

The Sprouls of Scotland
Some General Information c.1470-1650

For a general view of the Sprouls of Scotland I began by searching the index to Wills and Testaments up to 1650. This index covers the whole of Scotland and the earliest entries date from 1513. Wills from this period are primarily concerned with moveable property (money, goods etc.) rather than heritable property (land and buildings) for which separate records exist. Although generally only the wealthier members of society left wills and testaments this does give an idea of the distribution of the surname at this period.

The original documents are held by the National Archives of Scotland and full copies can be obtained. As was Scottish practice married women are listed under their maiden surname. The following Sproul (and variant spellings) wills and testaments are recorded:

NAME	DATE	DESCRIPTION	COURT
Jonet Spreull	22 Oct 1550	Lady of Cathcart, spouse of [...] Symple (incomplete)	Glasgow Commissary Court
Jonet Spreull	30 Oct 1550	in Parish of Cathcart (latter part of previous testament)	Glasgow Commissary Court
Stevin Sprewle	26 Jun 1576	of Edinburney Wik, Regality of Paisley	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Patrik Spreule	29 Jul 1583	Sacristan of Trinity College beside Edinburgh	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Jonet Sprewill	3 Nov 1587	sometime spouse of James Gillies	St Andrews Commissary Court
Johnne Spreule	8 Mar 1597	in Caulscoitts, Sheriffdom of Renfrew	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Henry Spreule	17 Jan 1601	cooper, burgess of Glasgow	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Issobell Spreull	2 Jan 1604	relict of Thomas Laird	Glasgow Commissary Court
Agnes Spreule	30 Mar 1605	spouse to John Ramsay in Fordellmylne, Parish of Dagattie, Sheriffdom of Fife	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Jonet Spreull	22 Apr 1605	spouse to Johnne Brounsyde in Fairslaw	Glasgow Commissary Court
Agnes Spreule	10 Feb 1607	sometime spouse to Andro Faulis in Cruke in the Mearns, Parish of Mearns, Sheriffdom of Renfrew	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Andro Spreull	29 Dec 1608	burgess of Inverkeithing, Fife	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Thomas Spreule	29 Aug 1609	in Arthourlie, Parish of Neilstoun, Sheriffdom of Renfrew	Edinburgh Commissary Court
Kathrein Spreull	30 Jan 1610	spouse to Robert Patersoun, maltman burgess of Glasgw	Glasgow Commissary Court

James Spreull	26 Sep 1611	in Abernethy	Dunblane Commissary Court
Nicoll Spreull	2 Apr 1612	in Kirkintulloch, merchant burges of Glasgw	Glasgow Commissary Court
Gabriell Spreull	11 Apr 1614	son to umquhile Thomas Spreull in Arthourlie, Parish of Neilstoun	Glasgow Commissary Court
Jonet Spreull	24 Jan 1615	spouse to Johnne Padie, skynner burges of Glasgw	Glasgow Commissary Court
Gabriell Spreull	2 May 1615	in Ovir Coldoun, Parish of Neilstoun	Glasgow Commissary Court
Mareoun Spreull	8 Feb 1616	spouse to George Pollok, cowpar burgess of Glasgw	Glasgow Commissary Court
Bessie Spreule	25 Nov 1617	spouse to Peter Douglas, burges of Innerkeithing	St Andrews Commissary Court
Robert Spreull	3 Apr 1645	traveller, burgess of Glasgow	Glasgow Commissary Court
Mareone Spreull	19 May 1648	spouse to John Craige, portioner of Nether Newton, Parish and Barony of Glasgow	Glasgow Commissary Court
Walter Spreull	7 Dec 1648	in Arthourlie, Parish of Neilston	Glasgow Commissary Court
Mareone Spreull	20 Dec 1648	spouse to John Craige, portioner of Nether Newton, Parish and Barony of Glasgow (Eik)	Glasgow Commissary Court

These records indicate that although there was clearly a concentration of Sprouls in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, they were also to be found elsewhere, notably in Fife.

In Scotland the transfer of ownership of land or buildings (by sale or inheritance) was recorded in the Registers of Sasines. The full register begins in 1617 (although there were earlier incomplete registers) and I searched the indexes to the General Register of Sasines from 1617-1652 for any mention of the Sproul family:

NAME AND DESIGNATION	DATE OF RECORDING	COUNTY OR SHERIFFDOM
James Spreule, fear of Coldoun & Agnes Kelso his spouse	1 Jul 1619	Renfrew
James Spreule, fear of Coldoun & Agnes Kelso his spouse	3 Feb 1621	Renfrew
James Spreule of Coldoun	16 Mar 1621	Dumbarton
James Spreule of Coldoun	24 Mar 1621	Renfrew
James Spreull of Cowdoun	15 Oct 1628	Argyle Perth
John Spreule in Milntoune	8 Jan 1644	Dumbarton

The General Register of Sasines covers the whole of Scotland but there were also separate registers

for each county and for each burgh. Many of these are not indexed and so a lengthier search would be required to search them for any mention of the Sproul family, but it is likely that this would reveal further records.

Many of the main records used in Scottish genealogical research, such as the Old Parish Registers, Wills & Testaments and Registers of Sasines, date from the mid 1500s or early 1600s and it can be difficult to find records of a family prior to this. I searched some of the indexes available to records held at the National Archives of Scotland for any early mentions of the Sproul family:

Index to Calendar of Charters 1142-1600:

Thomas Spreule of Coldon, prolocutor of Robert Conyngham of Conynghamheid - 20 Oct 1472
Precept of Sasine to John Spreull and Martha Hammyltoun his spouse to sell a tenement lying in the burgh of Paisley - 13 Mar 1552/3
John Spreull, Canon of the Metropolitan Church of Glasgow and Commissary General of the jurisdiction thereof - 7 Mar 1553/4
Mathow Spreull, burgess of Glasgow - attesting in an inquest - 5 Apr 1559 & 26 Jul 1564
Gabriel Spreull, servitor of James Maxwell of Calderwod - (1567-1582 - volume unavailable)
John Spreull - (1567-1582 - volume unavailable)
John Spruill, burgess of Glasgow - witness to two Instruments of Sasine - 29 May 1583
Gabiell Sprewl - in connection with lands of Kirkton - 15 Oct 1594

Index to Calendar of Deeds 1554-1590

Sir Patrick Spreule, Prebendary of the Trinity College Kirk beside Edinburgh - 27 Feb 1562
Thomas Spreull, of Cowdown - 18 Mar 1573
Janet Spreull, wife of Adam Mure, younger of Kittamuir - 7 Feb 1573
Margaret Spreull, spouse of Gabriel Sempill of Cathcart - 5 Feb 1583

Unfortunately, this indicated that there was little record of the Sprouls prior to the 1500s.

I next looked at some published sources of Scottish genealogy and history, beginning with *The Scots Peerage*, edited by Sir James Balfour Paul (Edinburgh, 1904-14). Although there is no chapter on the Sproul family there are several references to Sprouls in connection with other families:

Vol III - Page 341

Cochrane, Earl of Dundonald - 'A further acquisition was made in 1623 by the purchase from James Spreull of the barony of Cowdown, in the parish of Neilstone, Renfrewshire.'

Vol VII - Page 533-534

Sempill, Lord Sempill - 'Gabriel Sempill of Cathcart and Ladymure... had from Allan Stewart of Cardonald a charter of the lands of Cathcart and others, to himself and Jonet Spreule his wife, 25 November 1543... He married Jonet Spreule, who was possibly a daughter of John Spreule of Coldoun, prior to 18 January 1531. She died on 22 October 1550.'

Gabriel Sempill (son of above) 'was married to Margaret Spreule, before 1 August 1572, with issue. On 1 August 1572 he and his spouse had sasine of the lands of Brigholm of Cathcart on a charter from his parents.'

Vol IX - Page 75

Cochrane, Earl of Dundonald - 'Peter married Isobel Spreull and was succeeded by John Cochrane, though there is nothing to show that John was his son. John Cochrane had sasine of Nether (or

Easter) Cochrane in 1505, and as "John Cochrane of that Ilk" entered into a contract with Isobel Spreull, "relict of Peter Cochrane, now spouse of Patrick Dunyng, anent her terce of Pitfour and others".'

As the Sproul family appeared to be connected to Glasgow, and a number of sources described individuals as burgesses of Glasgow, I next looked at *The Burgesses & Guild Brethren of Glasgow 1573-1750* edited by James R. Anderson and published by The Scottish Record Society (Edinburgh, 1925). As one of the ways to become a burgher was through family connections these records may contain useful genealogical information. The following Sprouls were listed (1573-1650 only) with the dates they became burgesses:

- 2 Aug 1575 - Spreull, David, maltman
- 16 Jul 1577 - Spreull, Thomas, son to Walter Spreull in Coldoun
- 26 Oct 1599 - Spreull, Thomas, skinner, only son to David Spreull, served heir to his father, and thereafter made a burgher heir
- 17 Aug 1605 - Spreull, Nicoll, merchant
- 9 Jan 1612 - Spreull, Robert, gardener, by purchase
- 24 Mar 1614 - Spreull, Claud, cooper, as eldest son of a burgher
- 10 Aug 1615 - Spreull, Andrew, wobster, as married Jonat, lawful daughter to James Clark, cordiner, burgher
- 20 Feb 1617 - Spreull, Gabriel, tailor, as married Marion, lawful daughter to deceased Matthew Fleming, merchant
- 25 Jul 1622 - Spreull, Alexander, bonnetmaker, as eldest lawful son to deceased Patrick Spreull, burgher
- 6 Aug 1646 - Spreull, John, weaver, as eldest lawful son to Andrew Spreull, weaver
- 26 Sep 1646 - Spreull, Mr John, town clerk of this burgh, as married Catherine, lawful daughter to deceased John Merschell, merchant, gratis, for service done and to be done
- 30 Sep 1647 - Spreull, John, of Castlehill, gratis
- 5 Feb 1649 - Spreull, Thomas, merchant, as serving apprentice with Charles Gray, merchant burgher

I also found that Sprouls are listed in the indexes to the following:

The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland - 1306-1668 - Vols. IV, V, VI, VII, VIII & IX
The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland - 1488-1584 - Vols. I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VIII
The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland - 1545-1691 - Series I: Vols. II, IV, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XIII; Series II: Vols. I, III

Of particular interest may be the following entries:

The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland - Series I - Volume XIII:

James Spreull (sometime) of Cowdoun denounced for illegal execution of letters of caption against Sir George Elphinston of Blythswood - 'the said Spreull not now appearing, the Lords order him to be denounced rebel' - 1 Aug 1622

(Note: *letters of caption* = a warrant in the form of letters to a messenger-at-arms to arrest a person for debt)

The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland - Series II - Volume III:

'Commission to Sir Walter Stewart of Minto and others to try Margaret Spreull for witchcraft' - 1 Aug 1629

I wondered if James Spreull of Cowdoun being 'denounced rebel' in 1622 was of significance. In Scotland, a 'rebel' was someone who disobeyed the will of the sovereign by resisting a legal summons and this was often connected with non-payment of debt. In theory, this could have led to the Crown confiscating James Spreull's property. Might this have been the trouble with the King that led to the Sprouls leaving Scotland?

This trouble might also explain why the barony of Cowdoun was sold the following year (as described above in *The Scots Peerage*). The records I examined suggested that the Spreulls had held the lands of Cowdoun (also spelled Coldoun etc.) since at least the 1400s so the loss may well have been significant and led to members of the family seeking their fortune in Ireland.

I also examined two books which list published works on specific Scottish families, *Scottish Family Histories* by Joan P. S. Ferguson (Edinburgh, 1986) and *Scottish Family History* by Margaret Stuart (Edinburgh, 1930). These listed the following sources for the Spreull family:

Cowdonhill Mansion and the Glasgow family of Spreull by Leslie Buchanan (c.1924-27)
Notes on the Family of Spreull by J.M. Spreull & G.J. Spreull (1915)
The Shire of Renfrew by G. Crawford & G. Robertson (1818)
The Book of Dumbartonshire by Joseph Irving (1879)
Old Greenock by George Williamson (1886-88)

I did not have time during this research to look at these books but they may contain further information of interest.