

NOTICES OF THE KING'S MASTER-GUNNERS OF SCOTLAND, WITH THE  
WRITS OF THEIR APPOINTMENTS, 1512-1703. BY REV. R. S. MYLNE,  
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The office of King's Master Gunner was a public position of varying importance according to the political and military exigencies of the time. When there was war with England, or civil war prevailed at home, and the whole country was torn and rent with internal divisions, then the Master Gunner became a very prominent person : for the safety of the kingdom for the time being seemed at all events placed in his all-powerful hands. In days of prolonged peace, however, he generally sank into insignificance.

At first the Master Gunner was usually appointed to the charge of the artillery and guns in some particular castle. Afterwards, when numerous appointments of this kind had been made, a Principal Master Gunner was selected to superintend the other officials in this department of the service of the Crown.

The Master Gunner was also sometimes given the appointment of Master Wright. Sometimes he held the office of armourer, or some other kindred office.

From the *Exchequer Rolls* we learn that Robert Borthuik was the

principal Master Gunner of the King in 1512, and was that year in Dieppe on the King's business, doubtless making active preparation for the campaign which terminated in the disastrous battle of Flodden. In 1508 John Drummond,<sup>1</sup> King's Carpenter, had received a special grant, under the great seal, of £10 a year in consideration of his services rendered to the Crown.

Peris Rowane succeeds Borthuik in 1532, and his writ of appointment as Master Gunner under the privy seal is dated 30th April 1532. He is succeeded by his son David in 1545, though his writ of appointment is not registered until 1548. During the regency, before James VI. was able to undertake the actual administration of affairs, there seems some confusion: and at a later date the character of the office is somewhat changed, as the title is altered to Chief Engineer.

Still, however, a continuous succession of holders of the office can be traced for over two centuries. Like other similar posts, it was tenable for life, was invested with a fixed yearly fee, and certain small perquisites. Like other similar posts, its importance rose with the rise of the House of Stuart, and vanished away after the Act of Union in the reign of Queen Anne.

Sir Antony Alexander was son of the first Earl of Stirling, but the best known and most famous name in our list of Master Gunners or Chief Engineers is certainly that of John Abraham Slezer, a name spelt in the most strange and divergent manner in contemporary documents. Schlezer is the spelling adopted in the Index to the *Privy Seal*. Slezer is well known to the present generation by his maps and drawings made in various parts of Scotland, many of which still exist in a good state of preservation, and are of the greatest value for the illustration of contemporary history. In some cases the drawing can hardly be quite accurate, but they are always useful for the purpose of comparison. Compare, for instance, the two old views of Linlithgow, given at page 44 of Mylne's *Master Masons*, with the four modern views immediately

<sup>1</sup> In a grant under the great seal on 18th June 1532 John Drummond is called "rerum nostrarum bellicarum machinator" as well as carpenter.

following. It is worthy of note that in one of the old views the famous Crown Steeple of the parish church of St Michael is distinctly shown, being one of the three ancient Crown Steeples in Scotland. This steeple was unfortunately taken down in 1820 to save the cost of necessary repair! The other two—St Giles', Edinburgh, and King's College, Aberdeen—still remain intact, and in good condition.

Slezer was appointed Principal Master Gunner, or rather Chief Engineer, on 23rd December, in the year 1671, according to the Index to the *Privy Seal of Scotland*, but it is curious that the actual writ does not seem to exist. On 4th July 1677 he was appointed under the privy seal to the office of Lieutenant to the Artillery.

During the Civil War, on 10th July 1649, we find Colonel James Wemyss appointed General of the Artillery and Master of all Ordnance and Arms in England. So this office apparently existed in both countries during the 17th century.

There was also the office of King's Armourer, which was generally held together with the office of Bower. Thus, on 11th October 1675, Captain Andrew Forrester was appointed Bower and Armourer to the King under the privy seal. On 19th January 1697 a similar appointment was made in favour of John Monro, described as a Bower in Edinburgh, and on 24th February 1718 Thomas Gemmill was made Master Armourer in Scotland. In the grant he is stated to be the successor of "John Simpson, elder, Hammerman, Burgess of Glasgow," and to be appointed "during pleasure only," and to be exempt "from watching and warding within the burgh."

We give a list of thirteen Master Gunners or Chief Engineers to the Crown of Scotland appointed under writ of the privy seal, and also ten of these writs, or confirmations thereof, in complete form, as found in the *Privy Seal Register*.

As the style and tenour is very similar in each century, it seemed unnecessary to give them all.

After the death of Queen Anne, the office seems to have fallen into disuse, like some other similar offices under the Crown in Scotland.

MASTER GUNNERS AND CHIEF ENGINEERS TO THE CROWN OF SCOTLAND,  
APPOINTED UNDER WRIT OF THE PRIVY SEAL.

- 1512 Robert Borthuick.  
He is in Dieppe this year on the King's business, acting under the direction of Andrew, Bishop of Caithness, Receiver of the Kingdom of Scotland.  
He dies in 1531.
- 1532 Peris Rowane, Frenchman.  
The grant to him of April 30, 1532, is confirmed on February 12, 1533. From the *Exchequer Rolls* we learn that he received special payments from the Crown in 1533, and again in 1535.
- 1548 David Rowane.  
His appointment is dated April 15, 1548, but he had performed the duties of the office since his father's death in 1545.  
He also received a pension of £40 from the Crown.
- 1561 James Hectour and Harie Balfoure.  
They are both appointed, by separate writs of the privy seal, Master Gunners of Dunbar Castle on the same day in the same year.
- 1563 Harie Balfoure.  
He is made sole Master Gunner of the Castle of Dunbar.  
This grant is confirmed October 4, 1565, under writ of the privy seal.
- 1567 Harie Balfoure.  
He is made Principal Master Gunner within the Castle of Edinburgh, &c., by King James VI., with the advice of my Lord Regent James Murray.  
He became Master of Works in 1607.
- 1601 James Murray, younger.  
He is appointed to the office, in succession to his father, who was also Master Wright, as well as Master Gunner.  
Sir Antony Alexander.  
He was son of the famous Earl of Stirling, and was also Master of Works.  
In 1633 we find Hunter made a gunner in Edinburgh Castle, and in 1634 Toftis made an ordinary gunner.
- 1637 Sir Archibald Stewart of Hessilsyde.  
His salary is £10 Scots monthly, with an honest stand of clothes yearly.  
Homer Maxwell, Commissary of Dumfries.  
He is called "founder of the artillery" in 1644, was probably heir of Edward Maxwell of Crostane, in the barony of Lockendelow, Kirkcudbright, in 1618. He was also Captain of Pioneers.  
He died 1646.
- 1646 John Mylne, Master Mason.  
This grant is dated September 4, and was made by King Charles I. when he was much pressed by the exigencies of the Civil War. See Mylne's *Master Masons to the Crown of Scotland*, p. 141.

- In 1655 George Brown, appointed in 1626 a Master Gunner in the Castle of Edinburgh, is made a Burgess and Gild Brother in the city.
- 1664 John Mylne receives confirmation of the grant of 1646 from King Charles II., and dies in 1667.  
The grant is printed in the *Master Masons to the Crown of Scotland*, p. 147.
- 1671 John Abraham Slezer (Schlezer). This grant is dated December 23, in the *Index to the Privy Seal of Scotland*, and Slezer is called Chief Engineer, but the original writ cannot be found.  
Slezer is well known by his numerous maps and drawings of various parts of Scotland.
- 1693 Captain Theodore Durie, of the French nation.  
He had executed the duties of the office since the death of Slezer in 1689.
- 1703 Captain Durie receives confirmation of the grant of 1693 by Queen Anne.

*Grant by King James V. to Peris Rowane, Francheman.*

At Edinburgh, April 30, 1532.

James, be the grace of God, King of Scottis. To our custumaris of our burgh of Edinburgh now present and tocum, greeting. Littera Peris  
Gunnar.

Wit ye ws to have maid, constitut and ordanit and be thir our letteris makis constitutis and ordanis our lovit Peris Rowane, Francheman, seruand to umquhile Robert Borthuik, maistar gunnar to ws, principale maister maker and meltar of our gunnis and artilzerie for all the dais of his lif for using and exercing of the quhilk office we have gevin and grantit, and be thir our letteris gevis and grantis to the said Peris the sowme of fife pundis usuale money of our realm monethlie when he wirkis, and thre pundis monethlie when he wirkis nocht, in his fee, to be pait to him monethlie for all the dais of his lif of the rediest of our customez of our burgh of Edinburgh be our gret custumaris of the samin present and tocum. To be haldin and to be had of ws the said office with the said sowm of fiffe pundis monethlie quhen the said Peris wirkis, and three pundis quhen the said Peris wirkis nocht monethlie of fee to the said Peris, principale maister forsaid, in maner abonewrittin for all the dais of his life, with all and sindry commoditeis, fredomez, proffittis and ryechtuis pertinentis quhatsumevir pertening or that may pertene thereto, frelie quietlie, wele and in pece but ony revocation impediment or agane calling quhatsumevir. Quherfor we charge straitly and commandis yow our said custumaris of our burgh of Edinburgh now present and tocum, to mak thankfull payment to the said Peris monethlie for his lifyme of the said sowm in his fee of the rediest of our customez of our said burgh. And the samin sall be thankfullie allowit to yow in your comptis yerlie and monethlie in our chekker be the auditouris thereof, quhilkis we sall discharge and diffeis yow of the said sowm monethlie in your comptis, thir our letteris auys sene befor the said auditouris, apon compt in our chekker and registrat in the rollis thereof as efteris.

Gevin under our priue sele at Edinburgh the last day of Aprile the yer of God j<sup>m</sup><sup>ve</sup> and xxxii yeris and of our regne the xix yeir.

*Grant by Queen Mary to David Rowane.*

At Edinburgh, April 15, 1548.

Ane lettre maid to David Rowane sone to umquhile Peris Rowane, Franche-  
man, makand him principale Maister makar and meltar of our Soverane Ladyis  
gunnis and artaillerie for all the dayes of his life, and gevis him the office  
thairof: For using and exercing of the quhilk office hir grace with avise of hir  
tutour and governour gevis and grantis to the said David the soume of five  
pundis money of the realme to be payit to him monethlie in his fe for all the  
dayes of his life of the reddyest of the custumes of the burgh of Edinburgh be  
the custumaris of the samyn now present and tocum. And with command in  
the samyn to the saidis custumaris to mak thankfull payment of the said soume  
monethlie and the samyn to be thankfullie allowit to thame in thare comptis  
in the chekker be the auditouris thairof.

At Edinburgh the fiftene day of Aprile the yeir foursaid (1548).

Per Signaturam.

*Grants by Queen Mary to James Hectour and Harie Balfoure.*

At Edinburgh, August 31, 1561.

Reg. Sec. Sig.,  
vol. xxx. fol. 43.

Ane lettre maid to James Hectour makand him maister gunnar within the  
castell of Dunbar for all the dayis of his life, and for the gude, trew, and  
thankfull service done and to be done to our soverane lady be him, hir hienes  
gevis and grantis to the said James the sowme of vj lib. usuale money in his fee  
to be payit to him monethlie for all the dayis of his liffe be hir hienes thesaurer  
of the reddiest of hir casualiteis Begynnand the first payment the first day of  
September nixtocum etc. At Edinburgh the last daye of August the yeir of  
God 1561 yeiris.

Per Signaturam.

Ane lettre maid to Harie Balfoure makand him maister of hir hienes  
ordinarie gunnaris, powder makaris and wrichtis within hir hienes castell of  
Dunbar for all the dayis of his life. And for the gude trew and thankfull  
service done and to be done to our soverane lady be him in the said office hir  
hienes gevis and grantis to the said Hary the sowme of vj lib. money in his fee  
to be payit to him monethlie during the said space be hir thesaurer of the  
reddiest of hir casualiteis Begynnand the first payment thairof the first day of  
September nixtocum and sua continewand monethlie during all the dayis of  
his life etc. At Edinburgh the last daye of August the yeir of God 1561.

Per Signaturam.

*Grant by Queen Mary to Hary Balfoure.*

At Edinburgh, June 19, 1563.

Reg. Sec. Sig.,  
vol. xxxi. fol.  
114.

Ane lettre maid to Hary Balfoure makand him hir graces principall maister  
gunnar and commander of hir hienes ordinar and extraordinar gunnaris with  
utheris hir majesties craftismen within hir castell of Dunbar and gevand to him  
the office thairof for all the dayis of his lyffe for using and exercing of the quhilk

office our soverane lady gevis and grantis to the said Hary Balfoure the soume of viij lib. vj sh. viij d. money of this Realme to be payit to him monethlie for his fe and wages in tyme cuming during his lyfytyme be hir graces thesaurare now present and being for the tyme of the reddiest of hir majesties casualities and cofferis, begynning the first monethis payment at the first day of July nixtocum and sua furth monethlie in tyme cuming during his lyfytyme as said is. And that the said lettre etc., with command in the same to hir graces thesaurare now present and being for the tyme to mak thankfull payment to the said Hary of the foirsaid sowme of viij lib. vj sh. viij d. money abonewritten monethlie during his lyfytyme as said is, and the samin salbe thankfullie allowit to thame in thair comptis in hir hienes chekker yeirlie be the auditouris thair of as efferis, quhilkis our soverane lady chargeis to defeis hir said thesaurare yeirlie in his comptis of the sowme foirsaid the said lettre being auis schewin upon compt in the chekker and registrat in the rollis thair of as efferis and als with command in the said lettre to all and sundrie hir graces saidis gunnaris, and craftismen within hir said castell to reddilie ansuer and obey onlie to the said Hary hir hienes principal maister gunnar and commandar foirsaid in all thingis concerning the said office in all tyme cuming during his lyfytyme as efferis etc. At Edinburgh the xix. day of June the yeir of God 1563 yeiris.

Per Signaturam.

*Confirmation of Grant by Queen Mary to Harie Balfoure.*

At Edinburgh, October 4, 1565.

Ane lettre maid makand mentioun that it is understandin to our soverane lord and lady that thair majesties lovit dailie servitor Harie Balfoure thair hienes principall maister gunnar within the castell of Dunbar obtenit his hienes gift under the prive seill of befoir gevin and grantit to him makand him principall maister gunnar and commandar of thair majesties ordinar and extraordinar gunnaris and utheris craftismen within the castell foirsaid and geving to him the office thair of for all the dayis of his lyfe and granting to him the soume of viij lib. vj s. viij d. money of this realme to be payit to him monethlie during his lyfytyme be thair hienes thesaurare present and being for the tyme confening expres command thairin to the saidis gunnaris and craftismen within the said castell that they reddilie ansuer and obey onlie to the said Harie principall maister gunnar and commandar foirsaid in all thingis concerning the saidis offices in all tyme cuming during his lyfytyme as efferis, as the saidis lettres of gift under the prive seile maid to the said Hary thairupoun of the date the 19th day of June the yeir of God 1563 yeiris and of our said Soverane ladyis regne the 21st yeir, mair fullilie proportis: Quhilk lettre of gift being sene and considerit be thair majesties and at thair hienes command and willing that the said Harie according thairto have jois and use the office foirsaid and all priveleges thair of grantit to him as said is in all tyme cuming during his lyfytyme peceable without ony inquietatioun or impediment for the gude and thankfull service done and to be done be him to thair hienes; Thair majesteis hes ratifiit, apprevit and affirmit and be thir presentis for thame and thair hienes successouris ratifiis apprevis and affirmis the foirsaid lettre of gift maid to the said Harie of the office foirsaid of the date abonewritten in manner foirsaid and

Reg. Sec. Sig.,  
vol. xxxiii. fol.  
107.

all pointis clausis articlis and priveleges thairrof eftir the forme and tenour of the samen to be peaceabillie joisit and usit be him in all tyme cuming during his lyftyme conforme to the said gift with command alsua to all and sindrie the saidis gunaris and craftismen within the castell foirsaid that they and ilkane of thame reddilie ansuer intend and obey to the said Harie thair majesteis principall gunnar and commandar foirsaid in all thingis concerning the saidis offices in all tyme cuming during his lyftyme conforme to the lettre of gift foirsaid, and to the effect that he may be reddilie ansuerit and obeyit in his said office according thairto and na wayis molestit hurt nor inquietit in using thairrof thair majesteis hes revokit, annullit and dischargit as be thir presentis revokis annullis and dischargis quhatsumever lettres of gift maid or grantit in ony wayis to quhatsumever persoun or persounis sen the date foirsaid of the lettre of gift abonespecificit maid to the said Harie as said is that in ony wayis may or appear to be hurtfull prejudicial or mak dirogatioun in ony soirt to the said Harie his gift, office and privelege thairrof in tyme cuming, and that all sic giftis sua purchest be in that cais of nane avail force nor effect etc. At Edinburgh the 4th day of October the yeir of God 1565 yeiris. Per Signaturam.

*Grant by King James VI., with advice of my Lord Regent, to Harie Balfoure.*

At Edinburgh, February 21, 1567.

Reg. Sec. Sig.,  
vol. xxxvii. fol.  
40.

Ane lettre maid to Harie Balfoure makand him principall maister gunnar within the castell of Edinbrucht and gevand to him the office thairrof for all the dayis of his lyffe to use and exerce the samin within the said castell and mak residence thairintill to that effect and for using and exerceing of the said office oure said souverane lord with awise of my lord regent gevis and grantis to the said Harye the soume of aucht pundis vj s. viij d. money of this realme to be payit to him monethlie as for his ordinar fee and wage during his lyftyme be his majesteis thesaurar present and being for the tyme of the reddiest of his hienes casualiteis and cofferis Beginmand the first payment at the first day of Februare instant and sua furth monethlie during his lyftyme as said is: With expres command to his hienes thesaurar present and tocum to reddilie ansuer and mak thankfull payment to the said Harie of the soume abonewrittin monethlie during his lyftyme as said is etc. And als commanding the capitanes and constabill of the castell foirsaid present and being for the tyme and thair deputis to ressave admit and intertenne the said Harie in the said office of maister gunnar within the said castell, and caus him be ansuerit and obeyit of all thingis appertening thairto and to have jois and use all sic housis aismentis privelegis and commoditeis in the said castell as he presentlie hes or usis and quhilkis he hes had in tyme bigane etc. At Edinburgh the 21st day of Februare the yeir of God 1567 yeiris. Per Signaturam.

*Grant by King James VI. to James Murray.*

At Dalkeith, May 4, 1601.

Reg. Sec. Sig.,  
vol. lxxiv. fol.  
323.

Ane lettre maid to James Murray younger, makand, constituand, and ordinand the said James his majesties principall maister wricht, and gunner ordinar, within the castell of Edinburgh and in all utheris his hienes castellis,



strenthis, forthis, and palaces; And gevis to him the office thairof during all the dayis of his lyftyme, now vacand in our said soverane Lordis handis be lauchfull demission of the same maid be James Murray eldar his father his hienes present wricht and maister gunner to his majestie: With charge and commandment abone all tymmermen being occupiet in his graces service ordinar or extraordinar, with all and sundrie privilegis, liberties, casualities, commodities, deuties, and immunities, pertening thairto usit and wont, siclyk and als frelie as the said James Murray eldar or vmquhile Jhonne Crawford, or ony his majesties or his predecessours maister wrichtis hade and usit in tyme bygane, with full power, libertie, and priviledge also to the said James Murray younger to use, exerce, and occupie tavernrie and oistlarie, in Wyne, beir, aill, meit, and drink, in all his majesties castells, strenthis, palaces, borrowis, and tounes, or quhairever it sall happin him to repair and be for the tyme; for using and exercing of the quhilk office, and for gude, trew, and thankfull service to be done be the said James thairintill our soverane lord hes gevin and grantit, lyk as be thir lettres gevis, and grantis, and assignis to him for all the dayis of his lyftyme the soume of ten pundis money vsuall of this realme to be payit to him monethlie as for his fie of the reddiest of his grace's casualities and cofferis be his majesties thesaurer now present and being for the tyme: Beginnand the first monethis payment the first day of May, instant: Togidder with ane honest stand of clething yeirlie to be ansuerit and delyverit be the said thesaurer to the said James, lyke as the master wrichtis hes had in tyme bygane quhilkis servit in the said office: Commanding and charging his majesties present thesaurer and being for the tyme to thankfullie ansuer, obey and mak pament to the said James Murray, younger, of the foirsaid soume of ten pundis monethlie for all his lyftyme, beginmand the first monethis payment the day abone written, togidder with the said stand of clething yeirlie, as said is: And the same sall be thankfullie allowit to the thesaurer in his comptis yeirlie in his hienes chekker be the auditoris thairof, quhilkis his majestie chargis to deface and allow to the said thesaurer in his comptis, thir lettres being ause schawin on compt in chekker and registrat in the rollis as use is. At Dalkeyth, the fourt day of May the yeir of God 1601 yeiris.

per Signaturam.

*Grant by King William III. and Queen Mary to Captain Theodore Durie.*

Given at Kensington, January 31, 1693.

William and Marie &c.

Witt ye us to have nominat constitut and appointed Captaine Theodore Durie gentleman of the French nation during our pleasure only to be Chief Engeneer to all our forts castles and armes within our kingdome of Scotland as occasion shall require, and for making of draughts or maps of such grounds forts or castles as shall be requisite for our service within the same, which place and office he has exercised from and since the first day of April 1689 by virtue of comission granted to him by the deceased Major General M'Kay, then Commander in chief of our forces, on the demission of John Sletcher (Slezer) last possessor thereof: Giving granting and disposing to the said Captain Theodore Durie the aforesaid office of Chief Engeneer with all

priviledges and emoluments whatever thereto belonging, and specially and particularly wee give and grant to him the soume of Ten Pound sterling money monethly att 12 moneths in the year to be payed to him during the space aforesaid as his fe and sallary for the said office, which is hereby declared to begin and comence from the said first day of Aprill 1689, att which tyme he did actually enter to our service in the said employment: Requiring hereby the said Captaine Theodore Durie to observe and follow all such orders and directions and instructions as he shall from tyme to tyme receive from us, the Lords of our Privie Counsell, the Lords of our Theasury or the Commanding Officer of our forces for the tyme being, in persuance of the trust reposed in him.

Given att our Court at Kensingtoun the 31 of January 1693, and of our reigne the fourth year.

Per signaturam Manu  
S. D. N. Regis super-  
script. manibusque  
comitionariorum  
thesaurarii et scaccarii  
dicti regni Scotiæ  
subscript.

*Grant by Queen Anne to Capt. Theodore Durie.*

Given at Windsor Castle, August 25, 1702.

Gift of Chief Engeneer of our forts and castles to Theodore Durie.  
March 8, 1703. (Date of Registration at Edinburgh in the Privy Seal.)

Anne &c.

Witt yee us with assent of the Lords Commissioners of our thesaury and exchequer to have nominat constituted and appointed, lykeas we make &c. Theodore Durie gentleman of the French nation, during our pleasure only, to be Chief Engineer to all our forts castles and armes within our said kingdome as occasion shall require, and for making of draughts and maps of such grounds, forts and castles as shall be requisite for our service: Giving, granting and disponing to the said Theodore Durie the aforesaid office with all priviledges whatever and immunities thereto belonging.

And particularly wee give and grant to him 117 lib. 12 shillings sterling yearly conforme to the present establishment to be paid annually during the space aforesaid as his fee and sallary for the said office: Requiring hereby the said Theodore Durie to observe all such directions and orders as he shall from time to tyme receive from us, the Lords of our Privy Council, the Lords Commissioners of our thesaury, or the Comander in Chief of our forces for the tyme being in pursuance of the trust hereby reposed in him.

Given at Windsor Castle the 25 of Augt. 1702, and of our reigne the first year.

Per Signaturam.