James Smeton

Five children were recorded as born to James Smeton in the parish of Cargill, Perthshire between 1768 and 1783.

Perth, Cargill (338)
11 Sept 1768   Bapt.James lawful son to James Smeton in Strelitz

Perth, Cargill (338)
01 Mar 1772   Bapt.Janet, lawful dau to James Smeton in Strelitz

Perth, Cargill (338)
19 Jun   1774   Bapt.Agnes lawful dau to James Smeton in Strelitz.

Perth, Cargill (338)
20 Aug 1780   Bapt.Ester lawful dau to James Smeton in Strelitz

Perth, Cargill (338)
31 Aug 1783   Bapt.John lawful son to James Smeton in Strelitz

Some explanation of the name and hamlet of Strelitz is perhaps called for.

Very simply, The Seven Years' War was a worldwide series of conflicts fought between 1756 and 1763 for control of Germany and for supremacy over France mainly in North America and India. At its conclusion, homes were provided for discharged soldiers at several places, one of them being on land forfeited after the 1745 rebellion, at Whiteley in Cargill parish. The resulting village was named Strelitz after Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, consort of George III.

Building began in 1763 and upwards of 80 houses were built to form a street 90 ft broad watered in the middle (some reports say at one side) by a stream. Each house had a good garden, with about 3 acres of land properly enclosed with hedge and ditch and sheltered by strips of planting. The houses were intended as an encouragement to industry, and a reward for laborious service and were given to soldiers at a mere "quit-rent".

The concept was not successful. The cheapest estimate of the cost of houses on the estate appeared to be £16 each while the commissioners overseeing the estates had originally calculated on £5 each. Some of the houses had their slates set without sarking (the wood between the rafters and the slates) so were nearly uninhabitable in winter.

There is almost universal condemnation of the settlers. In 1765, George Young of Coupar Angus, who had been appointed supervisor wrote that some had left and carried away their tools, officially government property, and that they were 'troublesome, idle people'. He did add in mitigation that they also had the worst lots; but though he had promised them lime, they had lost patience and had gone off to Dundee. The following year he reported he had sold looms that he had recovered from some runaways but, at least, these had remained for a couple of years.

When an Inspector visited the estate, he reported 'A great number of houses were ill-kept, the ditches were neglected, and the park land was flooded". He also said that some of the inhabitants were unable to work, others, he thought were unwilling. On the other hand, he gave a reasonably favourable description of the nursery garden, which he thought well kept.

According to another source, the soldiers here were notorious smugglers; and it is also said that they instituted an annual march to remind them of old campaigns, 'marching through the parish to the strains of martial music'. This promenade gradually changed into Burrelton Market and finally Burrelton Games.

In 1784 the forfeited estates were returned to the descendants of the original owners. The Third Statistical Account (1964) states that Burrelton "came into existence in 1812 when the process of converting small crofts into large farms began in consequence of a steep rise in the value of land. Most of the crofters took advantage of a generous offer of feus by the laird of Stobhall, Peter Burrel (Burrel's town) who had married the proprietrix of the estate, Clementina Sara Drummond."

The new village of Burrelton grew and the name of Whiteley was apparently resumed locally. In the 1863 Ordnance Survey, both 1" and 6" to the mile, there is no trace of the village of Strelitz, although farm called Strelitz still exists in 2007.

In Forfeited Estate Papers (1745) E777/288/15 in Archives of Scotland there is a list of the inhabitants of the village of Strelitz on 6th June 1766.

There is (in tabular form):

No.of the Houses	Soldiers	Rent £ s d,	Total rent £ s d.
18	James Smeaton	£1-10-00	
31 Do.	Rented mart^s 1766		£01-00-00

On other pages the heading is "Cottagers" rather than "Soldiers" which would seem to indicate that James had been a soldier.

In E777/288/16, "List of soldiers and tenants in the village of Strellitz, 6 June 1766, there are two entries:
At 18 Ja^s Smeaton Rented 1766   No. 31   £1-10-00
At 31 Ja^s Smeaton Rented 1766   £1-00-00

In neither of these entries is there any mention of James being a soldier, although others are entered as soldiers, for example,
 At 17 Andrew M^{c}kenzey as soldier   £1-10-00

E777/288/20, is a "List of Inhabitants of Strelitz 1766" (If there ever was a more precise date it went missing before conservation.) In this list here is no mention of James Smeaton at all! This is unfortunate since this document gives details of soldiers regiments and length of service as well as their marital status and number of offspring of both sexes. The population according to this list was 291.

For many years it was unclear whether the assumption should be made that James Smeton was not an ex soldier but a local who married and moved into Strelitz when some of the original inhabitants decamped. This was eventually resolved when a receipt was found among documents in NAS. This receipt was signed by James Smitton, when his crops were

pinded following a court case at Perth Sheriff Court. The records of the court are appended below and make it clear that James was a local, having been born at Gallowhill.

No record of a marriage for James has been found and at the births of the children only the father is mentioned. The family must have been reasonably happy with their accommodation as they remained there for at least fifteen years. The houses were $54^1/_2$ft x 18ft to house two families divided by ½ ft clay wall.
Smyton in its various forms seems to have been a fairly common name in Cargill Parish.
As a result it is not possible to trace the family further back although it seems possible that the following may refer to the birth of the above James.

Perth, Cargill (338)
06 Mar   1743   Baptised James son to Thomas Smitton in Gallowhill.

Other mentions of Smeaton in the parish are:

1775 July 16 Barbary Smetons mortcloth money   £2-0-0
     Oct 29 Margt. Smetons mortcloth money   £2-0-0
1772 Dec 20 David Smetons mortcloth   £2-0-0
1771 Mar 15 Thomas Smiton mortcloth money   £2-0-0
1761 Aug 23 Mortcloth Mgt Smiton   £1-4-00
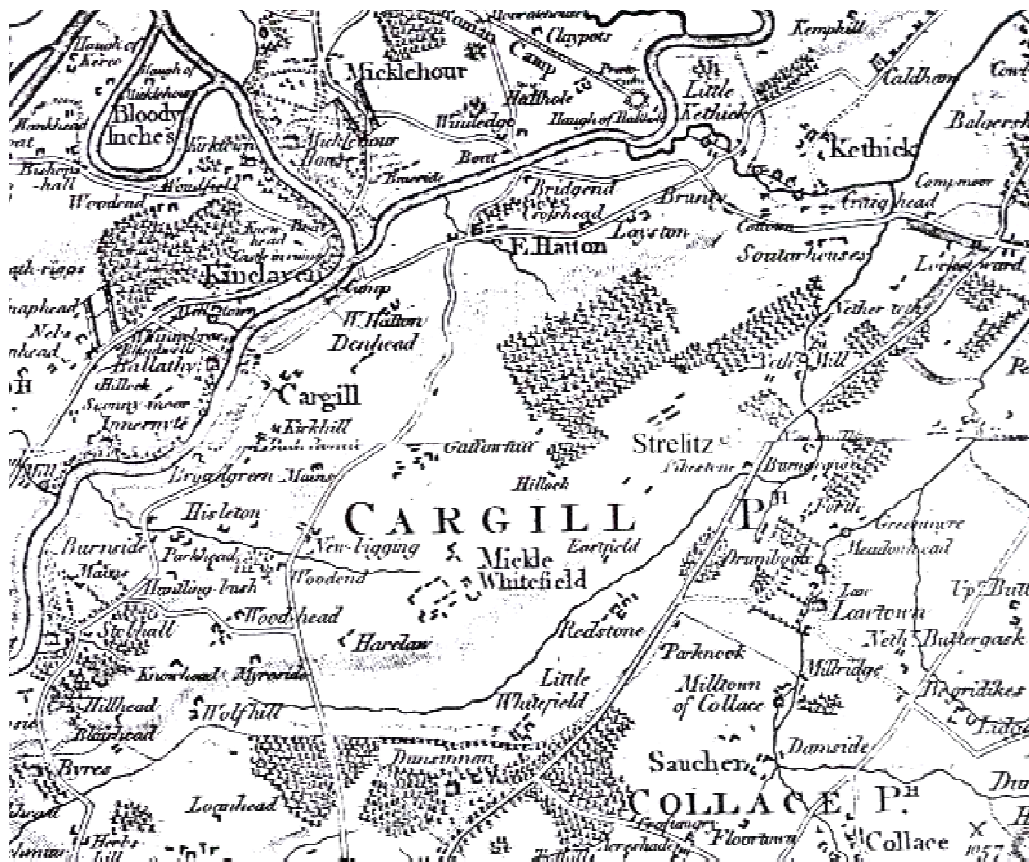
Perth, Cargill (338)
4 Oct 1747   Ja: Smiton and Agnes Sharp pawns £00-16-00.

Perth, Cargill (338)
21 Jul 1717   Bap. James son to James Smitton in Balwhomie

Perth, Cargill (338)
Aug 9th 1719   Bap. Barbara daur to James Smitton in Balwhomie

Perth, Cargill (338)
28 Jul 1721   Bap. Geo. son to James Smitton in Balwhomie

 Balwhomie is now named on maps as Balholmie.

"Stobie" map of 1783.