

# The McMurrays of Galloway





## Contents

The Locality	4
Introduction	5
Notes	6
 <u>History:</u>	
1. The Rhinns of Galloway	7
2. The Machars	33
3. Wigtown	40
4. Hamish and the Imperial Bank	47
Bibliography	63
Other Sources	64
Notes on the Tree	66
The Family Tree	67
 <u>Appendix:</u>	
Panorama from Eldrick Hill	
Katty's Drawings	
Maps – Environs of Drumrae (1850)	
Galloway (1654)	
South Rhinns (1782)	
Richard Goodwin's Recollections	
Two Obituaries	



## Introduction

The horizons onto which my grandfather James McMurray opened his eyes in the late summer of 1839 were those which had been imprinted on the eyes of his forefathers for centuries. He grew up in a world confined by natural boundaries where his daily activity differed little from that of generations of children before him. Family tales and memories were passed down to him from his elders and he grew up with a sense of the family's place in that remote agricultural community. But then began a series of changes which were to sever our connection with the past; changes which were almost universal in that fast-changing period of human history.

I was born in 1935 and by the time I was sixteen I had lived, far from the land of my ancestors, in six different counties of Scotland and England. Apart from my two brothers I did not have a single McMurray relative as far as I knew; my father had died before we developed the curiosity to ask about his family or his early memories.

I suppose that the feeling of connection with, and nourishment from, the past is sometimes only noticed by its absence, and it was my sense of that absence which led my researches into our family's history. The names and dates which I placed in the family tree told me very little, so I tried to fill in the background to those distant lives, in a vain attempt to reach back and recover the lost lore of my family.

The pages that follow are the result of that search and are written for my brothers and their children, and for my children.

Jim McMurray  
December 1999

## Notes

1. The Area – The ancient province of Galloway was divided by the River Cree into the Shires of Wigtown and Kirkcudbright. Our family lived in Wigtownshire, which was administered from the Royal Borough of Wigtown. The County naturally divides into three areas: The Moors, The Machars, and The Rhinns, and our story takes place in the last two of these. In 1975 the county boundaries were re-drawn and the area became part of the region of Dumfries and Galloway, with its headquarters at Dumfries.
2. Spelling – Most of the names and places in this story have over the years been spelled in a variety of ways. In early documents this was the result of educated officials writing down what was dictated to them by illiterate people, with each writer choosing his own way of spelling the sounds that he was hearing. I have used the form ‘Eldrick’ rather than Elrig, Eldrig, Eldridge or any of the other spellings I have seen, as this is the form on which our family seems eventually to have settled; in the same way they decided on ‘McMurray’ after the name had been spelled in many other ways.
3. I have used heavy type to indicate the first mention of each of our **direct ancestors**.
4. The small numbers next to quotations refer to texts in the bibliography.

## Thanks

To Hamish for all the time and care he has taken in scanning-in the illustrations and printing the story, and rescuing me from computer crises; to Katty for her drawings in the text and the appendix; to Keith for his drawing of the site of Eldrick farmhouse; to all three for their encouragement and for joining me in retracing the steps of our ancestors, and searching graveyards in the pouring rain for their resting-places.

## 1. The Rhinns of Galloway

“Down the long centuries of time, custom had altered little.  
Always the land had to be tilled and husbanded. Always  
the earth had called for human hands. Always it would be so.  
The earth and its people did not change.”<sup>2</sup>

Our family story begins in Galloway, in Southwest Scotland, where a gravestone in the churchyard at Kirkmaiden tells us that **Peter McMurray** was born in 1679.

Kirkmaiden is the southernmost parish of Scotland, a remote spot at the tip of a long, narrow, green ridge known as the Rhinns, where some of the most ancient Christian monuments in Britain are to be found. Robert Burns referred to this extremity of the Scottish mainland when he wrote:

“Hear, Land o’ Cakes and brither Scots,  
Frae Maidenkirke to Johnny Groats;”

The church (the ‘kirk’) is on a small hill, and five miles to the south the Rhinns peninsula ends at the headland known as the Mull of Galloway. From there, if you stand by the lighthouse on the cliffs high above the water, you can see the peaks of Cumberland to the east, the Isle of Man to the south, and to the west the Irish coast with the Mountains of Mourne beyond. Below, the sea is often a boiling turmoil of huge waves and troughs as a great number of conflicting currents meet.



The Mull of Galloway

The landscape of the Rhinns was, and is still, one of sparsely populated farmland with narrow roads following its contours and a few tiny villages on the coast. Peter, who was christened Patrick, grew up in a 'ferm toun', a small farming community where his family would have had an area of cultivated land around their house, probably with oats and some vegetables, alongside others with similar plots. The whole would have been enclosed by a dyke, or stone wall, within which they would also have kept a few dairy cattle. These small farmers also had the right of pasturage over the whole property of their landlord, and Peter's family would have had cattle and sheep grazing the open land beyond the dyke. As a boy he would have worked as a herd-lad, watching over the animals, probably from a very early age. These subsistence-farming communities relied on good neighbourliness and co-operation, sharing equipment and combining their animals to make up a team for the plough.

Tenure of the land was usually on a year to year basis and there was little incentive to invest in improvement. Houses were of rubble stone with timber supports and thatched roofs. Peat was the domestic fuel and in winter a cow would often be accommodated within the unpartitioned interior of the home. The family would all eat from a large wooden dish, and each member had a personal spoon made of horn, kept in a pocket or suspended from the belt. Oats formed their staple diet, and they grew 'bere', an early form of barley, for the brewing of ale.

The landlords were the McDowalls of Logan, a family whose title to the land extended, as the charter document states, "beyond the memory of man". The farmers paid them in produce and in labour on their home farm when it was needed. The Parish List of 1684 shows McMurray families at three ferm touns in the parish of Kirkmaiden, but unfortunately we cannot accurately place Peter, who was five years old at that date, because only those over the age of twelve were listed. At Auchness there were two families, numbering ten people in all, and there were others at Kirkbride and Kilstay, all within two or three miles of each other. There is also a record elsewhere of McMurrays farming at neighbouring Low Grennan from 1692.

Peter's childhood and early adult years were passed in a period of extreme economic depression, the result of a long period of religious persecution which I must mention as it tells us much about the Galloway character, as well as the state of affairs at the time when our story begins.

The origins of the devastation that followed lay in the very different forms of church government adopted by Scotland and England following the Reformation, and the desire of the Crown to unify the institutions of the two kingdoms, now united. The English Episcopal form of government retained the ceremonial and hierarchy of the Church of Rome, but to the people of Scotland the reformed doctrines represented a much more fundamental change. In their Presbyterian Church all the clergy were of equal rank, and they joined with elders chosen from the congregation in maintaining order.

In response to the efforts of the Crown to impose Episcopacy, the National Covenant was drawn up in Edinburgh in 1638 to bind all who signed it to defend and uphold Presbyterianism with their lives. This memorable document was supported in almost every part of the land, and nowhere more fiercely than in Galloway, where the people were prepared to make any sacrifice. In many parts of Scotland however, the clergy submitted to the bishops who were imposed upon them, but there was implacable opposition in Galloway, and the ministers were ejected from their parishes and forfeited their stipends. They endured great hardship but, sustained by their loyal congregations, they preached the faith with ever greater zeal to audiences in houses, barns, and in the open air. Severe penalties were imposed; troops were billeted in every parish and the population was terrorised. 'Covenanters' were fined, imprisoned, tortured, executed or deported and tens of thousands of people wandered the land homeless. The Galloway nobility were fully behind this rebellion and many of them were heavily fined and imprisoned. The Crown enlisted the help of the Highland clans, who had not embraced Presbyterianism, and invited them, in return for the right to pillage, to invade the western shires and suppress the rebels and their 'conventicles' (field-meetings). After three months they completed their task, having ravaged the land and removed everything portable. The Covenanters did not give up; they renewed their vows and took up arms to defend their cause. They had some military successes, but they failed to rally support outside the Southwest and were defeated in a series of engagements with the King's forces. When James VII came to the throne he first introduced the death penalty for attendance at a conventicle, but in 1687 he issued

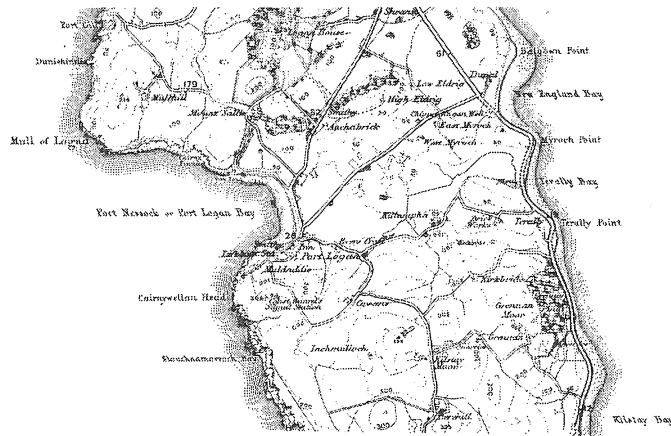
his Declaration of Indulgence which finally brought peace and religious tolerance. Galloway, by the time of Peter's birth, was in a state of economic ruin.



Kirkmaiden Church

When he was twenty-five Peter married **Margaret**, who was also a McMurray, probably a cousin from one of the neighbouring farms. We can picture them in coarse home-made garments of plaiding, made from undyed black and white wool. They would have possessed crude shoes, but have gone barefoot except in the coldest weather. Razors were not yet in use and Peter would have clipped his beard with scissors on a Saturday night in order to appear decent in the kirk on Sunday. The only luxury was tobacco, which was chewed by most of the peasant population. (In the eighteenth century snuff became popular, as did the use of a well-seasoned clay pipe.)

For the next fifteen years the age-old way of agricultural life continued, but was then shattered when the landowners in Galloway, recognising that the return on their land was small and that its management could be much improved, enclosed their estates and let out each farm to a single tenant. Many families were dispossessed; some emigrated to America while others moved to the coastal villages and small market towns.



Peter McMurray took on the tenancy of Eldrick farm, 112 acres on the south side of a small hill, seven miles north of the Mull. This bold step marked a significant advance in the fortunes of the family. The old communal system was gone and the new class of tenant farmer acquired considerable status in the community.

The displaced peasant farmers, or ‘cottars’, were naturally angry and rebelled against the action of their landlords. They joined together in huge bands and went from farm to farm by night destroying the new dykes which enclosed the land. They were known as the ‘levellers’ and Peter, newly moved into his farm at Eldrick, probably had to contend with them. The 1684 Parish List had shown people of fifteen different surnames residing at Eldrick, and no McMurrays. A very few of these people may have remained as employees of the new tenant, but the rest would have been forced to ‘flit’. Some verses from the ballad ‘The Levellers Lines’ give an indication of the feeling of the times:

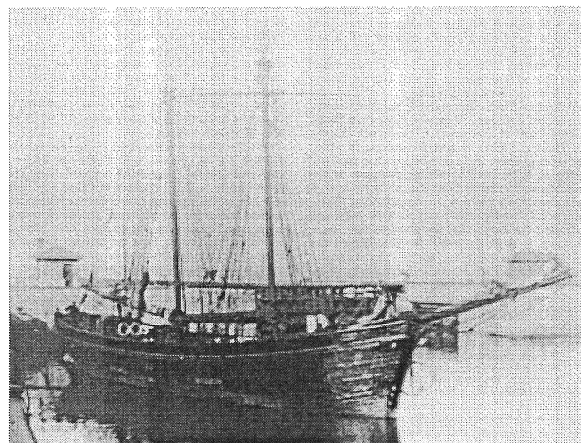
The Lords and Lairds they drive us out  
 From maillings where we dwell;  
 The poor man says where shall we go  
 The rich says go to hell.

These words they spoke in jests and mocks,  
 But by their works we know,  
 That if they have their herds and flocks,  
 They care not where we go.

Against the poor they still prevail,  
 With all their wicked works,  
 And will enclose both moor and dale  
 And turn corn fields to parks

These were indeed desperate times, but over the succeeding decade or more, the landowners began to create 'model' villages to house people who were ancillary to the farms, such as blacksmiths, saddlers, joiners and bootmakers, and these villages also provided a reservoir of seasonal labour. At Port Logan the Laird built new cottages and developed the harbour in a largely unsuccessful attempt to attract some of the Irish trade that went to Portpatrick, eleven miles to the north. (A weekly postal service between Portpatrick and Ireland had been in operation since 1662)

Galloway, and particularly the Rhinns, enjoys a unique climate – mild and damp, protected from the worst of the winter weather by the warm currents of the Gulf Stream, so that cattle can have access to pasture with little assistance through the winter, and palm trees are a common sight in the gardens. The peninsula has a very long coastline relative to its land area, and with poor road links in those days the main route for supplies was by sea. It was very much like living on an island. From Peter's single-storey thatched house it was no more than three-quarters of a mile to the Irish Sea in the west, and I picture him casting an ever-watchful eye in that direction for the approach of rain. It was a similar short distance from the house to the more sheltered waters of Luce Bay to the east. Fleets of small craft traded up and down these coasts, and tinkers travelled the countryside bringing small household goods (as well as news and gossip) to the scattered population.



A Galloway Coaster

Times began to improve as Peter began his new venture; earlier dependence on wool, and some crops, had given way to the profitable business of cattle ranching. The Treaty of Union in 1707 had opened up a huge market in England for beef, and Galloway was the largest Scottish supplier. Many animals came over from Ireland too, and by 1750 the number of cattle driven across the English border in a year

reached 80,000, mostly destined for the markets of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Though generally profitable, this trade carried uncertainty for the farmers. It was conducted by specialist 'drovers', following a well-established route which began at Portpatrick. They seem to have been plausible rogues, operating on credit from bankers in Galloway; they bought at prices based on speculation and gave bills to the farmers in payment. Many of the drovers suffered disasters and insolvencies, compelling their client farmers to accept only a proportion of the face value of their bills. However, they seem to have been able to regain the trust of the bankers and farmers, and to set off again and again for the south at the head of cattle trains worth up to £20,000. Messages regarding sale prices passed from the markets to the drovers' agents in the north, on the basis of which further consignments were either sent down or withheld for the next season. In spite of this intelligence the drovers, once arrived in the south and compelled to dispose of their stock, could be at the mercy of the buyers, and often went from market to market getting lower and lower prices until all was sold. In addition, animals unfit to complete the long journey south would have been shed at each stop for whatever they would fetch.

"Were the history of 'south droving' as it is called, and the failures which have arisen from it during the last eighty years, with the sums lost to farmers and graziers, laid before the public, the extent of the evil would appear almost incredible, and force us to wonder how a system so monstrous could be so long suffered to exist."<sup>19</sup>

The recording of births, deaths and marriages was introduced to Kirkmaiden parish in 1699, though not at first very completely, and we have only a few marriage records, and a gravestone, to help us before then. It was not until 1855 that the law required the keeping of such records. We do not know about Peter's brothers and sisters, though there are two recorded marriages of his generation – Andrew, who married Janet Adam in 1709, and Thomas who married Marion McConn in 1711. These may have been his brothers, or even his wife's brothers; the names Andrew and Thomas, as well as Patrick and James, occur regularly through the generations. More importantly for the family history, we do not have records of the children of Peter and Margaret – there is a missing generation, except for their daughter Agnes, born fifteen years after their marriage, whom we know from the

record of her death at Eldrick in 1741 at the age of twenty-two. We do have the record of a marriage in that missing generation, between a Patrick McMurray and Margaret Cochran in 1730, and this Patrick may well be the son of Peter and the father of **James**, from whom we can trace our descent with certainty. (To confuse the picture further, it is even possible that this is our original Peter, contracting a second marriage at the age of 51, two years after Margaret's death.) We learn of James and his brother Patrick, presumed grandsons of Peter, from the records of their marriages, a month apart in 1749, to **Janet McKerlie** and Jane Adair. (These are two ancient and distinguished Galloway surnames.)

The connecting link between Peter and James is the farm. We know that Peter took the tenancy of Eldrick in about 1720 and we know that James and his descendants lived at Eldrick. We also know that James' grandmother Margaret died at Eldrick in 1728.

A series of Acts of Parliament and of the Privy Council had made a reality of John Knox's vision of a school in every parish and a higher school in every town, and members of our family may well have attended from early in the seventeenth century. As well as providing religious education the schools were specifically charged with the teaching of English and the abolition of the Irish and Gaelic languages. Reading in Galloway schools was confined to the bible and as a result the spoken language became biblical in style.

There is a record of a 'visitation' to the Kirkmaiden School by the Presbytery of Stranraer in 1713, when the schoolmaster was found to be 'orderly', but by the time of James' birth (presumed to be about 1725) things had rather fallen apart. A salary had been fixed for the schoolmaster (the 'dominie') but it appears that it had never been paid,

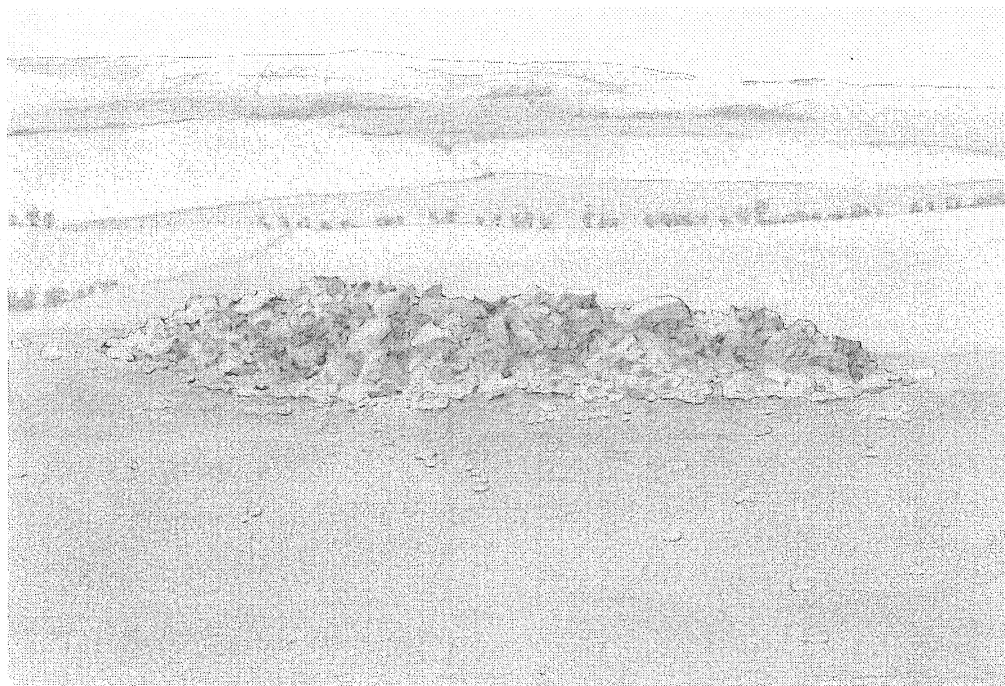
and the education of the parish was in the hands of the aged and infirm Alexander Adair, who was prepared to do the job for whatever he was offered. After his death the school (which had been held in the church) was closed for a period until in 1724 a group of parishioners demanded that the 'heritors' provide a secure salary and reopen it. There followed a dispute between the Presbytery and the Laird of Logan, one of the chief heritors (landowners who took the major responsibility for funding parish education). The Laird insisted that he would only pay if a school building was erected, but the Minister opposed this delay, speaking of the "vast loss for want of a right schoolmaster for a long time through age and the tenderness of the late schoolmaster". (We can imagine the fate of that poor 'tender' man at the hands of a schoolroom of spirited farm children). In 1725 Alexander Young was installed as teacher and the school reopened in the kirk. A visitation the following year found all in order, and by the time James reached the age to attend, the new schoolhouse had been built and William Kimbles succeeded as 'dominie'.

I have included this account of the parish school, although since writing it I have come to realise that the children on the farms to the north of the parish did not attend there, as it was too far for them to reach on foot. The appointed teacher, half of whose salary was paid by the farmers in proportion to the valuation of their farms, was responsible for providing education to all the children of the parish, if necessary paying an assistant to teach at another location. The Eldrick children were taught at Portnessock, later known as Port Logan. (In 1838-45, when the teacher's annual salary was £51.6.0, the Eldrick contribution was seven shillings and five pence.)

When James was about thirty-two his grandfather Peter died. They buried him in Kirkmaiden churchyard, on the high ground above the church, and the simple stone they erected bears the words:

Here lyes the body of  
Peter McMurray sometime  
tenant in Eldridge who  
died august 12 1757 years  
in the 78 year of his age

Though ten generations separate Peter from the latest-born of our line, I feel much nearer in time when I stand before this weather-beaten memorial, on the spot where James stood with the rest of the family on that summer's day, and I look out over the unchanged landscape that was the background to his life.



The Site of Eldrig Farmhouse

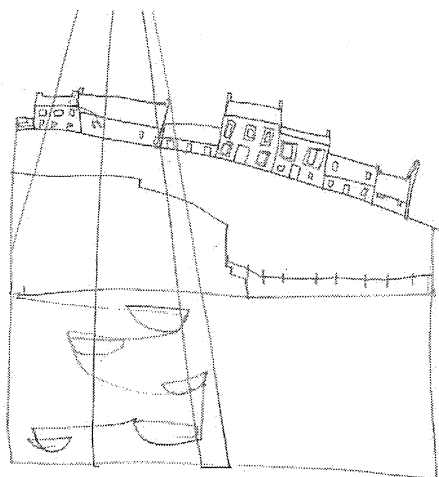
Eldrick farmhouse, later called High Eldrick when the farm was subdivided, no longer stands; the site is marked by a pile of stones on the southern slope of Eldrick Hill. The building stones have mostly been removed for use elsewhere, and those at the site today have been lifted from the fields and deposited there in the never-ending task of improving the land for cultivation. The panoramic photo in the Appendix, which I took from just above the site of Eldrick house, shows the pastoral landscape with the sea visible in either direction. Myroch farm, which now has all the Eldrick land, can be seen in the centre. During the period of higher sea levels which followed the end of the last ice-age some six thousand years ago, the Rhinns peninsula was a series of islands, and the low-lying isthmus which runs across this picture was under water.

In the absence of earlier records, I began this account of our family with Peter's birth in 1679, and we are left wondering about our origins

before that time. In each generation of the farming families the sons would either stay at the farm of their birth, take a lease on another farm in the area, or emigrate. In 1684 there were four McMurray families in the parish of Kirkmaiden and one or two individuals in the employ of other local households. In such an isolated corner it seems likely that this spread had originated from one family, particularly as they were all christening their sons and daughters with the same few names, and there were no McMurrays in the nearby parishes to the north.

We were probably Scottish Murrays who added the prefix 'Mc', a practice common in Galloway, which is known for its extraordinary surnames (McClumpha, McGuffog, McCracken and many others). Given the degree to which the family was established by 1684, I believe we must have been in the district for at least a hundred years by then, and perhaps much longer; I have not given up hope of finding some earlier record. The name does appear in some other parts of Galloway at that time (including a Janet McMurray who was tried in Wigtown as a witch) though there seems to have been only one other large family, in Sorbie. This account is concerned with the McMurrays, but we should not forget the other Galloway bloodlines from which we are descended on the female side – the McKerlies, the Alexanders, the Douglas's and the McClures.

Looking much further back, to 6000 BC, the first inhabitants of Galloway, and possibly of Scotland, were Stone Age people from a colony at Larne on the Irish coast who sailed across the sea in a fleet of tiny coracles and landed at the top of Luce Bay. Galloway was covered in forest then, but between 5-3000 BC a climate change brought gales, heavy rainfall and cold which razed hundreds of square miles of forest and created peat mosses. It became drier over the next two thousand years; the mosses and bogs dried out, the moors and grasslands were formed and the grazing of cattle and sheep began. During the half-millennium BC there was a counter colonisation, when some of the growing Celtic community in Galloway crossed the Channel to populate Ireland.



Isle of Whithorn

The Romans invaded Galloway in A.D.79 and seem to have lived on friendly terms with the natives, who were Celtic people known as the Novantae. The Romans contributed their expertise in agriculture and also brought Christianity to Galloway before they left in A.D.410. The Strathclyde Britons gained control until, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, it was overrun by the Anglo-Saxons and came under the rule of the King of Northumbria,

who settled at Whithorn.

The Vikings appeared from the north in their huge ships in 794 and before long became masters of the west of Scotland and the islands. During the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries there was an influx of Picts from Ireland and the Isle of Man, and the name of Galloway dates from that time - 'The Land of the Stranger Gael'. Galloway is well away from the north-south communication routes, but the proximity of Ireland, only twenty miles away, is obviously of historical significance, and there has been continual interchange of all kinds – religious minorities crossing to practice their faith; workers seeking employment; the trade in livestock; runaway marriages, and many more.

The Vikings remained in control until the 11<sup>th</sup> century and they inter-mixed with the people of Galloway creating a turbulent, energetic and independent race. Almost every reference to Galloway in the histories of Scotland is of revolt or rebellion, and for centuries it remained apart from the mainstream of Scottish government, laws and customs. When trial by jury had been accepted elsewhere in Scotland, the preferred system in Galloway was that a man accused could gain acquittal if he could find twenty-four people to swear he was not guilty. Though the area only came firmly under the Scottish Crown in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, whenever the fierce men of Galloway did take to the battlefield for the Kings of Scotland they always demanded the right to form the van. The Highlanders and the men of the Lothians and the Borders were always behind them.

As to the physical appearance and character of our ancestors, we have some general descriptions of the Galloway people. These are from the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

“Long, lean, but sturdy of build; with well-marked, often bold and prominent features bearing healthy traces of many a stiff battle against wind and rain; and having also a certain firmness of outline which betokens a spirit of dogged determination.”

“...self-reliant, independent, pawky, keenly humorous, deeply reverent, and even superstitious, and consequently disposed to cherish obstinate prejudices.”<sup>11</sup>

Here are a couple of light-hearted descriptions from the same period:

“Unlike the natives of other parts of Galloway, the aborigines of the Rhinns are noted for never speaking *directly* on any subject...It is all but impossible to get a direct answer from them to any question; they seem to have an idea that you are going to make a fortune out of the information you ask, and that it will be better for them to withhold it, and make money out of it themselves, or at least prevent you making any by it; which to them is the most desirable thing, next to making it themselves.”

“Ye may consider about us what ye like, but I can tell ye us Rhinns folk always do say what we think o’ ye, only we maybe dinna say’t tae yersel.”<sup>30</sup>

Galloway is, as I have said, situated in an out-of-the-way part of the Lowlands and Kirkmaiden occupies its most distant corner, so it is not surprising that its people have sometimes seemed strange to outsiders. In earlier times accents used to change every few miles and the Kirkmaiden tongue was particularly broad. There is a story of an Englishman who was staying with the noble family of Maxwell in Monreith, on the other side of the bay. When he asked his host how it was that there was no snow on that place across the water, when there were six inches where they were standing, the answer was: “Snaw in Kirkmaiden? Hoo the devil could snaw lie yonner? Yon’s the pot-lid o’ Hell.”<sup>30</sup>

The last McMurray who farmed at Eldrick was my father’s second cousin James, who died in 1923. James Stewart, who grew up nearby and whom I met a few years ago, remembers James as being very tall and usually referred to as ‘the big man’. (Stewart recalls travelling as a boy to James’ funeral; he sat in a gig opposite his father, who was

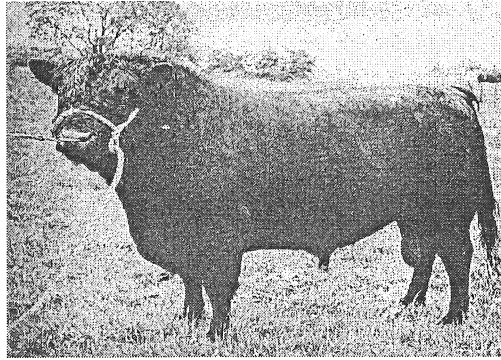
dressed in his Sunday best and wearing a top hat. At the first bump in the road, his father shot upwards and the hat was flattened against the roof of the vehicle. Thus are fathers remembered by their sons!)

But I have jumped ahead in providing that evidence of height in our family. When Peter died in 1757 James and Janet had three sons and a daughter, and in the next four years two more sons were born. Patrick and Jane had a son and two daughters. Eldrick farm now had many mouths to feed – thirteen in the families of James and Patrick, and probably some more from the ‘unknown’ generation of their father.

Agriculture in Galloway had been very advanced back in the fourteenth century, with wheat (a crop requiring good soil and some skill to cultivate) being grown for export to Cumberland and to Ireland, but for the next two hundred years or more the Lairds and their retainers were involved in continual warfare, and the land was neglected. In the late sixteenth century Galloway became one of the principal wool districts of Scotland, much of the produce being sent to Dumfries to be made into broad cloth.

‘Nay, the Calabrian silk had never a better lustre,  
or a softer gripe than I have touched in Galloway  
on the sheep’s back.’ (William Lithgow)

From the seventeenth century keen attention was given by the landowners to improving the strain of livestock, producing the famous breed of cattle known as ‘Galloways’ – hornless, well-proportioned, exceedingly healthy and fattening sooner than any other breed. The black Galloway developed as a long-haired animal, the result of living outdoors in winter (in contrast to the short-haired Aberdeen Angus which has to be sheltered from the cold winters in the north-east). The ‘belted’, ‘dun’ and ‘white’ are more recent off-shoots from the main black Galloway breed. The district had also been long known for its breed of horses - “small, but active, sinewy and spirited”.<sup>26</sup>

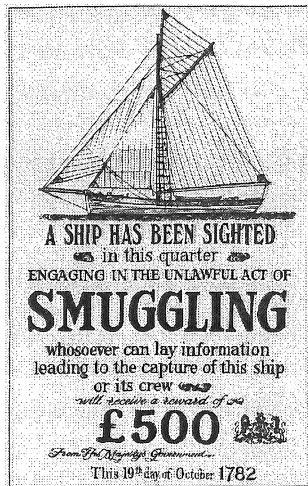


A Galloway Bull

We have reached the second half of the eighteenth century and the scene, looking south from Eldrick Hill towards the Mull, was of huge herds of these black Galloway cattle, and some horses, grazing the rich grasslands, with their great variety of plant species. Stone dykes divided the pastures and the cultivated areas, and the few trees that grew there were bent and shaped by the prevailing wind from the south-west.

A widespread and lucrative activity along the Solway Firth at that time was the smuggling of contraband goods – chiefly brandy, but also wines, silks, tobacco and salt. The high levels of excise duty, the proximity of the Isle of Man, which was still independent and not subject to those taxes, and the rocky Galloway coastline with its hidden caves, all encouraged this illegal traffic. Many farmers who were within a short distance of the coast were engaged in it and smugglers from the Isle of Man actually leased three farms near the Mull as a cover for their activities. The local economy benefited considerably from the capital which this trade brought in.

“No sooner was a ‘lugger’ known to be upon the coast, than ploughs were unyoked, and both masters and servants hurried to the point of debarkation, each furnished with a loaded whip, or some other weapon. A couple of kegs were then swung across each horse’s back; and thus equipped, the cavalcade moved along in so formidable an array, as to set even military parties at defiance”.<sup>19</sup>



Sometimes even the harvest took second place to the arrival of a consignment, and the handling of so much liquor seems to have led to widespread intemperance. There are many tales of encounters between the pirate skippers and the captain of the excise yacht; sometimes they would be at a stand-off, each becalmed and watching for the first breath of wind to get the advantage over the other. The government eventually stopped this illegal trade by placing hulks along the coast full of armed men, and patrolling the sea with more excise yachts. As to the involvement of our family, we can only speculate.

Our line of descent passes from James to **Thomas**, his second son, born at the end of 1753. James' tenancy of Eldrick seems to have continued until he was in his late sixties, when it passed to his nephew Andrew. Andrew had no sons, and sometime between 1799 and 1819 the tenancy was taken over by Thomas.

We can get an idea of Thomas' education at the local school from the minutes of the Kirk Sessions of another Galloway parish, Whithorn:

"The instruction imparted was, in the main, sound and serviceable, but the curriculum was much retarded by the demands of agricultural industry upon the pupils, manifestly to the great disadvantage of both teachers and taught. Reading was taught without the slightest regard to the rules of elocution, and, as to pronunciation, with as near an approach to the vernacular, as the English words would permit. Considerable attention was given to penmanship and a great deal to arithmetic."<sup>8</sup>

The study of the bible was still fundamental, and many of the parents were suspicious of any other text that might be suggested. As one father told the teacher "I'll seek nae Grammar for my boy, ye maun just learn him to read well on the Bible"<sup>34</sup>.

It was a time-honoured custom all over Galloway that in winter each pupil carried a turf peat to school every day for the schoolroom fire. If anyone came without one, a chorus would go up: "Maister, he hisna a peat". Later, when in Whithorn a few pence were substituted for the daily peat, "the warmth of the fire-place was only allowed to be closely appropriated by those of the pupils who had contributed".<sup>8</sup>

Thomas had four brothers and a sister. Three of his brothers remained at Eldrick, two of them fathering large families, and the other having apparently just one son. The fourth brother does not appear again in the records, and may well have emigrated, either to America, as many Galloway sons did, or perhaps to Glasgow. Thomas' sister married locally. The Church exercised severe control over the morals and conduct of the population in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Thomas' youngest brothers, John and Andrew, both incurred its wrath by fathering children out of wedlock. Andrew had children by two different women before marrying and having six more. The parishes were equipped with habits of sackcloth to be worn in front of the congregation and 'stools of repentance' to be used by such 'sinners'. I don't know if they were still in use at this time, but the parish records do show that John and Andrew were sentenced to sit in a special pew for a certain number of Sundays.

Thomas married **Elizabeth Alexander** two days before his twenty-fourth birthday in 1777, and their generation saw through the next important change in the family's way of life - a move back into crops. Though the 'black cattle trade' with the south of England continued, much of it to feed the army and navy who were engaged in the French wars, there were increasing profits to be made from grain. This was a time of long-overdue agricultural improvement in Galloway, led by the landlords and certain enterprising farmers. Proper rotation of crops was introduced, surface drainage was improved by ploughing the land into ridges and hollows, and the soil was enriched by the application of lime and shell marl. Huge deposits of this valuable fertiliser had been discovered in Galloway. Turnips were cultivated for feeding the animals and to enrich the land for the succeeding grain crop, and early forms of mechanisation were beginning to be used, such as threshing mills and a machine for sowing grain.

While the broad sweep of the landscape looks unchanged today, the surface of the cultivated fields bears evidence of the labour of many generations to level out the uneven surface by means of the plough and the manual removal of stones. That process continues, and I have watched the present farmer there, Mr Hannah, moving slowly over the fields lifting stones into a cart.

Enclosure of the land had brought a sharp distinction between farmer and farm worker. For the latter it was a hard life, working from six in the morning to six in the evening in summer and from dawn to dusk in winter. A ploughman's wages were about £7 per year and a woman servant's about £3. They no longer had a stake in the land, or their former grazing rights. After the day's work they retired to their homes, which were often small windowless hovels made of turf sods with an earthen floor, a central hearth and a hole in the roof for the smoke to escape. Unmarried farm workers were often accommodated in the farmer's house and fed with the family.

The most vivid accounts of day-to-day life in rural Galloway come from the sons of farm workers. They describe a life of hard work and poverty, and they often paint a less than flattering picture of the farmers, on whom they were completely dependent. Other histories have been written by members of the upper classes, but they do not concern themselves closely with the life of the ordinary people. The voice which is not heard is that of the farmer, whose sons and daughters were not, it seems, drawn to literature. They had for generations struggled to feed their families from the land in an uncertain climate. They had raised themselves above the subsistence level, and if at times conditions were in their favour, there was always the probability of hard times to come. But the labour market favoured them – there were always hands to be hired, and wages did not need to be generous.

“Many an older man told with pride how he had been reared on this farm or married on that. It was remarkable, considering the hardness of their labour and the poverty of their days, how strong and affectionate was their love of the land that gave them birth.....they thought and spoke and sang of the land as the land of their fathers, the land of their birth, the land that was their immemorial heritage.”<sup>2</sup>

It seems that feasts and festivals were not the custom in the Rhinns at this time and there was no communal life except for the service at the kirk on a Sunday. The exception was the harvest. Not only did the workers come together for the task of reaping the crop, but it was a

time for music and dancing as well. The farmer would provide food for all the seasonal labourers, some of whom came over from Ireland for the harvest.

“As soon as the whole field of reapers are collected together in the morning, they receive what is called their *handfel* which consists of as much bread and milk as they can destroy. This once finished, they proceed to work; at which they continue till 9 o’clock in the morning, when a plentiful breakfast of pottage and milk is brought them. That being over, and a sufficient rest afterwards administered, they proceed again to work, from which they are stopped about 12 by another refreshment. A dinner of broth, beef, and ale arrives at 2; and they are allowed sufficiency of time before dark to take their supper, which is the same with their breakfast.”

The author of this account was a Perthshire farmer, who was commissioned in 1794 to make a survey of the agriculture in Galloway. He took a rather jaundiced view of the local ways and concluded his description:

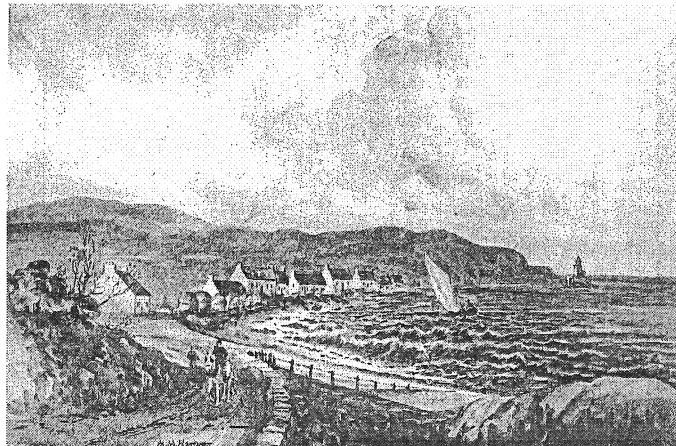
“The reader will probably wish to be informed, how it is possible that these people, crammed with victuals to the mouth at all times, can perform any work; or why at this season, and in a climate too so precarious for a corn crop, so much valuable time should thus be wasted? These are questions which it remains with the farmers of Galloway to answer.”<sup>35</sup>

Thomas’ wife Elizabeth bore her seven children over a period of twenty years, with a gap of nearly six years between the first two. Our next ancestor was their fourth child **Patrick**, my great grandfather, born in 1789. Like his great great grandfather, he was known as Peter.

“.....certain names prevail in particular districts, and in Wigtonshire the name Patrick was perhaps the most common, particularly among the gentry and farmers; and it was never considered Irish.

Patrick and Peter are considered synonymous; Patrick being used as the Sunday name, and for signing documents and such like; while Peter is the everyday name for common use, but they are often used indiscriminately. Pate is the diminutive for both, and never Pat or Paddy, which are still considered the particular property of Irishmen.”<sup>30</sup>

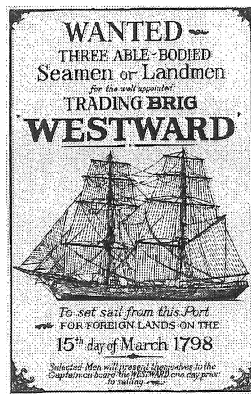
Peter’s childhood would have been one of hard work and study, but on Sundays, when they were free of the demands of the farm and the schoolroom, the children of the Rhinns were usually drawn to the rocks and sandy coves of the shore. There Peter and his many cousins could play their games and watch the sails of the barques and schooners passing between Glasgow and far-off ports, as well as the sloops trading along the coast. The routine of life was often broken by the drama of a shipwreck, and sometimes the cargo would be washed up on the shore.



Port Logan

To the west of Eldrick farm was the little harbour of Port Logan, set in the rugged and precipitous Irish Channel coast, while at its eastern margin the farm sloped gently to New England Bay, set in the coast of the larger Bay of Luce. There was a practice in those days of unloading supplies from the sea at a convenient place where there was no quay, rather than using a more distant harbour. Skippers would beach their ships and unload the cargo into carts at low tide, and it may be that Eldrick was supplied in this way through New England Bay. (A lifeboat was later kept at Port Logan, and if an emergency arose in Luce Bay, on the other side of the peninsula, they would run the boat

across the land on wheels, rather than face the perils of sailing round the Mull.)



For most of the children life would be devoted to the endless toil of the fields, but the sea offered a means of escape for some young men. Their education could only be to elementary level, but the fishing boats, coastal craft or even ocean-going vessels might offer work and the opportunity to travel. For the girls the expectations were service in the household of a farmer or landowner, and marriage with the raising of a (usually large) family.

In 1798, when Peter was nine, the post of schoolmaster at Kirkmaiden was taken over by William Todd, a remarkable local man who remained in the job for the next forty-five years. If I take a few lines to look at his career I hope it may add something to our picture of Galloway life.

One of Todd's many interests was mathematics, and he compiled a manuscript volume of problems and solutions with beautiful illustrations. He taught navigation and constructed a special globe for the purpose, and made a clock with only a knife as a tool. He contributed poetry and articles to literary journals and wrote an autobiography as well as a history of the Parish of Kirkmaiden. He worked with great enthusiasm under very difficult conditions; when the old and dilapidated school was demolished by a storm in 1801, his employers would only agree to provide a building of 30 feet by 14 to accommodate the 120 pupils whom he had at the time.

In 1825 Todd had a bright pupil who was deaf and dumb, and he resolved to have this boy educated at the Dumb School in Edinburgh. He managed to raise £80.11.0 in the parish, £20 of it from Colonel McDowall of Logan. The list of contributors does not, for whatever reason, include any McMurrays, though many of the neighbouring farmers subscribed. The boy's father raised some £7 himself, and it could be that our family subscribed through him. (McMurrays were notable absentees from another list published by William Todd – that of

the signatories to the constitution of the new Kirkmaiden Temperance Society, launched at a meeting in 1831.) Todd travelled with the boy to Edinburgh to enrol him in the school, using the opportunity of the visit to study the teaching systems in certain 'advanced' colleges in the city.

William Todd was a devout man of high principle, and an Elder of the Church. At the end of his career, when he was seventy years of age, he sacrificed the possibility of a retirement pension by his support for Secession and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland, in opposition to the established church, who were his employers. This act of conscience was in the tradition of the people of Galloway, whose fervour and sacrifice I have already described. (Incidentally Kirkmaiden parish church is known as 'Kirk Covenant', having been built in 1638, the year in which the National Covenant was drawn up.)

A short, and more down-to-earth, anecdote to conclude this mention of the parish schoolmaster: a pupil of Mr Todd who passed his navigation exams, when asked by the examiners if there were high tutoring fees for the course, replied "Oh no, my faither sent the dominie a cairtfu' o' peats every year, that was a'."<sup>29</sup>

The first twenty-five years of Peter's life were prosperous ones for the Galloway farmers, but the buoyant grain market crashed when the French Wars ended with the victory at Waterloo in 1815. The harvest of 1816 was cold and wet, the worst in living memory, and in the years that followed some farmers went bankrupt. This is the only period when the population figures for Kirkmaiden recorded a decline (from 1,919 persons in 1811 to 1,488 in 1821). Some tenancies were taken over by farmers from Ayrshire, heralding the next major development – a move into dairy farming.

Our family seems to have been forced to sub-let more than half of its land at this time. Certainly, by 1819 some 60 acres to the west of the Balgowan Road were in the name of Alexander Campbell, who paid £22.14.0 per year in rent. The remaining 52 acres seem to have been of higher value, the rent being fixed at £35. The sub-let land was henceforth known as Low Eldrick, (sometimes referred to as Eldrick

Drum, the name of a hill on the farm). By 1922 the tenancy of Low Eldrick had been taken over by John McMeekan, but by 1834 it was back in the family and Peter McMurray was the listed tenant. The recovery of the lost acres coincides with the time of economic recovery brought about by the developing dairy industry. By now the Galloway herds had largely been replaced by Ayrshires; cheese-making had become the main industry of Wigtownshire, and the farmers of the Rhinns were regularly taking the prizes for their Cheddar cheese.



Looking over Low Eldrick House to Luce Bay

Peter had remained a bachelor until he was forty-one, which was unusual, and had then, in 1831, married **Janet Douglas**, who was 27 years old and came from Old Luce. Thomas and Elizabeth were still the tenants of High Eldrick at the time of the division, but by 1834, when their son Peter had taken over at Low Eldrick, the listed tenant of High Eldrick was his older brother James. Thomas must have either died or retired by that time.

The census of 1841 shows that Peter and Janet, who by then had four children, kept three servants, while James and his wife Elizabeth had 'servants and labourers and families' (numbers unspecified). His cousin Margaret, described as 'indigent', also lived with James and Elizabeth and their two children at High Eldrick. The Parish Place Name List of 1847 describes High Eldrick as 'a farmhouse thatched and in good repair with outhouses in middling repair with a farm of about 52 acres of land attached chiefly arable'. Low Eldrick was 'A neat and commodious farmhouse one storey high and outhouses all in tolerable good repair with a farm of 60 acres good arable land

attached'. I wonder if this description, written by a farm worker of the period, gives a picture of these households:

"The farmer and his family, and the men, and the lasses, all sat at the wan table, and sat round the same fireside, and conversed with one another as if they were all human beings alike, and I don't think they were anything the waur o't; and in the lang winter forenichts we teased oo, and carded lint, and span, and workit stockin's, and dippit candles, while the men sang, and told us funny stories, and tales about ghaists, and fairies, and wutches, and the farmer was maistly the heartiest and drollest o' them a'; and when a' our work was done, the farmer gied out a psalm, and read a chapter of the Bible to us, and then put up a prayer, and after that we went to our beds. I mostly sleepit with one of the servant lasses, and I don't think it ever did me any ill."<sup>30</sup>

The Eldrick farms were approached by a private track lined with beech trees and huge rhododendron bushes which are still there, as is Low Eldrick house. The 'sense of place' which the empty house used to evoke with its old stone walls, overgrown garden and orchard, was wiped away this year when the house was covered in pebbledash and a lawn replaced the fruit trees to make the place ready for the retirement of one of the Laird's retainers.

Peter now took a bold decision. On the other side of Luce Bay, the larger promontory known as the Machars was more low-lying and marshy, but in about 1840 the landowners began to introduce underground tile drainage, which brought much more land into productive use. This improvement may have influenced Peter's decision in 1846, at the age of 48, to move away from the Rhinns and the land of his ancestors and to take the tenancy of Drumrae farm, across the water in the parish of Glasserton in the Machars.

Another reason for the move must have been the expanding family at Eldrick, perhaps as many as thirty people by the year 1800. There may have been competing claims to the farm, with older sons having precedence. When Peter moved out of Low Eldrick William, the 30-year-old son of his first cousin, moved in. After growing up at Eldrick,

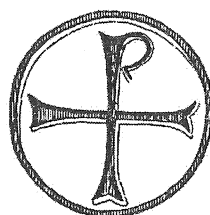
William had worked as a labourer on another local farm, Loganmill. His father and grandfather had been the oldest of their generations, which must have given him precedence over Peter, who was the second son of a second son. Peter's nephew James moved north to take the tenancy of a farm called Port O'Spittal, near Portpatrick, and he and his son Andrew, who later moved to Aird farm, brought much credit to the family name. I have included their obituaries in the Appendix. Unfortunately, if you mention the name McMurray in the Rhinns today the person who often comes to mind is Andrew's adopted son Donald, known as 'Donie', who seems to have lacked his father's qualities. I have heard him described as 'a shocker' who ran down the farm and used to hurtle round the roads in the first American car seen in those parts.

We have reached the year 1846 and must leave that quiet, out-of-the-way corner to follow Peter and Janet and their children across the bay. But first a brief look back. The community of the Rhinns is insulated by the sea and by its remote location. No major roads cut their way through the landscape, and the railway never ventured south from Stranraer. There is no new building and no new industry; almost everyone depends on the land as they always did. Eldrick was named in documents giving title to land from the early sixteenth century, and was no doubt there for centuries before. Our family farmed there for more than two hundred years, and in the neighbourhood long before that. Now the land has been taken into the farm of Myroch, a name just as ancient, and Eldrick has disappeared from the map.



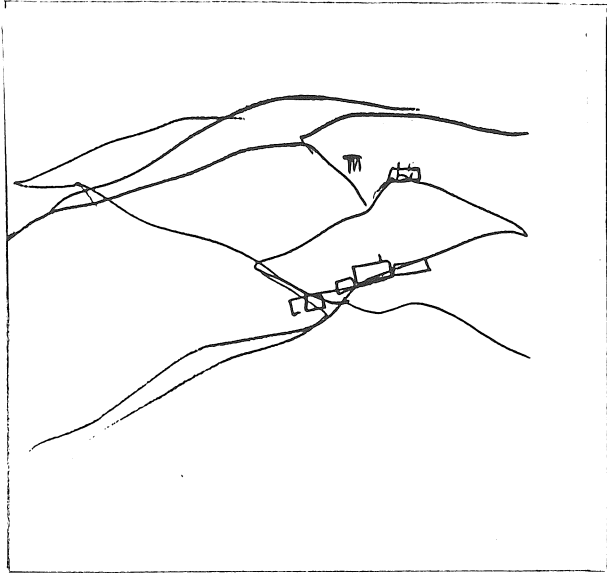
Kirkmadrine

The most suitable place from which to take our leave must be Kirkmadrine, where a tiny chapel stands on a bleak hill in the middle of the Rhinns. To this now-deserted place, in about 500AD, was transferred the seat of the first Christian diocese in Scotland, which Ninian had founded at Whithorn about a hundred years before. With Peter and Janet we are taking the reverse journey, to a farm which is only three miles from the 'Candida Casa', the name Ninian gave to the place where he began his mission to the Southern Picts.

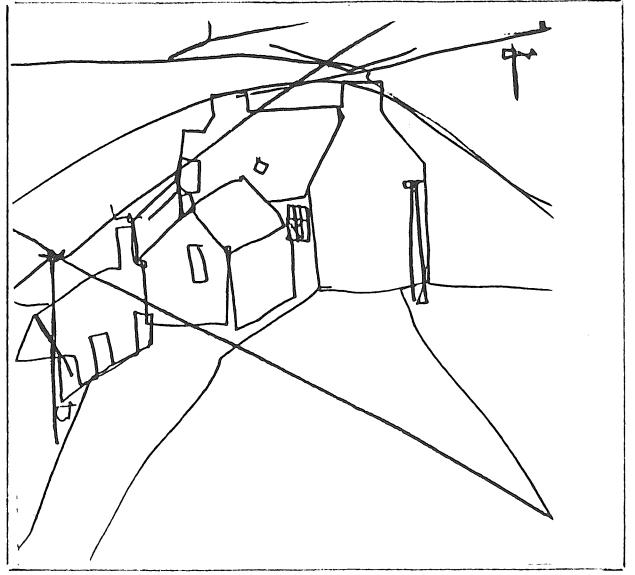


Chi Rho Monogram  
at Kirkmadrine

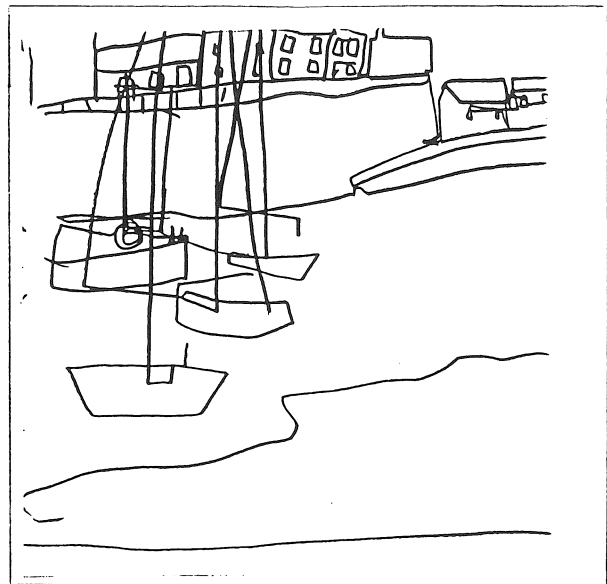
Drawings of Galloway by Katty McMurray



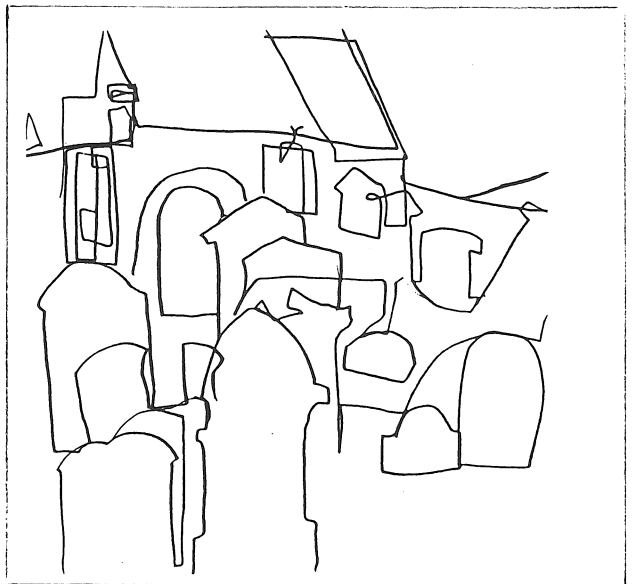
Rhims Landscape



Drumrae



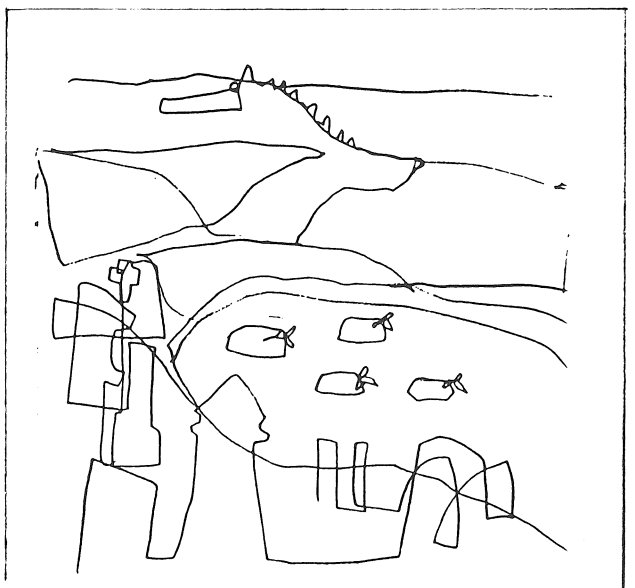
Isle of Whithorn



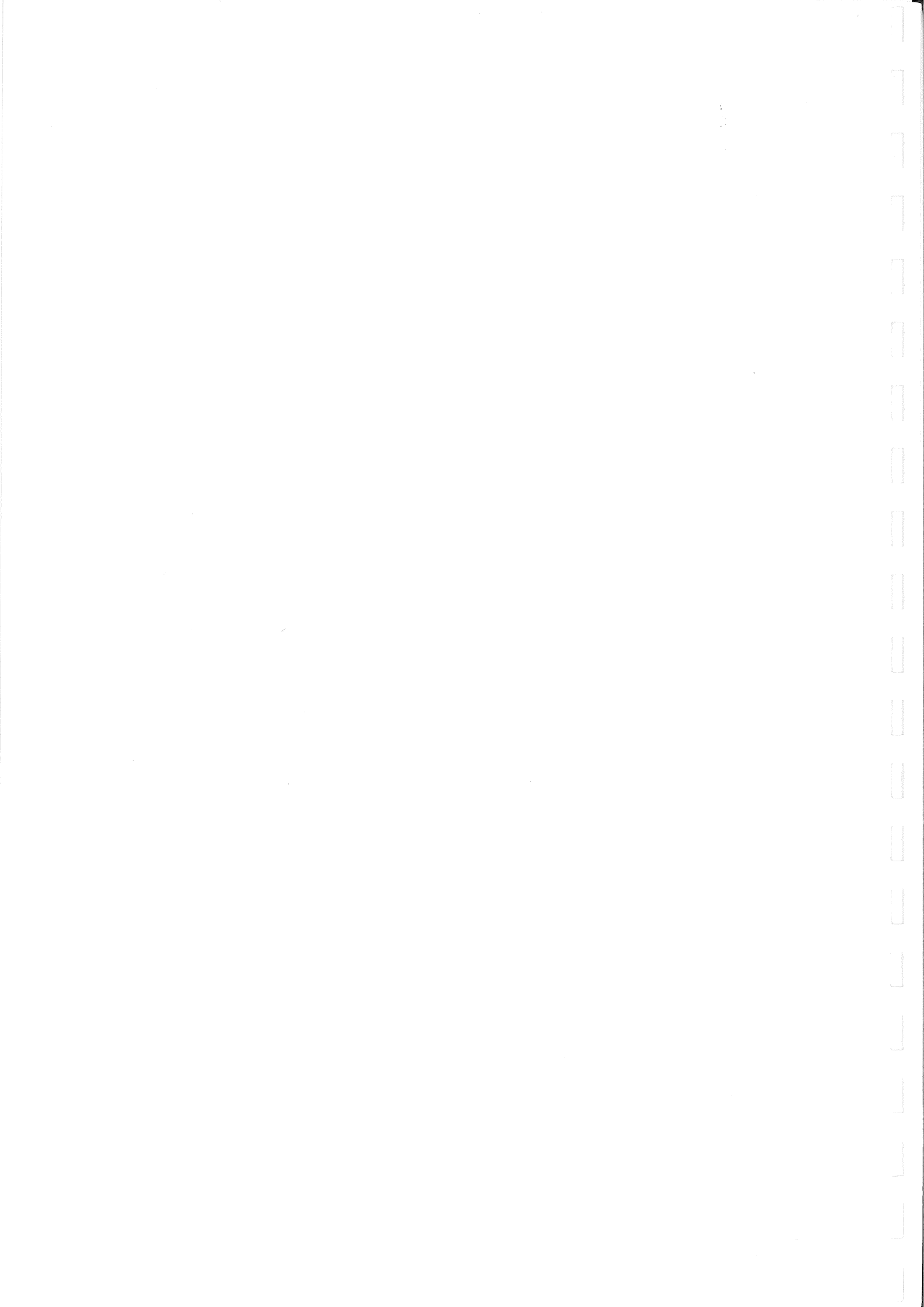
Kirkmadrine

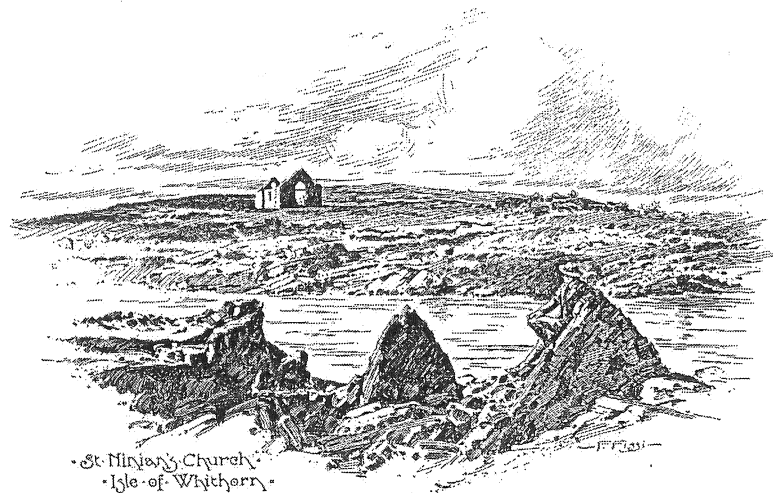


St. Medan's Chapel



Kirkmaiden





Candida Casa

## 2. The Machars

Our story moves to Drumrae, a dairy farm of 144 acres where Peter and Janet settled with their six children. The farm is on the Ravenstone Estate, and their landlord was the Earl of Stair. They employed one servant, called Jessie Kelly, and four outdoor labourers. (Farm labourers always began their employment on the 'term day', which was either Whitsun or Martinmas, and Peter's tenancy of the farm would also have commenced on one of those dates.) The landscape was rather different from that of the Rhinns, much more uneven with surface rock and gorse – good for grazing but much of it unsuitable for growing crops. The two-storey stone house and farm buildings (all still in use) were probably built at about that time. Farms were being let on longer leases and farmers were more inclined to invest in buildings.

The area was beginning to benefit from advances in dairying technique, developed in Ayrshire and brought south by Ayrshire farmers who settled in the Machars. A complementary activity was the rearing of pigs, which were fattened on the by-products of the dairy, particularly whey. The steamship was by now providing a faster means of transport for animals and produce and had largely replaced droving. The most

notable was the Countess of Galloway, which operated between Liverpool and the Galloway ports of Wigtown, Garlieston and the Isle of Whithorn. The Wigtown Free Press reported:

'From Liverpool the Countess landed at Wigtown one of the heaviest cargoes so far – manures, feeding stuffs and merchants' goods – and bringing passengers. She left on her return to Liverpool with 72 head of cattle, 200 sheep, 20 pigs and upwards of 1200 gallons of Bladnoch whisky for Australia, and a number of passengers.'

The expansion of the railway network after 1850 gave access to markets in the centres of population for milk and cheese, and creameries were built in most of the Machars towns and villages. By the end of the century the steamships had lost most of their trade to the railway. This was a period of full employment - on the farms, and in the trades and cottage industries, and there was very little emigration.



Drumrae

Peter's house, like that at Eldrick, was on the south side of a hill topped by a wood, enclosed within a stone dyke. The wood at Drumrae is at the centre of a large circular field which slopes away in all directions. If he missed the familiar presence of the sea at his new inland farm, Peter could walk to the top of this hill and look west to Luce Bay four miles away, and beyond it to the familiar outline of the Rhinns peninsula. To the north he had an uninterrupted view to the Galloway Hills.

A number of facts about Peter arouse interest. First, why did he remain single until the age of forty-one? Did he perhaps go to sea for a period and then return to marry and settle down to farming? We shall probably never know. Second, his decision to move from the Rhinns and, third, his reluctance to admit to his age. In the ten-yearly census he understated his age by 3 years in 1841, by 6 years in 1851 and by 8 years in 1861. But the most intriguing questions are raised by a monument in the churchyard at Glasserton.

In September 1843 Peter became the father of a child, Samuel, born to someone other than his wife. When the family moved to Glasserton about two and a half years later, Samuel remained with his mother in Kirkmaiden, where he died a few months later and was buried in the churchyard. The odd circumstance is that Peter placed a memorial to this 'illegitimate' son, not in Kirkmaiden where he was buried, but at the church in Glasserton, where he and his wife Janet had recently settled and would presumably be attending on Sundays. Furthermore, this memorial is not a discreet stone, but a large and imposing obelisk. When his son Alexander later died at the age of 24, Peter had his name added to it.

When I first came across this monument it was in pieces. The heavy base was still in its place but the other two parts were separated from it. An inscribed and extremely heavy oblong block was embedded in the earth with one face obscured, and the tapered top of the obelisk was lying some distance away covered by ivy. I was with Sam McColm, whose family has intermarried several times with ours. Sam later returned to Glasserton with his brother, their wives and a crowbar, and succeeded in raising the buried block to find that its hidden face records the death of Janet in 1872 and finally of Peter himself in 1874.

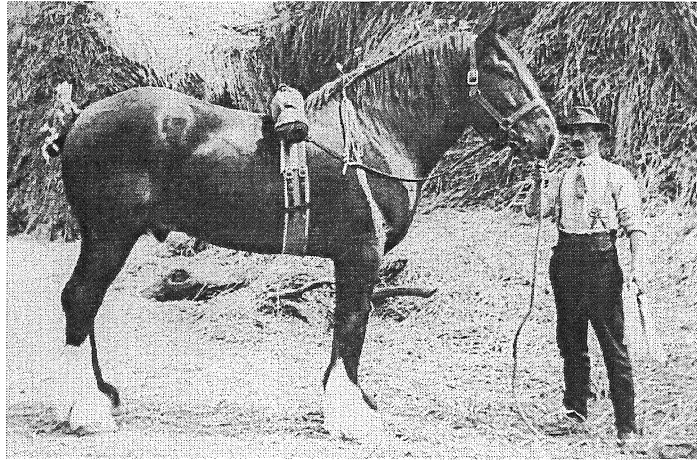
There is one more curious fact, which concerns Peter's two youngest sons. The christening record shows Alexander's mother as Isabella Douglas and not Janet Douglas; the birth record shows Andrew's mother as Isabella, though the christening record names Janet. Both sons are listed as part of Janet and Peter's family in all the census returns. Was Janet called by either name? She was christened with the one name Janet. There is a record of an Isabella Douglas, three years

older than Janet, born in the parish of Sorbie, next door to Glasserton. She was born of different parents, so was not a sister, but a cousin perhaps? (I don't know whether it is a reflection on the seasonal nature of the farmer's life, but I notice that all of Peter's seven children were conceived between October and February.)

A notable event in Peter's calendar would have been the regular gathering of the tenantry at the home of the landlord on rent-day. They wore their best suits and bowler hats and would sometimes make a presentation on an occasion such as the engagement, marriage, or coming-of-age of the heir to the estate. There would be a dinner and perhaps some entertainment. I have seen photographs taken on such occasions, and have searched in vain among the dozens of indistinct faces for a recognisable McMurray.

Another special day was the annual Cattle Show. The farming community would set off for the town in every form of conveyance as soon as the early milking was done, and be free from their work for that one day in the year. Most of the population of the Rhinns went to the Stranraer Cattle Show, and this may have been an opportunity for the Drumrae family to meet their relations from Kirkmaiden, whom they would probably not otherwise see from one year to the next. Many individuals in Galloway worked on farms quite distant from their families, and would look forward to this annual get-together – a day for eating, drinking, shopping, beginning a romance or admiring the prize cattle and horses; perhaps even having a photograph taken. The Wigtown Show was also a great occasion:

“What a hullabaloo is in Wigtown Toon  
On the Cattle Show day when the country folks roun’  
Come a’ pourin’ in,  
Mid confusion an’ din –  
Some folks almost rin  
Intae Wigtown Toon.”<sup>10</sup>



Horse and Groom

Agriculture depended on horse-power, and animals with the capacity for working long and hard were needed on the farms. There were local horse-breeding societies which would hire the services of a stallion to be walked by a groom through the farms in the area, serving any mares in season. Our family was involved in the breeding of horses, both in Kirkmaiden and in Glasserton. Peter placed an advertisement in the Wigtown Free Press in 1856 advertising the services of his thoroughbred cart horse stallion called 'Farmer' – 16 hands high and 'a sure foal-getter'. He gave the horse's pedigree, and the terms: '£1 payable when the mare proves in foal and 2s.6d. in hand to the groom.' The library copy of this newspaper was of poor quality for reproduction, but a similar one, shown below, appeared in that paper in 1849 in the name of James McMurray of Eldrick, Peter's brother.

**To Cover this Season,**  
IN THE  
RHINS DISTRICT OF WIGTOWNSHIRE,  
The True Clydesdale Horse,

**CHAMPION**, the Property of JAS. McMURRAY,  
Eldrick, Kirkmaiden. Champion is a Black  
Horse, four years old, stands 16½ hands high, and  
has proved himself a sure foal-getter; his stock is  
good, and there have been very high prices offered  
for some of them.

Champion will travel the district he takes in  
once a fortnight during the season, health permit-  
ting. For further particulars see handbills.

Eldrick, 17th April, 1849.

Peter, whom I imagine as a robust, forceful man, lived to the age of 85, and his was the last name added to that obelisk in Glasserton churchyard. His family added the postscript: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord'. Although he was fourteen years older than Janet, they died within two years of each other.

Our attention turns to his fourth child **James**, my grandfather, who was about seven years old when the family moved to Drumrae. His two older brothers, Thomas and Patrick, were shown as resident there in the 1851 census, aged 18 and 15 respectively, but by the next census ten years later they had left home, and there is no further record of them locally. James's younger brother Alexander died at 24, as I have mentioned, and the youngest, Andrew, seems also to have moved away.

James took over the farm, and was to be the last of our line in that occupation, though his cousins continued to farm in Kirkmaiden. He was 30 when he married **Margaret McClure**, who was five years his junior. She was known as Maggie, and was the daughter of John McClure, the Clerk of Works at Galloway House, the seat of the Earl of Galloway. Her mother was also a McClure. Peter was 80 by now and earlier in that year of 1869, had seen his daughter Martha married to a neighbouring farmer, who was twelve years her senior. Drumrae now housed only Peter, his son James and his daughter-in-law Maggie, but these two soon began to fill the house with children – nine of them in the next fifteen years. They named their sons strictly according to Scottish custom: after the paternal grandfather, the maternal grandfather and the father, in that order – Peter, John and James. The fourth son was called Thomas, the name of James' oldest brother and a familiar one in the family. It was obviously Maggie's choice to name her youngest son David Simpson; this was the name of her sister Jessie's husband, and is the first time that the name David appears in the family.

James managed the farm for fifteen years after the death of his father and then in 1888 gave up the tenancy, moving with his family to Wigtown, where he took up the post of Keeper of the County Buildings.

Drumrae is still a dairy farm, but the buildings and yard have an air of neglect. The present owners permitted us to tour the house where my father grew up, and looking from the windows across the farm to Ravenstone Moor, it was as if we were seeing the landscape through his eyes – so little has changed.





### 3. Wigtown

Wigtown is a little town on a hill overlooking Wigtown Bay and the mouth of the River Cree. When James moved there it was the county town of Wigtownshire and the seat of administration and justice. It was a place of some commercial importance, with its busy harbour (between four and five hundred vessels per year), its fairs and markets and, most important, its right to levy dues on all sheep, cattle and wool crossing the Cree. It must have been a lively, thriving place at that time, and it is reported that the attendances in the 1890s at the agricultural society's annual show, many of them arriving in special trains, were almost unmanageable.

All these commercial advantages have been lost to Wigtown in the twentieth century; the major rail and road networks have bypassed it, the harbour has fallen into disuse and it is no longer the seat of administration. It is hoped that its new position as Scotland's official book town will revive its fortunes.

Wigtown's layout is typically medieval – a rectangle of inward-facing houses, which is still the heart of the town. The route into the centre from the west is along the High Street, and it was to a house on the south side of this street that James and Maggie moved with their children. These are quite large terraced houses, each different from its neighbour, with the front door opening onto the pavement.



Wigtown High Street

Wigtown would be a very humble-looking place if it were not for the imposing and elegant County Building, constructed in 1862 on the east side of the square and incorporating the tower of the earlier tollbooth. The other attractive feature is the centre of the spacious square, which was enclosed by trees in 1809 and provided with a bowling green and, later, tennis courts. The latter have gone, as have most of the trees, but the bowling club, founded in 1830, is still in existence. I imagine that my grandfather James might have been a member, perhaps watched by my father, who took up the game in his later years.

A result of the move to Wigtown, whether or not it influenced the decision, was to provide better educational opportunities for the children, including my father who was 11 at the time. A look through the log of the rural school in Glasserton for 1885 showed the same

pattern as that already noted in Whithorn a hundred and sixtyfive years earlier. Typical entries were:

“Thin attendances. The farmers are employing scholars in contravention of the Education Act.”

“Horse Show in Port William. More than a fourth of the scholars absent.”

“Owing to the turnip thinning having begun the attendance is broken.”

Things were probably different at Wigtown Grammar School, which was founded at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (the exact date being unknown owing to the Town Council records having been eaten by rats). It was one of the first five schools in Scotland where arithmetic was taught. Greek and Latin were on the syllabus in 1781 and in 1810 English, Writing, Arithmetic, French, Bookkeeping and Navigation were also taught.

Once again, new information has come to hand which questions my assumptions about the family's schooling - in this case the fact that one of the children, John, attended Ewart High School in Newton Stewart, about seven miles from Wigtown. Whether they all went there I don't know; it may be that John, whose academic achievements I will report later, gained a scholarship. The Ewart was for “the sons of the better class of residents in and near Newton Stewart, and, from a greater distance, sons of landed proprietors, clergymen, and other professional men, the higher class of farmers, and the educated classes generally.” John may have boarded there, as some boys did, before the family moved to Wigtown. It is frustrating that the records still held at the school do not quite go back far enough to tell us about the other children. There was a Girls' School on the same site, as well as a 'Ragged School' for children who could not pay.

The accounts of Wigtown Town Council give an indication of James' duties as Keeper. They show payments to him for 'gas and firing' in the council chamber for the meetings, and receipts from him for the rent of the Hall and Assembly Rooms. He deducted a commission of 1s.6d for each pound he collected in rent, and in 1898 he was paid 2s.6d for ringing the town bell on the day of Gladstone's funeral. I note

incidentally that one of those to whom he rented the hall in 1903 was 'Scott's Cinematograph'.

<i>Discharge</i>	<i>Howard</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>Paid Subscription to Wigtown Coal Fund</i>		1	15	
<i>Paid Jno. McRobert repairs on gas for Town Clock</i>		5		
<i>Paid repairs on gate of Store per Mr. McRobert from price of old metal</i>		4	4	
<i>Keeper of Buildings fire &amp; gas for Council Chamber</i>		4		
<i>Paid Francis McEinn burning dog killed in acre Place</i>		9		
<i>Paid Gas Mr. Murray ringing Town Bell Gladstone's funeral</i>		1	6	
<i>Paid Town Clerk for copy Valuation Roll for collector of rates</i>		2	6	
<i>Paid Subscription to Wigtown Cattle Show</i>		4		
		3	3	

The accounts show that the rent payments were handled by Mrs McMurray in 1902 and 1903 and it may be that James was ill for that period. He seems to have returned to his duties again in 1904, but he died in 1905 at the age of 66. The notice of his death in the local paper said that he 'had been in very indifferent health for a very long time'.

He was buried in Wigtown High Cemetery, just outside the town on Windy Hill, a peaceful spot with almost limitless views in all directions. His widow Maggie erected a marble stone with a carving in relief of two clasped hands and an inscription in his memory.

James was spared the knowledge of the early death of three of his children, whose names Maggie had to add to this stone. Their daughter Martha Jane died at 27, outliving her father by only three years, and their sons John and David were killed within three days of each other at Passchendaele in October 1917. John was a captain in the Royal Scots and David was a private in the Australian Infantry. They were aged 42 and 32 respectively when, as the gravestone says, 'they gave their lives for their country'.

Bereavements have a way of evoking earlier losses, and Maggie had suffered many. During the years when she was giving life to her nine children at Drumrae, four of her younger siblings died as young adults and the McClure stone in Sorbie churchyard also records the death of two children in infancy.

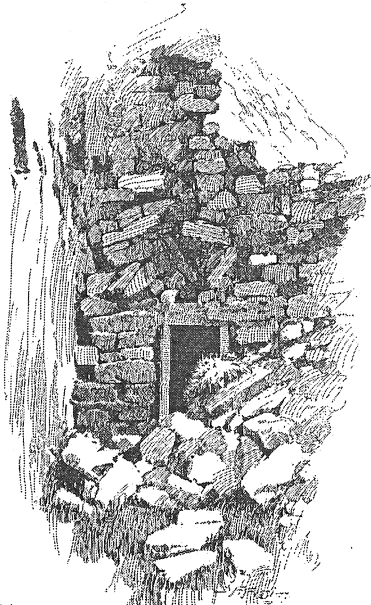
It is time to introduce my father, **James** known as Hamish, fifth of the nine children of James and Maggie and third of the five sons. First-hand accounts of his young life are as absent as those of our more distant ancestors. He certainly did not grow up in a very tranquil environment, with eleven of the family, and a servant, in a house situated in the middle of a dairy farm with something over a hundred cows. The transition to the social world of the schoolroom would have been an easy one, I imagine, and the evidence of his later life suggests an aptitude for learning. The school which he and his brothers attended, Ravenstone Public School, was on the edge of their farm, less than a mile away. This was a one-teacher school with, at that time, up to fifty pupils, providing infant, primary and secondary education. It closed in 1962, but the building remains in good order as a private house.

I had always believed that my father grew up on the farm and only moved to Wigtown to begin his career in Banking. It seems, however, that he only lived his first eleven years at Drumrae and spent the rest of his childhood in the very different world of the town. I wonder what his feelings were when he left the wide-open spaces to become a town dweller.

The 1891 census lists the whole family in Wigtown High Street with the exception of Hamish, by then aged 13. Presumably he was staying elsewhere at the time of the census and I think I have traced him, back in the countryside, in Mochrum, visiting the farm of Margaret McSkimming, a widow aged 42. Also in that household was a William McMurray, a servant, who may have been a relation. Perhaps one of Mrs McSkimming's children was Hamish's friend, or he may have had holiday employment there. Mochrum is not far from Drumrae.

I understand from my mother that a favourite place of Hamish's was Monreith Bay, a few miles from the farm. Behind this bay is the tiny walled burial-ground of the Maxwells, with the ruins of a little chapel, and to the north the bay is enclosed by cliffs with deep caves. At the southern end there is a green promontory, now laid out as an attractive short golf course. This is certainly a place one does not forget. Standing on a rock at the headland above the cliffs there is now a bronze otter, a memorial to Gavin Maxwell, the author of 'A Ring of Bright Water' and son of the noble family.

One cannot write about Galloway without including at least one story from its rich folklore. The legend of St Medan links the place I have just described with Kirkmaiden in the Rhinns.



St Medan's  
Cave Chapel  
(showing the fall of the wall.  
in July 1912)

Medan was an Irish lady of great beauty and wealth, who resolved to devote her life to the service of God. She rejected her many suitors, who all gave up hope except a certain noble knight. To escape his unwelcome attentions she fled with two handmaidens across the Irish Sea in a small boat and landed in the Rhinns, where she hid in a cave near the Mull and began practising charitable works. The knight, on hearing of her departure, followed in another boat and was borne to the same place. Medan, terrified at his approach, jumped onto a rock near the shore and prayed to God that she might be delivered from him. The rock began

to float and she and the two maidens were carried across to Monreith Bay. But the knight followed again, and Medan asked him what it was about her that excited him. He replied that it was her beautiful eyes, at which she plucked them out and threw them at his feet. The knight departed in horror and remorse. When he had gone, Medan washed her face from a spring that suddenly emerged from the earth at her feet, and her sight was miraculously restored. She spent her life in works of piety and charity and chapels were named 'Kirkmaiden' after her, in the Rhinns near Drummore and at Monreith Bay in Glasserton. At her original landing-place near the Mull the rock-chapel remains as the oldest still-existing ecclesiastical structure in Scotland, though the front wall of the cave is now largely demolished. As the reader may have gathered, this legend has been woven around a true story.



Clydesdale Bank,  
Wigtown

After completing his education, Hamish began his career at the Clydesdale Bank in Wigtown as a clerk, and he must have worked there for about three years. (An uncle and a cousin, both on the McClure side, had worked for the Clydesdale Bank.) An important aspect of Hamish's life in these years must have been his membership of the Galloway Rifle Volunteers, which he joined in January 1894 when he was seventeen. This was a territorial unit, earlier known as the Galloway Militia. His older brother John, known as Jack, had joined three years earlier, and they were together in 'D'Company (Newton Stewart) for two years. His younger brothers Thomas ('Tom') and David later joined the same Company. The records of the Volunteers tell us that Hamish was 5'10" at 17, as was Tom. Jack and David were both two inches smaller at that age. The other personal information recorded was the chest measurement, which shows that Hamish was the most robust, and Jack the slightest in build. Hamish won the Wigtown Volunteer Shooting Competition in September 1896 and was presented with an unusually elaborate silver trophy – a bowl supported by a tripod of crossed rifles. Jack and Tom represented D Company in shooting matches in 1893 and 1899 respectively, though each scored the lowest of his team.



Cap Badge of the Galloway Rifle Volunteers

## 4. Hamish and the Imperial Bank

Hamish left Wigtown for London in 1897 at the age of twenty, to join the Imperial Bank of Persia. After three years in the London Office he was appointed to the overseas staff and travelled to Teheran to take up a position at the Bazaar branch, having no doubt kitted himself out in accordance with the Bank's advice.

“Men should acquire from their tailor a frock coat and a dress suit (made of thin cloth – and get them very well cut, and with all suits bring extra trousers); two flannel or tropical tweed suits; two dark suits, two pairs of white flannel trousers (be careful that the flannel is thoroughly shrunk; Persian laundries have a knack of making flannel shrink to an inconvenient extent); one Harris tweed travelling Ulster; one light rainproof overcoat; one heavy pair of riding breeches of strong material.’ Hosiery requirements included white and black dress ties, half-a-dozen tennis shirts and 24 pairs of socks. A variety of shoes, boots, pumps, tennis shoes and slippers were on the list, plus a straw panama and silk and felt hats – and a pith helmet if the officer was arriving in Persia between May and September. 200 visiting cards were essential.”<sup>17</sup>

The journey to Teheran would have taken at least a month, the most usual route being by rail to Paris, the Orient Express to Istanbul, steamer to Batoum, a rail journey to Baku, steamer to Enzeli and then by road to Teheran. An alternative route was by rail to Marseilles and a steamer to Istanbul, and then as above.

Banking was an adventurous activity in the East at the turn of the century. Travel between branches in Persia was a slow and hazardous undertaking, usually involving weeks on the back of a horse or mule. Persia experiences extremes of weather, from bitterly cold winters in the north to extreme heat and humidity in summer in the south. One officer wrote of the journey to his new branch: ‘It was so hot that my stirrup irons burnt my boots!’ My maternal grandparents, who were also with

the Bank, were seized by brigands when they were travelling between Isfahan and Yezd and were lucky to escape with their lives after several days in captivity.

Bank staff would spend years in remote places with inhospitable climates and poor medical facilities. Of 96 men who joined the bank between 1900 and 1914, most of them under 25 years of age, only 35 survived beyond the first few years of service and seven of them died. These were indeed pioneers, motivated by a spirit of adventure, extending the interests of British commerce and political influence.

The Bank operated in circumstances which could hardly have been more volatile. It was essentially a political bank, established for the purpose of furthering and protecting British interests in a crucially important area. It was formed under the terms of a concession granted by the Persian government to Baron Julius de Reuter in 1889 for the formation of a Persian State Bank with responsibility for issuing currency (The bank's 'Imperial' title refers to the Persian Empire). It was however a British bank, and in order to facilitate the raising of share capital de Reuter sought the granting of a Royal Charter. Though contrary to British government policy, the charter was agreed for 'special political reasons' on condition that the Bank remained British in character, regulated by a board of directors in the United Kingdom, with the majority of the directors being British subjects. The importance of Persia to the British government lay in its strategic location between British India and the expansionist Russian Empire, which had already seized the Persian Caucasus provinces and the Khanates of Central Asia and had ambitions to gain a warm-water port on the Persian Gulf.

I have given this background sketch to indicate the volatile political conditions which surrounded Hamish's career. As Geoffrey Jones, the Bank's biographer writes; "The Bank's Concession made the bank a Persian national institution. The Royal Charter made it a thoroughly British banking institution. The dual identity was to prove a difficult legacy."

After his first five-year contract Hamish came home on leave to Wigtown arriving, I believe, some months after his father's death. During this period of leave he won the Wigtown Open lawn tennis tournament in 1906 and was presented with a handsome silver cup.

Another verse from Gordon Fraser, the Wigtown chemist, seems appropriate here:

There are lads ha'e gone forth oot o' Wigtown toon  
Tae a' countries shone on by the licht o' the moon;  
They ha'e proved nae disgrace  
Tae their ain native place,  
An' a sicht o' their face  
Cheers auld Wigtown toon.<sup>10</sup>

It seems likely that Hamish was married while he was home on his first leave. It is ironic that I know about Peter's marriage to Margaret (maiden name McMurray) in 1704, but I have not yet tracked down my own father's first marriage. The Bank discouraged marriage for its younger staff, stipulating that a man must be a Manager with a salary of £500 per annum before he could marry, though exceptions were regularly made. Since there were few single European women in Persia, a man would usually either have been engaged before going abroad and marry on his return if he met the conditions, or he would have to find someone suitable in the few months of his leave. I don't know which of these applied to Hamish; I do know that his wife was named Elizabeth, that she was Scottish, that she was known as Ella, that her second initial was 'E' and that she was several months older than him. I have yet to discover her family name and where she was born.



The Wigtown Tennis Club.

Could the figure on the extreme left of the back row be Hamish?

While we are back in Wigtown it seems a good time to take a look at Hamish's brothers and sisters – my aunts and uncles. He was, as I have mentioned, one of nine children, but in contrast to earlier times (where in one instance five brothers and a sister produced a generation of 23 first cousins), these nine seem to have given birth to only four children.

Maggie, my oldest aunt, known as Meg, married a man named Graham and, I believe, had one son called David and lived in Liverpool. Since she was born 130 years ago, it seems probable that not only she but also her son, my first cousin, must now be dead. However, the Liverpool Grahams would seem to be an interesting line of enquiry, as we may have some quite close living relatives.

I believe that Peter, the second of the family, emigrated to New Zealand and I know no more of him. He may have left home early, perhaps at the time of the family's move to Wigtown, when he was 16; he did not join the Rifle Volunteers as the others did.

John, known as Jack, was, I understand, my father's favourite brother and he seems to have been the most successful academically. He was 15 when the family moved to Wigtown and in that year he was one of four successful competitors for the Lees Bursaries. There were two categories: 'Latin and cognate subjects' and 'Geometry and cognate subjects', and Jack came second in both. All of the 11 candidates were attending Ewart High School in Newton Stewart. I notice that the boy who came first in Geometry was Master George McClure of Garliestown, who was probably a cousin. Jack's name next appears in the class prize list of the faculty of Law at Edinburgh University in 1894-5. He took honours in Scots Law and first prize in Conveyancing. After University he was employed by Davidson and Syme in Edinburgh and he continued his army volunteer activity, serving for sixteen years with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Queen's Edinburgh, afterwards the 4<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots Volunteers. In December 1914 he enlisted in the Royal Scots and was promoted rapidly, to sergeant within a month, to company quartermaster sergeant by February 1915, and he was commissioned in May 1915. He was a captain when he lost his life, as I have reported, in October 1917 at the age of 42.

The next in order of birth was Janet Douglas, whom we knew as Auntie Jen. She was two years older than Hamish and their birthdays were three days apart. The two may have been close, as I know that she went to stay with him in Teheran, and she spent her last four years with us at Gullane and Wadhurst. Jen was a vegetarian and she devoted her life to a Christian sect; she was, I understand, closely involved with its bishop. I believe that Hamish and Ella had to send her home from Persia when they found that she was distributing religious tracts (echoes of Galloway religious fervour).

After Hamish came Thomas, known as Tom. He also worked as a clerk in Wigtown, for a Mr McClean, and probably left in 1900, the date when he resigned from the Volunteers. The Wigtown Free Press carried many reports about the activities of the London Galloway Association, and prominent between 1918 and 1923 were the names of Mr and Mrs T. McMurray of Wigtown. I presume this is Tom. He was on the Council of the Association and in one report he was MC at a dance.

I met Tom briefly in 1952 when I was a trainee at the London office of The British Bank of Iran and the Middle East, as the Imperial Bank was by then known. He came expecting to see his brother Hamish in connection with the estate of their sister Nan, and he seemed quite unmoved by the news that his brother had died. He told me that in that case his share of the estate would go to my brothers and me. I understand that he and Hamish fell out over Tom's handling of the estates of their parents. My recollection is of a tall man with strong features, wearing a long black coat and carrying a stout walking stick. It is tantalising now to think of the opportunity that I missed to learn more about him and the rest of the family.

I have already mentioned the untimely death of Martha Jane, at the age of 24, and after her came another girl, Agnes known as Nan. Nan never married, and pursued a career in the Post Office. The Wigtown Free Press reported that she was given a farewell present of a ring when she left Whithorn Post Office in 1908. Whether she left her native Galloway like all the others, I don't know. She must have had some years of retirement, as she died at the age of 69, in 1952. Her furniture fetched £130 and her net estate was £99.12.0 of which my brothers and I inherited £11.1.4d each.

The youngest of the family, David Simpson McMurray, began his career as a clerk at the County Buildings in Wigtown, while his father was still Keeper. Then he emigrated to Australia, where he enlisted at the outbreak of war in 1914 as a Private in the Australian Infantry. I wonder if he and his older brother John knew of each other's presence, in different allied armies, at Passchendaele in October of 1917, and whether John knew, in his last three days of life, that he had lost his youngest brother David.

Since John and David were 42 and 32 respectively when they died, it seemed that they might have had children, and that Peter might also have had a family, but the evidence to the contrary is in the documents winding up Nan's estate. Thomas was the only one of the family to survive her, and the lawyers' statement, that only two of her predeceased brothers and sisters (Meg and Hamish) had any children, must have been based on his information. (The lawyers in question were Davidson & Syme, Jack's former employers.)

Some of the bank's more remote branches took a particularly heavy toll of their European staff, and it was to one of these that Hamish went on his return to Persia. Nasratabad, near the Afghan border and not far from the northwest frontier of British India, was isolated by the desert from all the other branches. It had been opened in 1903 for political reasons at the request of the British Foreign Office, who subsidised its lack of commercial viability. Hamish seems to have survived his stay there, and must have been responsible for the branch's first profit, recorded in the year 1908. In October 1909 he was given the task of opening a new branch at Hamadan, in the Russian-dominated north of Persia. Of several branches opened at that time it was the most successful, rapidly building up a substantial business. Hamish may have been the only European at the branch, or there might have been one other.

A new Manager's house was constructed there in 1911, a building which apparently earned high praise from subsequent managers. Hamish was not tolerant of poor accommodation; some years later he was highly

critical of the Chief Office building and of the furnishings in the Chief Manager's house. In 1913 he was appointed honorary British vice-consul at Hamadan.

Bank staff in the provincial branches coped with the loneliness, hostile climate and difficult living conditions in various ways. Alcohol helped many, but was the downfall of some. I guess that Hamish, with his upbringing on the farm, was better able to adapt than those reared in the city, and like many others he engaged in sporting activity of all kinds. Horses were inexpensive and even junior staff could afford to ride. Hamish won a cup for 'tent pegging' in Hamadan and excelled in many sports. Later he was to win the Persian Tennis Championship for three successive years. My mother tells the story that he incurred the suspicion of the authorities in Hamadan when he began to design a golf course there. (Only to a lover of the game would it not be surprising to see a foreign official plotting out the land and planting flags in such politically sensitive territory!)

Though declaring its neutrality at the outbreak of the First World War, Persia became a battleground for the British, Russian, Ottoman and German armies and agents. In 1915-16 Hamish was twice forced to close the branch and flee as Ottoman forces took over Hamadan, making use of his house as their Army Headquarters. As Sir Percy Sykes, the head of the British military mission, wrote of the Imperial Bank: 'I hardly think that banking has ever been carried on under circumstances of such peril and difficulty'. Geoffrey Jones writes in 'Banking and Empire':

"The provincial branches regularly acted as billets for British troops. General Dunsterville made his Hamadan headquarters at the home of the Bank Manager James McMurray. 'Throughout all the varying fortunes of the force in North Persia', he later wrote, 'the Bank House at Hamadan stands out as a landmark, a never-failing refuge for the weary, a centre of genial hospitality and a focus of all political news.' McMurray also turned his branch into a famine relief centre when fighting, bad weather and speculation caused major food shortages in northern Persia in 1918."

Hamish was awarded the OBE by the British Government in 1918 for his wartime services, and received the CBE in 1921, when Ella was also honoured, with the OBE.

The Imperial Bank handled a wide range of ‘political’ spending on behalf of the British Government, and this included the financing of the Russian troops in Persia, now our allies. This operation was planned by the British and Russian Governments and a Financial Board of Control was set up in Hamadan to administer the funds, headed by Hamish McMurray.

Hamish’s work in Hamadan gained him a high reputation and in 1919 he was appointed to the post of Chief Manager. He took over in Teheran on 21st September at the age of 42, the youngest Chief Manager in the Bank’s history. This was clearly a happy matching of the man and the moment. The period of the war had seen a succession of Persian governments, some pro-Allied and some pro-German, and Hamish’s predecessor had managed to offend most of them. The Bank’s position in the volatile post-war period called for qualities of diplomacy, determination and financial acumen.



Persian Banknote bearing the signature of Hamish McMurray as Chief Manager

Hamish’s period as Chief Manager coincided with Lord Curzon’s tenure at the Foreign Office, and their relationship was not an easy one. The Bank was torn by the inherent conflict between its two roles – agent of Empire and State Bank. The Board in London was inclined to oblige the Foreign Office, who were discouraging other banks from opening in Persia, but Hamish was reluctant to incur the hostility of the Persians, who were beginning to threaten the Bank’s position as the State Bank.

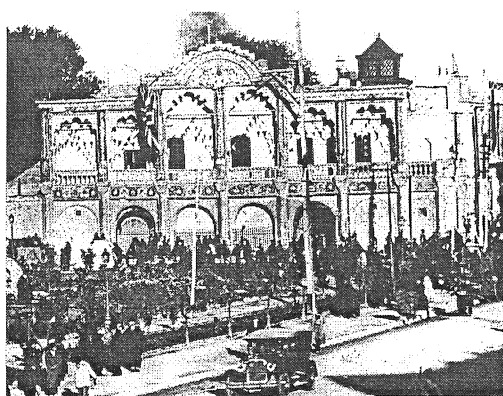
Curzon was determined to use British military dominance at the end of the war to turn Persia into a virtual British protectorate, and to that end negotiated an agreement to gain financial and military control in exchange for a large loan to the Persian Government. When this secretly-negotiated agreement became known, it provoked violent public opposition and a surge of Persian nationalism, and it was never implemented. (The Minister of Finance had been paid a large bribe to facilitate the agreement, but Hamish refused his request that he make a false entry in the bank's books to disguise the payment.) There followed a period of instability and danger, and Hamish had to make contingency plans to send the Chief Office's books and cash further south. Bolshevik troops had entered the country in the north and the British forces, for reasons of economy and British public opinion, had withdrawn from the north to protect British oil interests in the southwest.

Disintegration was averted in 1921 by a nationalist coup, backed by Reza Khan, the Commander of the Cossak division, who seized power in Teheran in 1921 and became Minister of War in a series of governments over the next two and a half years. He was to be a very significant figure in Hamish's life. Hamish welcomed the coup and was eager to assist any government which re-established order in the land. He was soon able to reopen several branches which he had been forced to close. Lord Curzon was not enthusiastic about any government that pursued a less than completely pro-British foreign policy, and tried to prevent the Bank from making advances to governments of which he disapproved. Hamish's difficult task was to limit the damage being done by the Foreign Office, and he tried to modify their policies by using his influence with the British Legation in Teheran, where he was privileged to see all the Foreign Office's secret telegrams to the Minister.

Hamish argued that the way to keep other powers out of Persia was to advance money to the government. Lord Curzon did not agree and, in December 1921 he persuaded the Board not to make any further loans. The telegram with this instruction crossed with one from Hamish saying that he had authorised a large advance to meet the needs of the Persian army. It would be typical of his style to have known that this

sanction was coming and to have pre-empted it. "McMurray seems to have pursued a very independent line in these years, often informing London after rather than before advances were made."<sup>17</sup>

The embargo of 1921 was lifted after six months and Hamish authorised sums against the security of various aspects of the Persian economy, such as customs duty and oil royalties. The Bank could not ignore the wishes of the Foreign Office, from whom it benefited in many ways, not least in keeping other banks out of Persia, but "...the Imperial Bank had put up strong resistance to being reduced to the status of a 'political pawn'. McMurray's independence, his sympathy for the Persian Governments after 1921 and the bank's obvious willingness to help them except when the British Authorities expressly forbade it, must have limited the bad feeling created in the Persian government by the behaviour of their state bank."<sup>17</sup>



Chief Office of The Imperial Bank, Teheran

Hamish established a good business and social relationship with Reza Khan who, while Minister of War, entrusted the whole of his Ministry's financial affairs to the Bank. Reza Khan became Prime Minister in 1923 and was in the habit of dining at the McMurrays' house. It is evident that by this time the Chief Manager had achieved a unique position in Persia, perhaps only second in authority and influence to the Prime Minister (the Shah having been exiled in Europe for several years).

As children we were told the story of Hamish's official car, which was a Rolls Royce. It was the only one in Persia, and Reza Khan used to ask to be taken out in it. Hamish instructed his driver never to leave the car, as he knew that the Prime Minister coveted it, but one day the driver was tricked and the vehicle was purloined. (I remember reading in 1953, when Reza Khan's son returned to power in Teheran after a period in exile, that he drove to the parliament in a 1925 Rolls Royce.)

I imagine that Hamish and Ella must have come home on leave perhaps twice before the outbreak of war, and possibly once more before he became Chief Manager in 1919. I guess that these periods of leave would have involved time spent in Liverpool, where his mother and sister Meg were living, and also time with Ella's family and probably a visit to Wigtown.

We have reached 1923, the year in which my grandmother Maggie McClure died in Liverpool at the age of 80. She had been living at 79, Crawford Avenue, Wavertree, Liverpool, which I presume was the house of her daughter Meg Graham, and her body was brought to Wigtown to be buried next to her husband. We can reflect on what the records have told us of her life - the loss of so many of her close relatives; the bringing up of nine children on the farm and later in Wigtown; the dispersal of those children to distant parts; the notable achievements of some of them; the years spent caring for her ailing husband, and seventeen years as a widow, mostly, I think, spent outside her native Galloway. She was outlived by her older sister Jessie.

Hamish was by now unwell with stomach pain and kept a divan in his office on which to rest when necessary. He blamed this illness partly on one of those hazardous journeys to Persia, when his ship was cast adrift in a storm and they were without food for a long period. I think it was at the end of that particular journey that he was about to step into an official car that had come to meet him, only to realise in time that the driver was a Russian sent to kidnap him and seize the secret documents which he was carrying from the British Government. He was saved by the arrival of the genuine vehicle.

The doctor in Teheran diagnosed cancer and Hamish tendered his resignation early in 1925. He was relieved as Chief Manager in November of that year, just as Reza Khan was proclaimed Shah. The Board awarded Hamish a gratuity of £10,000 on his retirement (worth about £200,000 in today's money), and he must have accumulated a considerable sum in savings, as there was little on which to spend money in Persia. (In 1938 so much foreign exchange was being used by staff remitting up to half of their salaries to London, that a limit of 30% had to be introduced.) Hamish would also have had a considerable sum from the Bank's Provident Fund into which, after 1920, 10% of every officer's salary was transferred, while the Bank added a further 20%. Before 1920 the figures had been 5% and 10%.

Hamish and Ella returned to London where medical investigations revealed that he was suffering from a duodenal ulcer, and not cancer. A successful operation was performed in Edinburgh (at a cost of one hundred guineas) by Sir David Wilkie, who became a friend. The operation was, I believe, one of the first of its kind to be carried out.

Information about the next period of their lives comes from Ella's godson, my maternal uncle Richard Goodwin ('Uncle Dick'), whose recollections I have included in the appendix. Hamish and Ella bought a beautiful house, Woodham House, Horsell, near Woking in Surrey and settled down to an active and sociable life in which, I imagine, golf played a prominent part. They took on the role of guardian to Uncle Dick, who was boarding at Haileybury School and whose parents were in Persia. He spent his holidays with them and remembers seeing films with 'Aunt Ella', who was a keen cinema-goer. Hamish arranged for Uncle Dick to enter the Royal Navy Reserve training ship H.M.S. Conway, in the River Mersey, and later to join the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. Instrumental in making these contacts was an uncle of Hamish's named Commodore Kite. I had not heard of him, but guessed that he must be on the McClure side of the family, and I have found the record of a marriage between Frederick Ernest Kite of Liverpool and Jeanie McClure of Garlieston in 1882, which must be the connection. They seem to have settled in Garlieston, because Jeanie gave birth to four children there. The union of these families is no doubt a result of the maritime links between Liverpool and the Galloway ports, including Garlieston.



Hamish McMurray (1877-1950)

In November 1928 Hamish was appointed to the Board of Directors of The Imperial Bank of Persia, and within two weeks was despatched to Teheran to negotiate the settlement of a dispute with the government there. He was later appointed to the Bank's Executive Committee which, like the Board, met weekly, and I have a recollection from somewhere that he was also a member of the Iraq Currency Board. He remained a Director of the Bank until his death in 1950.

When Uncle Dick graduated from H.M.S. Conway, Hamish and Ella travelled to Liverpool for the occasion, but on their return home Ella was taken ill and died a few weeks later. This was early in 1930, when she was 54 years of age.

Hamish's goddaughter **Kathleen Goodwin**, my mother, was the daughter of John Goodwin, known as Jack, who came from Worcester. He joined the Imperial Bank in London and first went to Persia in about 1903, returning on leave in 1908 to marry his fiancée Gertrude Grove. After three years abroad Gertrude returned to England in 1911 for the birth of their first child Kathleen, and Jack must have come on leave either with her or soon after, because the three of them travelled back to Persia together when Kathleen was six months old. Jack was working in the branch at Kazvin and their son Richard (Dick) was born there in 1913. At the end of the war, when she was about seven, Kathleen came

back to school in England and remained there until she was seventeen, when she went to Teheran and spent two and a half years with her parents. Hamish was by then back in England, though he made one or two visits to Persia in his capacity as a Director during Kathleen's time there.

When she was about three years old Kathleen had informed Hamish that she intended to marry him, and after a period back in England in which she worked as a chauffeuse-companion to an old lady, this prophecy was duly fulfilled. Their children – Michael John, Alistair James and David Bruce – were born between 1934 and 1937.

Hamish and Kathleen led a convivial life in Surrey among a lively circle of friends (which included the famous England cricket captain, Percy Chapman). Hamish served a term as Captain of Worplesdon Golf Club, a position in which he was succeeded by the Prince of Wales.

Their many relocations (ten moves in twenty years) have been chronicled by my mother in her recorded reminiscences. Suffice to say here that most of these moves were dictated by Hamish's need to be in London for two days each week, by periods of poor health following the two duodenal haemorrhages which he suffered, and by the Battle of Britain. Their addresses included Chaltell, Nightingale Lane, Chalfont St Giles in Bucks; St Margarets, Hill Road, Gullane in East Lothian; Brightlands, Brightlands Road, Reigate in Surrey; and Meadowcroft, Wadhurst in Sussex. In the early years of their marriage Hamish's oldest sister Meg visited them on several occasions and stayed for a week or two. I have already mentioned that Jen came to live with us for her last four or five years.

All this seems a long way from the Rhinns of Galloway; I have crossed that gap of disconnection from our history and reached the era of living memory, of which my mother has already left her recollections and of which my brothers will have their own accounts to pass on.

In the summer of 1949 Michael, David and I visited Galloway for the first time, on holiday with our parents. We stayed in Newton Stewart and Portpatrick and we visited Drumrae. Just over a year later, on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1950, Hamish died at home in Wadhurst at the age of 73.



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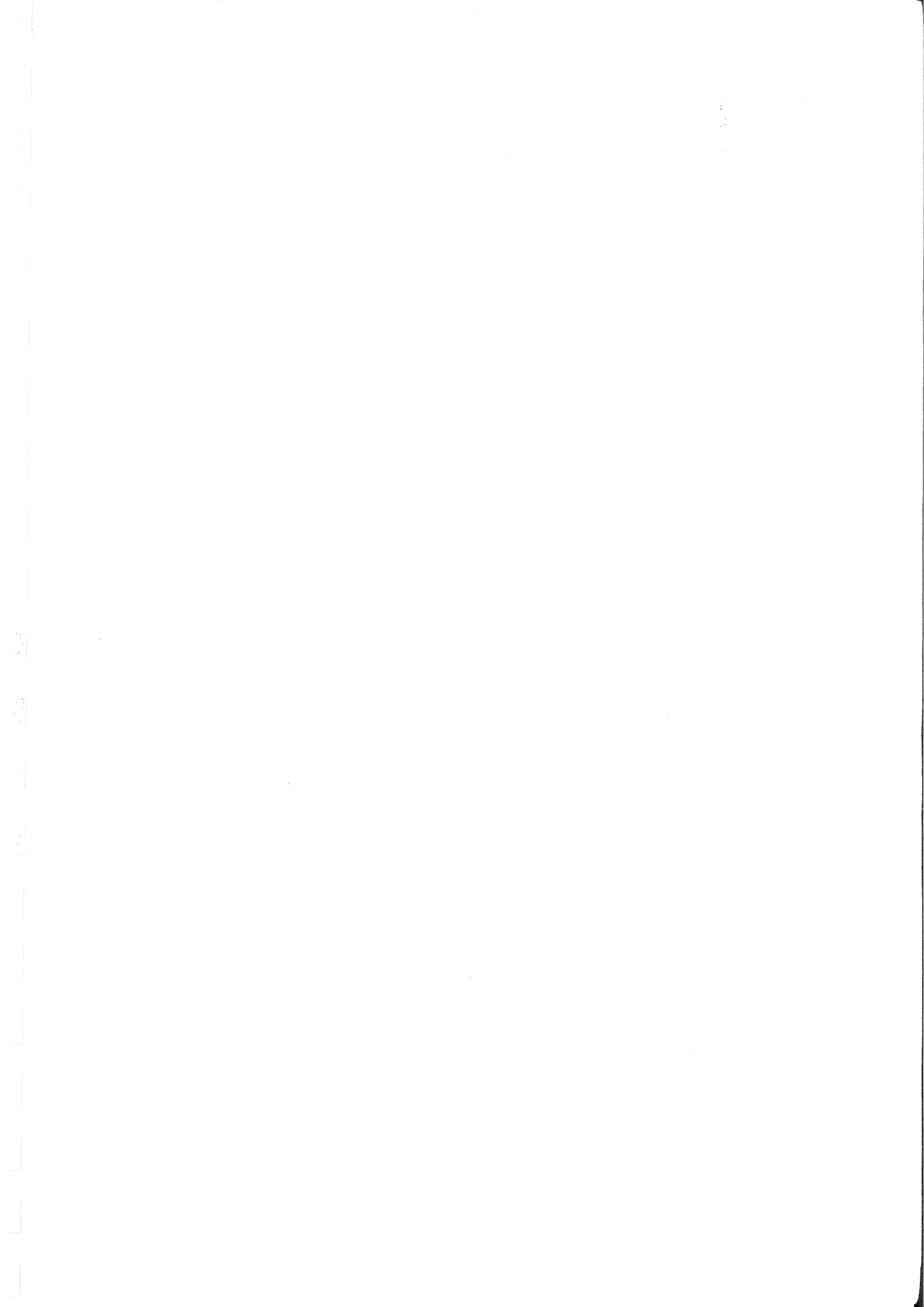
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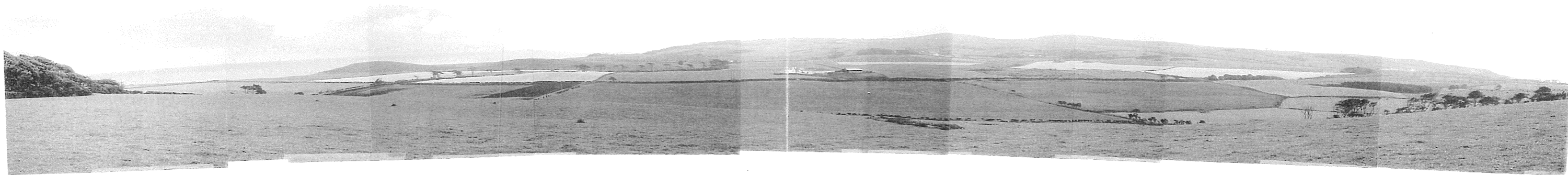
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## Notes on the Family Tree

1. Gravestone at Kirkmaiden
2. From Kilstay
3. Tenant of Eldrick
4. On Jamieson gravestone at Kirkmaiden (spelled Merron)
5. Farmer, Macherolly
6. Tenant of Eldrick
7. Married in Ireland
8. Tenant of High Eldrick
9. Tenant of Low Eldrick and later of Drumrae.  
Gravestone at Glasserton
10. Parents were John Douglas and Jean McCaig of  
Old Luce
11. On McGaw gravestone at Kirkmaiden
12. Farmer, Auchabrick. Died at 33 years.
13. Mariner
14. Born out of wedlock (at Eldrick).  
Mother Agnes McConnell
15. Born out of wedlock. Mother Mary McFarland
16. Born out of wedlock (at Eldrick). Mother Grizal Sloan
17. Born at Logan. (Older brother and sisters all born at Eldrick)
18. Remained single. Lived at The Quay, Drummore.
19. Mail driver
20. Tenant of Low Eldrick
21. Miller's daughter
22. Farmer, Portospittal. Obituary in Appendix. Gravestone at  
Stoneykirk.
23. Born and died at Kirkmaiden. Gravestone at Glasserton.
24. Farmer, Barneal
25. Tenant of Drumrae. Keeper of the County Buildings, Wigtown.  
Gravestone at Wigtown
26. Parents John McClure and Margaret (maiden name McClure).  
Died at Liverpool.
27. Birth record gives mother as Isabella Douglas
28. Christening record gives mother as Isabella Douglas.
29. Remained at Eldrick after marriage.  
Notes on her descendants in Appendix.
30. Mariner
31. Tenant of High Eldrick
32. Lady's maid. Daughter of farmer at Logan.
33. Farmer at Port o' Spittal and later at Aird.  
Obituary in Appendix. Gravestone at Inch.
34. Married name Graham. Had one son, David.  
Lived in Liverpool.
35. Emigrated to New Zealand (?)
36. Lawyer with Davidson & Syme, Edinburgh.  
Captain, Royal Scots. Died at Passchendaele..
37. Chief Manager & Director, Imperial Bank of Persia.
38. Parents John Goodwin and Gertrude Grovc.
39. Worked for Post Office
40. Emigrated to Australia. Private, Australian Infantry.  
Died at Passchendaele.
41. Born to James two months before his marriage.  
Don't know whether Margaret was his mother.  
Only lived a few days (death certificate refers to him as illegitimate).
42. Used to have a hardware shop in Wigtown.





Looking South from Eldrick Hill



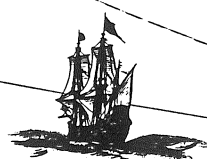


PART OF THE FYRTH OF CLYDDE. PART OF CARRICT.

GALLOWID vernacule G A L L O W A Auct. Timoth. Pont.

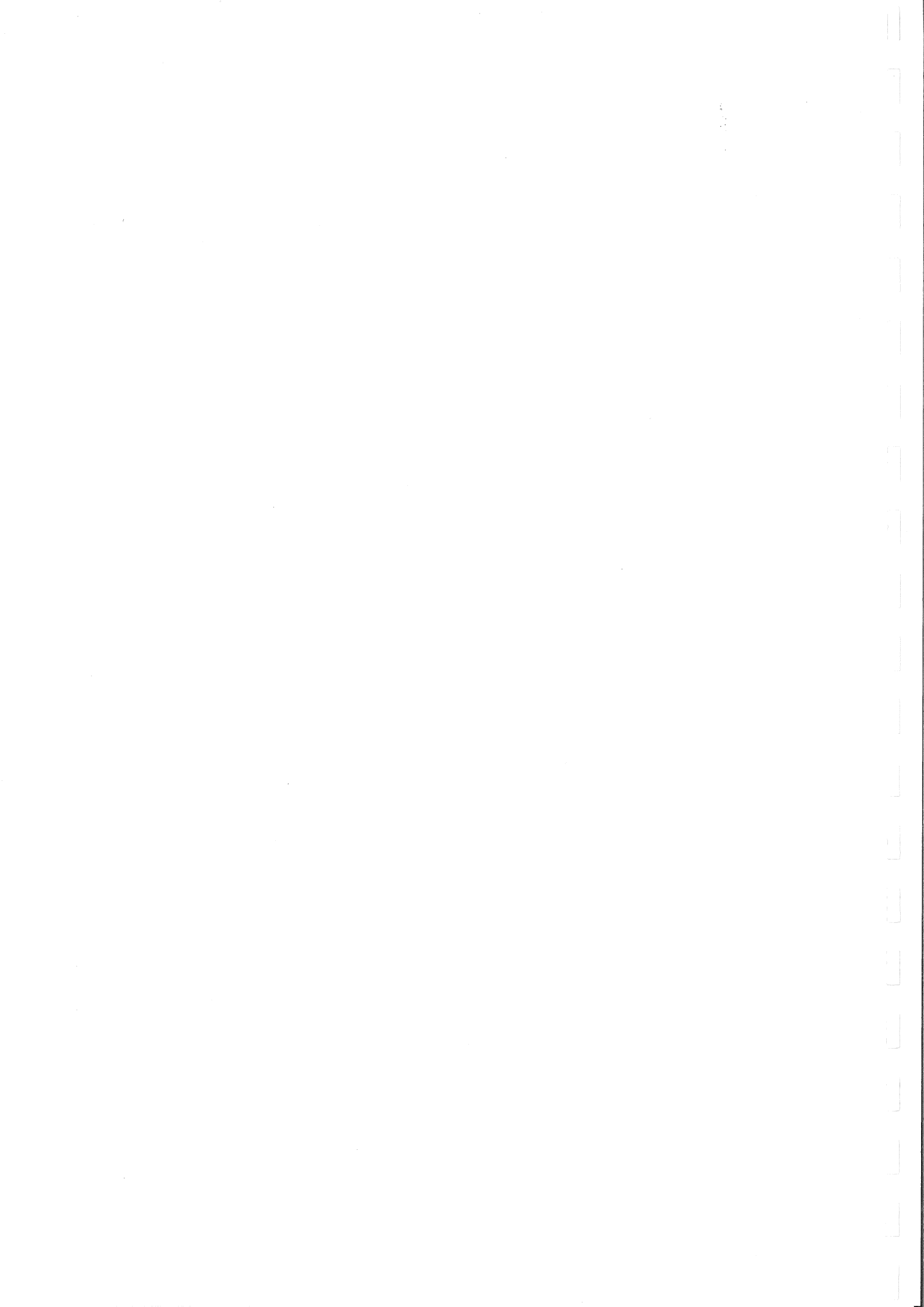


GALLOWAY (1654)









**Recollections of Hamish and Ella McMurray**  
**Contributed by Richard Goodwin**

During my three years at Haileybury, I was completely in the care of two people whose love and understanding were to help me so much. They were my Godmother, "Aunt" Ella and her husband "Uncle" Hamish. In my writings about early days of my life in Persia, I make reference to the existence of those two people because not only was Hamish Godfather to my sister but also my father's immediate boss in Persia. As a result of circumstances, these two people, Mr and Mrs J. McMurray, became in 1930 my guardians due to the fact that my Mother and Father were abroad for much of my time at Haileybury..

Hamish McMurray had joined the London Staff of the Imperial Bank of Persia in 1897 and was sent overseas to Persia in 1900 and served in the branches of Teheran Bazaar, Nasrababad and Hamadan. He was charged with the duty of opening of the Hamadan branch and it was there that I first recall hearing of him. From 1917-1918 he became head of the Commission of Control of Expenditure which financed the Russian Forces in Persia. He was awarded the OBE in 1918 and the CBE in 1921 when Aunt Ella was also awarded the OBE. He was appointed Chief Manager of the Bank but had to resign in 1925 due to ill health and left Persia. He was elected to the Board of the Bank in London in 1928 and Director later in 1928, serving in that capacity until his death in 1950. His half century of service to the Bank was clearly very memorable. Much more memorable to me was the help and guidance given to me by these unrelated dear people when it was not possible for my parents to be at my side.

When Hamish returned to England in 1925, they went to live near Woking - Their house was a beautiful one, Woodham House, Horsell. It was there that I spent many happy holidays while attending Haileybury. and one summer we spent those holidays at Gullane, Scotland. Aunt Ella was a keen cinema-goer and I was very happy to keep her company at a cinema in Woking when there was a matinee worth seeing. Hamish attended Board meetings in London at least three days a week. Happily his short-circuit duodenal operation was very successful and I believe that it was the very first ever performed, the specialist being an Edinburgh surgeon.

My poor marks meanwhile at Haileybury had not gone unnoticed and when I mentioned that my ideal would be to enter the Royal Navy, Hamish made arrangements for me to enter the Naval Reserve training ship HMS Conway since I was too old to enter the Navy through Dartmouth. Hamish had an uncle who had served for many years with the Pacific Steam Navigation Co in their service to and from the West Coast of South America. Before retiring from active sea service in the early 1920s he became Commodore of the Company and later a member of the Board of Directors of the governors of H.M.S. Conway, the Royal Naval Reserve training ship anchored in the River Mersey off Rock Ferry in Cheshire. Commodore Kite was his name and he had a son Edwin Kite who was also one of the senior Masters in the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. The elder Kite lived in Rock Ferry with his daughter, his wife having died earlier. It was to him that Hamish wrote asking for a recommendation for me to enter H.M.S. Conway and later to enter the PSNC.

My two years in Conway were two of the happiest in my life, chiefly because I loved what I was doing, both in technical training and sport. I soon realised that becoming so rapidly a relatively large cog in the Conway machinery was like a sort of balm which soon healed the scars of three years of trying to become any sized cog in the overpowering Haileybury colossus. What I was learning meant so much more during those years and it is hard to describe the wonderful effect on me of serious responsibility. - such as being in charge of a motor launch full of passengers during bad weather while it was my watch to run the service between H.M.S. Conway anchored in the middle of the Mersey River and the pier at Rock Ferry, often in very bad weather. Small responsibilities judged by later ones which I was to assume but great ones because they were my first. Before I was hardly aware of the passage of time, I found myself making my application to

the PSNC to be accepted for my two years of active sea service which would entitle me to be called up for three months in the Royal Navy and then sit for my first Board of Trade exam for Second.Mate. I know that Hamish had kept Captain Kite (Senior ) abreast of my progress in Conway because that latter gentleman had invited me to spend two or three Sundays at his home in Rock Ferry.

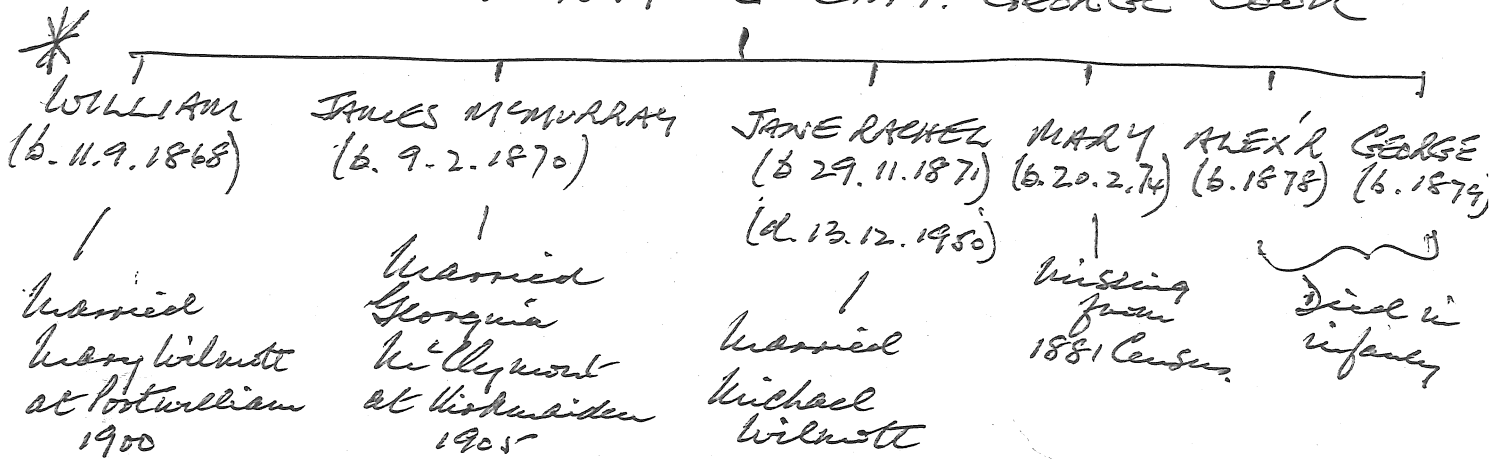
I recall with gratitude the day I graduated from H.M.S.Conway .Hamish and Aunt Ella came up to Rock Ferry on that occasion which made it very special for me.It was a great shock to learn that on return to Woking Aunt Ella was taken ill and died a few weeks later..

During the next few years starting with late 1931 , I recall that during my absence at sea with PSNC ,that Hamish sold the house at Horsell and moved up to a small village, Worplesdon .The house he bought there was much smaller .Kathleen,my sister had been out to Persia for about a year and came back with my parents some time in 1932 . I am very vague about the chronology of the next events because I was away seafaring for the next two years but it was during that time that my Sister Kathleen and Hamish were married . It seems only fitting that those two people should bring up a family which entailed their united efforts until Hamish died in 1950 ,shortly after I had left England to start my post war career in South America .

I am certain that any reader of these lines will appreciate how much I owe to Hamish ,the man who acted as my father when I needed him .

# Some Notes on THE COOK FAMILY

JANE McMURRAY = CAPT. GEORGE COOK



Had 9 children

SOIL FARMING  
AT COWANS  
(Near Portloman)

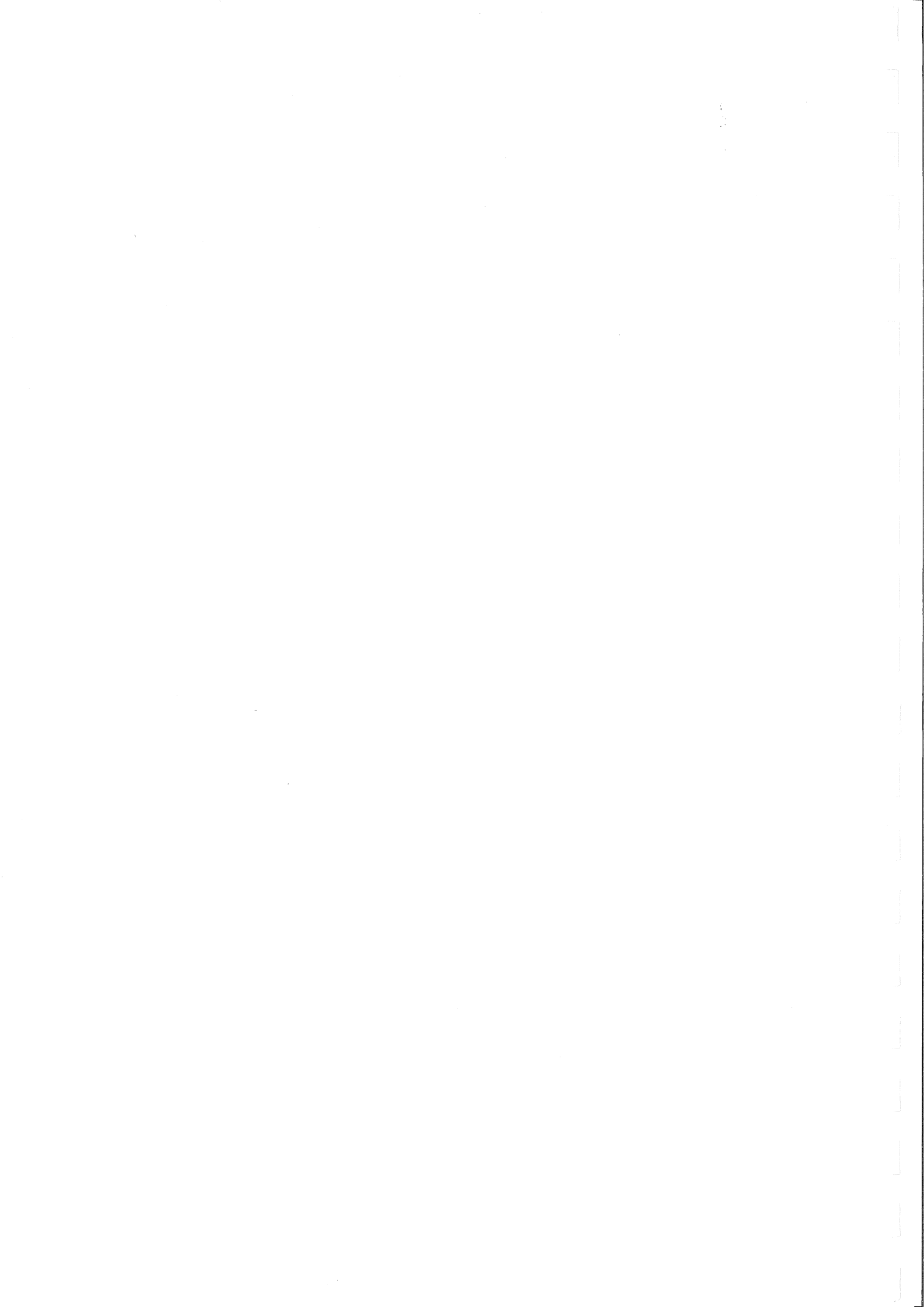
Elizabeth Marion Jean  
b. 1903 d. 1982  
b. 1905 d. 1970

had a son  
out of wedlock  
(Michael - lived  
at Myroett.)

\* This family is on the  
same generation line  
as Michael, David & I.  
(Look at their birth dates!)

Our great great grandfathers  
were brothers.

Used to work  
at Alison's hustom,  
Portwilliam.  
(on the pumps)



**OBITUARY.**



**Mr A. McMurray, Aird.**

Deep regret is felt throughout the Rhins of Galloway at the passing of Mr Andrew McMurray, the well-known farmer of Aird, Castle-Kennedy, and of Port o' Spittal. For a considerable time he had been far from well, but a fine courage kept him at his daily duties until a few weeks ago. Death came on Saturday.

Mr McMurray received his training in husbandry from his father, the competent and respected farmer of Port o' Spittal, who is still remembered by the older of our Rhins agriculturists. The advantage of a good pedigree and an exact tuition was apparent when Mr McMurray succeeded to the tenancy of this farm, for young as he was he proved himself capable, not only of carrying on a tradition of skilful farming, but of utilising to the full the modern improvements of his science. Most of his life was spent in Port o' Spittal, and by his quiet and unflinching kindness he made a place for himself in the esteem and affection of his neighbours. Nothing that affected the welfare of his community left him unaffected.

**Wigtown Free Press 24<sup>th</sup> March 1898**

**Death of Mr James McMurray, Port O' Spittal**

Mr James McMurray was throughout all his career an exceedingly successful farmer and held the reputation of being a good judge of all classes of stock. He never entered public life, being of a retiring disposition.

Mr McMurray was for many years a prominent member of the Free Church, Portpatrick.

The funeral at Stoneykirk was very largely attended.

of many who sought his advice and help, and unconsciously he won the respect of all. He was too much a Scot to be talkative about his own or the affairs of others, but his characteristic caution and reserve hid a heart that was full of real kindness - as not a few could testify.

Mr McMurray was no idler, but he was fond of wholesome recreation. He was one of the original members of the Portpatrick Golf Club, and once, at least, he gained the club's trophy. On the ice, also, he was a skilful curler and was caught in enthusiasm for the roaring game. But work and recreation were not his sole concerns, for though he did not parade religion, he had a deep religious sense. In Trinity Church, Portpatrick, and later in the United Free Church, Inch, he was an honoured office-bearer.

**Wigtown Free Press 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1924**  
(transcription)

Deep regret is felt throughout the Rhins of Galloway at the passing of Mr Andrew McMurray, the well-known farmer of Aird, Castle Kennedy, and of Port o' Spittal. For a considerable time he had been far from well, but a fine courage kept him at his daily duties until a few weeks ago. Death came on Saturday.

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Ten years ago Mr McMurray succeeded Mr J.M.Rankin as tenant of the farm of Aird. In Inch district he soon attained the popularity which had been his in Portpatrick district, for he took an active interest in the wellbeing of the neighbourhood. Some time ago he added to his farming responsibilities by a lease of Glenhead, a sheep farm near Glen Trool.

Without a doubt Mr McMurray will be much missed by a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. He had no enemies and he had more friends than he knew. Never a man who aimed at reputation in public affairs, he was the trusted confidant of many who sought his advice and help, and unconsciously he won the respect of all. He was too much a Scot to be talkative about his own or the affairs of others, but his characteristic caution and reserve hid a heart that was full of real kindness, as not a few could testify.

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