

An Anecdotal History of the Irvine Family

Compiled by Franklin P. Mason II

Dedication

This pamphlet is dedicated to the three people who made it possible:

- Agnes (Aggie) Armstrong Leckie (Mason)
- Elizabeth (Ella) Alexander Blackhall (Robb)
- Elizabeth (Bessie) Alexander Irvine (Watt)

All three are granddaughters of William Irvine and Elizabeth Alexander.

In this pamphlet is presented all the known vital statistics for each person discussed, followed by anecdotes about them. After one or a series of anecdotes appear the initials of the writer of the anecdote(s). All dates are approximate, unless they are stated exactly.

THE IRVINE FAMILY

I-1. John Irvine

- b. ca. 1800/01, Forfar, Forfarshire (now called Angus)
- d. 12 Sep 1875 (75 years) of Pleurisy (10 days) at *Porter Lodge*, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- o. Journeyman Blacksmith

John Irvine was 5' 11" tall, but none-the-less, he was the shortest of his siblings. His sister Sophia, for example, was 6' tall and had red-gold hair and a fair complexion. (The Irvines tended to be tall, handsome and fine-featured with fair complexions.)

Our grandfather¹ was at the building of Portpatrick pier, but it was destroyed in the terrible storm of 18 __ (?). Sorry, I cannot remember the date of the storm, but Auntie told me that her father (your and my grandfather) "had built it". EABR

It was John Senior and his brother (but I don't know his name) who built breakwaters and did very well until they got the contract for Portpatrick where the sea defeated them and they lost everything. Then they returned to their original trade as blacksmiths and went into the new shipyards on the Clyde.

Margaret Anne Watt Foggie

John Irvine married Agnes Armstrong (b. abt. 1811, Ireland; d. 27 Mar 1889, *Porter Lodge*, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland).

Their children:

- I-2. John Irvine, b. 1833, Ireland
- I-3. Jessie Irvine, b. 1835, Ireland
- I-4. Sophia Irvine, b. 1838, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland
- I-5. William Irvine (see below)
- I-6. Christina Irvine, b. 1843, Yoker, Renfrew, Renfrewshire, Scotland
- I-7. James Irvine, who later changed his name to Irving. (see below)
- I-8. Collin Houston Irvine, b. 1848, Yoker, Renfrew, Renfrewshire

I-5. William Irvine

- b. 27 Sep 1841, Ferry Road, Yoker, Renfrew, Renfrewshire, Scotland
- d. 21 Dec 1913 (69 years) of Arteriosclerosis, Angina Pectoris at 39 South Vennel Street, Lanark, Lanarkshire, Scotland
- o. Journeyman Blacksmith (Marine Engineering)

Grandfather [William Irvine] worked in John Brown's famous shipyard (in Clydebank) on the River Clyde. He was the Quantity Blacksmith, which was a very responsible job and, for the time, a very well-paid job. When work was slack and other men paid off, his job was secure, and his pay went on. He was a very clever man, and he read a great deal. He kept bees and was very *friendly* towards them. He never wore a mask or gloves. Even when the bees were swarming, he was always gentle and kind. Nice to think we have that in our background. In the summer, they rented a cottage at Whistlefield down the Clyde, and the hives with the bees, and the smaller children went on a horse-drawn cart down to the little cottage until it was time for the bees to come home to Dalmuir. EABR

When Grandfather [William] Irvine lived in Lanark, he worked in our large garden at *The Cottage*, Greenside Lane, Lanark; and I remember him planting polyanthus (dusty millers). He also made a little glass house for propagating seedlings. EABR

We had a little fox terrier dog, and our grandfather taught that little dog to stay on the path round the gardens and not to go on the flower beds.

William Irvine loved cowboy pictures [even in 1911]. It was about three miles to the nearest movie. One day he took "Baby Bill" [William Leckie (I-25), son of Sophia Simpson Irvine Leckie (I-16)] with him on his shoulder but came rushing home because Bill (only nine months of age) had said, "Lookada osses."—translated by a loving Grandfather—"Look at the horses". AALM

In the spring, when the strawberries were large and luscious, Grandfather [William Irvine] would go into his back-yard garden and pick a large lovely cabbage leaf and fill it with strawberries and present them to Granny [his wife]. AALM

On Saturday nights, Grandfather [William Irvine] would go out in the streets and pick up drunken husbands and bring them back to their wives. And when there was no entertainment available for the young people, he arranged for [Sir] Harry Lauder to come to Clydebank to perform. AALM

William Irvine visited his daughter, Sophia Simpson Irvine Leckie (I-16) in America several times. The last time was in 1913 (which was the year he died).

William Irvine married Elizabeth Gibson Alexander (b. abt 1844, Mortonhall Estate, Liberton, Midlothian, Scotland; d. 14 Nov 1910, 13 Nairn Street, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dunbartonshire, Scotland). They were married on January 2, 1867. At the time of his marriage William was 25 years of age and lived in Dalmuir Parish of Old Kilpatrick (near Clydebank). His bride was 23 years of age and lived in Barony Parish, Glasgow. They were married in Morton, Parish of Liberton, Midlothian, near Edinburgh, in the Free Church of Scotland by the Reverend David K. Guthrie. After they were married, they lived in a two-family stone house in Dalmuir, which they owned.

Their children:

- I-9. John Irvine
- I-10. Mary Gibson Irvine
- I-11. Agnes Armstrong Irvine
- I-12. James Irvine
- I-13. William Irvine
- I-14. Christina (Teenie) Irvine
- I-15. Janet (Jessie) Irvine
- I-16. Sophia (Abby) Simpson Irvine
- I-17. Elizabeth (Bessie) Alexander Irvine

I-7. James Irvine / Irving

- b. 1847, Yoker, Renfrew, Renfrewshire, Scotland
- d. Malaya
- o. Ship's Engineer, Adventurer in Malaya, Tin-mine owner in Malaya

[James Irving] was one of the original men who opened up Malaya. At one time he had bought a tin mine and then sold it for sixpence. EABR

[James' four children were Alice, Eva, Fred and John (Jack).] When Alice and her sister (Eva) were young, they joined in prayers with the Muslims at the court of the local Sultan in Singapore, with little prayer mats on which they knelt, facing Mecca. It was an education in itself to go visiting the Irvings. They had such wonderful stories to tell. I just wish I had kept a note of their sayings and stories. They had a wee Sealyham terrier who also was a character. When he came to a shop selling toys, he would stop, sit on the pavement, and clap his front paws together to get a toy! It was fun to watch him. The Sealyham's name was Hiram. EABR

The two Irving boys were Fred and Jack and were much under the thumb of Alice. I remember, I was with them for breakfast and Fred made a noise at the table, and Alice turned on him and made a scene. I was very sorry for poor Fred who took the rebuke and said nothing. EABR

Alice was a school teacher and inclined to treat her two brothers as pupils. Eva had been a munitions worker in the 1914-1918 war and was in charge of a number of women. As a child in Singapore, her governess (Ayah) had kept her quiet by means of drugs and she always said this was why she wasn't as clever as Alice, but she was a very kindly soul. EABR

I've typed out the additional obituary² of Great-grand-uncle James for you as it is too faded and brown to photocopy. Mum [Elizabeth Alexander Irvine (I-21)] gave me a little sandalwood box that was Auntie Alice's in which she always kept this memorial of her father and I treasure it as I can remember the lady herself as great fun—you really wanted Auntie Alice to visit and you didn't want her to leave. She lived in Gloucester and once brought Beatrix Potter's *The Tailor of Gloucester* for us. In those immediately post-war days illustrated children's books were rarities and this pre-war edition with the coloured pictures of the little mice in their “tippets” and the Mayor's flowered waistcoat lying on the bench were the root, I'm sure, of my continuing interest in the 18th Century. One thing I did not enjoy was discovering through one of her visits that the world went on even when I couldn't see it—a painful moment in growing up! Mummy had taken Sheena and Auntie Alice for a sail in a steamer while I was at school. I was 5 and it nearly put me off education forever. Maybe that was why Auntie Alice brought the *T of G* next time she came.

Alice's sister Eva lived with her in Gloucester in the South of England until she died and I think Jack did too. None of them left descendants. Alice's mother, like so many of the women of the “White Raj” eventually had to choose between her husband and her children's health and education, and she came home with them. Uncle James stayed in Malaya and the suspicion is that he “went native”. Obviously, he wasn't lost to what passed for “society” in the colony or there wouldn't have been an obituary in the Straits Newspaper. The whole Irvine family was, like most Scots, inclined to travel so he was likely to go and seek his fortune somewhere. He started off in India, I think, and then went to Singapore

where he is reputed to have helped fund Raffles of “The Raffles Hotel” fame.
Possibly that was one of the fortunes either made or lost.
Margaret Anne Watt Foggie

James Irvine married Jessie Denoon Ross (b. abt. 1848, Beauly, Inverness-shire, Scotland) on 10 May 1870 in Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland. In the 1871 Scottish Census, Jessie Irvine (age 23) was living in Old Kilpatrick with Sophia Irvine, James Irvine’s older sister. And James (age 24) was listed as being in Glasgow harbor as a 3rd Engineer on the ship *India*.

Their children:

Alice Irving
Eva Irving
Fred Irving
John (Jack) Irving

I-9. John Irvine

b. 1868, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
d. 1880, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland

Uncle John [Irvine] was just a little boy of twelve when he died. He fell on the ice when he [was] skating and cracked his skull. Of course, in those days there was no help for such an injury. He lived for some months after the accident.
EAIW

I-10. Mary Gibson Irvine

b. 1869, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
d. 1939 of bronchial trouble

Mary Irvine went to Liberton when she was about eleven years old to care for her grandfather, James Alexander, and his son Johnnie.³

Mary Irvine married Benjamin Thomson

Their child:

Elizabeth Alexander Thomson, died at age 8 or 9

I-11. Agnes Armstrong Irvine

b. 1870, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
d. of cancer

Agnes Armstrong Irvine, a lovely person she was, and of whom I was very fond. She called me “Honey.” I think it was an Americanism she had heard in Cleveland. When Alice Irving (a cousin of your mother) heard she had died, she said to me, “With Aggie, the art of conversation has died.” EABR

Aggie was the sweetest little lady anyone could ever hope for. She was petite, dark-haired, and had a lively sense of humor. She wore a mohair coat and when going to the store at the corner, never went without gloves. I have a very vivid memory of her putting on her gloves, which she never quite got on right. There was always a flappy bit on each of her fingers, but gloves she had. I loved her dearly. And still do. When she saw anyone with a happy, smiling face she said, “I hope nobody ever takes the smile off that face.” Her hair fell out after a bad spell of asthma when she was a young woman; and lo-and-behold, it came in

curly. So she was very pretty. Her name was Agnes Armstrong Irvine. She never was married although I heard she had a young man but had committed herself to looking after [her sister] Auntie Bessie [Elizabeth Alexander Irvine (I-17)] who was a real cripple with rheumatoid arthritis. I was very devoted to Auntie [Aggie] and she told me a lot of the family history. I can remember what she told me better than things that happened yesterday. I never called her Auntie Aggie, just "Auntie" and I think that is why I never call you [Agnes Leckie (I-27)] anything but "Agnes". When I was very young, I couldn't say Aggie and for a long time I called her "Auntie Pantie" and later she was just "Auntie". She took me down the River Clyde to see a castle ruins, where she said our forefathers came from and fought over with Robert the Bruce against the English. Then there is the old story⁴ of Johnnie Armstrong, the Border Reiver, being pardoned by King James V of Scotland and then being hung by him; and in an old Scots play, there is a verse:

This is the rape baith lang and strang
That hangit Johnnie, the Armstrang.

After this outrageous affair, the Armstrongs escaped to Ireland. EABR

Agnes Irvine never married. She lived with her sister Elizabeth (I-17) and her brother James (I-12). In her last years, she was nursed by Margaret (Ferguson) Irvine (see below), the wife of her brother William (I-13). She is buried in Clydebank.

I-12. James Irvine

- b. abt. 1872, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- d.
- o. Ship's engineer

James Irvine used to go back and forth to India on the ship on which he was an engineer.

Uncle Jim would come home after a long, long, time at sea and dump gold pieces into Granny's [his mother's] lap. AALM

James Irvine never married, but lived with his two sisters Agnes (I-11) and Elizabeth (I-17). James Irvine lived his last three years with his brother, William Irvine (I-13), and was nursed by his brother's wife, Margaret (Ferguson). He is buried in Clydebank.

I-13. William Irvine

- b. July 21, 1874, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- d. April 1946, Clydebank, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- o.

In 1904 in Glasgow, William Irvine married Margaret McPhee Ferguson, (b. 14 Apr 1875; d. 24 Apr 1946), a woman from Islay and a Gaelic speaker.

On January 07, 2008, Margaret Anne Watt Foggie wrote the following note regarding the Irvine connection to Islay, which was originally through her grandmother, Margaret McPhee Ferguson, and now is also through her daughter, Margaret (Maggie) Anne Foggie McLellan:

I cannot think how I came not to tell you that Maggie is married to Alastair McLellan. They were married in the famous Round Church at Bowmore and live

in Lighthouse Buildings, just along from it in the Isle of Islay. It is a very beautiful island as well as one we have a very long connection with because my Grandma Ferguson belonged there. She had a life-rent of a house in the village of Port Charlotte that she inherited through her own family and reverted to a nephew after her death, and next door was her cousin and dearest friend, Ann MacIndeor (pronounced Mac-in-jor). Ann's house and croft descended to her two maiden daughters, Katie and Maggie. They had both begun work as pupil teachers in the village school and Maggie had progressed to the "Normal School" for formal training once she was old enough to put her hair up. She later taught on the mainland but Katie taught in Port Charlotte all her life and everyone loved her. They say the reason the old women round there are such good bakers is that Katie taught them. Our youngest daughter, Margaret Anne, known as Maggie, teaches in that school's "new" building and has the honour of choosing the winner of the "MacIndeor Prize for Gaelic" every year. Now is that not a coincidence? Even more of a coincidence is that when Maggie went to the Gaelic Medium Unit at Bowmore School as a Gaelic teaching student, she found two little girls in her class lived with their Mum and step-Dad in Auntie Maggie's house. They were Jennifer and Julia McLellan and through them she met and married their father Alastair! The girls had always spent a lot of time with their Dad and are now like young sisters to Maggie. Jennifer wasn't able to be with us in France for the wedding [of our son Angus] but Julia was there and not only made a great hit with the French friends because she is gorgeous but was a great help to us with all the children. They are really nice mannerly girls and it is a pleasure to have them in the family. There is a poem by James Elroy Flecker that I used to be very fond of:

"As swans go double in the river
So do events come drifting down our lives"

That is how it feels to have Maggie in Islay.

Their children:

- I-18. Margaret Dallas Irvine
- I-19. William Irvine
- I-20. Donald Ferguson Irvine
- I-21. Elizabeth Alexander Irvine

I-14. Christina (Teenie) Irvine

- b. 1878, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- d. 15 Nov 1922, Greenend, Lanarkshire, Scotland

My mother [Christina, had a] beautiful rowan tree. It was a large and symmetrical tree. When I was a little girl, my mother cut long branches when the tree was in flower for me to take to the teacher. I never hear the song "Rowan Tree," the beautiful Scottish song, without tears flowing. EABR

Christina Irvine married James Blackhall. James Blackhall was a meat cutter.

Their child:

- I-22. Elizabeth (Ella) Alexander Blackhall

I-15. Janet (Jessie) Irvine

- b. 1881, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- d. of a heart attack

Auntie Jessie never married. I think she lived into her early thirties, but I have heard that she was very stout so she may have had a heart or kidney complaint.
EAIW

I-16. Sophia (Abby) Simpson Irvine

- b. December 26, 1882, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- d. October 24, 1956, New York, New York, USA (of cancer)

Mother [Sophia Irvine] wrote charming letters. When Jennie [Janet Leckie (I-24)] was at college she could hardly finish reading a letter from Mother before one of her friends was begging to read it. She had a wonderful sense of humor and the ability to tell a story.

When I would have friends visit, they preferred to spend time talking with Mother. Even those who couldn't understand everything she said loved to listen to her because of her soft voice and pleasant accent. She never lost [her accent] even after fifty years here in the States.

The last trip Mother made to Scotland was in 1911. She was always terribly seasick and the steward had to take care of the three children, Bessie, Jennie and Bill, aged five, three, and one.

One day (when I was about tenish), Mother was catching flies "on the wing." We were all amazed and asked how she had learned to do that. She said that while she was growing up, her mother was confined to a chair (not a wheelchair) where she sat all day. She also took naps in the chair. If there were any flies about, Mother did not want to disturb her mother's rest by swatting them, so she learned to catch them on the wing. (None of us could do it although we tried.) AALM

Sophia Irvine married John Taylor Leckie (b. 18 Sep 1879 in Alva; Stirlingshire, Scotland; d. 14 Mar 1949, Cleveland, Cayahoga, Ohio, USA) on 24 Mar 1905 at 13 Clyde Trust Buildings, Dalmuir in the Parish of Old Kilpatrick, her childhood home. (She had Rh-negative blood)

Their children:

- I-23. Elizabeth (Bessie) Alexander Leckie
- I-24. Janet (Jennie) Thomson Leckie
- I-25. William Irvine Leckie
- I-26. John Taylor Leckie
- I-27. Agnes Armstrong Leckie
- I-28. James Alexander Leckie

I-17. Elizabeth Alexander Irvine

- b. 1885, Dalmuir, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland
- d.

Auntie Bessie [Elizabeth Irvine] was very clever, as was the whole family. She was secretary to a firm of haulers (I think you would call them), but had to stop while still quite young because of arthritis. However, the owner and his sister

visited the Aunts Aggie and Bessie as long as Auntie Bessie lived. They were very fond of her.

[Elizabeth Irvine] visited America with Auntie Aggie [Agnes Irvine (I-11)] at least once, but probably oftener. On one occasion, they came home on the first, or one of the first, ships to sail through the Panama Canal from the Pacific to the Atlantic. EAIW

[Despite the fact that Auntie Bessie had arthritis, she visited us in America.] I can see in my mind's eye my father carrying her to the car to go for a Sunday afternoon drive. Another recollection is a friendly but heated discussion between my father and her about religion—something about faith versus works. My recollection is that she had a very keen mind. I couldn't have been more than eight. Another recollection is that she had very sharp eyesight. In fact, I recall a story in which she was talking to the captain and asked him what ship was that off the bow. The captain replied that he saw no ship, but when he looked through his telescope, sure enough, there was the ship. AALM

Elizabeth Irvine never married. She lived with her sister Agnes (I-11), who nursed her much of her life, and her brother James (I-12). In her last years, she was nursed by Margaret (Ferguson) Irvine, the wife of her brother William (I-13). She is buried in Clydebank.

I-18. Margaret Dallas Irvine

- b. 14 July 1906, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland
- d. 31 Mar 1975, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland

Margaret Dallas Irvine married George William Francis (b. 25 Nov 1904, Stirling, Stirlingshire, Scotland; d. 09 Aug 1971, Glasgow, Scotland) in 1940 in Glasgow, Scotland.

Their children:

- George William Francis, b. 15 Apr 1941, Lanark, Lanarkshire, Scotland
- William Alexander Francis, b. 02 Oct 1943, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland
- Margaret Ferguson Francis, b. 03 Aug 1945, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland
- David Houston Francis, b. 08 Oct 1947, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland

I-19. William Irvine

- b. 24 July 1908, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland
- d. 08 Sep 1981, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland

William Irvine married Catherine Zena Mackay (b. 24 Oct 1909, Aberdeen, Scotland) on 12 Oct 1935, St. Columba's Church, Pont Street, London, England.

Their children:

- William Irvine, b. 11 Nov 1938, London, England
- Catherine Zena Irvine, b. 13 Sep 1947
- Donald Ferguson Irvine, b. 17 May 1949, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland (at home, 34 Gray Street)

I-20. Donald Ferguson Irvine

- b. July 1910
- d. 1942

Donald Irvine was a medical doctor in Malaya. He was killed by the Japanese in front of his hospital in Singapore in 1942.

Donald Ferguson Irvine married Evadne Hannah Stephenson (b. abt. 1910, Cottage, Saint Kenelm's Hall, Romsley, Worcestershire, England) on 15 Sep 1936 in Harborne, St Peter, Birmingham, England.

Their child:

Elizabeth Margaret Irvine, b. Apr 1937, Auckland, Durham, England.

I-21. Elizabeth (Bessie) Alexander Irvine

b. 07 February 1916, Clydebank, Dumbartonshire, Scotland

d. 05 August 2014, Fort William, Inverness-shire, Scotland

Elizabeth Alexander Irvine married George Watt (b. 1914, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire, Scotland; d. 04 Nov 1984, Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Greenock, Renfrewshire, Scotland).

Their children:

Margaret Anne Watt, b. 08 Oct 1942

Agnes Jean* Watt, b. 16 Feb 1944

Elizabeth Alexander Watt, b. 05 Feb 1946

George Thomas Watt, b. 04 Jul 1948

* (Jean is the English equivalent of the Gaelic name Sine, pronounced “Sheena”.)

I-22. Elizabeth (Ella) Alexander Blackhall

b. 21 July 1911, Lanark, Lanarkshire, Scotland

d. 02 May 1989, Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland

When my mother [Christina Irvine (I-14)] (your Auntie Teenie) died in 1922, Auntie Aggie [Agnes Irvine (I-11)] and Auntie Maggie [Margaret Ferguson Irvine, wife of William Irvine (I-13)] took me under their wings. I spent most of my weekends with Auntie Aggie, Auntie Bessie [Elizabeth Alexander Irvine (I-17)], and Uncle Jim [James Irvine (I-12)], but my first three summer holidays (in 1923, 1924, and 1925) were spent with Auntie Maggie and Uncle Bill and their four children in Port Charlotte, Islay, where at that time everybody spoke Gaelic. Although I missed my mother terribly, all my aunts and uncles and cousins were loving and kind and did their best to fill the gap. When my father remarried in 1925, my stepmother's family were also darlings and very kind to me—more than kind! Loving! Especially one of her brothers, his wife and their five sons, all years older than me and their wives, nearly all dead. But still well remembered.

In 1926, Betty Irvine [Elizabeth Alexander Irvine (I-17)] took diphtheria and my step-mother invited her to Lanark in the summer to recuperate. We had a very happy holiday together much of it engineered by my step-mother. She really was a very fine lady, and I love her dearly. EABR

Elizabeth Alexander Blackhall married A. Sinclair Robb (mmm) in 1937 in St Andrew, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Their children:

James Blackhall Robb, b 1938, Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland

David Alexander Robb, b. 1940, Lanark, Lanarkshire, Scotland

William Irvine Robb, b. 1942, Lanark, Lanarkshire, Scotland

¹ Ella had recalled that it was William Irvine (1841-1913) who had been involved in the building of Portpatrick Pier. Actually, it was his father, John Irvine (1800-1875).

Below is some information about Portpatrick Pier, taken from *www.ports.org.uk*:

“In the 17th Century a royal warrant was granted to the laird of Dunskey enabling him to restrict voyages between Galloway and Ards to the ports of Portpatrick and Donaghadee and during this time Irish cattle, mail, passengers and soldiers were ferried back and forth across the North Channel. The ferry service was at first a rude affair where boats waited until they had sufficient loads of mail and passengers before they put to sea and then, in the winter months, waited again for the weather to improve. Animals were unloaded by pushing them in the sea to swim ashore; people boarded from the beach.

The Post Office built the first pier on the south side of the bay in 1774, under the guidance of John Smeaton, to facilitate the carriage of mail. The work was completed in 1778 but a northern pier, built round a rocky isthmus locally known as M'Cooks Craig, was quickly destroyed by the sea. A lighthouse was built on the southern pier in 1779, and by 1790 four purpose built mail packets were operating out of the Port. One of them the Downshire was wrecked in a storm in 1810.

Portpatrick grew in importance as a ferry port, and in 1820 the government commissioned Sir John Rennie to build a substantial new harbour. Two piers, north and south, were to be built with a lighthouse at the end of each and a north and south harbour were to be constructed.

Rennie's south pier and lighthouse were completed by 1836. But in 1839 a storm breached the pier. It was repaired, but because of escalating costs work on the unfinished north pier and lighthouse was stopped and the north pier was never completed. Village and harbour boomed even without the north pier but it was not to last for long. As sail gave way to steam Portpatrick declined. In 1862 the Stranraer to Larne ferry route started operation and the Port was finished when in 1868 the ferry service was officially transferred from Portpatrick to Stranraer.

While Portpatrick's once massive harbour breakwaters lie in ruin and the 'Port', as Portpatrick is affectionately known, is now only a safe haven to a few inshore fishermen, pleasure craft, visiting trawlers and yachts.”

² The newspaper obituary for James Irvine / Irving is as follows:

THE LATE MR JAMES IRVING

Our London correspondent writes:

Three weeks issues of your journal have come within three days of each other, and there has not been time to digest all their contents. But I observed with sincere regret the death of Mr. James Irving whom I knew well for many years and in whom there has passed away an excellent type of Colonist of who his native country has given so many examples. He was a man possessing great gifts, well read, with a retentive memory, and a Malay scholar with a unique knowledge of the country through which he had traveled so often. In earlier days his position in Kedah was one of extraordinary influence, but he was devoid of ambition and content to go his own way. You have referred to several points in his versatile career, but there are others well worth recording. He made two or three fortunes and lost them again, bearing ups and downs with perfect equanimity. I remember his pointing out to me what had once been a tin mine owned by himself, and which, after sinking huge sums of money in it he eventually sold for two dollars. He was a perfect master of the lost art of conversation, an admirable story teller, and an evening spent in his company was an education.

The story of his life and adventures would make a fascinating volume. Throughout his career his character remained simple and entirely unspoiled. Never unduly elated by success he was equally unaffected by misfortune and pursued the tenor of his very uneven way with true philosophy. In business matters he was keen and some called him hard, but he was a just man and a generous and unostentatious in his charity. He possessed a happy gift of humour which must have been a great comfort. No man I ever knew was more determined in his opinions or more difficult to move after once having made up his mind on any particular point nor do I remember him acknowledging that in any action he had taken he had been in the wrong. But he was absolutely reliable and trustworthy, never knowingly did an injustice and his word was his bond. He was steadfast and also unmovable, a great hearted man of a type all too rare and the settlement is poorer through his death.”

On the back my mother has written “Grand-uncle James, Alice's Father”.

I understand the article was copied from *The Straits Times* but it is sadly undated and no author is given. I assume it was 3 copies of this paper that had reached London together and sparked the further obituary so it was possibly published quite a while after James Irving's death.

MAF, 30.12.2011

³ The 1871 Census of Scotland for Liberton lists the following: James Alexander, Widower, 55, gardener; John Alexander, Unmarried, 21, Invalid; Mary Alexander, Unmarried, 22, Dairymaid. James' wife, Mary Gibson Alexander, had died in 1868 of cancer. Mary Gibson Irvine must have gone to live with her grandfather and uncle when she was perhaps 13 years old or older because she does not appear with him in the 1881 Census of Scotland (when she was 12 years old). (The 1881 Census lists James and John both as gardeners; so perhaps, John had improved sufficiently to work.) The 1891 Census of Scotland does show that Mary was in Midlothian at that time. (In 1891, Mary Alexander was no longer living with her father and brother. Presumably, by then she had gotten married and left her childhood home.) James Alexander died in 1895, after which Mary (who was then 26 years old) was free to leave (after about 13 years of service to her grandfather).

⁴ Sir John Armstrong was born 1480 in House Gilnockie Hall, Scotland, and died in about 1529 in Caerlanrig, Whithaugh, Scotland. He was hung by the then 17 year old King James V of Scotland. The story goes something like this:

John was called "The Strong". He had 5 sons. John was Robin (Robyn Hood) of the Border, and the stories of his exploits run through all Scottish literature, and Sir Walter Scott makes frequent reference to him. John was granted lands in Eskdale, & Dumfrieshire Scotland 8/4/1525 by Robert, Lord of Maxwell. John had several times challenged King James V to a duel, and John was considered an embarrassment to the Crown. So King James V declared him an outlaw. King James V men trapped John in Whithaugh, Scotland with a few of John's men, and without a trial, hung them on the spot. All the Armstrongs of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century are descended from John as are all the American Armstrongs, who trace their ancestry through the Scotch-Irish Clan.