

Bruce Bulletin

Bruce County
Genealogical Society
Box 1083, Port Elgin, ON
N0H 2C0

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~onbcgs>



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Upcoming Meetings and Other Events

Date: Tuesday, April 3, 2012 at 7 p.m.
Place: Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre
Topic: Introduction to Genealogy. Free night.

Date: May 14, 2012 at 7 p.m.
Place: Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre.
Topic: Internet Workshop in the Theatre.

Date: June 11, 2012 all day
Place: Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre.
Topic: Bus Tour, Forgotten Lives with Museum BCHistS, Lewis and Lurgen

Highlights of Previous Meetings

December: What a Good Year We've Had was the theme of the Bruce County Genealogical Society meeting held December 14 when members and guests were invited to share the results of their research. Reports included visits to cemeteries where gravestones revealed a wealth of data about ancestors. Advances in DNA technology supported a researcher's find of long searched for biological family members. An obituary published in an early edition of the Paisley Advocate and a family reunion sparked interest in the family arranging bus tour of Ireland to visit their

ancestral home and meet descendants. Census transcriptions which can be accessed from Ancestry.ca allowed a member to learn of previously unknown siblings of a great grandmother. Research on the early settlers of the hamlet of Dobbinton is in progress with a presentation to be announced. A new to genealogy member responded to queries from her son as to what kind of lives his ancestors had lived and found a wealth of information available from The Family History/Genealogy Course offered by the society has proven to be a great help to those interested in searching for their roots.

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Bruce County Genealogical Society has an exciting calendar of events planned for 2012. Meetings are held in the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre on the 2nd Monday of the month in the afternoon during the winter months and evening otherwise. Why not check the website at www.rootsweb.com/~onbcgs and plan to join us at an upcoming meeting?

January: BCGS met in the Meeting room of BCM&CC on January 9. at 1 p.m. Five members joined two Clippers for a Clipping Workshop with Cecile Lockery. Ann-Marie Collins joined the meeting in place of Sue. She reported that the Reading Room was to re-open on Tuesday, January 17th. Some of the BCGS boxes that were in the stacks were sorted, and some things disposed of. We discovered that we have a coffee maker there. We noted future meetings, and the need for volunteers for Family Heritage Day Feb 20th at the Museum. Next meeting is Mon Feb 13, at 1 p.m. Bring Genealogy Books & Research to share style & Info. All welcome.

Bruce County Genealogical Society was pleased to host a large number of members and guests in the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre on November 13. Alan Scott who is a retired educator, spoke on Scottish Emigration-Debunking Some Myths. Scottish emigrants set sail for Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the East India Company as well as Canada. Poverty in the Scottish Highlands and the Islands and the devastation caused by the Highland Famine in the mid 1840s resulted in an early wave of emigration involving whole communities relocating to Canada. By the end of the 19th century far more Lowlanders, who tended to travel in small groups or as individuals, relocated in scattered settlements in Canada. Before 1840 emigration was self-financed but afterwards it relied on landlord or government assistance. People scrimped and saved for the chance of owning a farm in Canada. In contrast to the poor Irish who were offered inferior shipping, Scottish emigrant accommodation was very basic. Traveling in the hold of an ocean sailing vessel

was a rough and ready experience. A safe arrival in Canada was a cause for celebration with reels and songs. The most informative presentation was preceded by a potluck luncheon and followed by the installation of officers for the coming year.

Chasing Family Folk Lore

by Mary MacKay

Every January when it gets near Robbie Burn's birthday (Jan. 25) I think about the family folklore that claims a connection of my Aitken ancestors to Robbie Burns.

One of the better-known poems of the great Scottish bard was *The Cottars Saturday Night*. Under the title of this poem are these words INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.

Further reading of Burn's work discovered two other poems of interest, one a four-line poem called: *For Robert Aiken Esq.*

*Know thou, O stranger to the fame
Of this much loved, much honour'd name!
(For none that knew him need be told)
A warmer heart Death ne'er made cold*

The other had six-verses, from which I quote here the first and last as translated into English.

*To Robert Aiken
Assist me Coila, while I sing
The virtues of a crony
That in the blessings friendships bring
Has never been matched by many.
And who is the man such land to gain?
There can be no mistaken,
As if there could be more than one-
Step forward Robert Aiken!*

....

*The time will come when I will be deemed
A poet grander, greater,
Than ever prophesied or dreamed
The loudest, proudest foolish talk,
Then let this fact be published too
That at the bard's awaking
The truest kindest friend he knew
Was honest Robert Aiken!*

Some years ago this caught the attention of an Aitken researcher on my Canadian branch and he proceeded to find out if this was *our* Robert Aitken. In recent years I continued the quest. The fact that the spelling of the name differed did not deter me because early records in Scotland show our family also was spelled without a *t*

I discovered Robert Aiken was christened on May 15, 1784 at Kirkmichael, Dumfriesshire, Scotland. He married Isabella Kirk who was born about 1779. He died at Pleasant Field Townland, Dumfriesshire on October 26, 1844 age 60. Isabella died at Johnston Mill Townland on August 18, 1852, age 73. When we were in Scotland we found their grave markers in Kirkmichael and Garrell Cemetery.

Well obviously this was not the Robert Aiken Robbie Burns wrote about because Robbie Burns died in Dumfries on July 21, 1796 This Robert Aitken would only be twelve years old. But in the same cemetery on a near-by stone this inscription caught my attention.

Robert Thomas Aitken 1744-June 18, 1837
Died at Rafhil, Dumfries age 93
Isabella Glover 1850-January 7, 1839
Died at Rafhil, Dumfriesshire age 89

This Robert Aitken would be fifty-two when Robbie Burns died. That was a much better possibility. The townland given on each grave-marker agreed with previous research that they were the ancestors of my mother's great-grandfather Thomas Aitken, who in 1854 came from Westerkirk Parish, Dumfriesshire, Scotland which was near the little places of Langholm, Moniaive, and Bentpath and the larger place of Lockerbie.

How would Robbie Burns know Robert Aitken? Did he live anywhere near there? Yes it's all in the same area. Travel wasn't easy in those days, but Robbie Burns moved around a lot. We visited his cottage about two miles out of Alloway near Ayr where he was born. There we viewed maps showing where he lived and a short video of his life. It tactfully played down

his philandering ways and accented the quality of his writings. During his latter years he lived at Dumfries, the leading town of Dumfriesshire. In 1789 Robbie Burns became the excise officer for Dumfries. Moniaive was about fourteen miles from Dumfries. So the two men were in the same area. It's quite possible they would know each other. Would have been nice if he had dated his writing and mentioned the place – a good reminder for us today!

Robert Aitken was the name of the father of our pioneer forefather. Although he never came to Canada, his son Thomas (1816- May 8, 1884) and his wife Bette Mundell (April 15, 1813-September 27, 1894) with six of their eight children did. They settled in Turnberry Township, Huron County in 1854. Their third child, Thomas (Jan. 15, 1846- May 25, 1919) married Eliza Townsend. Thomas and Eliza's oldest daughter, Agnes married Neil Reid from Elderslie Township and became my grandparents. So that's the documented facts.

That's the wonderful thing about family folklore, there always is some fact and an air of mystery that can never be solved but always savoured.



Chasing Family Legends

by Mary MacKay

Another family legend that goes with my maternal grandmother's side of the family is that before Thomas Aitken and Bette Mundell immigrated from Dumfriesshire, Scotland they lived *a stone's throw away from where Annie Laurie was buried.*

You know- Annie Laurie that was immortalized in an old Scottish song based on a poem by William Douglas (1672?-1748) of Dumfries and Galloway?

**Maxwelton's braes are bonnie,
Where early fa's the dew,
And it's there that Annie Laurie
Gave me her promise true.
Gave me her promise true,
Which ne'er forgot will be,
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doon and dee.**

So when my husband and I visited the area of Langholm, Bentpath and Moniave in Dumfriesshire I inquired where I might find the cemetery where Annie Laurie was buried. I got this rather vague answer, "Oh, you know they don't really know where Annie Laurie was buried. The Laurie family doesn't even admit *their* Annie is the one written about in the poem."

"Well," I thought, "isn't that a fine kettle of fish?"

But the gentleman who was the source of this information continued, "Many of the Lauries are buried in the Glencairn Churchyard at Kirkland just a few miles south of Moniave. A short drive from the cemetery there is a little chapel dedicated to Annie Laurie. You might want to visit it."

Yes we did! The local tourist association has done a good job of compiling and displaying information about the area and about Annie

Laurie.

Anna Laurie, born September 16, 1682, was the youngest daughter of Robert Laurie, who became the first baronet of Maxwellton in 1685. Tradition says she had a romance with William Douglas, the writer of the poem, but her father opposed the marriage probably because she was very young (still in her teens). It may also have been because of his Jacobite allegiances which Robert Laurie considered treason.

Later I learned Douglas recovered from this romance and eloped with a Lankshire heiress. His political beliefs forced him into exile and he became a mercenary soldier and sold his estate at Fingland in north-west England in the 1720's, though he eventually received a pardon.

On August 29, 1709 Anna Laurie married Alexander Ferguson, 14th Laird of Craigdarrock. She was still only seventeen years old. Under her direction the present mansion at Craigdarrock was built and remains of the Georgian gardens she created at the rear of the house can still be seen. History tells us in 1745, the family camped in the hills while Bonnie Prince Charlie and his army spent two nights at Craigdarrock. Robert Burns was also a frequent guest there in the 1780s.

Anna Laurie Ferguson lived at Craigdarrock for 33 years and some sources say she was buried there. I tried throwing a stone four ways from the mansion and I didn't find anything that made me think the Aitken's ever lived near-by.

However I did have something with me that was more helpful than a legend. I had a family heirloom—a postcard bearing the inscription **Moniave—Annie Laurie's resting place, Glencairn Churchyard.** On the back of it in handwriting was "*This was just over the fence from the Aitken farm.*" If this is true I had found it!

It was exciting to see the foundation of the old school where my ancestor, Thomas, taught.

Beside it still standing was a white building, which was the vicarage, and a one story building which probably was where Thomas lived. Across the road from the old cemetery and down in a valley was the smithy. Up on the hill on a little road leading to the cemetery gates was an old stable that now has been made into living quarters.

Also in the cemetery was a stone for John Aitken who had taught at that school for forty years, long after Thomas had emigrated to Canada. John's wife and family are also buried there. Another researcher has since established John was a nephew, the illegitimate son of Thomas' sister Jane Aitken.

As well as many Lauries in the cemetery at Kirkland we found the grave marker for William Burnside Dunbar, the minister who was ordained in the parish of Westerkirk the year after Thomas and Bette were married. In 1854 he transferred to the parish of Glencairn and Thomas and Bette moved there about the same time. In those days a small path joined the two parishes but today it is about a forty-mile drive, south then north again in a "V" formation. Thomas and Bette named their youngest son William Burnside Dunbar Aitken, a name I had always questioned. Now I knew why.

At Bykenburnfoot, the townland where Thomas's wife Bette Mundell was born we saw broken down foundations south of a small collection of houses called Bentpath. In the cemetery surrounding the churchyard we found a stone bearing the names of her father, mother brother and sister-in-law. And on the same stone this unusual inscription that tied it all together, (since I already knew Bette's sister had married Thomas Dunn and is buried here in Ontario).

*Also his daughter Mary the wife of Thomas Dunn
who died at Whitechurch, Canada
May 20, 1887, age 55 years*

Don't you think it most unusual that the name of a daughter buried in Ontario would be

inscribed on her parent's grave stone marker so many miles away in Scotland. Some days you just get lucky!

End of chasing a legend. It proved to be correct. Thomas Aitken and Bette Mundell probably did live a stone throws away from Annie Laurie's grave (if they only knew where she was buried.)



Doing genealogy can be just like doing a jigsaw puzzle!

By Mary MacKay

There were two pieces of the puzzle missing when I was researching the family of Neil McNeil who was a very early settler in Elderslie Township. His name appears on the first voter's list (1856) living on lot 3 and 4 Concession 9 and he is listed on the 1861 census with his wife and six children (although he actually had nine at the time and one more later.)

The missing info I couldn't find was who was he? Who were his parents, brothers and sisters? Most pioneer families stuck together and often immigrated in a group. Not Neil McNeil! No one tied in with him. So I attached him to his wife's family, the Galbraiths who I wrote one of my first books was about.

The other missing part of the puzzle was his oldest daughter, Catherine. She was born in Colonsay before her parents left that island in about 1839 but she wasn't on the 1861 census. Too early to find a marriage recorded for her in Ontario, so I presumed she might have died and to be honest didn't look too hard.

The missing pieces of the puzzle jumped right out at me five years later when I found the marriage record for his oldest granddaughter! Yes, I said granddaughter! And I wasn't even looking for **her** marriage. Well how could I? I hadn't even found his daughter. How could I look for a granddaughter? Missing clues do show up in the most unexpected places.

While researching for my book about John Gillies, "Always a Hill to Climb," I was looking for information about John McMillan who was married to one of John Gillies' sisters. I found them in Sault Ste Marie and I found their son's marriage record to Kate Munn, age 26. That made me take notice! What Munn was she? Registration said she was the daughter of Donald Munn and Kate McNeil. Checked my Munn files. Sure enough Donald Munn had come from Colonsay with his parents as a young man in about 1852 and came to Elderslie in 1856. In the early Huron County Marriage Records I found his marriage to Catherine McNeil. The young couple had walked all the way to Southampton on October 28, 1858 to be married by a Presbyterian saddle-bag minister. Because there was no Bruce County then his records were in Huron County. No wonder I didn't find it in Elderslie records!

Now to figure out which McNeill family she belonged to. In the Paisley Advocate I looked for an obit for both Donald Munn and Mrs. Donald Munn (as all women went by their husband's name in those days). Her obit said she was the daughter of Neil McNeil and Margaret Galbraith. Great! There was the missing oldest daughter that I had assumed died. Not dead at all but married and the mother of eleven children, nine of whom were still living when she died in 1922.

But it was from Donald Munn's obit I learned who his father-in-law, Neil McNeil, really was. It said Donald Munn had married Catherine STEWART McNeil. That one word STEWART told it all. Catherine Stewart wasn't just a name the parents liked. Children were named after real people. Catherine Stewart was a real person. Being the first born Catherine McNeil was named after her grandmother, Catherine Stewart, following the Scottish naming pattern.

I already knew all sorts of things about Catherine Stewart. She married Malcolm McNeil in Colonsay September 13, 1802 and

died leaving nine children. Two of them, James and Sarah, were raised by their mother's brother Captain Archibald Stewart who had been an officer in the 92nd Highland Regiment and fought in the Battle of Waterloo (as had her other brother James Stewart). Archibald Stewart was a bachelor but *kept house* which means he had servants and was well off. When his sister died he brought his niece and nephew to Dunbarton, in Dumbartonshire and educated them. When she grew up Sarah eloped with the ploughman, Hector Cameron, and they came to Canada in 1848. Her brother, James, came with them. James married here and in 1863 the Camerons came to Elderslie, followed four years later by James and his family.

How do I know all this? Their story was told and retold in both James' obituary and Sarah's. It said they came from a family of nine sons and two daughters. Now I know Neil McNeil was one of their brothers (actually the oldest, found his baptism in Colonsay.) So Neil did have family here. He actually came first and James and Sarah came to join him. I found another brother, Donald, here too on the 1871 census. He may also have been raised by his uncle, Archibald because he named his first born Archibald Stewart McNeil as James and Sarah did. Neil named his first son Malcolm after his father.

Why wasn't Neil mentioned in his brother or sister's obit? Because he died before them. Have you noticed obituaries of the olden days never mentioned deceased brothers and sisters or children, just the ones still living.

Genealogy is like doing a jigsaw puzzle but you have to have all the other pieces in place so that when you find the missing part you know where to fit it in.

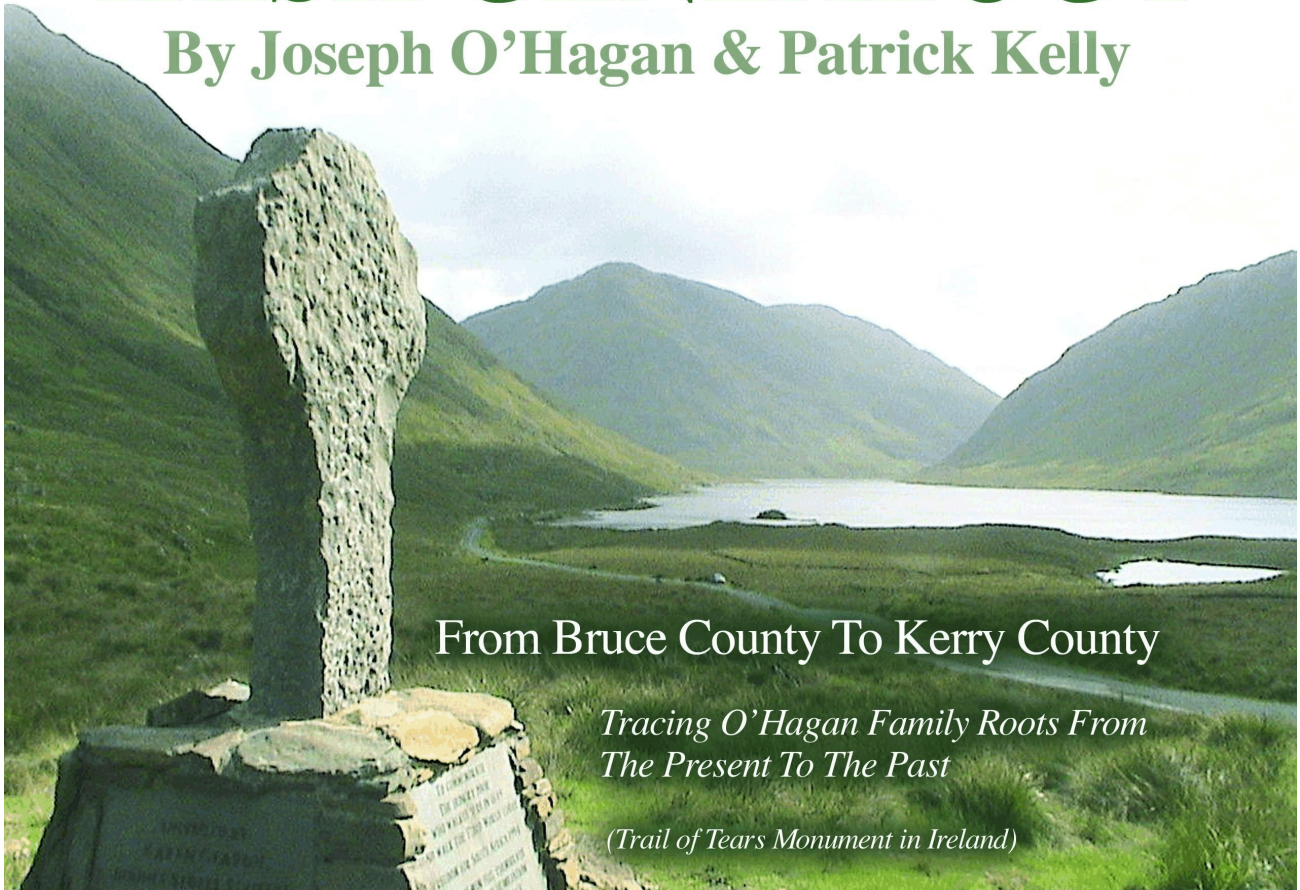
Here's a hint. Try to find the obits of brothers and sisters of the ancestor you are looking for. Pay special attention to the names of the children, especially if they have a second name which is a surname. And don't overlook the marriage records of the grandchildren!



The Bruce County Genealogical Society presents:

IRISH GENEALOGY

By Joseph O'Hagan & Patrick Kelly



From Bruce County To Kerry County

*Tracing O'Hagan Family Roots From
The Present To The Past*

(Trail of Tears Monument in Ireland)

FLIGHT FROM FAMINE:

- Case study of John O'Hagan & Bridget O'Reilly Family
- Arrival in Canada and coming to Bruce County
- Following the evidence back to Ireland
- "O'Hagan" heredity, guardians of Tullyhogue, Co. Tyrone
- Ballyheigue Parish, Co. Kerry, Ireland "Our Irish Home"
- Touring in Ireland

Monday, March 19, 2012

at 1:00 pm

**At the Bruce County Museum
& Cultural Centre**

**For further information call
Sue at 519-797-2080 ext. 129**

**33 VICTORIA STREET NORTH, SOUTHAMPTON, ONTARIO
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**BRUCE COUNTY
MUSEUM
& CULTURAL CENTRE**

ARCHIVES • HISTORY • EVENTS

If you have a story or great old photographs that you would like to share feel free to email them to the editor: smoulton@bmts.com for publication in a future newsletter.

This newsletter is printed by Austin Graphics in Port Elgin, Ontario

A Few Genealogy Definitions

Cemetery: (n) A marble orchard not to be taken for granite.

Crazy.... is a relative term in MY family.

Floor: (n) The place for storing your priceless genealogy records.

Genealogy: Tracing yourself back to better people.

Genealogy: A hay stack full of needles. It's the threads I need.

Genealogy: Collecting dead relatives and sometimes a live cousin!

Genealogy: Where you confuse the dead and irritate the living.

Heredity: Everyone believes in it until their children act like fools!

Research: What I'm doing, when I don't know what I'm doing.

Theory of relativity: If you go back far enough, we're all related.

Bruce County Genealogical Society-2012

E-mail: brucecgs@yahoo.ca
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~onbcgs>

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Newsletter

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Newsletter Editor: Shirley Moulton
 385 Carlisle St.
 Southampton, ON
 N0H 2L0
 (519) 797-3206

E-mail: smoulton@bmts.com

