



Clan Prints in the Sands



Turnbull Clan Publications

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WILLIAM TURNBULL:

Although no direct link genealogically has been established with this gentleman, there is little doubt that a common ancestry is shared by most Turnbolls in present times, probably coming from Williams area of Scotland.

Early records indicate that his mother was possibly of the family of Stewart (Turnbull appointed John Stewart the first provost in the city 'of Glasgow') and did early university study at St Andrews University (founded prior to Glasgow University)

A definitive story can be read of the early days of this, establishment, titled "The University of Glasgow 1451- 1577" by, John Durkan & James Kirk, University of Glasgow Press, 1977.

I quote from extracts of the publication & others sources:

"Founder & Foundation

In the year of our Lord 1451, Glasgow University was firmly founded on a firm rock...so that the first products of the said university might from the beginning pass on to posterity a doctrine pure and sound...by acceptance of privileges of our mother, the University of Bologne, freest of all universities..."

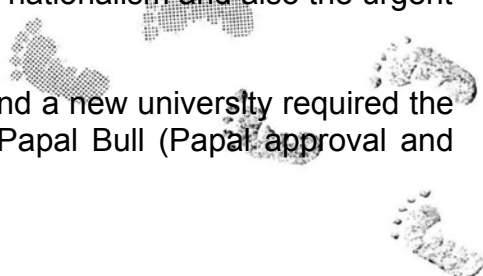
(Prologue: University & Arts Statutes)

Throughout the fifteenth century individual Scots were to be found in European Universities.

Since the foundation of St. Andrews (university) some of these continental wanderers returned to teach there and sometimes with bracing effect.

The reason for multiplying small foundations at home (Scotland) was partly Parliament's wish to stem this 'brain and money drain'; partly the new nationalism and also the urgent need for better educated clerical class.

The answer was to establish new institutions, but to found a new university required the finding of a suitable founding Bishop and to obtain a Papal Bull (Papal approval and financial sponsorship).







Foundation Stone Glasgow University

WILLIAM TURNBULL, the Bishop of Glasgow, with a long record of scholastic career and much time spent abroad in Bologna etc. seemed the obvious choice. He was born on the Borders of the diocese and the Kingdom, at remote Bedrule in Black Douglas country, probably about 1400. He began his university studies at St. Andrews in exciting days. It was a new university, dominated by Laurence of Lindores. The new philosophical fashion of Turnbull's generation was Albertism, a new school of realist philosophers following Albertus Magnus.

The Great Schism of the west was coming to an end as Turnbull finished his arts course and Christendom once more had one Pope instead of several.

Turnbull was made an envoy to the council of Basle in 1435 and was in Italy for at least five years, partly as a student but partly also as a busy agent for the Scots King and a passionate adherent of Pope Eugenius. Finally he went to Pavia and took his doctorate in canon law there in 1439.

His service in the court of James II as keeper of the privy seal and principle secretary brought him face to face daily with problems of authority. In the eyes of Bishop Eugenius and Nicholas, the papacy's problems were not dissimilar to those of kings, forced to measure their powers against unreliable magnates or to docile councils of state.

Turnbull must have seemed to James II and Nicholas V, both of them cordially attached to him, well fitted to manage a new University.

He had been the recipient of continuous patronage, as a university man of those days needed to be, since his first appointment to vicar of East Calder. He had been a protégé of Wardlaw, the Bishop-founder of St. Andrews, was knowledgeable about the problems of learned society, he was a Pope's man and a king's man.

At that time, Glasgow was a small town with approximately two thousand inhabitants. Its markets were mainly local and it is unlikely that, like Ayr it had ships trading as far off as La Rochelle. The noble cathedral in Glasgow was one of the more solemn in Scotland in spite of a calamitous fire of 1406. Besides St. Kentigern, 665 saints were piously believed to be buried there. In the High Street a thin ribbon of houses ran past the Dominican priory to the riverside trading nucleus clustered round Fishergate and Walkergate.

A new collegiate foundation at Glasgow, with a more all embracing educational program may well have been part of Turnbull's original dream.

The new Bishop meant to use his considerable influence with the Pope and king to build up the city and see. He moved against whatever threat to the town's trade came from other Clyde ports, Rutherglen (then probably a bigger town than Glasgow) and Renfrew, in both of which Paisley Abbey had some interest: but not against Dumbarton, where George Lauder, Bishop of Argyll, was forced to retreat from Highland inhospitality at Lismore. Turnbull had some understanding of the Lauders because of ties of kinship.

(David Lauder was (1461) cousin of John Turnbull of Bedrule:GUL, Murray MS 645, p. 425.

There was a need to resist the growing prestige of St. Andrew's which now had a new collegiate church created by Bishop Kennedy. Glasgow claimed second place among Scots cathedrals and this claim furthered Turnbull's attempt against a laird of Kilmaurs, to annexe Glencairn to the canons' commons and so help the growth of Glasgow University.

There was a need to proceed with repairs to the church begun by Bishop William Lauder and his successor Cameron and finish the upper chapter house. Turnbull's coat of arms is on its western external wall.

To ensure final Royal backing, it may not have taken great persuasion to induce James II to become a cathedral canon.

Unlike his immediate predecessors who were Bishops "by Gods blessing", Turnbull was so "by favour of God and the apostolic see."

'Auchinleck' records the university foundation as follows:

That samyn zere the privilege of the universite of glasqw came to glasqw throw the instance of king James the secund and throw instigacioun of master willame tumbull that tyme bischop of glasqw and was proclomit at the croce of glasqw on the trinite sonday the xxii day of lune. And on the morne thair was cryit ane gret indulgence gevin to glasqw at the request of thaim forsaide be pap nycholas as it war the zere of grace and with all indulgens that thai mycht haf in rome contenant iiij monethis begynnand the ix day of luly and durand to the x day of november.

The indulgence by the Pope was granted in Rome on 22 November 1450 and the foundation dated the 7th January 1451, the feast of St. Kentigerna, (said to be related to St. Mungo) was probably announced then to enable the chapter of canons to be able to hear it at Whitsunday. The Bishop part may be in the choice of the Bologne model:

Nicholas V was a humanist, with personal associations with these and university there. The ambiguous phrase styling the Bishops as 'Rectors called chancellors' reflects less the position in that 'freest of universities' than Turnbull's determination to be master of hostile territory. The papal bull authorises university officers but appoints no conservators; it authorises also the setting up of the various faculties and includes the usual requirement that graduates were to be accepted without further examination elsewhere: an experience Turnbull did not personally, always have.

King James is said to want the university not only for his own subjects but for those of neighbouring lands and Glasgow is represented as an important centre with mild air and plenty of the necessities of life.

The remainder of William Turnbull's time at the university is best read of in detail as accounted in "The University of Glasgow 1451- 1577" as I mentioned at the start of this account.

The actual death and subsequent resting place of Bishop William Turnbull are still subject to some verification, however after a period of difficulty, some scarcity of food and eventually the plague and later of rising civil turmoil in 1455, Turnbull died in September 1454.

His death is recorded in Law in the old chronicle published in Pinkerton and in the Auchinleck Chronicle. The last records it thus:

"The samyn yer the thnd day of December [sic], thar decesit in Glasgw master William Tumbull, bischope of Glasew, that brocht haim the perdoun of it" Law dates his death in 1456, and does not mention place. He merely says, "This year there died William Trumbil, Bishop of Glasgow, who asked for the indulgences for the city of Glasgow."

Anything as unusual as death in Rome was likely to have been mentioned by the chroniclers. It is extremely likely, therefore, that his death took place in Glasgow as the Auchinleck chronicler says, and that he died of the famine and plague that struck the country about this time.

(Please note the different dates of death quoted in two sources referenced. The later reference is from Dr. Durkan, printed in the Innes Review Vol. 2, reprinted with bibliography and index June 1951, Glasgow.)

The 'labours and expenses' of the university's founder would not be utterly lost, nor the 'liberties' of Bologne, as they were set out 'most evidently in the bull of erection and foundation', altogether forgotten.

As to the location of his burial place there is some difficulty. It would have appeared probable that if he were not buried with his family he would be buried in his cathedral or in the university itself. The following excerpt shows that there was in the 18th century a tradition that he was buried in Cambuslang. A few days after some workmen had taken down the walls of the Church of Cambuslang they discovered a vault below the wall, in which was a large stone coffin six foot and a half in length and having removed a stone which covered it they found therein the bones of a man. There's a tradition about the place, that Dr. William Turnbull, Bishop of Glasgow, who founded the University in the Year 1450 [old calendar] was buried there."

The local historian points out that, as the coffin was "below the wall" of the first post-Reformation Church, it must have been a memorial in the last pre-Reformation church (taken down in 1626). He suggests that Turnbull was buried there because of his connection with John Ralston, rector. But Ralston, then Bishop of Dunkeld, was already dead in 1452, and John Irnhos, had probably already succeeded him as rector. Was Irnhos also a friend of Turnbull?

Irnhos is first found as a clerk to William, earl of Douglas in 1446. He probably inherited Ralstons prebends on his death. The prebend of Carnbuslang was in Douglas's

patronage in any case, and was likely to go to a member of his clerical staff, and indeed he certainly is recorded as holding it later. Moreover, strained relations between Douglas and the Bishop did not prevent Irnhos from being admitted to Glasgow University on the 3rd May, 1453, by which date he was already a canon of Glasgow. Nor was this necessarily desertion on Irnhos's part, for one of the Hamiltons was admitted on the same day. The Bishop was no doubt keen to make his peace with such an influential house in his own diocese, and if the peace was broken the fault was scarcely his.

Moreover, the Turnbells of Bedrule did settle in Cambuslang district, but how soon we do not know. Turnbells were in Gambuslang in the century following the Bishop's death. There is every reason, therefore, for accepting the hypothesis that the Bishop died in Glasgow on 3rd September, 1454, and was buried in the church at Cambuslang.

