

Tron Doras

Paton Family History and Folklore



Forward

June 29, 2019
Millarville, Alberta

Tron Doras – Scots Gaelic; “through a doorway “.

Tomorrow morning, we will step through a portal and travel seven generations into the past. We leave Calgary at 6:45AM and will arrive in Scotland, in the year 1811. My Great, Great, Great Grandfather, William Paton will be there to greet us. Together, we will wander through the Scottish Lowlands in a quest to uncover Paton family roots.



Very little of the Paton family pre-Canadian, history is recorded. A few birth, death and marriage certificates survive, and we have some church and immigration records, which shed light on historical *time* and *place*. The recorded history establishes that the family lived near Glasgow, Scotland in the early 19th century, and made their living through agriculture. The few tangible records we have are invaluable in dating and placing the family in history but the generational conversation - stories passed from parent to child through the years, bring our history to life.

What follows is a blend of historical fact and family folklore. I hope that the facts are evident, and that the folklore is a genuine echo of the stories as they were first told.

While I have the privilege of relaying this history, the real work has been done by Shirley Erskine, who has spent a lifetime compiling a comprehensive genealogy and historical record, and by my father Adrian Paton, who guards the family folklore. What you are about to read is a testament to their dedication to perpetuating the Paton/Erskine family heritage.

I write this for the living, about those who came before, but my hope is that Paton's yet to be born will benefit from this record.

To know where you come from is to know where you are going.

Russell Paton

Nuts and Acorns

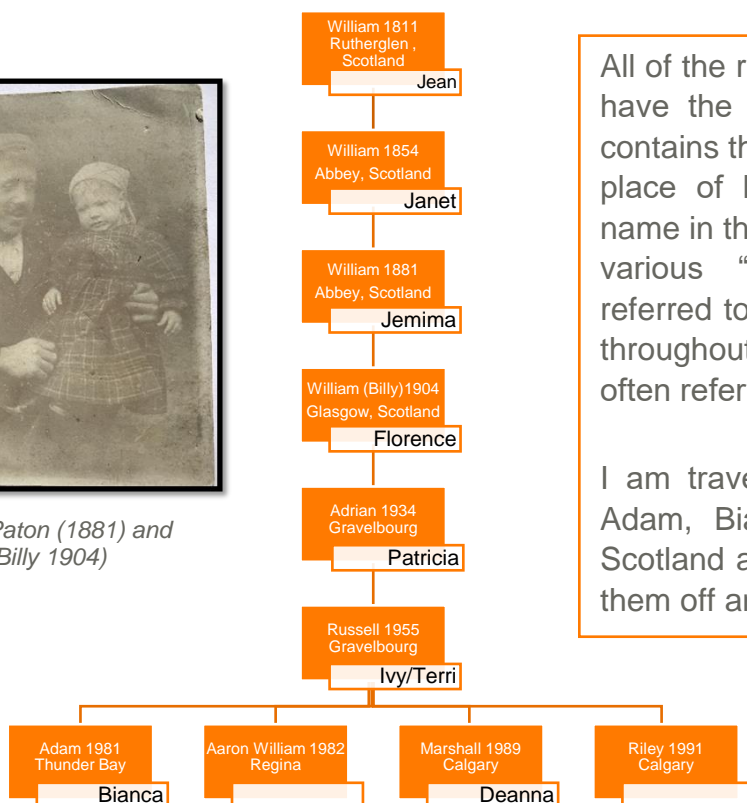
June 30, 2019
 Millarville, Alberta

The genealogical record that Shirley Erskine has compiled depicts a mature family tree with a solid trunk, majestic branches and abundant leaves; with a few nuts and acorns scattered in the foliage. Shirley's 64 pages of fine print conveys an epic family history.

The record I am gathering is confined to only a single sliver of that tree - the one that extends from our earliest known Paton ancestor, in a direct line to me and my progeny.



William Paton (1881) and William (Billy) 1904



All of the relatives in the boxes on the left have the surname "Paton". Each box contains their first name, year of birth and place of birth, with their spouse's first name in the overlapping box. To keep the various "Williams" straight, each is referred to by his name and year of birth throughout this record. William 1904 is often referred to as "Billy".

I am traveling with Terri (a.k.a "Bear"). Adam, Bianca and Aaron are also in Scotland and we will be intersecting with them off and on during the trip.

I will leave it to the reader to decide which are the nuts, and which are acorns.

Happy Birthday William!

June 30, 300019 BCE
Awash Valley, Africa

Paton Family history started where all hominid life began, in Africa.



Life on earth had been evolving for approximately 4 billion years when Lucy (pictured on the left) was born. Lucy lived in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia approximately 3.2 million years ago; she is of the hominid species *Australopithecus*. Lucy's wonderfully preserved remains were discovered by an archaeological team in 1974.

But Lucy isn't our direct ancestor. She was part of a complex web of creatures that culminated in our species, *homo sapiens*.

The fellow on the right lived and died in the Jebel Irhoud region of Morocco. His skull is the first known fossil record of our *Homo sapiens* ancestors. In fact, today is his birthday! June 30, 300019 BCE.



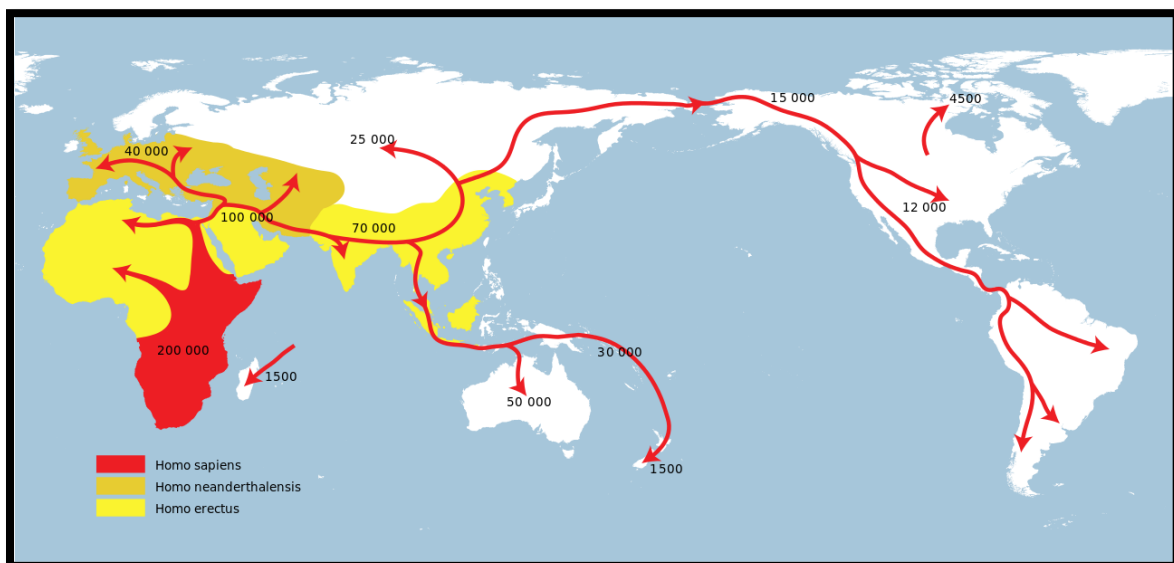
Lucy is named after the *Beatles* song, *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, which was popular at the time of her discovery. Based upon Paton family naming traditions, the handsome fellow on the right's name was probably William.

Happy Birthday William!

William the 10,000th.

Unknown date, 1811 River Clyde Valley, Scotland

William of Africa, and his *Homo sapiens* (“wise men”) descendants began to grow restless. Advancing technology in weaponry, tools, shelter and language allowed them to indulge their migratory tendencies. In approximately 200,000 BCE, they started to drift off the African continent. Over the course of the next 180,000 years *Homo sapiens* explored and populated every square mile of habitable land, on six continents.



Some of William of Africa’s descendants chose to wander north-westward through Europe. They spread across the continent, then crossed the English Channel and ultimately settled in the River Clyde Valley in what is now Scotland. While much of Europe was populated as early as 40,000 BCE, the British Isles remained covered in ice. William’s descendant clans were forced to wait until approximately 12,000 BCE to make their push into Scotland.

The nomadic existence of William the Scot’s stone-age forbearers gave way to a more settled lifestyle in the Neolithic, or New Stone Age period starting in 4000 BCE. Settlers cleared forested areas to make room for permanent villages and began to sew crops rather than relying on hunting and gathering, as their forefathers had.

Neolithic William of Clyde was our first ancestor to farm.



Young William of Clyde and his wife worked their farm near the river and together they sired another 200 generations of Scottish William's.

Neolithic William of Clyde,
became Bronze Age William,
then Iron Age William,
then Middle Ages William,
who became Early Modern William.

More than 10,000 generations after William of Africa, my Great, Great, Great Grandfather William Paton (1811) was born, near a bend in the River Clyde, at Rutherglen, Scotland.



William 1811 is the first "Paton" for which written historical records exist. The 9,999 William's who came before him are purely speculative, but we know for certain that William 1811 and his wife Jean existed.....

otherwise, I wouldn't be here to write these words.

Breadcrumbs

July 1, 2019
Edinburgh Airport

I looked around the welcome lounge as we disembarked, half expecting to see a weathered farmer, with bright blue eyes, and a wooden sign with “Paton” hand-painted on it. But Great, Great, Great Grandpa William was not going to make it that easy for us. In the tradition of Paton self-reliance, Wm has chosen to let us discover family roots on our own. But he did leave a trail of breadcrumbs for us to follow.

For the next two weeks we will pursue a trail of evidentiary family artefacts and Paton-family folklore across our ancestral homeland. We will look for traces of Paton existence, explore known sites and attempt to connect family folklore with the places we find.

We will be traveling in a rented Ford with the steering wheel on the right side, and the road on the wrong side. My stupid hand will be controlling the gearbox as we propel the car down narrow roads and confusing clockwise roundabouts. Watch out for us.....

as we gather up the breadcrumbs.



No photo record of William 1811 exists, which is not surprising considering that personal cameras were not commercially available until 1888.

This photo, of William 1854 ploughing a field in Scotland is the oldest family photo record we have. The date is uncertain but, based upon Wm’s estimated age, it was probably taken in the early 1890’s.

Wm seems pleased with his new 2-horse-powered plow.

Going Home

Spring of 2019 Millarville, AB

In the months leading up to our trip to Scotland I interviewed Dad and other senior family members. We reviewed family photographs and retold family folklore. I followed up with some on-line research and was able to piece together a sepia-toned, family collage of people, places and events. Paton family history is concentrated in an area southeast of Glasgow, with the epicentre at Old Kilpatrick.

These two photographs are of Paton ancestors in Scotland, circa 1907. The little fellow below is my Grandpa William “Billie” (1904). On the right is Billie with his father, my Great Grandpa William (1881). The images were captured in the months before they emigrated to Canada. In the photo on the right, Billie is holding a bag of penny candy.



I have seen these images many times over the past 60 years and wondered where the house was located. I also speculated about what life might have been like for

our ancestors at the time the photos were taken.

Our mission in traveling to Scotland is to get a sense of *place* - to immerse ourselves in the lives of our ancestors.

It will be wonderful to have my eldest sons travelling with us to explore our history and dig up family roots.

We intend to take a lot of pictures, and

.... I might even buy them a bag of candy.



Having studied Shirley Erskine's in-depth family record and harvested Dad's recollection of family lore about our ancestral Scottish home, the sum-total of information we could come up with to identify the house and its whereabouts was this:



- Three generations of Paton's lived in a tenement house, which they called "Gavin Cottage", near Old Kilpatrick, Scotland.
- The family posed for the pictures on the previous page some time before they emigrated to Canada in May of 1908.
- We have a church attendance card (left) from 1904 – 1907 that has a handwritten, single-word address for William 1881 and Jemima – "Gavinburn". Attendance dates are stamped on the back.
- Dad wrote the following excerpt in a family history (The "Jim" he is referring to is his uncle, son of William 1854): *"Jim remembers a castle on the far side of the Clyde River. He couldn't remember the name of the lord who lived there but he believed that he was the owner of the farm where his father worked. Jim remembers a large stone house where the farm foreman and his family lived. Jim's family and the other farm*

labourer families lived in a long row of attached stone buildings; the end compartments of this long building housed the livestock."

- The house was near enough to the River Clyde that William (1881) and Billie could watch the ships coming and going on the river.
- Legend also has it that the family could "hear the sounds of shipbuilding from their house".

We did not have an address for Gavinburn so, considering it has been 115 years since the Paton family left the place, I was resigned to the fact that our chances of finding it were slim, if Gavin Cottage still existed at all.



Pencil drawing of Gavinburn Cottage

On a whim, I Googled “Gavinburn” to see what might pop up and, to my astonishment, this is what emerged!



Not only is Gavinburn cottage still standing, it has been lovingly restored as a vacation Inn, called *Gavinburn Holiday Cottages*. I conducted some further research and found that the correlation to our family data is astonishing:

- Gavinburn Cottage is located on a hillside, just north of Old Kilpatrick Church where Wm 1881 and Jemima Paton worshipped.
- There is a clear, 180° view of the River Clyde from the property.
- There was shipbuilding-related industry all along the riverbank from Clydebank to Kilpatrick, so the sounds of shipbuilding would have been audible from Gavinburn.
- Gavinburn is a long, stone, building, with three entrance doors, two in front and one in the back.
- It was built in the Victorian Era, circa 1820.
- The cottage was originally known as High Gavinburn and was built to house estate workers by Lord Blantyre who lived across the Clyde at Mar Hall. Mar Hall looks much like a castle (pictured below).
- The stonework around the doorway of Gavinburn Cottage matches the stone pattern in the doorway of the family photos.



Mar Hall - Home of Lord Blantyre

I contacted the proprietor of the vacation rental and was informed that they have five rental units; two suites in a new building and three in the original house. The only vacancy in July was in the smaller of the two suites in the old building.



It took no time at all to decide that we wanted to stay at Gavinburn for the week available.



Gavinburn Cottage has undergone extensive renovation over the years, but we will be sleeping under the same roof as our ancestors.

It feels like Going Home.

If These Walls Could Talk...

July 9, 2019

Gavinburn, Old Kilpatrick, Scotland

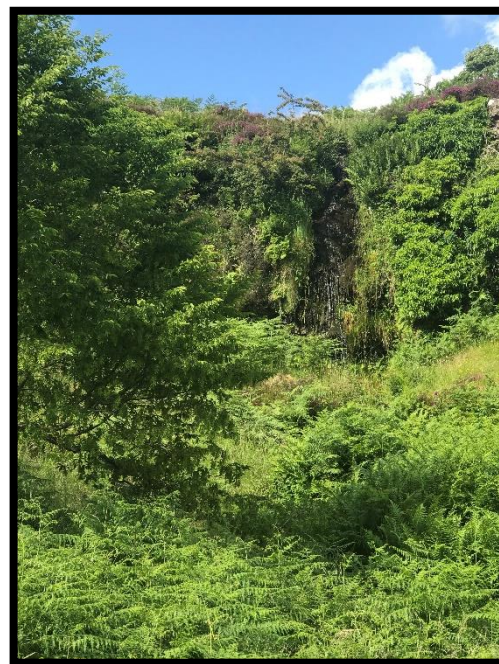
The walls of Gavinburn are made of stone but, if you pay close enough attention, they tell a compelling story, in a rumbling lowlands brogue.



The first sound you hear as you step onto the property is silence, then the “burn” speaks. There is a constant trickle of water running from a waterfall in the hills to the north, it meanders through the meadow and past the cottage. It trickles under the road then wanders through a pasture,



past the “hairy coos” and the sheep and on to the town. The burn empties into the River Clyde but everything it touches along the way turns to Gavinburn; Gavinburn Cottage, Gavinburn School, Gavinburn Gardens, Place and Street.



Water from this stream nurtured and sustained the occupants of Gavinburn, it is the source of the lifeblood of the Paton family.

Looking outward from Gavinburn, the views in every direction are stunning. So much so that I can't describe them, so I will let them speak for themselves:



*"There's No Other Place
Like This Place Anywhere
Near This Place, So This
Must Be the Place" –
Thomas Giddings*



I had a little chat with the exterior roof on about the fourth day at Gavinburn. It told me that the interior might have been quite different in 1906. There are a total of 10 chimneys on the roof; all but three of them are capped and not in use. I think what the roof was telling me is that there were once many suites in this building, which fits more precisely with how the building was described to Dad. He was aware that Great Grandpa shared the building with the farm foreman, but also thought that there were many workers in a “row of houses”.

There are only three entrances to the building but there may have been as many as ten families occupying the space. I am not fluent in roof-speak, but I think that is what it said.

The inside of the cottage has undergone extensive restructuring, but the thick windowsills, steep stairs and sloped roof of the upper floor retain some of the original 19th century character. The fireplaces that remain have been retrofitted with wood-burning stove inserts within the original firebox, and indoor plumbing has replaced primitive fixtures. Despite these modern attributes, the interior walls still voice a muffled testament to what life must have been like here when Grandpa paddled his bare feet across these wooden floors.



There is a modern double cottage just to the east of the original building. It is located on one of the only other flat spots on the property. While I was investigating the cottage, the burn and the pasture, I overheard a few indistinct words from the foundation of the new building. I turned in that direction and noticed that part of the base of the building is much older than the rest. It is made of the same stone as the house foundation, but much rougher and with less artistry to the grout. The foundation wall seemed to be telling me that it was once a barn.



This doesn't fit exactly with Dad's recollection that the barn was attached to the end of the house. The building is very close to the house, with the burn running between, but they are not attached. The location is slightly downhill from the house, on the edge of the pasture, with ample water, and would have been an ideal site for a milk-house/barn.



There was one more clue with respect to the potential location of the barn. Someone in the distant past has excavated a small reservoir (left) where water from the burn could be redirected. In times of low rainfall, the basin would have been an ideal resource for livestock water.

Again, Gavinburn's comments were muffled by time, with Gaelic influences, but I believe I heard correctly.



While some of the voices coming from Gavinburn's walls are difficult to comprehend, the expressions emanating from this doorway were loud and clear.



When I first saw the doorways of Gavinburn on the internet, I had a hard time believing that one of them could be the very door where Great Grandpa and Billy were standing in the old family photos. There is a lot of brick and stone in Scotland, and Gavinburn's doorways are not unique in their design. And yet, I held out hope that, when I got to Gavinburn and had a close inspection, I would make a tangible connection to our family's past.

It was dusk when we arrived, and I was preoccupied with the usual debarkation duties. I glanced at the doorway of our suite, as I bullied the suitcases through it, and decided that doorway was probably not the one I have memorised from the family photo; a disappointment I slept on the first night.

I was up before sunrise the next morning and took a stroll with my coffee to the suite next door. I had my "Grandpa" picture open on my phone, but I didn't need it. The rockwork was a perfect match!

I heard a lot of voices emanating from inside. My grandfather's ever kindly words, Great Grandma saying "Ach, it's grand" and Great Grandpa's lilting aged expressions, heard a lifetime ago.

My reaction was profound.....

How much I miss them!

Postscript

July 12, 2019

Gavinburn

On our last day at Gavinburn I had an opportunity to talk to our host, Alex, and to a farmer tending the Highland cattle. Alex said that there were once fireplaces in various rooms of the cottage but could not elaborate on the original layout. He was not sure how many families lived here at one time.

The farmer was a lifetime area resident. He was a wealth of information about the farm and the region. He confirmed my suspicion about the barn location - there were once two barns where the new cottage now stands. They were torn down about 20 years ago to make room for the addition of the new cottages, which were built on part of the old barn foundation.

But he corrected me on the use of the reservoir beside the burn. It was excavated about the same time the barns were demolished, but its intended use was for fire prevention, not livestock. He said it never worked for either purpose, as the water drains out as fast as it is directed in.

The farmer and I chatted for some time, about agriculture, local history, and life in general. He had a very warm and positive demeanour, much like Grandpa Billie. Like I said,....

there must be something in the water.

Post-Postscript

July 12, 2019

Gavinburn

I had taken a couple of Dad's books along on the trip. I left one for each of Alex and the farmer (I wish I remembered his name).

Adam Paddy Paddy

July 7, 2019

Old Kilpatrick, Scotland

We don't know which William first used the surname "Paton", but it was likely one of the Middle Ages' Williams. Most research points to the origin of the name as a derivative of "Son of Patrick", but there is a slightly altered theory:

The heaviest concentration of the use of the surname Paton is in southwest Scotland, around what was once known as Old Kilpatrick parish. The parish was named after Saint Patrick who was born there in approximately 385 AD. There is a high degree of possibility that our name was derived as a place name rather than a familial lineage name.



Saint Patrick is most often identified with Ireland, despite his Scottish origin. He rose from slave of the Irish to their patron saint. Patrick often used a clover leaf in his preaching as a symbol of the trinity, an emblem that is still prominent in Irish imagery.



Old Kilpatrick Church – There are several 19th century Paton graves just behind the church.

Among the miracles Patrick is said to have performed to achieve sainthood are:

- Banishing snakes from Ireland,
- Transforming his walking stick into a tree, and
- Communicating with the dead.

Adam Patrick Paton, our eldest son, got a double dose of *Patrick*, his middle name is in honour of my Mom, Patricia, and Paton; a person from St. Patrick's parish.

With a name like that, Adam should have no trouble with snakes.

Town

July 10, 2019
Old Kilpatrick

There is so much remarkable architecture in Scotland that nondescript, three-story buildings, like the one below, go largely unnoticed. I didn't pay much attention to it as we wandered around Old Kilpatrick, until I realized what it was.



Gavinburn Terrace was erected in 1904. It is located on what was then known as Main Street, between Gavinburn Place and Gavinburn Street. Old Kilpatrick Church is one block east across Main Street, and Gavinburn School is one block to the west.

The Clydesdale Bank once occupied the east corner and a general merchant was

established in the west corner. There was a dairy located next door to the bank.

For the Paton family, living at Gavinburn Cottage just up the hill, in 1906, this would have been "town".



The building is about a mile from Gavinburn, *as the crow floats*, to use a local phrase. It would have been a short mile on the way there, but a difficult climb up the hill on the way home. I suspect that the path to town would have followed the burn, as that is the most direct route.

It isn't hard to imagine that William 1881 would have kept his savings for the trip to Canada at the Clydesdale Bank. Grandma, the milkmaid, surely frequented the dairy with deliveries of cream. In fact, if you squint your eyes just a little, the family beside the cart in front of the dairy in the picture on the previous page could be the Patons.



The bag of penny candy wee Billy is holding in the famous family photo surely came from the merchant on the corner.



The west corner of the building is still occupied by a retailer. We stopped and bought a bag of candy there. It cost 100 times more than Billy's and was probably not as sweet.

We asked the store owner where we might find books on the history of Old Kilpatrick. He directed us to "Donald and Julie" at what used to be the Clydesdale Bank, at the other end of the building. Donald, a financial adviser/historian, has set up an office where the bank was once located and offers historical as well as financial advice. There were some brochures on hand, but Julie said that "someone picked up the last copy of the history book to give to a Canadian couple staying at Gavinburn"!

We had met the couple the night before and mentioned our quest. They said they would drop off some historical material, which they did.

People don't get any friendlier than the folks in this town.



Gavinburn Terrace has additional historical significance, but much older. Old Kilpatrick is on the westerly end of the Antonine Wall, a Roman fortification. The wall was built during the years 172 CE to 185 CE. It ended precisely where Gavinburn Terrace now stands. A Roman fort was located just to the west.

Wee Billy and his parents would have strolled right over Roman artefacts, uncovered when Gavinburn Gardens housing development was built in the 1920's.

Schoolyard Bullies

July 10, 2019
Old Kilpatrick, Scotland

There is a family legend about James Erskine Paton b1897: *“Jim started school in Scotland. He walked about a mile. He can recall that the farm foreman’s children as well as others went to the same school. One class was in Gaelic, with Gaelic songs. Jim said that he was not fond of that class”*.



The local history books the friendly couple gave us have been a treasure-trove of information. One had an article about Gavinburn School, and a picture as it would have looked when Jim Paton attended, singing those dreaded Gaelic songs.



We were wandering around the schoolyard, not suspecting that there would be anyone about in July, but we were approached by a friendly teacher. When we explained to him what we were doing, he invited us into the school to have a look at a memorial plaque.

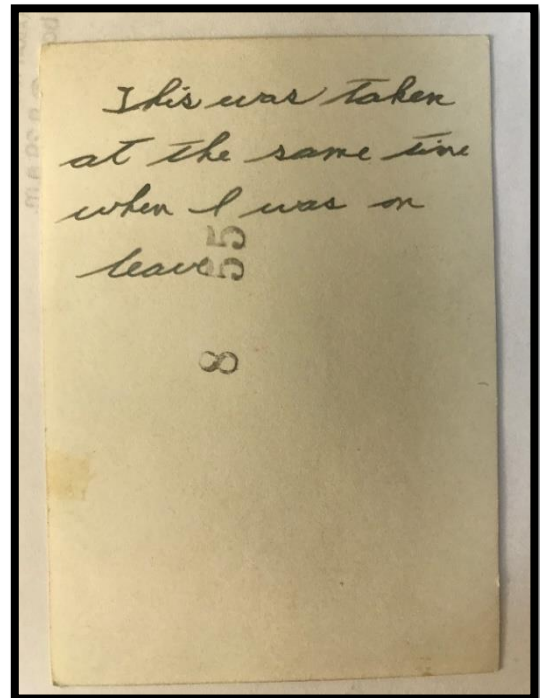


On March 13, 1941, Gavinburn School was mistaken for a factory by the German Luftwaffe and destroyed in a WWII bombing raid. Fortunately, the raid was conducted at night, so the school was empty. Having said that, 535 people died that night in other parts of Old Kilpatrick.

James Erskine Paton had emigrated to Canada by that time and was well out of harm's way. But, his nephew, James Gilbert Paton, was in the Canadian army, serving in Europe during the war. Jim sometimes travelled to Scotland to stay with family while on leave from active duty.



James Gilbert Paton centre, in uniform. On leave in Scotland, with unknown relatives.



There is no date on this picture, so it is not possible to tell if Jim was in Old Kilpatrick to witness the Gavinburn School bombing.



Jim Paton spent almost five years in Europe during the war. He did his very best to defeat Hitler.....

and his schoolyard bullies.

An Outward Sign of an Inward Grace

July 7, 2019
Old Kilpatrick, Scotland



The two cards on the left, from Old Kilpatrick Church, are some of the oldest Paton family records. They tell a marvellous story:

The “William Paton” and “Mrs. Paton” referred to are my Great Grandparents, Wm 1881 and Jemima. Their address is simply stated as “Gavinburn”.

These are token cards for the Spring, Summer and Winter Sacraments. The dates stamped on the back may be a

receipt of sorts for tithing on those special days each year. The cards indicate that the Patons attended Old Kilpatrick Church from 1904 to 1907.

Sacrament is described in the bible as “an outward sign of an inward grace”. It is also a day when special ceremonies, like a christening, might take place. Billie (Wm 1904) would have been two months old on 6 November 1904, so it is probable that he was christened at the service on that date. Annie was born at Gavinburn Cottage on 29 October 1906, so she would have been five weeks old on 4 November 1906. Again, it is likely that that was the date of her christening service.

Wm. Paton’s card is stamped more often than Mrs. Paton’s. This could mean that he was more devout than she, but it most likely indicates that he made the offering in the family name on those dates and only his card was stamped.

The last date stamp is 10 June 1907 - the family emigrated to Canada on May 30, 1908. It is hard to imagine that the Paton’s would not have attended church in the months leading up to their departure. They would have wanted to say goodbye to neighbours and friends – perhaps ask for Divine assistance with their passage to Canada.

Bear and I attended Sunday service at Old Kilpatrick Church this morning. We assumed that two strangers with odd accents might stand out in the congregation, but there was a large contingent of newcomers on hand for a christening. We were far less conspicuous than we had anticipated so we were able to settle in and observe the service, in relative anonymity.

I anticipated that a protestant, Church of Scotland, service in 2019 would not differ much from the ritual my ancestors would have witnessed in 1906, and I still hold that opinion. Bible verses have not changed and many of the hymns are timeless. The young minister today may have chosen different passages for his sermon than the Patons heard, but the premise of “faith as a virtue” and “belief in miracles” remain unaltered.

The service officially commenced at 11:00, but regular parishioners started showing up well before that. They went through a practiced ritual of meeting, greeting and well-wishing, much like I assume the Patons and their neighbours would have, more than a century ago. Most of the flock were seniors, dressed in their Sunday best; they seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the timeless routine.

The two Canadian outlanders in the crowd were unbegrudgingly accepted into the congregation. In fact, we were treated to candy from a plastic bag, just like everybody else, by a kindly lady in a lively frock. She circled every pew exchanging good cheer and sweets with everybody in attendance.

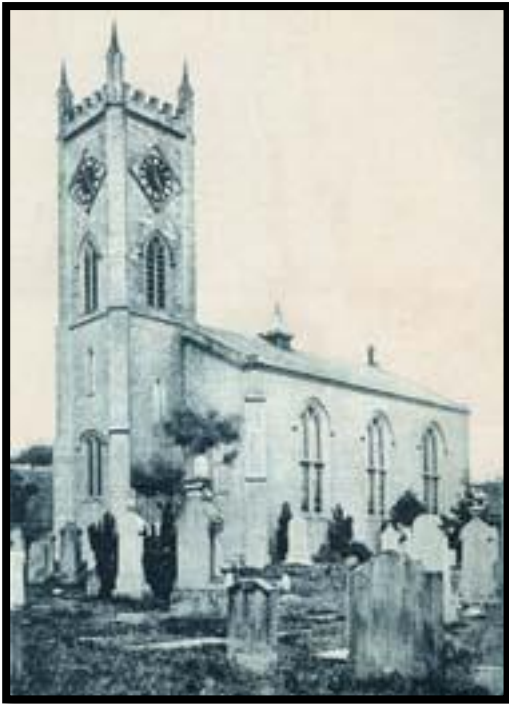
Truly, an Outward Sign of an Inward Grace.

All the dates stamped on the Token cards above are a Sunday, except the last one. I get the feeling that the church secretary may have rolled his date stamper one cog too far that day....

an outward sign of gracelessness.



The first Old Kilpatrick Church, sometime before 1812, when it was destroyed by fire.



Old Kilpatrick Church, then and now.



Gravestones of 19th century Patons, in Old Kilpatrick Churchyard



A Wee But an' Ben

July 8, 2019.

Gavinburn, Scotland

There is a bit of family lore that goes:

" Wm. Paton (1881) sometimes tended sheep in the hills north of the River Clyde. When he did so, he lived in a "wee but an' ben."

A *but an' ben* is a Scottish peasant's cottage, with a romanticized aura.

In a purely physical sense, it is a two-room cottage with a single entrance; the *but* being the main room, where the family prepared food and slept. The *ben* is the anterior room, reserved for company and special occasions.

Metaphorically, *but an' ben* is a term used for any residence of rural folk. It is often romanticized as a symbol of a simple life.



To be *far ben* with one means to be a close friend, someone who was regularly admitted to the ben.

Aaron and I encountered this well-worn but an' ben while hiking in the hills near Gavinburn. I assume it is much like the herder's shack great grandpa would have stayed in while tending sheep in the hills. It is just a shack, but it would have been warm and dry, a peaceful place to gaze out over the hills and contemplate the future.



The decisions made in the wee but an' ben in the summers leading up to 1908 resonate through the ages for the Paton clan.



Aaron and I – rockin’ the *highlander* look.



Sir Harry Lauder wrote these heart-warming words in a song, in 1911:

*Just a wee deoch an’ doris, afore ye gang awa’;
There’s a wee wifie waitin’ in a wee but an’ ben....*

A young man agrees to a customary drink at the door (deoch an doris) before departing, but he is anxious to get back to his but an’ ben and his wee wifie waiting.

Since the *but* and the *ben* constituted the whole house, *but an’ ben* can also mean *everywhere*. Robbie Burns used *but and ben* in one of his poems, as a metaphor for *everywhere*:

*Blithe, blithe and merry was she,
Blithe was she but and ben:
Blithe by the banks of Ern,
And blithe in Glenturit glen.*

We are having a wonderful time in Scotland,
blithe are we, but and ben.

Lord of the Manor

July 7, 2019
Erskine, Scotland

There is another piece of Paton family lore that goes:

“Wm Paton (1854) and his family lived at Gavinburn Cottage near Kilpatrick Scotland on land owned by a Lord. The Lord’s castle was located across the river”.

This tidbit of information has passed down the generations, but little else was known of the Lord or his castle.

By yet another strange twist of fate, Adam and Bianca have booked a few nights at a resort called Mar Hall. Mar Hall, as it turns out, is the “castle” referred to in the Paton lore.

I started my research on Mar Hall with Alex, the current owner of Gavinburn Cottage. He informed me that the cottage and the land around it was once owned by a Lord Blantyre. His manor house, Mar Hall, is located across the River Clyde, in Erskine parish.



In the early 17th century, the Earls Blantyre came into ownership of the Erskine estate. Robert Walter Stuart, the 11th Earl of Blantyre, commissioned the building of Mar Hall in 1828, naming it after his ancestors, the Earls of Mar.

Granite from a local quarry was used to build the outer structure but Blantyre insisted on nothing less than Quebec Oak for the interior finishing.

Unfortunately, the 11th Earl of Blantyre would never live in Mar Hall. Robert Stuart had the misfortune of being shot dead by a musket ball

while standing in a hotel room window in Brussels during the Belgian civil war, in 1830.

Charles Stuart, the 12th Lord of Blantyre completed the building and lived there until his death in 1900. Charles Stuart would have been the “Lord” referred to in the Paton family legend, and Mar Hall was his “castle”.

Charles Stuart had no male heirs, so a dispute arose over the succession of the Earldom upon his death. The schism in the family line resulted in two holders of the title, a male as well as a female. That dispute would have been ongoing when wee Billy Paton lived at Gavinburn in 1904.

The building lay empty around that time, while the peerage was being sorted out. In 1916 the government of the UK acquired ownership; Mar Hall was renovated and opened as the *Princess Louise Scottish Hospital for Limbless Sailors and Soldiers*. Some time after WWII, when there were no more limbs to reattach to soldiers, Mar Hall underwent a third transformation to a resort hotel.

Adam will be the first, and only, Paton to have slept in the castle owned by the Lord of the land on which the Paton family toiled for generations.

Sleep tight m' Laird



Billy, you Rascal!

July 7, 2019
Gavinburn Cottage

I don't believe in spirits or ghosts, but I have to say, living in Gavinburn this week, I am feeling a presence, real or imagined. Our ancestors lived within these walls; they labored in the fields nearby, looked out over the same view, and interacted as a family here. I feel their presence, particularly last night.

It doesn't get very dark in Scotland, in fact at 2:30AM, when I got up to go to the bathroom, there was enough gloom that I never bothered to turn on a light. I wandered down the stairs to the toilet and swung the door but didn't latch it. Enough light filtered through the window to find the bowl and do my business.

As I was standing there, feeling a little uneasy to begin with, the door swung open on its own and bumped me on the back. The "presence" got very real until I figured out what had happened.

As I trembled up the stairs, to the relative safety of 'under the covers', I imagined wee Billy had played a trick on me.....

....the rascal!



Stooking

July 11, 2019
Clydebank, Scotland

Family Lore: The Patons could hear the sounds of shipbuilding from Gavinburn. And, young Billy could recognize and name many of the ships coming and going on the River Clyde.



The photo on the left was taken Thursday June 7, 1906 on the occasion of the launch of the Lusitania at Clydebank.

Cunard Ship Lines started building the Lusitania, the largest ship ever built to that date, in August of 1904, just when Billy Paton was born. The 787-foot, 31,550-ton behemoth under construction at Clydebank Harbour, just down the road from Billy's home near Kilpatrick, would surely have been an attraction.

I imagine that William 1881, his pregnant wife (with Annie), and young son Billie might have attended the 1906 launch. Perhaps they are some of the folks dressed in their finery with their backs to the camera.

I also found this fascinating photo of farmers stooking grain on the banks of the River Clyde. The man on the right is gazing across the river at the Lusitania, in production at John Brown's shipyard. The photo was taken in the fall of 1905.

The men in the picture are not Paton's. They appear to be in their 20's or 30's, approximately the same age as Wm 1881 was at the time, but they are on the wrong side of the river. The Paton farm was on the north side of the Clyde, the same side as John Brown's shipyard.



These handsome, hardworking men are harvesting on the Erskine side of the river - so they could be related through that branch of the family. But, even if there is no family connection, the photo is rife with situational and historical significance.

William 1881 was probably doing the same kind of work, on the same day, in the same general area, as these men were;

stooking.



View of Erskine Bridge and the River Clyde, from Gavinburn

Brownie's Sway

July 12, 2019
Gavinburn, Scotland

Family Legend: *“James Erskine Paton, born 1897 Castle Hill Scotland, remembered his mother cooking bread on a hearth. There was a big-handled pot that hung near the hearth and could be swung in and out of the heat. Jim remembered pulling the bread apart to eat it rather than cut it.”*

It is curious how a benign memory like this can travel through the ages – it has been 122 years since Uncle Jim (as I knew him) was born, yet the story of his mother cooking bread over an open fire is still part of our family lore.



The hook over the hearth must have been a prominent feature in 19th century Scottish homes. It is mentioned in a folklore tale that resonates through the ages.

The story goes that every Scottish house had an occasional resident fairy called a Brownie. When he visited the house, the Brownie would sit in the “Brownie’s seat” or “Brownie’s sway”, as the notch at the end of the hook was called. If the hook moved residents would know that the Brownie was present.

Brownies were not considered a particularly good or bad omen – they were just there. The Brownie was often blamed for missing items or small household accidents, but he was also considered a portent of good luck. It was necessary to leave small gifts of food and cream if the householder wished the Brownie to return.

When I was very young, our house had a little fellow who often came to visit. He was never referred to as a Brownie; we didn’t have an open hearth or a Brownie’s sway for him to sit in, but he was a very real presence in our lives. In fact, this particular fairy had a name – Johnny Conory.



Johnny often showed up at bedtime. As he tucked us in, Dad would recite some adventure that Johnny had experienced that day – a narrow escape from a cat, a downpour that had washed out his match-box house and floated it down the river, or getting lost and finding his way back to the dump (where his tiny house was located).

Johnny Conory stories had a decidedly “Saskatchewan” bias to them. There were often gophers and droughts and thunderstorms involved.

I asked Dad about Johnny before we left on this trip. Johnny Conory was passed down to Dad from Grandpa Billie, and I expect from William Paton’s long before.

Long may he Live.



Scots have another folklore spirit they call a Kelpie. It takes the form of a horse, or a human.

Chalk Flowers

July 12, 2019
Gavinburn, Scotland

Family Legends: *Great Grandma Jemima was a milkmaid at Gavinburn. Her duties would have included milking cows, mucking out the barn, separating (cream from milk) and churning (butter). Dad said that he was skilled at milking, but his grandma was even faster.*

Jemima told a story that the floors of the milking parlour at Gavinburn were cobble. Once they were cleaned and had dried, she and her sister would draw floral patterns on the parlour floor with chalk.

Again, more benign memories, but they have persisted through the ages.



Grandma Jemima lived to 105 years. The last time I visited her, when she was only 104, I asked her how she was enjoying the retirement villa she lived in. Her answer, in her lilting Scottish accent, has become a mantra for me on 'how to live for more than a century';

“Ach, it’s lovely. The people are grand, the food is grand, I have many friends here. - Lovely, quite lovely!”

Grandma’s pervasive “Paton” attitude is the reason why our family tree is covered in flowers and....

Lovely, quite lovely!

Great Grandma Jemima, on her 100th birthday.



Milking cows by hand is a dying art. I am probably the last generation in our family to have done it. So, speaking of family legends, I would like to add this story in the hope that it will carry on for a generation or two:

I was milking our Guernsey cow after school one day, when I was about 13. Brownie (no relation) was a calm beast, but a wasp landed on her belly, and she gave a great kick with the leg I was working beside. The milk cow's foot landed in the pail, I gave her a kick to get it out and she gave me a kick back.

The pail went flying and I landed in the gutter, covered in manure.

I stormed off to the house with the bent, empty milk pail in tow. Mom met me on the step and burst into laughter, which irritated me almost as much as the muck on my face.

What I attempted to say was:

"She stuck her foot in my pail!"

What came out was:

"She fucker stoot in my pail!"

Mom stopped laughing just long enough to exclaim:

"I don't care what the cow did, there is no reason for language like that!"



Pure Raspberry Jam

July 11, 2019
Old Kilpatrick, Scotland

Family Legend: “William 1881 was ‘Head Plowman’, at Gavinburn. He told a story about hauling turnips in a hand cart to a factory that made ‘Pure Raspberry Jam’. Wm knew that the jam was laced with turnip and therefore not ‘Pure’.”

The Legend continues: “Asked if grandma went with him when he made deliveries to the waterfront, he said; ‘No, you wouldn’t take a woman down there’. Apparently, the sailors were very rough. He said they had rings in their ears and carried knives.”

We were not able to find any trace of a jam factory in or around Old Kilpatrick. Maybe their jam was of such poor quality that they quickly went out of business.

There were many other prosperous businesses in the town, back in the day, particularly on the riverfront. The major shipbuilding yard in the area was John Brown’s, at Clydebank, but there was a small shipbuilder in Old Kilpatrick. Napier and Miller’s shipyard produced 123 light ships and was likely the source of the “sounds of shipbuilding” mentioned in that family legend.

The Erskine Ferry was also a busy spot on the river. Before it was replaced by the Erskine Bridge, the ferry was the only way to the south shore of the Clyde, west of Glasgow.



The Forth and Clyde Canal runs through Scotland, from the Firth of Forth to the Firth of Clyde. (Try saying that quickly, without swearing).

Bear and I spent some time on the waterfront, enjoying the scenery, ...



... and a scone, with Pure Raspberry Jam.

The Flat Cap

July 12, 2019
Newmains, Scotland



Great Grandma's brother worked in an iron foundry near the shipyard. He is one of the capped labourers in this photo. We don't know which, but he probably looked a lot like the handsome fellow below.

Aaron was working in France in June this year. His job finished just as we arrived in Scotland, so he joined us during our stay at Gavinburn and other Scotland locals. Aaron carries the time-honoured "William" as his second name.

I doubt that any of the Great Greats ever rode a motorcycle across the lowlands, but they surely had the same adventurous spirit as this William.



And they all look great in the flat cap.

I don't think Aaron, or his brother Adam had much fun on this trip....,

or maybe too much.



Fortunately, they had Bianca as their tour guide and ...

voice of reason.

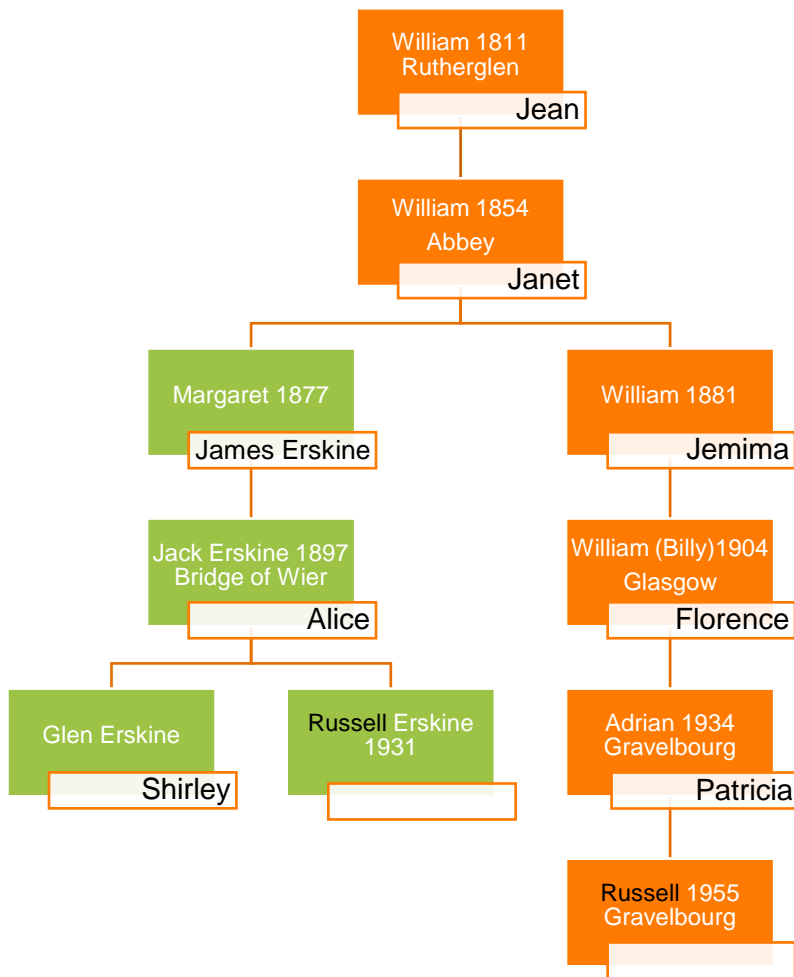
Speaking of time travel, when I put on the flat cap I look exactly like my dad.



Areskyn

July 4, 2019
Erskine, Scotland

The Paton family tree is entwined with another lovely tree – the Erskine’s. The two saplings grew from a single acorn planted in 1897 when Margaret Paton married James Erskine. Erskine and Paton clans have grown as one, each reinforcing the strength of the other.



Billy Paton and Mary Erskine - 1906

This sliver of the family tree shows a portion of the Erskine branch. Glen Erskine’s wife is the “Shirley” referred to in the introduction.

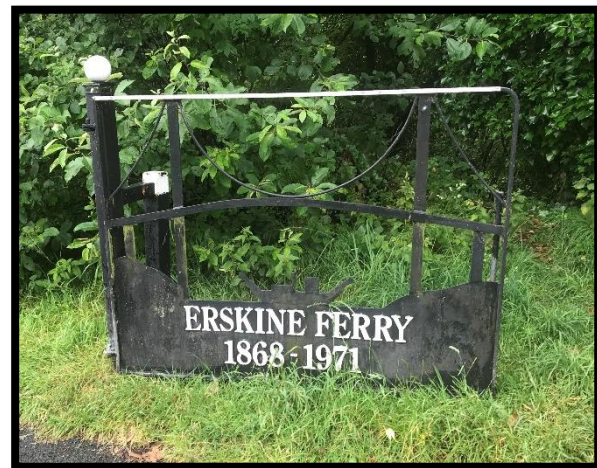
Tragedy occurred on November 7, 1954, when Russell Erskine died accidentally. Russell, along with my parents, Adrian and Pat Paton, were hunting birds on the Wood River near Gravelbourg. Russell's rifle misfired as he got out of a vehicle near a bridge on the river. He died in Regina hospital several hours later.

My mom and dad had just married, in July of 1954. When I was born the following year they named me Russell Adrian,

... names I wear very proudly.



"Erskine" is an ancient and noble name. It is derived from the old English *Areskyn* meaning *green rising ground*.



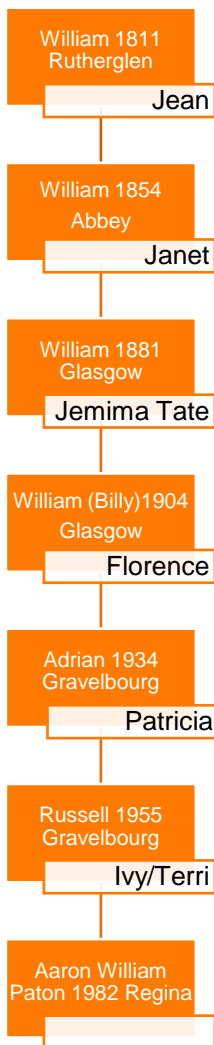
Russell Paton at the Erskine Ferry site, and Erskine Bridge from Gavinburn (below).



Blood and Water

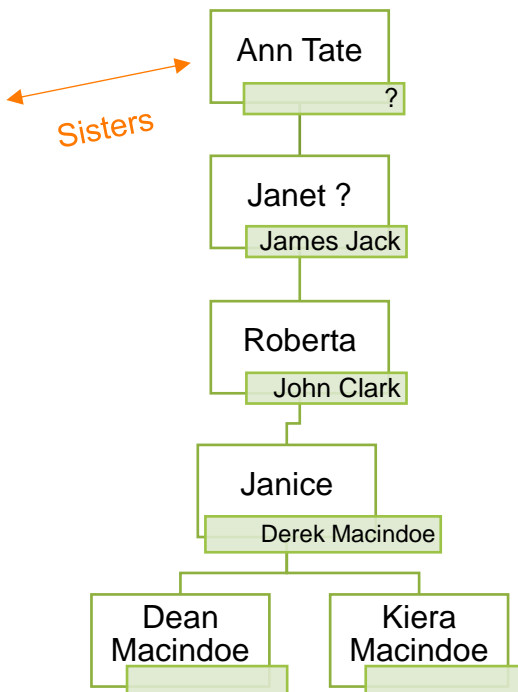
July 5, 2019
Blackburn, Scotland

The proverb, *“blood is thicker than water”* has a lesser-known counterpart – *“kin-blood is not spoiled by water”*, meaning; *family ties don’t diminish by distance*. Both proverbs apply to the Paton and Macindoe families. We are connected by the thinnest of ancestral links and yet a kinship endures.



When Aaron asked me last week “where in the UK could he have some motorcycle tires delivered” (a long story) I never hesitated; “you could ask Derek, he will probably hold them for you.”

I don’t think Aaron and Derek have ever met. If they did, it was briefly, a very long time ago, and yet, because Derek’s wife Janice is a descendant of Aaron’s Great, Great Grandmother’s sister, I felt comfortable suggesting that Derek might undertake the inconvenience of taking delivery of the tires and holding them for a few days.



Such is the nature of blood and water.

Scottish Mom

July 5, 2019

Blackburn, Scotland

The inevitable effect of time and tide reached out to us as we arrived in Scotland this week. We were saddened to hear that the Scottish family matriarch, Roberta Clark had died. We were saddened by the news, but happy to be in the country to attend the celebration of this remarkable woman's life.

The funeral hall was packed to overflowing, and they ran out of memorial cards – a better testament to a life well lived I cannot imagine.

My sister, Valerie prepared a touching eulogy, which the funeral celebrant read as part of the service. In her tribute Val referred to Roberta as her....

... **“Scottish Mom”**



Despite the family loss, Derek, Janice, Dean and Kiera showed us a wonderful time while we were in Scotland.

They shared their home and their time, provided chauffer services, and were always there to share a laugh.

We cannot thank our Scottish kinfolk enough.

One thing the ship's log did not record was the fact that there was a stowaway on board. Whether she knew it or not at the time, Jemima was carrying an unborn third child. Robert Paton was safely stowed and traveling for free.

The reasons behind the family's decision to leave their homeland are obscured by time but some facts and family lore remain to shed light on the event.

Earl Paton recalled a family story that Wm 1881 was initially reluctant to leave Scotland. Wm. was 26 years old, married with two children (so far) and had a relatively secure job as head ploughman at Gavinburn. It was Jemima who convinced him that their children would have a better future in Canada. Their son Billie might follow in his father's footsteps, but any sons yet to be born would have limited employment prospects in Scotland. Jemima perhaps knew her condition and she was afraid that future sons might be pressed into military service or be forced to go down in the mines to find work. Canada offered employment potential for the entire family and their descendants. Jemima was successful in convincing Wm to follow his father, who had migrated a year earlier.

Wm (1854) and his wife Janet had established a homestead near Gravelbourg, SK and were living in a sod house. They may have reported favourable conditions back to Wm (1881) in Scotland and helped persuade him to join them.

Farmland was being offered free by the Government of Canada to immigrants willing to prepare the land for crops and establish a homestead. Surely this must have been an enticement for a man working on land owned by a Lord, who lived in a castle, across the river.

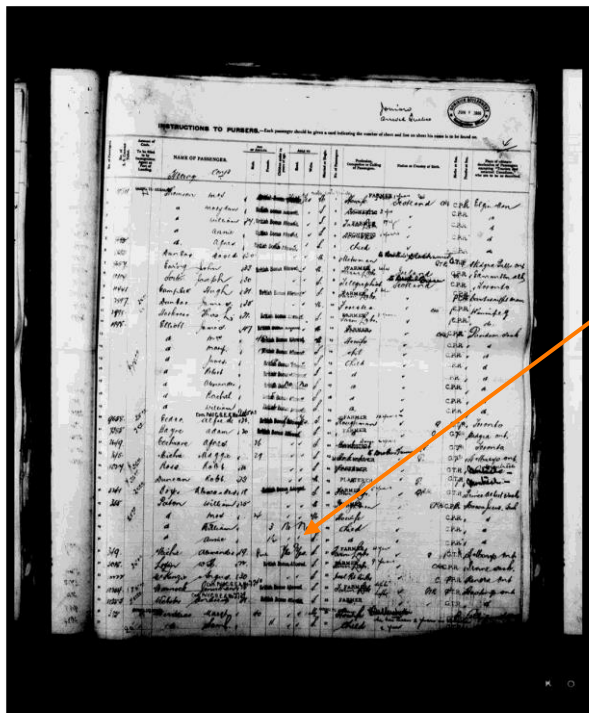


This cartoon depicts a slick salesman selling “All-the -World and his Missis” on the fact that crops can be grown as far north as James Bay and that flowers were blooming at Great Slave Lake. I reckon his descendants now sell cars.

Relocating to Canada would have been a memorable event. It is unlikely that the family would have had an opportunity to travel much further than to church in nearby Kilpatrick, so traveling halfway around the world, with little likelihood of returning, must have been a difficult decision to make. When they got on the ship, their decision would not have been immediately reinforced.

Jemima would have been 2 – 3 months pregnant and parenting two small children. The accommodation in below-deck steerage cabins would have been cramped, dark and damp. Once

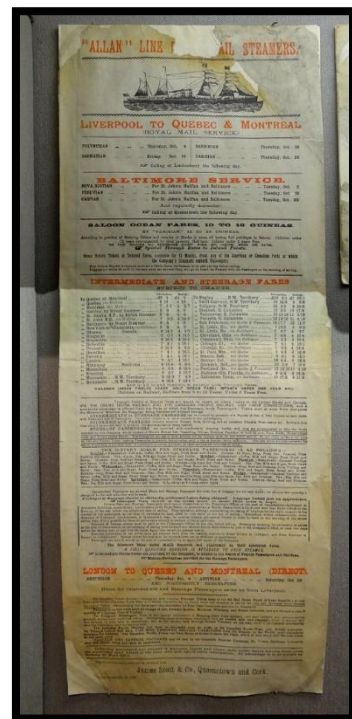
underway, with the combination of motion of the ship and morning sickness, it is almost certain that she would have experienced more than a little discomfort.



Billy was only 3 years, nine months old when the family made the crossing. He didn't remember much about the trip but did recall that when the family arrived at immigration in Quebec, someone pulled a tight-fitting sweater over his head so that an immigration officer could check Billy's vaccination mark on his upper arm.

The image at the top of the postcard on Page 45 depicts a navy man shaking hands with a man in a peasant's blouse. The Ionian's sole purpose, from its launch in 1901 until the outbreak of WWI, was as a transport for migrants from the UK to Canada. I doubt that Wm (1881) shook

hands with the captain, but the bond depicted in the handshake may have reassured him that he and his family would arrive safe in Canada.¹ This old Allan Line poster sheds some light on what travel on the Ionian might have been like. There were only 280 first- and second-class berths and 800 steerage bunks. The Paton's would have been "up close and personal" with another 796 travellers, in a very tight configuration.



Meals were included, but alcohol was not (and not likely required, given the Paton's Presbyterian sensibilities). The meals were basic "meat and potatoes" fare but, as a special treat, "Gruel at 8:00 every night".

While the food was included, steerage passengers were required to rent "Life Preserving Pillows, Mattress, Plate, Knife and Nickle-Plated Forks and Spoons".

Charles Dickens described gruel as: "small quantities of oatmeal, combined with an unlimited supply of water."

¹ The Ionian was reassigned as a troop carrier at the outbreak of WWI. On October 17, 1917 the ship was a casualty of war when it hit a mine off the coast of Wales and sunk; seven men lost their lives.

Financial Considerations:

I was not able to locate a price list for passengers on the Ionian, but I found a poster for a similar ship on the Allan line in the same time period. Allan Line was affiliated with the CPR railroad so combined ship/rail passage was quoted to the final destination. The adult fare from Glasgow to Moose Jaw, via Quebec, was £7, 16 shillings, 1 pence, with children traveling at half price, for a family total of £23, 8/3. Converted to \$CDN and adjusting for inflation, it would have cost the family the equivalent of \$4,700 to get to Canada.

The Passenger log says that Wm. Paton had \$25 Canadian dollars with him – worth about \$550 today.

It is difficult to put these amounts into perspective without knowing the relative earning power the family had at the time. One on-line source said that the average annual salary of workers in the UK in 1908 was £70. In which case Wm and Jemima would have needed to save a half year's salary just to move to Canada. Difficult I am sure, with two small kids and expenses to pay.



Hands Across the Tea!

When Wm 1854 and his wife Janet ventured across the Atlantic in 1907, they brought with them a small three-burner stove. Earl Paton has had the family heirloom tucked away for many years. This spring (2019) Earl dug it out, cleaned it, put some kerosene in the tank and lit the wicks for the first time in 112 years!

Earl visited with Adrian and Jim in May and brought the artifact with him. The three brothers enjoyed a cup of tea prepared in the same way Great, Great Grandpa and Grandma Paton would have in 1907.

Paton Laces

July 1 - 14, 2019
Scottish Lowlands

Adam pointed out that it is almost impossible to swing a cat in the Scottish Lowlands without hitting a Paton. Here are a few examples:



William 1881 and Jemima were married in Cambusnethan, Scotland in 1903, probably in the Presbyterian church on the left. As we were looking for the church we stumbled upon Cambusnethan Priory, a now derelict abbey far off the beaten path. The church is impressive but the collapsing priory building stirs the imagination.



William 1904 (Billy) was born at 101 Coventry Drive, Glasgow. The location is now a housing development, with no trace of turn of the century buildings.



The site was once the location of company housing for the Burnbank Bleachworks Company.

There is no mention of Wm 1881 working at anything other than as a farmer, but he may have been employed at the bleachworks in 1904, when wee Billy was born. Alternately, the address could have been a midwife station or a hospital.



By coincidence, 101 Coventry Drive is just a few blocks from Paton Street, a short industrial service road.

The father of South African author Allan Paton (*"Cry, the Beloved Country"*), also lived in this Denniston neighbourhood. James Paton was born here in 1872. We didn't have time to trace those roots – next time!



We don't have any traceable direct lineage to John Paton C.E. but he kept popping up everywhere we looked. The first place we encountered him was at the Old Kilpatrick Church graveyard. Fortunately for John, we were tracing him backwards, so his story got more interesting as we went. John is mentioned in a Glasgow directory as an engineer and in another history book as *"the designer of Buchanan Institute Reading and Recreation Rooms"* and *"an Old Kilpatrick man"*. I believe that the "C.E." on his tombstone denotes "Civil Engineer".

John Paton C.E. designed and built this house (right), just behind the Old Kilpatrick train station. We were not able to see the front, but the back is impressive.



In an intriguing twist of genealogical fate, we Paton's have a connection to one of Scotland's most famous sons. In 1785, Robert Burns fathered an illegitimate child with Elizabeth Paton, his mother's servant. Burns wrote three poems about "Wee Bought Bess". The first was a tasteless outburst of sexual boastfulness about a "hen he had brought down with his gun".



When "bonnie Betty" was born Burns forgot his masculine bluster and expressed fatherly tenderness:

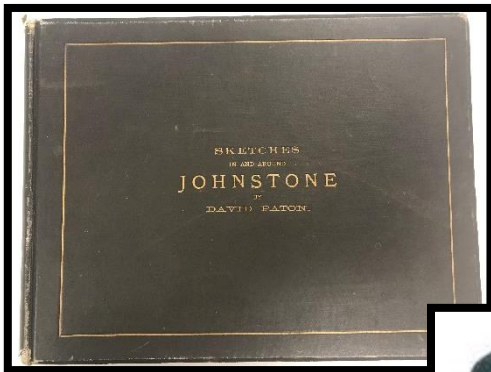
Welcome! lily bonie, sweet, wee dochter,
Tho' ye come here a wee unsought for,
And tho' your comin' I hae fought for,
Baith kirk and queir;
Yet, by my faith, ye're no unwrought for
That I shall swear!...
Lord grant that thou may ay inherit
Thy rnither's person, grace, an' merit,
An' thy poor, worthless daddie's spirit,
Without his failins,
'Twill please me mair to see thee
Than stocket mailens...



We dropped by the Scottish writer's museum in Edinburgh to see the Robbie Burns display. There was a large timeline poster but no notation about his tryst with our ancestor, Elizabeth Paton.

Other Patons in the area were involved in sketching historical buildings, as wool merchants since the 1770's, a local parcel service, and a "world renowned" boot and shoelaces manufacturer....

... just in case we need something to swing that cat on or string up a lecherous poet.



A Doorway to the Future

July 14, 2019
Gavinburn, Scotland

We travelled all over the Scottish Lowlands in our quest for family history, but every road we took led back to this doorway. It is a portal through which generations of Paton's can interact.

The suite was vacant, but locked all week, so we were only able to experience it from the outside. I knew exactly what it looked like from photos on the website, but I had hoped to step over the threshold. Friday, just as we were checking out, the owner arrived, and I was able to venture inside.

I rested my shoulder on the door frame and gazed simultaneously back, and forward, in time.





