

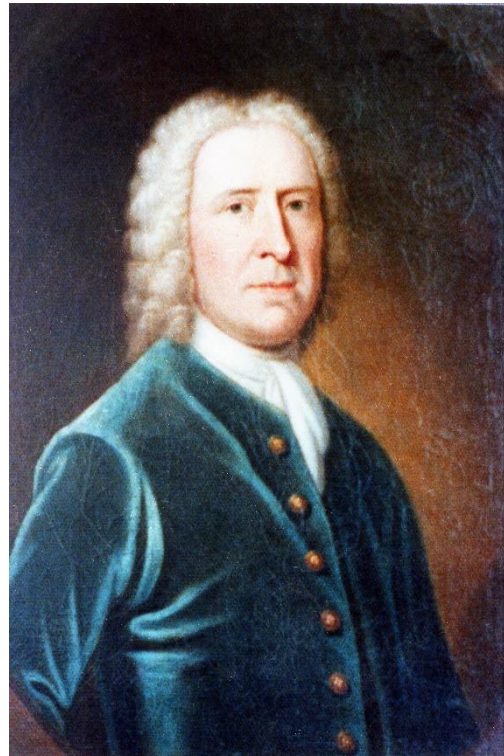
William Gammell JP

Shipmaster & Merchant of GREENOCK 1695-1765

We have no firm evidence of the date of William Gammell's birth, but 1695 is family tradition, and must be about correct; nor do we know of [his parentage](#) other than the information given on the [Ancestors pre-1700 page](#).

The first definite record traced is the entry in the Greenock West Parish Register dated 19 August 1727, recording his marriage to Margaret Scott of Greenock, which took place on 31 August of that year. In this entry he is described as 'shipmaster'¹.

William and his wife Margaret had a family of nine as follows (Greenock West Parish Register):



	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>
Magdalene	19 June 1728 ²	28 May 1729 ³
Janet	23 August 1730 ⁴	4 April 1738 ⁵
William	20 June 1732 ⁶	1818 or 1819?
James	12 December 1735 ⁷	15 September 1825 ⁸

¹ Scotlands People 31/08/1727 SCOTT, MARGARET (Old Parish Registers Marriages 564/3 40 33 Greenock Old or West) Page 33 of 505

² Scotlands People 23/06/1728 GEMMIL, MAGDALANE (Old Parish Registers Births 564/3 10 241 Greenock Old or West) Page 241 of 648

³ Scotlands People 28/05/1729 GAMEL, MAGDALEN (Old Parish Registers Deaths 564/3 10 260 Greenock Old or West) Page 260 of 648

⁴ Scotlands People 03/09/1730 GAMEL, JANET (Old Parish Registers Births 564/3 10 277 Greenock Old or West) Page 277 of 648

⁵ Scotlands People 04/04/1738 GAMMEL, JANET (Old Parish Registers Deaths 564/03 10 426 Greenock Old or West) Page 426 of 648

⁶ Scotlands People 25/06/1732 GEMMEL, WILLIAM (Old Parish Registers Births 564/3 10 311 Greenock Old or West) Page 311 of 648

⁷ Scotlands People 15/12/1735 GAMEL, JAMES (Old Parish Registers Births 564/3 10 379 Greenock Old or West) Page 379 of 648

⁸ British Newspaper Archives Scots Magazine 1825-11-01 (Death notices), and gravestone at Auchinblae Church

Robert	29 November 1736 ⁹	29 May 1737 ¹⁰
Margaret	3 August 1738 ¹¹	Unknown
Jean	3 February 1744 ¹²	15 February 1744 ¹³
John	2 March 1746 ¹⁴	In infancy date unknown
Agnes	17 February 1747 ¹⁵	In infancy date unknown

But as will be seen above, only three survived to adulthood.

It seems plausible that Margaret (Margarit) Scott was born in Greenock on 2 November 1704 to James Scott, skipper in Greenock and Magdaline Rankin¹⁶, but though this seems likely¹⁷, we cannot be absolutely sure.

We can presume that William must have commenced his career at sea at a fairly early age, since, as will be seen from the record of his marriage above, he was already a shipmaster at the age of just over thirty. Of his career at sea, we know little, although indications are that the ships he commanded traded with the West Indies and North America. In 1728 he captained the Speedwell of Glasgow on a voyage from Virginia, and in 1730, the Alexander of Glasgow on a voyage from Irvine, via Barbados to South Carolina¹⁸. We know the names of two further ships which he commanded; firstly the 'Prince William' which he commanded in 1733, as in that year he was presented with an inscribed tankard by the 'owners' 'for his good services' and in 1742, a teapot inscribed as 'a gift to Mrs. Gemmele from the company of the ship 'Baltimore' 1742.' It is not unlikely that the ships he commanded were owned by the ship-owning and later ship-building family of Scott, of which his wife was a member.

Sometime in the 1740s, William evidently left the sea, and set up as a merchant in Greenock, presumably in the import and export business, where his experience overseas would have stood him in good stead. There is a record of a land

⁹ Scotlands People 05/12/1736 GAMMEL, ROBERT (Old Parish Registers Births 564/3 10 399 Greenock Old or West) Page 399 of 648

¹⁰ Scotlands People 29/05/1737 GAMMEL, ROBERT (Old Parish Registers Deaths 564/3 10 410 Greenock Old or West) Page 410 of 648

¹¹ Scotlands People 06/08/1738 GAMMEL, MARGARET (Old Parish Registers Births 564/3 10 433 Greenock Old or West) Page 433 of 648

¹² Scotlands People 11/02/1744 GAMMEL, JEAN (Old Parish Registers Births 564/1 10 29 Greenock New or Middle) Page 29 of 441

¹³ Scotlands People 15/02/1744 GAMMEL, JEAN (Old Parish Registers Births 564/1 10 30 Greenock New or Middle) Page 30 of 441

¹⁴ Scotlands People 04/03/1746 GEMMEL, JOHN (Old Parish Registers Births 564/1 10 49 Greenock New or Middle) Page 49 of 441

¹⁵ Scotlands People 19/02/1747 GEMMEL, AGNES (Old Parish Registers Births 564/1 10 57 Greenock New or Middle) Page 57 of 441

¹⁶ Scotlands People 04/11/1704 SCOTT, MARGARIT (Old Parish Registers Births 564/3 10 46 Greenock Old or West) Page 46 of 648

¹⁷ She was born in Greenock to a father involved in shipping. She would have been 22 when married which seems a likely age, and she called her first-born daughter Magdalene, her mother's name. All these seem to be positive indicators to a link existing.

¹⁸ Ships from Scotland to America 1628-1828 Vol III

transaction in Greenock in 1750, in which he is described as 'sometime shipmaster and now merchant in Greenock', so he was clearly established in business by that date.

William Gammell was a close friend of James Watt, the father of the famous James Watt, the inventor of the marine steam engine, and their children attended Greenock Grammar School together. Both William Gammell and James Watt senior were founder-members of Greenock's first 'Town Council'¹⁹, or what was known as 'Managers of the Tax on Ale and Counsellors'. William's signature appears regularly on the minutes of the meetings of this body from its inauguration in August 1751 until September 1758, on which date he resigned. It is interesting to record that in all instances his signature reads Wm. Gammell, so there is no doubt that the present spelling of our family name was firmly established during the lifetime of William.

We have no record as to the dates of either William's or his wife's death, but it is almost certain that William died in 1765. There is a memorial stone (No. 75) in the West Greenock Churchyard, commemorating them both and their children, but as is obvious from the wording quoted below, this memorial stone was erected by their son James Gammell, at a much later date, probably just before he left Greenock in about 1822 for his estates in North-east Scotland. The inscription on the stone reads:

'In memory of WILLIAM GAMMELL, merchant in Greenock, of MARGARET SCOTT, his spouse, of their son WILLIAM GAMMELL and other of their children who died in infancy. Also of JANET GEILS, spouse of JAMES GAMMELL, banker in Greenock, who died April 18th 1818 aged 79 years, and of their sons, WILLIAM GAMMELL, who died in infancy, Lieutenant General ANDREW GAMMELL, buried in Westminster Abbey, and Lieutenant Colonel WILLIAM GAMMELL, buried in Martinique.'

The Greenock West Church was moved lock, stock and barrel to its present site on The Esplanade²⁰, to make way for industrial development in the 19th century, and this move included the tombstones, which are now displayed outside the new church. The above Gammell Memorial stone is among them, though it is now so weatherworn as to be mostly unreadable.



¹⁹ History of the Town of Greenock by Daniel Weir 1829 (page 31)

²⁰ The Esplanade, Greenock PA16 8AN