

JOHN INGLIS

1813 - 1878



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SHEENA INGLIS - CARMICHAEL

John Inglis the Miner

John Inglis died on 1 March 1878 at the age of 65. He had been a coal miner all his life and died of heart disease and "miner's asthma". He had been married three times and buried two of his wives, had thirteen children and buried four of them. He had seen profound changes in every aspect of his life: the village of Hurlford in Ayrshire where he spent his last thirty years; the mining industry and the colliery where he worked; and the society in which he lived.

Over one hundred years after he died, he has at least one hundred living blood descendants in Australia, with another hundred or more in the British Isles.

John Inglis was born around 1813 in Sanquhar, a small village in Dumfriesshire. His parents were Alexander Inglis and Jane Hair. Alexander was probably a cotton weaver, as described on his son John's death certificate, but in other official documents his occupation is variously given as mason (his son James' death certificate), wood sawyer (his daughter Alison's death certificate) and coal miner (his son John's third marriage certificate). Two sons were born in Sanquhar, James (about 1811) and John (about 1813).

During the 18th century, the life of a weaver was enviable. They earned good wages and worked at their looms indoors, often at their homes. They could work whatever hours they wanted, and could take time off in autumn to help farmers with their harvests. Towards the end of the century, however, advances in technology made the home shops less profitable, a problem aggravated by the Napoleonic Wars. Many of Sanquhar's weavers found themselves looking for other work, and it is likely that at this stage, Alexander changed perhaps to coal mining. He left Sanquhar with his family because his two daughters were born in Glasgow, Alison in about 1817 and Johanna (or Janet Joan) in 1819.

By 1841 (the first detailed census in the British Isles), Alexander had died, because his wife had returned to Sanquhar and was living with her daughter Johanna in the High Street just a few doors away from her son James, now married with two young children.

The eldest son, James, continued to live at Sanquhar and worked as a cotton hand-loom weaver, although by 1881 this work had died out and he had become a general labourer. He had nine children and his descendants were still living in Sanquhar after the Second World War.

First marriage

John meanwhile had moved to Ayrshire. On 12 June 1835 (when John was about 23), he married his first wife, Margaret Steven or Stevenson, in Kilmarnock. She was probably the daughter of Thomas Steven and Jean Muir (one of the children was called Jean Muir Inglis).

John and Margaret moved several times: the first two children were born in Kilmaurs but by 1844, when Janet and Thomas were born, they had moved to Dreghorn and they finally settled in Hurlford by the time Elleson Scott Inglis was born in January 1847. It is likely that, throughout this period, John was working as a coal miner, although the first firm record of his occupation comes in the 1851 census. He remained a miner until his death in 1878.

Hurlford was a mining village in Ayrshire, with 462 people living in the village and the surrounding rural area in 1841. Collieries were small and locally owned and the miners

were able to make “certain crucial decisions concerning the mining of coal”. They were mostly from mining families, 95% born in Ayrshire, with skills in mining by hand that made them valuable employees. They were “paid by the piece” and, by restricting their output (the “darg”), they were able to control their wages and the way they worked. One collier (Children’s Employment Commission, 1842) described the “collier as his own master”. The New Statistical Account (1845) says of colliers in Hurlford “there are very many of them in comfortable circumstances – inhabiting their own houses, bringing up their families respectably, and seemingly surrounded with many comforts”, “most are natives of the place” and “the different coal-proprietors are very careful in employing and encouraging only the best behaved”. Miners were relatively well paid, earning nearly three times as much as general labourers and nearly twice as much as skilled craftsmen in 1831.

By 1851, Hurlford's population had grown to 1,663. This explosive growth was caused by the development of the iron industry which needed coal. The technical advances in the smelting of iron - first the use of coke and then the hot-blast furnace - enabled Ayrshire's natural resources of blackband iron ore (which "as it contains a large proportion of carbon, requires less coal to calcine it") and splint coal to be used to the full. "Technology and geology were then combined with signal success in the second quarter of the nineteenth century". The Portland Iron Works were opened, along with the Portland coal-mine.

Second marriage

Margaret and John had nine children before she died in 1852 or 1853, although three died as babies. However, at her death the oldest child, Alexander, was only 15 and the youngest, Mary, was still a baby. As was normal in these circumstances, John married again within a year. His second wife was Crawford Kiers, a widow who had previously been married to another miner, David Hood. When David died in about 1850, Crawford was left with three small children, all under eight. John and Crawford married in Kilmarnock on 6 October 1854, bringing nine children from their earlier marriages. They quickly added to them, with four more children born between 1855 and 1861. The first of these was Elleson, named after Margaret and John's daughter Elleson Scott who had died of scarlet fever aged 9 in early 1855.

The boys, including the two step-sons from Crawford's first marriage, had all become coal miners. The 1842 Mines Act banned all females and all boys under 10 from work underground and it also created an inspectorate. However, enforcement was weak – the first mines inspectors were not even required to go underground. In Hurlford, children as young as 8 were still working as miners in 1851, and 20% of the miners were under 15 years of age. It is difficult to tell how young the Inglis children were when they started work in the mines, but in the 1851 census, Alexander, aged 13, was already a miner as was David Hood, aged 14, in 1861. Meanwhile, on 2nd May 1860, William Hood, also a miner, died of phthisis (tuberculosis) when he was 16. His mother, Crawford, died of the same disease three years later.

Coal mining in the middle of the nineteenth century was still largely manual. The main innovation was the introduction of steam engines to ventilate the pit and lift the coal to the surface. The pits were sunk where the coal seam was near the surface, and worked out when it became too difficult to extract the coal. As a result, as can be seen on the map above, there were numerous small pits all over Ayrshire. These pits all worked the same coal seam, called Major or 'Tourha' in this area. By 1886, both Dykehead and the nearby Barleith coal pits had ceased working, with the only pits in Hurlford being

Portland (the largest, with two separate mines employing 331 underground workers), Hurlford (35) and Bellfield (85).

In 1851 in the Inglis household, there were three adults (John's sister, Johanna, was living with them) and five children. In 1861, there were two adults and nine children (ranging from Alexander aged 22 to Crawford aged 1). The 1861 census shows that the Inglis family lived in a house with two rooms with windows - this was better than several of their neighbours who had only one windowed room. The house was in Dykehead Row, outside the village of Hurlford and close to Dykehead Mine. There seem to have been about 10 dwellings there, all occupied by people working in the mine.

Scotland had notoriously bad housing - in 1871, almost a third of dwellings had only one room, and a further third had only two, a much worse situation than in England. One reason was the draconian Scottish poor laws, which gave no support to "able-bodied" unemployed; another was wages which, throughout the 19th century, were significantly lower than in England. These factors led people to accept poor accommodation at low rentals, leaving a safety net in case of lack of work and therefore wages.

Schooling

In England, it was not until 1880 that even elementary education became compulsory, and most National Schools date from then. In Scotland, legislation as early as 1695 required each parish to provide a school, giving education to all at an affordable fee. A measure of the success of the system is shown by the fact that, in 1855 when civil registration was introduced, 89% of men and 77% of women in Scotland could sign their marriage certificate, compared to 70% and 59% respectively in England and Wales. The marriage certificate of John Inglis to Elizabeth Fry in 1866 shows he could sign his name (and she could not), and the birth certificate of his son John in 1857 shows his actual signature.

191	S	Inglis	1857	Mr. John Inglis	Crawford, Glasgow	John Inglis	1857
		John	September	Coal Miner	Indians Row	Father	September 27 th
			Six months				W. Niccarton
			5 to 10 M. Bell				William Hood
			Dykehead Station				Registrar
			Hurlford				

Children typically attended the parish school from 5 years old to about 9 or 10, learning to read (usually the Bible), to write (or at least sign their name), and to do simple arithmetic. Many school masters also taught other subjects, such as Latin, geography and book-keeping, for a small additional fee. The Scots generally set great store on education, and, although it was neither compulsory nor free, would make sure their children attended school for some years. In the 1851 census, Jean (11), Thomas (7) and Alison (4) are scholars, although Alexander (13) is a coal miner. In the 1861 census, Joan (10) and Mary (8) are scholars, although David Hood (14) is working as a miner. In 1871, Crawford (11) and William (9) are scholars, with John (13) already working.

The Children's Employment Commission 1842 gives some idea of children's efforts to both work in the mines and continue with their education.

Stephen Trew, Crook's Moss Pit, Ayr, aged 16: "Came down as a trapper at nine years old. Has been helping his father, who is a collier these five years since he was 11 years old. 'He could make an offer at hewing' when he first began, at 11 years old but could not do a great deal. It was gayan hard work, and is so still. He went to school for three

years and was in Bible and Collections; has forgotten a heap since he came to work. Half a year tried the night-school a little. The father working with him her observed: 'To tell truth, Sir, when he has been working here till six o'clock at night the school's out o' his head - head a heap o't. He's more ready for his bed.' "

Religion

The Presbyterian Church was the Established Church of Scotland and had been since the Reformation in the 16th century. A key article in the 1707 Act of Union with England was the retention of the Scottish national church (the English one being Episcopalian). There had always been breakaways to form churches which were still Calvinist but subtly different. In Kilmarnock in 1837 there were five churches which were Presbyterian but not Established Church. In 1843, the Disruption broke the Established Church in two, with almost half the churches and congregations leaving to form the Free Church. The split was caused by the issue as to whether the congregation should select its minister, or whether it could have one imposed by the church's patron (usually the major landowner).

Prior to civil registration in 1855, banns for marriage were called in the Established Church, regardless of which church the couple belonged to. John Inglis and Elizabeth Fry were married in 1866, his first marriage after civil registration, and this was in the Free Church. His oldest son, Alexander, and his daughters Alice and Crawford also married according to the forms of the Free Church. It is therefore reasonable to assume that he belonged to the Free Church rather than the Established Church. Two of his sons (John and William) were active members of their churches – John in St. Andrews Free Church in Kilmarnock – and in particular were responsible for the buildings and fabric of the church.

Third marriage

When Crawford died in 1863, John Inglis was once again left with young children. His oldest daughter, Jean, had been working as a domestic servant to a grocer in Hurlford in 1861. In 1862, she married another miner, Francis Stevenson, and their first child arrived later that year. But the other eight children were still living at home. In 1865, Alexander married Janet Strachan, the daughter of an extensive family of miners. In 1866, John married again, to Elizabeth Fry, the widow of Gilbert Aird. Her youngest child was 13, the other two were adults. By 1871, the family living at Dykehead consisted of John and Elizabeth, three of Crawford's four children (John, Crawford and William), and Gilbert Aird. John (13) and Gilbert (18) were both working as coal miners. Joann had moved to work as a domestic servant for the same grocer in Hurlford as her sister had in 1861. Elleson, Mary and Thomas had left home and the girls were probably working as domestic servants (both give this as their occupation on their marriage certificates).

In 1878, John died. In 1881, Elizabeth gave her occupation as grocer and was living in Hurlford in a different house, with her step-son, William Inglis (still a miner) and her 13-year-old grand-daughter Elizabeth Findlay, the daughter of Mary Aird who had recently been widowed. By 1891, Elizabeth had moved back to Dykehead Row and was living alone, next door to her son, Thomas Aird, and his family. She was still living there when she died in 1901 at the age of 82.

Emigration

John Inglis had four sons who lived to adulthood, two by this first marriage and two by his second. All four started work as coalminers, but then three of the four emigrated to Australia over a period of 16 years, all going to different states but surprisingly keeping in touch with each other.

The first to emigrate was the second son, Thomas, who sailed to Melbourne in 1872 but moved to Sydney in 1874. He had been a coal miner in Scotland but became a hairdresser in NSW. He settled in Grafton where he owned a stationery store.



Thomas Inglis' store in Grafton

He married twice in Australia and had 8 children.

John's oldest son, Alexander, sent his 19-year-old eldest son to Brisbane as a "bounty" passenger in 1886, with the rest of the family (including 7 more children) following in 1887. Alexander then worked in the Ipswich coal mines.

The third son, William, half-brother to Alexander and Thomas, emigrated to Victoria in 1888, and settled initially in Terang where he had a newsagent business. In 1903, his brother-in-law joined him and they set up a stationery manufacturer in Melbourne. He married three times and had 5 children.

All four of the brothers' marriages in Australia were to women of Scottish descent. The fourth son, John, remained in Scotland (he was my grandfather), as did all the five surviving daughters. John had five children and became a master builder in Kilmarnock.

There is no photo of John Inglis senior but I have managed to find (from four different family branches) photos of his four sons.



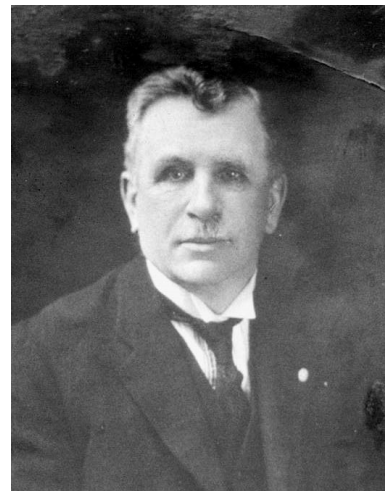
Alexander Inglis
1837-1923



Thomas Inglis
1842-1912



John Inglis
1857-1942



William Inglis
1861-1941

The Inglis family illustrates very clearly the situation in Scotland in the 19th century. Housing was poor, jobs were very limited (immigration from Ireland following the famine put even more pressure on Scotland) and emigration must have seemed like the only option to many people. For the Inglis family, Australia gave the brothers and their descendants great opportunities, although the brother who remained behind showed that Scotland could provide the same chances.

Research notes

I started researching my father's family history about 25 years ago. Although I knew my aunts, uncles and cousins, I had never discussed the family with my father. We lived in London and several times Australian cousins would come to visit us - I'm not sure my father knew exactly how they were related!

Scotland's People is a terrific resource for research and worth the cost, but I also used FamilySearch (which is free), particularly at the beginning. They gave me the bones of the family, the births, marriages and deaths and the census information, and I was very careful to document all my sources (I used Family Tree Maker) and try to have at least two sources for any fact.

I wrote to the cousins I knew and finally got in touch with one in Australia (my second cousin) who had also started investigating the family history. Stuart had a farm near Coonamble, about 300 miles west of Sydney. Initially, we communicated by letter but very quickly moved to email. Although Coonamble is quite a small and isolated town, Stuart was able to find many documents that I couldn't. He had contacted all the relatives he knew of in Australia and eventually we had a large network of Inglis descendants. I visited him twice, in 2002 and 2007, and saw the reality of farming in the Australian outback.

But names and dates are very boring on their own and I found research into the family background much more interesting. Here, the internet of course provides a major resource, but there are also libraries for books, or if there is an old book you particularly want, try the Advanced Book Exchange (abebooks.co.uk). There are Ordnance Survey maps and many other maps available (free) from maps.nls.uk. Gravestones are another great source, and more are becoming available on the internet (billiongraves.com and findagrave.com). Family history societies, such as this one, also provide booklets of local graveyard inscriptions. In my view it is worth the subscription to belong to Ancestry, Findmypast or the like, although I would never trust the family trees on them without further checking. Newspapers are a resource I haven't really used enough yet, and more and more are becoming available. In addition, there are the two Statistical Accounts of 1791 and 1845 (<https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk>), post office directories (<https://digital.nls.uk/directories>) and numerous official reports (such as the Children's Employment Commission 1842). The Scottish Mining Website is very useful (<http://www.scottishmining.co.uk>).

So pick a particularly interesting ancestor (I recommend choosing one who has lived through the nineteenth century as you will find more information is available) and then research his family and background. It is a fascinating way of building a picture of your ancestor.