

## Shiel Folk - About Shiel of Castlemaddie cottage and its occupants

### Introduction

My travels into Galloway have been few and far between. It's not surprising therefore that I have considered (incorrectly) for a long time that Clennoch is Carsphairn's local bothy. It is actually the Cairnsmore of Carsphairn, the big hill to the west of Clennoch, that claims this small bothy as its near neighbour. Carsphairn village is 5 km to the south west of this big hill and it is Shiel of Castlemaddie bothy that is Carsphairn's local bothy. Or rather, was Carsphairn's local bothy as the building was demolished in 2011. Sadly, this was due to the consistent mis-use of the bothy when it was maintained by the MBA and latterly the Forestry Commission. Until well into the twentieth century, the families that occupied the remote homes that we now use as bothies often looked to one particular village for almost all the requirements of their life that they could not find for themselves; they often looked to the church and minister in that village, or to the village store and smithy, or sometimes to the big house in the village where their employer and landlord lived. Carsphairn was such a village for the occupants of Shiel of Castlemaddie.

Yet, ironically, it was in looking for information on the former Clennoch cottage, now the snug Clenoch bothy, that I stumbled on the treasure-house of information about Shiel that is held by the Carsphairn Heritage Group, and contacting Karen Hall, Chairperson of this energetic Heritage Group, opened the door to further detail of Shiel of Castlemaddie's heritage, which I spell here the way the MBA's Galloway folk spelt the name in the last years of the MBA's care for the bothy but Castle



Mrs Margaret Wilson, whose life at Shiel of Castlemaddie is discussed below, from Andrew McCormick's book

Maddy, Castlemaddy and Castlemadie are all to be found at various times in old documents; not surprising, of course, when many could say but few could read or write the written form, many-a-minister has changed many-a-spelling as he had no guide on how to spell the names of his congregation, and they couldn't help. The 1841 census seems to avoid the problem by referring to the cottage as 'Shiel'. Or at least that is my conclusion. The 1841 Census is the first to be of interest to the family historian and seeker of bothy heritage information (both of which describe the author) and in that 1841 census, a cottage with a Logan family resident is listed as the Shiel. I think I'm right because the census numerical identifier 860/4/1 also refers to other properties in the vicinity of Shiel of Castlemaddie.

### Shiel and the Logan family

When was Shiel of Castlemaddie cottage built? Clennoch, White Laggan and Black Laggan, the first two now bothies, are known to have been built pre-1841 and it is possible also

that Shiel of Castlemaddie was built before this 1841 date. From their architectural style, it is likely that the properties were built after 1800 and this raises the possibility that 45 year old Thomas Logan, Agricultural Labourer in the 1841 Census, was the first occupant of Shiel of Castlemaddie (Agricultural Labourer, almost always abbreviated to Ag Lab, was often used in the 1841 census to describe a trade where shepherd would be used in later census returns). He lived at Shiel with his wife Sarah, 40 and daughter Mary, aged 7 and a male by the given census name of Frederick Cathcart Kink, although that is a census or transcription error, it should be Kirk, Sarah was born a Kirk. Family history resources identify Thomas was the son of James Logan and his wife Margaret (née Moffat) but as is often the case, family history can tell us hard facts but little about the life of the individuals - successful, precarious, gregarious or shy and retiring, troubled or easy-going, we just don't know.

#### William McTurk and his will

It is with the more detailed information of subsequent censuses that more of the life at Shiel emerges but first we need to travel back in time. Writing in a Scottish Genealogical Society 2007 Journal, a Murray Johnson describes the 1740s efforts to produce a list - the Commissioners List - of the beneficiaries of the will of a Glasgow University Professor of Divinity, William McTurk. Murray finishes his article by writing "Sometimes, just sometimes, research turns up a gem. This [document, the Commissioners List] without a doubt was a diamond". It was a gem to Murray's family history research and helps too on the bothy heritage of Shiel.

It's a big leap from the shepherding occupants of Galloway's remote Shiel of Castlemaddie cottage to a Glasgow University Professor, but it needs to be made. William McTurk's grandfather was born and lived in and around Carsphairn, but his son Alexander (William McTurk's father) 'made good' and headed to Glasgow. The generous provision to distant relatives in William McTurk's will resulted, in about 1750, some of the grandchildren of a Janet McTurk, wife and mother of the family at the "remote croft of Shiel of Castlemaddie", receiving a legacy of £33 each (about £3900 at late 2019 currency values). The use of the word croft suggests that Shiel of Castlemaddie was then not the home of a shepherd working a sheep run but a largely self-sufficient household living a lifestyle similar to that of the highland crofters. It is very likely that the remote croft of Shiel of Castlemaddie named in the Commissioners List was a predecessor property to that occupied by the Wilson family described below and which was to become one of Galloway's open bothies.

Murray Johnson has researched part of his story of the Commissioners List by looking at the Carsphairn Parish Registers and around Carsphairn Churchyard and records that the youngest of Janet McTurk's children, James, was baptised at the Shiel cottage (See Note 2) and that her husband, Robert, died there in 1771. Janet was born a McTurk and her marriage to Robert McTurk brought together two branches of this family which, as Murray Johnson tells us, results in 5 graveyard monuments and 5 gravestones naming 31 members of the McTurk family, deeply rooted in Carsphairn. The family tree of William McTurk and Janet McTurk is given below, after the census data.

#### And even earlier

Reverend David Bartholemew, Carsphairn's current minister and active member of the village's Heritage Group, has enabled the knowledge of Shiel of Castlemaddie to be extended further back, not unreasonably, he knows a thing or two about church history in his area. The much despised (and murdered in 1684) anti-Covenanter (See Note 5) Carsphairn parish priest Peter Peirson listed those 'disorderly' people in his parish, i.e. those not attending his church services - pretty much a list of the parish residents given how much he was loathed, he was a strongly anti-Covenanter minister in a parish that strongly supported this dissenting group. The first thing that strikes the reader about Peirson's list is the number of homesteads listed that can still be identified today. Amongst the numerous 'Disorderly' residents in his parish in 1684 are listed Jannet, Robert and Agnes McMillen at Shiel of Castlemaddie and 16 people at Castlemady - widows, sons, young and old and including a

John McTurk and another Jannet McMillen. The list for Castlemadie in 1683 includes Margaret McMillen in the Shield. Whilst we cannot be certain that these specific four McMillens were living at Shiel of Castlemaddie, with Peirson being so despised we can only assume he was not well informed, the inclusion in the list of Shiel of Castlemaddie (in its various spellings!) tells us that there was habitation there in the 1680s.

For a long period until 1500, the area around Shiel of Castlemaddie and Castlemaddie, and indeed much of this part of Galloway, was a Royal Hunting Forest but one not much favoured by later kings and in 1500, the hunting was leased out. Nevertheless, the hunting was sufficiently successful for the tenant to delight in the title Ranger of the Forest of Buchan and hounds for the hunting were kept at Castlemaddie, which is believed to mean the strong place of the dogs. However, patronage of King or Ranger did not support a year-round existence and local people are known to have grazed cattle on the land. It is speculation, but given that people rarely suddenly take up residence at a remote location, over the period 1500 - 1680, it is likely that residence was taken up at Shiel of Castlemaddie, maybe initially as a summer shieling and then year-round, in response to the needs of cattle farming and /or number pressures at Castlemaddie.

David does note that in the 1680s, there were more people living at Castlemaddie than at Carsphairn, I speculate that with a church and being on a significant through route, Carsphairn had higher status. It is revealed below that by the time of the early censuses (mid 1800s), Castlemaddie was home to one family working a sheep run and again I speculate that a less well known (and perhaps less brutal) Clearance occurred in this part of Scotland. People with a better knowledge of Galloway's history will have a better view of the reality of what went on.

#### Back to more recent times; the 1851 Census

A Thomas Crosbie was herding at Shiel of Castlemaddie at the time of the 1851 Census, living there with his wife, Mary, and son and daughter John (3) and Helen (1). Thomas was the son of a shepherd but by 1861 the Crosbie family were living in Straiton, Ayrshire, and Thomas was following a more urban occupation (meat fletcher) - not for them a lifetime of shepherding in remote locations.

#### James and Margaret Wilson and their family

It is with the next occupants of Shiel of Castlemaddie that more about the lifestyle emerges, not from just from subsequent censuses but from the writings of Andrew McCormick, the author of *Galloway, the Spell of its Hills and Glens* (first published 1932), a book which Carsphairn Heritage Group brought to my attention and a copy of which I have been able to purchase through the penetration of Amazon into the second-hand (or pre-owned!) book market.

By 1861, the Wilson family had started their 70 years or more at Shiel of Castlemaddie. James Wilson had married his wife Margaret (née McClymont - Note 3) in Penninghame, Wigtownshire in May 1858 and we know this is when they moved into Shiel - McCormick recounts Jessie's tale told years later of the Best Man's shenanigans the day after the wedding. Their daughter, Mary, is the first born of their family, 2 year old in the 1861 census. Also at Shiel in this census were 46 year old Mary Gray (a farmer's wife and probably a visitor) and 15 year old Jessie McKay, described as a servant, but likely to be a distant relative helping out in the house in what otherwise would be a lonely and difficult life for Margaret while her husband was out on the hill every day of the week.

Mary was to be joined in due course by Robert (b 1862), Samuel (1863), William (1867), Agnes (1869), Jessie, just days old at the time of the 1871 census and finally Elizabeth (b 1884). Mary does not appear in the 1871 census, but may, at the age of 12, have been living as a 'domestic servant' in some other local farmhouse as Jessie McKay had lived at Shiel in 1861. She was back with her family in 1881. The Wilson family tree is shown below (as are all family trees relevant to this article).

Margaret was Head of the family at Shiel of Castlemaddie in 1891, the census helpfully (for family historians) describing her as a Shepherd's Widow, and ten years later her son Samuel heads the

family. His 68 year old mother Margaret is described as Housekeeper, the census enumerator probably choosing to give her and Samuel the status they were due. She appears in the 1911 census and presumably will be in the 1921 when it is released (there is a 100 year rule), for Margaret Wilson lived to be 96, dying in 1929 - life at Shiel of Castlemaddie was obviously good.

Samuel Wilson (b 1863) continued to shepherd from the Shiel and by the time of Andrew McCormick's conversation with the two brothers and Jessie, written up in his Galloway book, Robert (born 1862) also lived at the Shiel. He was recorded there in the 1891 census and his absence in the 1901 census might have been a short-term absence - he had been absent all day on shepherding work when McCormick arrived at the cottage. Later in the day, Robert returned with a horse and cart-full of winter feed for the tupps and Andrew had to help the family heave the cart out of deep mud that bogged it down just short of the cottage. Certainly, McCormick describes a sheep farm successfully run by the three siblings with various other younger relatives passing through to give a hand.

Andrew McCormick was from a hill-farming family and he recognises the experience and 'pedigree' that the Wilson family brought to Shiel of Castlemaddie. In the late 1700s, a Robert Wilson was herding at Culsharg, a cottage that fleetingly came onto the Mountain Bothies Association's radar in the mid 1970s. McCormick notes that two generations of the Wilson family had shepherded at Culsharg before the move to Shiel of Castlemaddie and Castlemaddie [Note 4]. Another Robert Wilson is head of a Wilson family at Castlemaddie in the 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 census returns, aged 65 at this last census. This Robert at Castlemaddie was the youngest son of the Robert who herded at Culsharg, and was the youngest of a family of 9 siblings - it's not often that the father's name is given to the youngest child. Robert Wilson snr died in 1863 but the family carried on at Culsharg for a number of years with Robert jnr and an older brother William listed in the 1871 census as the shepherds at Culsharg. It is not clear if the two generations of Culsharg shepherds were Robert snr and his sons, or if the father of Robert snr had also herded there.

By 1881 Robert jnr had moved to Castlemaddie, perhaps encouraged to move there because his brother, James, was herding at Shiel of Castlemaddie. Robert was head of a family of 5, himself, his wife Elizabeth, daughter Sarah and sons Robert and William. They were to be joined over the next 13 years by James, John and Agnes, this last child named after her paternal grandmother, Agnes Murdoch, wife of Robert snr. Elizabeth Wilson (née Malcolm) was the daughter of William Malcolm and Sarah (née McMillan). A Family Tree for Robert and Elizabeth Wilson is available through Ancestry.co.uk.

Before Robert jnr, a James McFadyean was herding at Castlemaddie household in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 Censuses, his family resident at the cottage for somewhere between 20 and 40 years. Born in about 1802, family history records trace his lineage back through his father, also James (born 1763, husband of Elizabeth McNellie (b 1765)) to his grandfather, Adam McFadyean (b 1736); James snr and Adam were both born around Carsphairn. As is typical of male dominated society of that



An undated photograph at Shiel with Margaret Wilson at the front and behind her, Annie McMillan (I am unsure of her connection to the family), Alexander Belford (Margaret's son-in-law) and Elizabeth Belford (née Wilson); © and courtesy of Carsphairn Heritage Group.

time, Elizabeth's parents and Adam's wife are not recorded in the parish registers. The McFadyean family tree is shown after the census data.

### The way of life they lived

Andrew McCormick gives a little insight to the sort of life the two Wilson families lived when he writes of their respect for James McFadyean recording Jessie's recollection:

"James McFadyean, the shepherd o' Castle Maddy, used to pick up every pickle o' 'oo' [small piece of wool] the sheep had cast aff. His wife cairdit an' spun it into yarn an' he knitted it into stockin's.



Robert (Rab), Jessie and Samuel Wilson at Shiel, August 1923; © and courtesy of Carsphairn Heritage Group.

Even on a wet day as he trudged on herdin' his sheep he wad be knittin' un'er his plaid. He selt the stockin's to Geordie Briery." [Geordie Briery was a trader in Carsphairn].

It is common, and obviously has been for a long time, for each generation to complain that the next generation spends excessively. Andrew McCormick writes "In times of reckless expenditure everywhere, it is interesting to note how the grandmother of this family had to economise. She had seven to nurse and nine to feed. The money income was £17 a year in actual cash with extras - two cows, a sheep now and again, and some oatmeal. She said, and none needs doubt it, that she had lost many a night's sleep wondering how the bill for food and feedstuffs could be met". (This grandmother was Margaret Wilson, wife of James). There were throughout, of course, hens to provide eggs and wheat was purchased for baking, but undoubtedly the Wilson family had a simple diet for Samuel and his nephew dine on porridge and milk after a full day of work on the farm, whilst Andrew was offered, as an honoured guest, scones, bread, oatcakes and butter for his tea. Andrew enquires of the fishing and is told that small trout from the Polmaddy burn are occasionally caught and eaten, and that on rare occasions salmon had swum up the Polmaddy burn as high up the water as Shiel, Samuel Wilson is able to tell Andrew McCormick of the one occasion that one of the salmon was caught for food. A copy of Margaret Wilson shopping accounts for the years 1908 and 1912 can be viewed by readers on the Carsphairn Heritage Group website and give a good idea of the type of food and goods that the Wilsons had to buy in.

The Wilson family were not unusually religious but they were staunch members of the Presbyterian church in Carsphairn (Note 5). Their life at the remote farms of Culsharg and then for many years at Shiel did not divorce them from their local parish church. At Shiel, when the farm work permitted,

members of the family would walk to the Kirk in Carsphairn to celebrate their faith at the noonday service. They walked in their 'sabbath clothes' but in boots fit for the terrain, doing as folk have probably done across the country across the years, changing into footwear fit for the church on the approach to the village, hiding their boots at a convenient spot in a wall. When age prevented Margaret Wilson ('old Mrs Wilson') from making this journey, most summers, the minister would invite members of his congregation to join him on a walk out to Shiel of Castlemaddie, where he would hold a short communion service in the cottage's parlour for Margaret Wilson and any other family and friends (including residents from other outlying cottages and farms) who wished to participate in the service. Although primarily with religious intent, nevertheless there is no doubt that Mrs Wilson regarded this event as a splendid opportunity to entertain and the walk to Shiel for the congregation members was rewarded by a table set with fresh tattie scones made on the household's girdle, small pancakes and treacle scones with home-made butter, apple, rowan and other fruit jellies to spread on the scones and pancakes - further hints about the diet at the Shiel. In the 1990s, Willie Dickson of Carsphairn recorded his memories of attending, as a boy, this Shiel service and being offered a slice of cold, pre-cooked porridge as well the scones and pancakes.

#### The end of a family home

It is known that the Wilsons were the last occupants of the cottage. Robert, Samuel and Jessie Wilson retired to Bardennoch, a house on the A713 just outside Carsphairn village. Scottish family history records give the dates of passing of the three as Robert in 1940, aged 78, Samuel in 1944 (81) and Jessie in 1950 (79), so Shiel of Castlemaddie had been unoccupied for ten years or more when the cottage and its lands were sold to the Forestry Commission in 1949. Memories of specific dates have faded but there is locally general agreement that the sheep were taken off the Shiel of Castlemaddie sheep run in around 1956. The last tenant of the farm was the neighbouring farmer and he found it difficult to get shepherds to live there - among other difficulties, the house had no running water. With no resident shepherd, at the clippings the food was taken in by horse and cart from the tenant's farm and the wool was taken back using the same transport. Much of the food was cooked on a primus stove outside the house and water was drawn from the nearby well.

By the 1960s, the cottage was receiving occasional bothy use which may have started as early as shortly after the WW2, however it did not come into the MBA's stewardship until 1974. The location of the above-mentioned well seems not to have been known by most of the walkers who subsequently used the cottage.

#### Notes

1. The title of this article is a straight lift of the Chapter in Andrew McCormick's book where he recounts some of the detail of the life of the Wilson family at Shiel of Castlemaddie
2. Why was the youngest child, James McTurk, baptised at Shiel of Castlemaddie? My answer can only be speculative. Perhaps the minister (maybe he was new to his parish) liked to get out and about among his congregation. Perhaps Janet McTurk or the baby was not well and there was some urgency about the baptism. Perhaps it was something practical, it was simply too difficult for Janet and Robert McTurk to get themselves, a baby and four young children to the kirk for a baptism. Who knows, we can only speculate.
3. In the 1851 Census, James Wilson was shepherding on Palgown Farm, Kirkcudbrightshire where a 27 year old James McClymont was working as a farm labourer - we can see how James Wilson met his wife-to-be.
4. Shiel of Castlemaddie and Castlemaddie are separate properties and sheep runs. At first, I though reference to Castlemaddie was shorthand for Shiel of Castlemadie, but inconsistencies in census data were cleared away when I realised that there were two separate sheep farms and homes.

5. The story of the Covenanters in southern Scotland and the history and evolution of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and particularly on Scotland's western seaboard and islands are subjects in their own right. The church in Carsphairn attended by the Wilson family was probably known to them as the Kirk (as most churches in rural Scotland are still known) and was built as the United Presbyterian Church - it moved with its congregation into the United Free Church when it was formed. It closed in 1930 shortly after the United Free Church merged with the Church of Scotland. Two churches in Carsphairn was probably too heavy a burden for the residents of such a small village.

Census data and family trees are given below.

**My thanks** go to Joan Janette Scott, a fellow family historian, to Anna Campbell and to the volunteers of Carsphairn Heritage Group, including specifically David Bartholomew, for their help in gathering together the material for this article. Comments, corrections and any additional information will be welcome, please use the contact details below.

The 'legal' stuff: © Richard Genner 2020, and Carsphairn Heritage Group as indicated. The census data was taken in December 2019 from the [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) and [scotlandspeople.com](http://scotlandspeople.com) websites. The family trees are compiled from family trees made publicly available on [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) and have not been verified by the author.

Richard Genner

February 2020

Contact via the Secretary of Carsphairn Heritage Group

Shiel Folk

Residents of **Shiel of Castlemaddie**

Year	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901		
Description of Residence	Shiel	Shiel of Castlemaddie	Shiel of Castlemaddie	Shiel	Shiell	Shiel	Shiel of Parth Madie* <sup>6</sup>	Born	Occupation
Thomas Logan	45, Head	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Agricultural Labourer
Sarah Logan	40, Wife	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mary Logan	7, Dau			-	-	-	-	-	-
Fredrick Cathcart Kirk	13, Unk.* <sup>7</sup>							-	-
Thomas Crosbie	-	28, Head	-	-	-	-	-	Dailly, Ayrshire	Shepherd
Mary Crosbie	-	30, Wife	-	-				Dailly, Ayrshire	-
James Crosbie	-	3, Son	-	-				Dailly, Ayrshire	-
Helen Crosbie	-	1, Dau	-	-	-	-		Carsphairn	-
Agnes Hutchinson		11, Sister-in-law						Dailly, Ayrshire	-
James Wilson	-	-	26, Head	31	46	-		Minnigaff	Shepherd
Margaret Wilson	-	-	28, Wife	35	48	59, Head	69, House-keeper	Barr, Ayrshire	-
Mary Wilson	-	-	2, Dau	-	22	-		Carsphairn	-
Robert Wilson	-	-	-	9, Son	-	-		Carsphairn	-
Samuel Wilson	-	-	-	8, Son	-	-		Carsphairn	-
William Wilson	-	-	-	4, Son	14	-	-	Carsphairn	-
Agnes Wilson	-	-	-	2, Dau	12	-	-	Carsphairn	-
Jessie Wilson	-	-	-	<1 mo, Dau	10	20	30	Carsphairn	Gen Serv (Dom)* <sup>8</sup>
Elizabeth Wilson	-	-	-	-	7, Dau			Carsphairn	-
Mary Gray	-	-	46	-	-			Kirkconnel, Dumfries-shire	Farmer's wife* <sup>9</sup>

## Shiel Folk

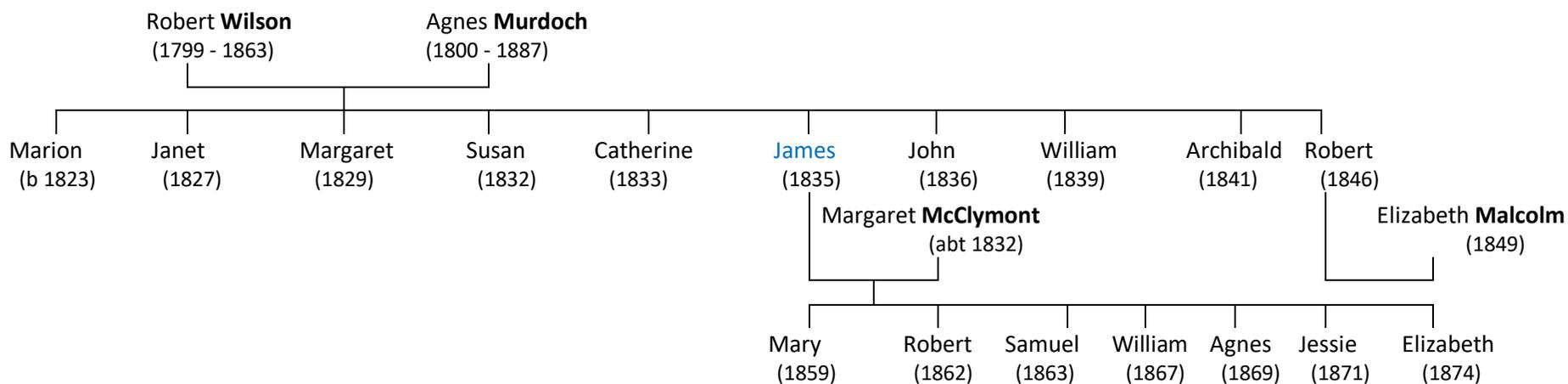
Jessie McKay	-	-	15, Servant	-				Carsphairn	Servant
Jean McMorran	-	-	-	15, Servant				Douglas, Lan'rk.	Servant
	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901		

### Notes

- \*<sup>6</sup> This is definitely the right census entry, so the cottage name is an example of handwriting or transcription error at its worst!
- \*<sup>7</sup> Unk. = Unknown
- \*<sup>8</sup> So described in the 1901 Census. This is a judgement made by enumerator and family. Working at home and Housekeeper would have been equally valid descriptions
- \*<sup>9</sup> Any attempt to describe her presence is speculative, but Mary Gray might have been the wife of a Carsphairn farmer, visting socially or on farm business, or she could be a distant relative – there is nothing to indicate that Mary is a close relative.

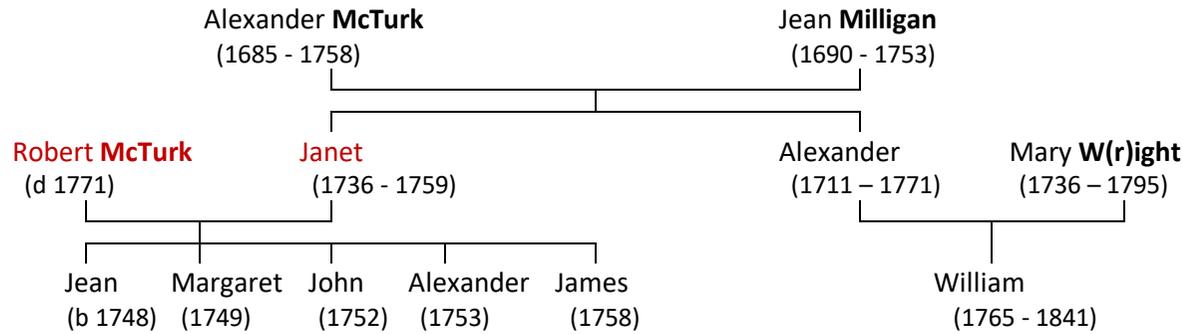
### Family trees

The family of [James Wilson](#) at Shiel of Castlemaddie, and his father before him Robert Wilson who herded at Culsharg



Shiel Folk

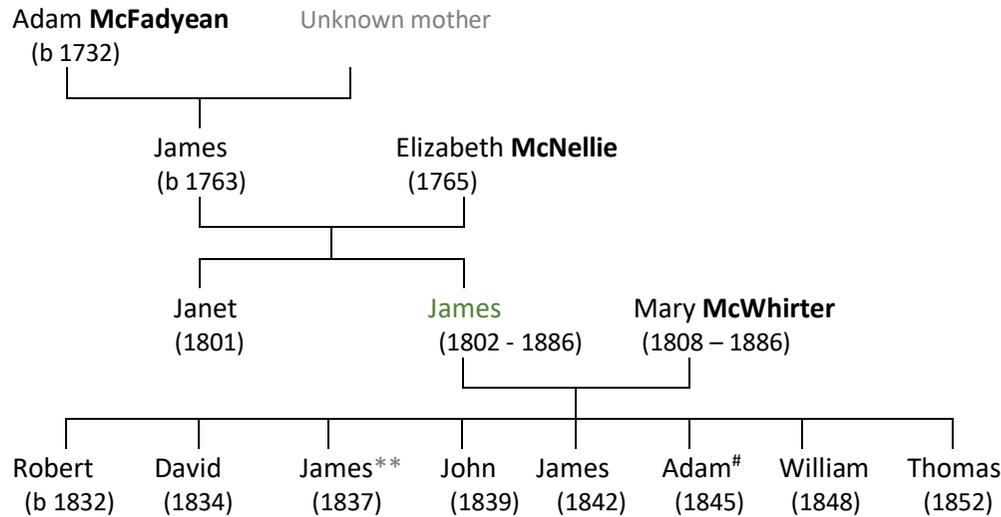
And long before them, **Janet McTurk** at Shiel of Castlemaddie, then a croft



It is the surviving children (at the time of William McTurk's death) of these cousins of William who each received the £33 legacy.

**Robert & Janet McTurk were the residents at Shiel of Castlemaddie croft.**

The family tree of **James McFadyean**



\*\*The repeat use of James in 1842 indicates that this James died very young, before the birth of the younger James.

# As was the case for many families, Adam and his wife had a son (Herbert) who lost his life at Flanders in WW1.