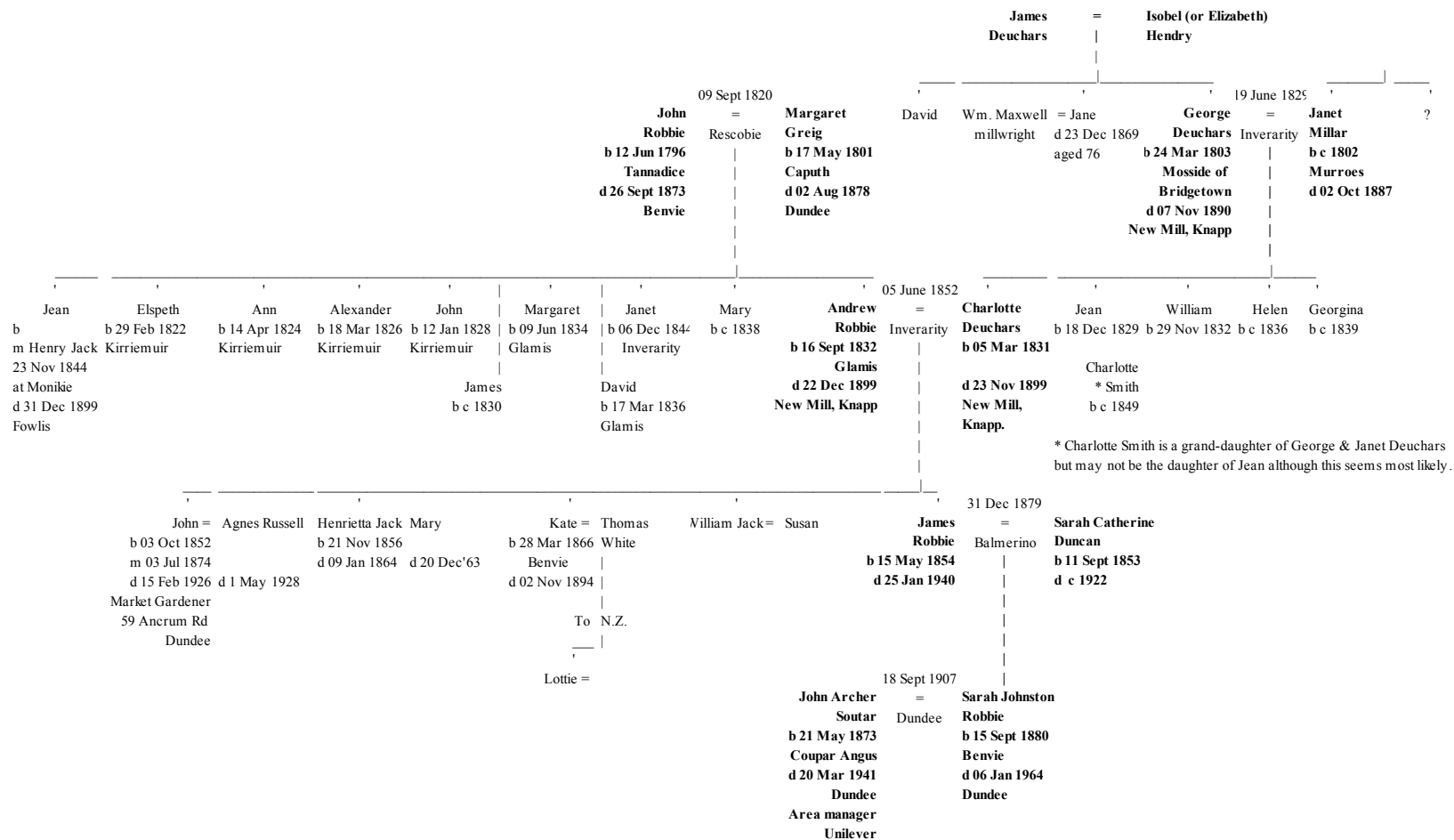
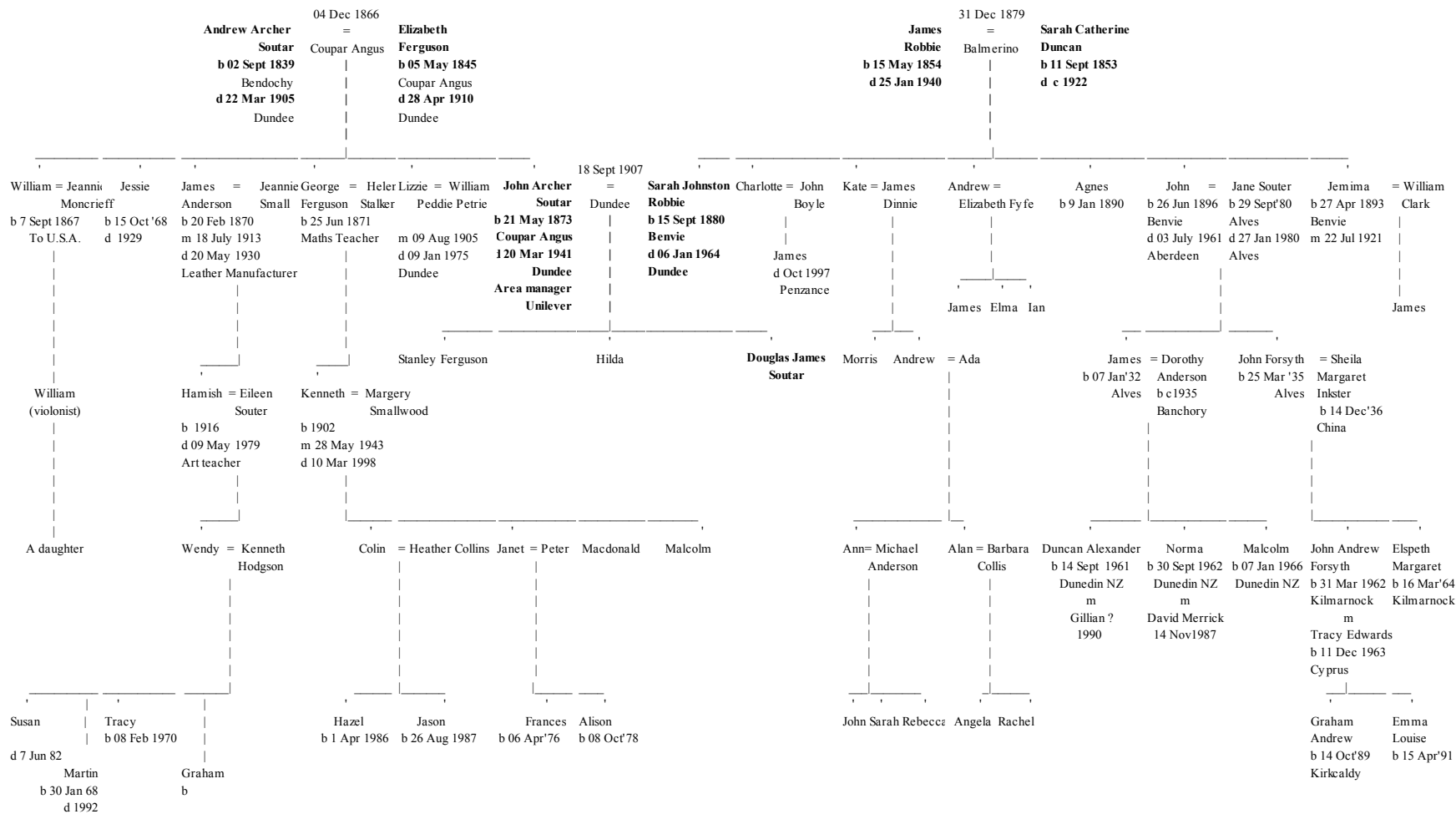


James Robbie and Sarah Duncan





James Robbie Sarah Duncan

James Robbie and Sarah Duncan were married on 31st December 1879 at Balmerino. She from Balmerino, he from Benvie. They had met when she was ladysmaid at Balruddery House and he, although at times, a journeyman miller with his father at Benvie, also worked as coachman at Balruddery House. (In those days tall handsome men were in favour as coachmen and were paid more than others).

There is a family tale that he missed the train which, a few days before the wedding had gone down into the river in the Tay Bridge disaster (or alternatively he looked at the weather and decided it was too bad to use the bridge and travelled by ferry instead). Whichever version you incline to it does seem probable that he had crossed the river that day, the Sunday before the wedding, and possibly his last opportunity to see Sarah before the big day. Whatever the truth it doesn't take much to imagine what the major topic of conversation must have been at the wedding.



James Robbie



Sarah Duncan

Shortly after the wedding they moved into one of the cottages at Benvie while his father, Andrew, was in the mill. Their first child, Sarah, was born on 15 September 1880. In the 1881 census for Liff and Benvie (Dist 301) they are in Benvie Cottage which had two rooms with windows: (Census enumerator James Robbie)

Robbie	James	h m	26	Miller, Corn & Barley	Forfar, Inverarity
Robbie	Sarah C	w m	27		Fife, Balmerino
Robbie	Sarah J	d	6mo		Angus, Liff & Benvie

Many years later Sarah recalled walking round from the cottage by way of the "spoutie" (the pipe on the bank of the burn, which was the water supply for the houses) and having boiled egg for tea when she arrived at her gran's. The distance between cottage and mill is only twenty yards and the "long" way by the spoutie only a few hundred yards but to a young child this must have seemed a great adventure. As the family continued to grow in the early 80's, Andrew and his wife, Charlotte moved to New Mill of Knapp and James and his family moved into the mill house at Benvie and were responsible for adding a second story to the mill house.

By the time of the 1891 census the family was:

Robbie James	h m	27	Miller, meal and flour	Forfar, Inverarity
Robbie Sarah C	w m	28	Millers wife	Fife, Balmerino
Robbie Sarah J	d	10	scholar	Forfar Benvie
Robbie Charlotte D	d	9	scholar	Forfar, Benvie
Robbie Catherine Sime	d	7	scholar	Forfar, Benvie
Robbie Andrew	s	5		Forfar, Benvie
Robbie Agnes	s	1		Forfar, Benvie

The children attended the nearby Liff School in their younger years and when older, Harris Academy in Dundee. They travelled there by train using either Liff station or sometimes Invergowrie station both of which involved a long walk just to reach the station and of course another walk from Magdalen Green Station in Dundee to the school.

<http://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch/view/?sid=74426930> shows Benvie, Gray Walk, the Dundee to Newtyle Railway which the family used to get to Dundee. (Parts of the Dundee to Perth Railway are missing since they are in Perthshire.

All the family as they grew up helped around the mill and Sarah remembered one occasion when she was raking grain on the drying room floor. Unknown to her the "granny" (or rotating ventilator) above somehow caught fire. Her father carried water up and doused the flames but without warning her which resulted in her being soaked with dirty water.

In 1901 the census enumerator was again James. Benvie (301) book 1 page 1.

Benvie Mill

James Robbie	h m	46	millar oatmeal etc. Own account	Forfar, Inverarity
Sarah C. Robbie	w m	47		Fife, Balmerino
Sarah J. Robbie	d s	20	pupil teacher in Pub. Sch.	Forfar, Liff & Benvie
Charlotte Robbie	d s	19	dom. Serv At home	Forfar, Liff & Benvie
Catherine S. Robbie	d s	17	dom. serv. At home	Forfar, Liff & Benvie
Andrew Robbie	s	15	millar (app)	Forfar, Liff & Benvie
Agnes R. Robbie	d	11	scholar	Forfar, Liff & Benvie
Jemima D. Robbie	d	7	do.	Forfar, Liff & Benvie
John D. Robbie	s	4		Forfar, Liff & Benvie



Benvie Mill 1993

One of the secrets of success in milling was to be first on the market and James would ride round the district assessing which farm would have the grain ready first and then negotiating with the farmer to buy it and so be ahead of others, particularly the "Peter Pan" oats man with whom he competed in a friendly way. The mill produced oatmeal, lentils and hen food.

On leaving school, Sarah became a pupil-teacher at Blackness School and also taught at the Episcopal School in Dundee before teaching at Liff School. Despite being a country girl, Sarah was scared of the dark and one night, as she walked down Grey Walk on her way from Liff station she was frightened by an approaching coach and drew right into the hedge. Martin White of Grey House saw this from the coach and asked the coachman who it was, receiving the reply "Sarah Robbie". He later visited James and told him the story and as a result she took digs in Commercial Street, Dundee. About this time Sarah witnessed some of the earliest powered flights (by Preston Watson) which took place in the Carse. She was not impressed and later said "It just went up, went a little bit and came down again".

Catherine (always known as Kate) became a child nurse at Balruddery House and later governess there. Andrew became a paper mill engineer in Invergowrie. Andrew was a bit of a rogue when younger and was known to collect payments due to his father and not pass the money on! Agnes became a fever nurse, Jemima (Mima or Mim) worked in Mathers Hotel, Dundee as well as helping around the mill. As a result of lifting heavy sacks from the top floor and carrying them down narrow stairs in the mill, Mim always, to the end of her life, went down stairs sideways. Later, after the death of both her son and her husband within a very short space of time she worked as a clerkess with Dundee Corporation Transport. John, the youngest, became a forrester. Daughter, Sarah married John Soutar on 18th July 1907

Until 1918 the Gray Estate, of which Benvie mill was part, was owned by the Earl of Moray. That year, the coming of age celebration for Lord Doune, eldest son of the

Earl of Moray was held at Kinfauns. Tenants, workers and tradesmen on the estates were invited. From the Liff area they were taken by cart to Invergowrie Station. Then by train to Kinfauns where they were driven up the long drive to the Marquee at the Castle for a lavish meal and presentations. Miller Robbie as the oldest tenant of the estate was asked to say grace. After an embarrassingly long pause, his prayer was: "For Christ's sake, Amen".

The 1918 Valuation roll for the County of Forfar, Parish of Liff and Benvie, lists James Robbie as paying £31-00-00 for the Mill, House and Garden.

Later, Charlotte and Mim looked after their mother, Sarah, who by this time had developed Parkinsons Disease. Perhaps as a result of this Sarah developed a drink problem. Each day the daughters managed to get their mother up from her bed but, during a period when Charlotte and Mim took a break and Kate took over, the change in routine was too much for Sarah. From then on their mother wouldn't get up again and spent the rest of her life in bed although she always kept herself immaculate, perhaps a legacy of her time as a ladysmaid.

Hilda's memories of visiting her granny are of sitting on the hair sofa, getting a "granny sooker" out of the mahogany chest and keeping quiet! Sarah died on 5th November 1924.



James Robbie tending his sweet peas at Benvie

James died 25th Jan 1940 at 85 Magdalen Yard Road, the home of his daughter, Sarah and his son-in law John.

James enjoyed curling and was a prominent member of Balruddery Curling Club from its foundation in 1892.



The Benvie Teapot.

O.P.R. (old parish register) Angus, Inverarity and Methy.

03 Oct 1852. John, son to John Robbie miller at Kincreish Mill and Margaret Greig Spouses.

O.P.R. Fife, Balmerino. 1853 Birth Aug 11, Baptism Sept 11.

Duncan. Sarah Catherine daughter of John Duncan, seaman, Balmerino and Sarah Johnston his wife.

Banns cried Balmerino Nov 27 1878

Robbie & Duncan James Robbie mealmiller Benvie & Sarah Johnston Duncan, Norham gave in their names in order to marriage: they were Regularly proclaimed and no objections offered. Married at Norham 31 Dec 1879.

1880 Marriage Balmerino 409/1

1879

on 31st Dec.
at Norham Parish
of Balmerino after
banns according to
the est. Church of
Scotland.

James Robbie 35
mealmler
bachelor

Sarah Catherine Duncan 24
Spinster

Andrew Robbie
mealmler

Charlotte Robbie
M.S. Deuchars
John Duncan
salmon fisher

Sarah Duncan
M.S. Johnston

Witnesses: James H. Peebles, Susan Emslie.

Death certificates:

1924

Sarah Catherine Robbie married to James Robbie retd. meal miller	F	70	1924 Nov 5 th 1.45 a.m. Benvie, Liff	John Duncan Salmon fisher (deceased) Sarah Duncan M.S. Johnston	Paralysis Agitans 12 years	James Robbie widower present.
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1940 St Marys and St Peters, Dundee. 282/1 No. 32

James	M	85	1940	Andrew Robbie	Cardio-vascular	J A Soutar
Robbie			January 25 st	miller	degeneration	son-in-law
Miller (retired)			11h 15m p.m.	(deceased)	as cert by	occupier
Widower of			85 Magdalen	Charlotte	W Fyfe Dorward	present
Sarah Duncan			Yard Road	D Robbie	MB ChB.	
				(deceased)		

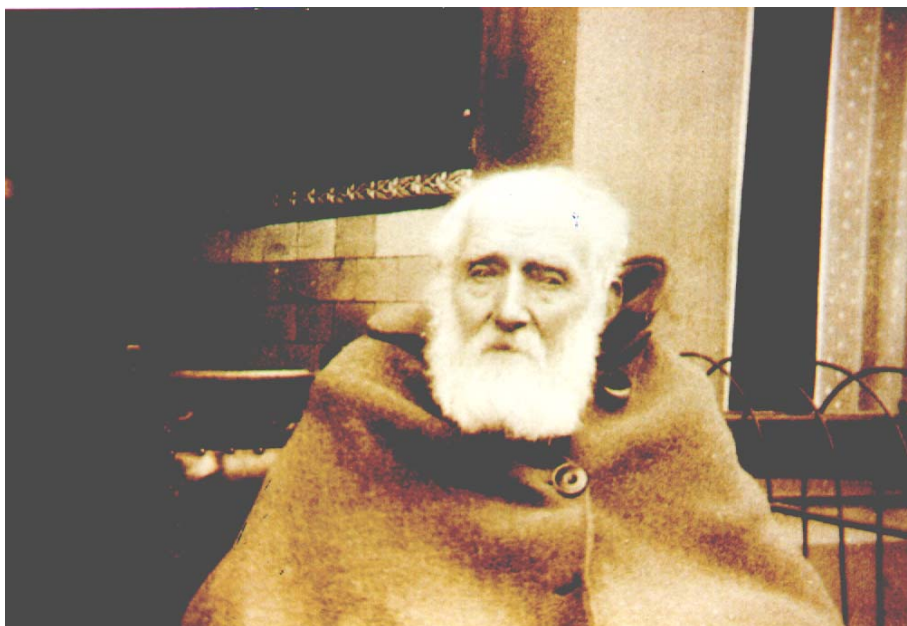
The Benvie Clock

The Benvie clock was reputed to be the first clock in the district. The story is that a Packman had been visiting the district trying to sell clocks. He carried two with him when he visited the Big House (Balruddery). Having failed to sell there he called in at the mill on his way back and asked if he could leave his clocks there until he returned. This he was allowed to do. When he returned some time later, the miller and his family had become so used to the clocks that they bought this one.



The clock is American in origin and probably dates from around 1850. It strikes the hours and has an extremely loud alarm, the alarm bell being about 7 cm. in diameter and made of cast iron. In 1999 the clock still works although it has to be in exactly

the right position to run continuously. Over the years whenever the clock stopped, a bird's feather would be found and used it to apply oil to the works!



James Robbie outside 83 Magdalen Yard Road c1939
(No. 83 is back door to 85)



Agnes who died circa 1922



Kate



L-R Jim Boyle, Aunt Mim, Aunt Chat, Hilda, Sarah.
With Togo the dog.

(At the time the 'photo was taken, Chat and Jim were home from Ireland during the "troubles").



Charlotte



Charlotte, Kate and Sarah with Andrew in front c1886. The necklaces worn by the two older girls are of amber beads. Only a few of these beads are left in 1999.