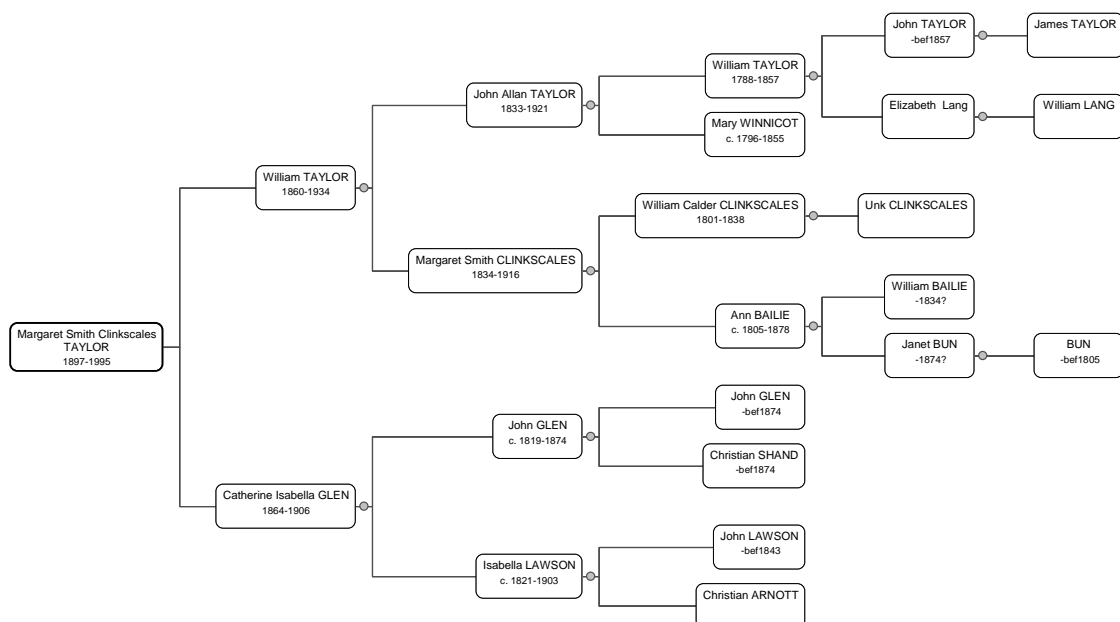


Margaret Smith Clinkscales Taylor Buchanan – 1897 to 1995

What's in a name? We all have them and in the 21st century we have many, including Christian, middle, surnames, maiden, married, nickname, family, sign-on, email, twitter and all the other social media platforms. Unambiguously, a name is a label for a specific person which, over time, becomes adapted and changed dependant on circumstance.

Some names are traditional or cultural, some are handed down and some are made up, whilst generally, names are 'given' to individuals, many of us choose to change them to better reflect who we feel we are at any given point in time.

Margaret Smith Clinkscale Taylor had a long name and had been named at birth after her grandmother, Margaret Smith Clinkscales, (1834 – 1916). Margaret was one of seven siblings born to William Taylor (1860 – 1934) and Catherine Isabella Glen (1864 – 1906).



Ancestors of Margaret Smith Clinkscales Taylor – Larger scale version at appendix

In typical Scottish family naming tradition, Margarets oldest sister by almost twelve years was named Isabella Lawson Taylor, after her mother and mother's mother so Margaret was named after her father's mother and the rest were boys. As long as the author can remember, she was known as Meg.

Meg's home birth on 23rd July 1897, was characteristic of that time and even as the fifth child, meant it was a normal working day for her father William, who was a cabinet maker, like his father before him, at the family firm of John Taylor & Sons.

14 Panmure Place in Edinburgh, where the family lived, was a four-storey tenement building overlooking a large grassland park named The Meadows in Edinburgh. The area had been a marsh but was effectively drained 100 years before Meg was born and

became a walking, picnic and entertainment area as well as traditional practice ground of the Royal Company of Archers who function as the Sovereign's 'Body Guard in Scotland' and perform duties at the request of The King at any State and ceremonial occasion taking place in Scotland. It was also a lovely place for children to play.

William and Catherine gave Meg a baby brother, Robert Glen, in June 1900 but after catching Hooping or Whooping cough, the child died aged ten months in April 1901. At almost

four Meg might have understood some of the trauma her family were living through and to the author's knowledge, she never spoke of him.

Early school years were spent following her older brothers George (1894 – Unk.) and William (1889 – Unk.) along the sulphur smelling smog laden streets of 'Auld Reekie' (Old Smokey), to and from the school they attended.

The school was not far from the house they had moved to two years previously at 13 West Nicolson Street, which in turn was only 300 yards from their last home. It was a busy household and on the 1901 census Meg's grandmother, Isabella Lawson Glen, was listed as a 'widow aged 80' and 'Head' of the house. Also listed were her daughter Rosina Walton and Rosina's daughter Elizabeth Glen Walton, Catherine and her husband William and their children John, William, George, Isabella and, Meg. Son Robert was also listed but he died soon after the census was taken.

There were no doors at the front of the five-storey, rubble masonry stone building where the family lived and instead the residents accessed their homes via a central archway leading from the street at the front of the building, to the stairs that reached their homes at the back. The building had both attic and basement housing but the family's exact home location remains unknown. There were occasional shops either side of the entrance but many more around the corner in Nicolson Street, which was a main thoroughfare. The trams ran down Nicolson Street to Princes Street and the city centre and their bells were often heard within Meg's home.

Margaret Smith – Research into the history of the name Smith notes it is an occupational name denoting a worker in metal, especially iron, such as a blacksmith or farrier, from Middle English *smith* 'smith' (Old English *smith*, probably a derivative of *smītan* 'to strike, hammer'). Scottish: sometimes adopted for Gaelic Mac Gobhann 'son of the smith'.

Within walking distance of the household were many places of interest including; Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood House; King Edward VII's residence in Scotland, The Royal Scottish Museum and just 300 yards away from Meg's home at number 13 Nicolson Street was, in 1905, The Empire Theatre. Also known as 'The Empire Palace of Varieties', the theatre was built upon the site of Newsome's Circus, a favourite amusement location of the late 19th century. The Empire's claim to fame was that it was the first place moving pictures were seen in Scotland. Perhaps Meg saw her first silent film there.

Margaret - Origin of the word is believed to be Persian. St Margaret of Antioch, one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, was supposed to have been martyred in the 3rd C. When apocryphal lives were written, she was represented as having overcome a dragon. She was also regarded as the patron of women in child-birth. The first recorded example of the name in England is St Margaret (d.1093) sister of Edgar Atheling and wife of Malcolm III of Scotland.

The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Names (1947) by E. G. Withycombe

Built upon the site of Newsome's Circus, the Empire opened with 3000 seats in November 1892. The auditorium featured a sliding roof, which could be opened in warmer weather and had different entrances for different classes of patron. A devastating fire in 1911 spread rapidly through the decorative fabric scenery but even as the stage manager lowered the protective metal screen, it jammed causing air to feed from the main entrances to the seat of the fire. The vast majority of the almost 3,000 members of the audience escaped unscathed but eleven people, including the magician The Great Lafayette, who was onstage at the time, died. It is difficult to imagine what Meg and her family may have witnessed, living as they did within sight and sound of the horrors that occurred.

Meg's mother Catherine suffered from an inflammatory disease of the kidneys which included inflammation and hardening of the organs and fullness and hardness of the pulse (hypertension) known as Bright's disease. It is likely to have caused her pain on a daily basis and caused her death, at the relatively young age of forty-one, in March 1906.

In 1910, Meg's older sister by thirteen years, Isabella Lawson Taylor, married James Bertie [See James Bertie;1884 – 1920 story] but Meg could not attend as the marriage was in India where James served as a Lance Sergeant in the 2nd battalion Cameron Highlanders. I wonder if the couple managed to take any photographs to send home? By November 11th 1911, Meg had her first Indian born cousin; Isabell Lawson Bertie, who was born in Bangalore.

Margaret Smith **Clinkscapes** = The name Clinkscapes, 'One who made armour by clinching the scales of metal to leather or heavy linen' has its origins in Scotland. In 1601 there is an entry in the Wedderburn book; 'A History of the Wedderburns in the counties of Berwick and Forfar' (The subjects mother came from Dundee, twelve miles south of Forfar). Retours (return made to the court of chancery on a brieve of inquest with the jury's verdict thereon) Berwick, 27, stating 'terra cotagia in villa de Coldinghame vocata Clinkskailis', meaning land in the village of Coldingham named Clinkscapes. Coldingham is a village in Berwickshire Scotland and only forty miles east of the author's current home. Walter Clinkscapes is recorded in Wedderburn mylne in 1635 and Isobel Clinkscapes in Grewldykes in 1675 (Lauder), and Agnes Clinkskell died in 1785 and was buried in Langton Churchyard [This is believed to be the Langton in West Lothian].

Meg may have completed her schooling as early as 1909 when she reached the age of twelve. The school leaving age had stood at twelve since 1899 and would not be increased to fourteen until

1914. By the time the First World War had broken out, she was working as a shop assistant but the name and location of the premises has long been forgotten by existing relatives, and records of that nature have yet to be discovered.

One of the most popular sayings of 1914 was that the war would be 'over by Christmas'. Over the course of a few months however, the fighting expanded beyond Europe and many other nations; Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, China and Japan, joined the fighting.

When, or soon after war broke out, according to family memories, Meg found herself a beau and they began walking out but the love affair ended prematurely when he was killed in action. Nothing is known of the man, not his regiment, nor his service number, not even his name.

On Nov. 11, 1918, after more than four years of horrendous fighting and the loss of millions of lives, including 880,000 British servicemen, almost 6% of the adult male population, the guns on the Western Front fell silent. Although fighting continued elsewhere, the armistice between Germany and the Allies was the first step to ending World War I. The global reaction was one of mixed emotions: relief, celebration, disbelief and a profound sense of loss.



Meg (far right) in group of perhaps schoolfriends, undated - Private Collection

'And this is the end of it. In three hours, the war will be over. It seems incredible even as I write it. I suppose I ought to be thrilled and cheering. Instead, I am merely apathetic and incredulous ... There is some cheering across the river—occasional bursts of it as the news is carried to the advanced lines. For the most part, though, we are in silence ... With all is a feeling that it can't be true. For months we have slept under the guns ... We cannot comprehend the stillness.'

Robert Casey, Battery C, 124th Field
Artillery Regiment, 33rd Division,
November 11, 1918.

Meg was twenty-one years old. Perhaps she met Duncan Dewar Buchanan when he served in the Royal Navy towards the end of the war, certainly the photograph below is made out 'sincerely yours, Meg' and dated 4th February 1918.

Margaret Smith Clinkscales **Taylor** = English, Scottish, and Irish: occupational name for a tailor, from Anglo-Norman French, Middle English *tailleur* 'tailor' (Old French *tailleur*, *tailleur*; Late Latin *taliator*, from *taliare* 'to cut'). The surname is extremely common in Britain and Ireland. Taylor is the fourth commonest patronymic in England, giving precedence only to Smith, Jones, and Williams. Some of the early records include: Alexander le Tayllur¹ who was valet of Alexander in 1276; John le Taillur who was held the mill of Selkirk as firmar in 1292; and Brice le Taillur who was one of the Scottish prisoners taken at the capture of Dunbar Castle in 1296.

Meg's grandson, Duncan Williams recalled in 2023;

'She was working as a waitress in a cafe that Granda [Duncan] used to go into, I presume when he was on leave from the Navy. He would make sure he sat at a window table; then he would leave her tips of a ha'penny under each cup or saucer that he'd used, and stand across the road watching while she found them'.





Duncan, who hailed from Bo'ness in West Lothian, had signed up during 'Hostilities' but lied about his age, stating his birth date as 12th September 1899 instead of 1900, which suggested he was 18. After training in engineering, gunnery and other field skills at HMS Victory Royal Navy Base between October 1917 and January 1918, he qualified as a stoker.

There were two classes of Stoker: Trimmers, who brought the coal from the bunkers to the boilers in wheelbarrows, and Firemen, who actually shovelled the coal into the fireboxes. The latter was considered the more skilled job: get it wrong and a blowback could incinerate you. Boiler rooms operated at extremely high temperatures and were full of coal dust; something Duncan was used to in his job as a miner. But a stoker's life was more involved than shovelling coal, they were also highly trained boiler mechanics. Duncan served until 1st December 1919. At some point he served on minesweepers and retained his cap badge as a memento.

At five feet six he was half a head taller than Meg and his brown eyes matched his same-coloured swept back hair. Photographs of his early life have still to be uncovered.

The couple married on 30th April 1920 at the United Free Church of Scotland on Lauder Road in Edinburgh.

On their marriage certificate, Meg's home address is noted as 33 Guthrie Street in Edinburgh city centre. After her mother Catherine died in 1906, her father William had re-married. Maria Duncan was twelve years his junior and in 1913 Duncan and the family moved in with

Margaret Smith Clinkscales **Buchanan** = The ancient Pictish-Scottish family that first used the name Buchanan lived in the great lands of Buchanan in Stirlingshire where this illustrious Clan held extensive territories since early times. Although many of today's members of the Clan Buchanan can trace their heritage as far back as McAlpin, the first to establish the name of Buchan was Anselan O'Kyan, son of the King of Ulster about 1016.

It is generally believed that the Buchanans of Auchmar received lands bordering Loch Lomond by King Malcolm II for services rendered against the Danes. And records do confirm that Walter de Buchanan had a land grant in Auchmarr in 1373. A Maurice Buchanan also acted as treasurer to Princess Margaret of France at this time.

The surname Buchanan was first found in Lennox. In Gaelic, "both-chanain" means "the seat of the canon," suggesting an ecclesiastical origin. "The name of this place was originally Inchcaileoch, which it received from an island in Loch Lomond. This name is of uncertain origin; but the family who used it in consequence of having, at a very early period, obtained a grant of the lands so called, sprang from Anselan, a native of Ireland, who is supposed to have located himself here in the 11th century."

www.houseofnames.com

James Buchanan (1791—1868), fifteenth president of the United States was of Scottish ancestry. His father had emigrated there in 1783. Any direct relationship has still to be found.

The Surnames of Scotland (1946) by George Fraser Black (1866-1948)

her. Family sources suggest that Meg did not get on with her stepmother, which is often quoted as ‘no love lost between the pair’.

When Meg and Duncan had their first child in April 1921, they were living in a house at 29 Richmond Place, Edinburgh. Listed at the same address were Meg’s oldest sister Isabella Lawson Taylor Bertie and her two children; Isabella who was ten and James, six. Isabella’s husband, James, was serving as a Sergeant with the 1st Battalion Queens Own Cameron Highlanders in northern India. Their story is told separately.

No sooner had the ink dried on first child Maria’s birth certificate, then the couple moved house to 3 Beaumont Place and Meg gave birth to their second child, Margaret, who was born on 29th December 1923. Duncan continued to work down the pit but now as a Drawer at the John Nimmo & Company mine. A Drawer, as noted on the 1921 census list of occupations, as someone who ‘conveyed materials to the shaft’. The main John Nimmo pit was the Limerigg Pit at Falkirk, meaning that when travel time was included, either side of his shift, there was little time for Duncan’s journey home to play with his children.

Throughout 1924, life continued as normal, or as normal as life can be with two children under five. A Labour Government was now in power, albeit as a minority, with its leader Ramsay MacDonald being equally described as ‘of an imposing presence, handsome features and a persuasive oratory delivered with an arresting Highlands accent’ (John Sheppherd -Historian) or as ‘as a traitor to its [Labour’s] cause’ (the Labour Movement). Duncan and Meg both kept their views private.

Meg fell pregnant again during the Spring of 1925 but carrying an increasing burden through that summer, when temperatures rarely dropped below 90 degrees in July and August, could be exhausting. By the time the baby was ready to be delivered in December, the temperature had swung the other way and was constantly cold reaching -42 degrees at one point, in Glasgow. Thankfully on the day that Isabella Lawson Bertie Buchanan was born in the Royal Maternity Hospital, it was a balmy 19 degrees.

And then there were three...but not for long. In December 1928, along came Jane Taylor and of course, they had moved house again, this time to 16 Downfield Place to the west of Edinburgh city centre.

With the ‘roaring twenties’ coming to an end, the decade perceived in the west as a decade of economic prosperity following the impact of the First World War and the Spanish flu (1918 - 1919), it was time the Buchanan’s took stock. At the end of the decade, Maria was almost nine, Margaret, known as Magga, seven, Isabella or Isa for short five and Jane, also adjusted to Jean, had just passed her first birthday. Meg was kept busy with the four children and Duncan remained employed as a coal miner. Everyone was healthy and they were undoubtedly looking forward to a settled period during the 1930’s, however, the best laid plans...

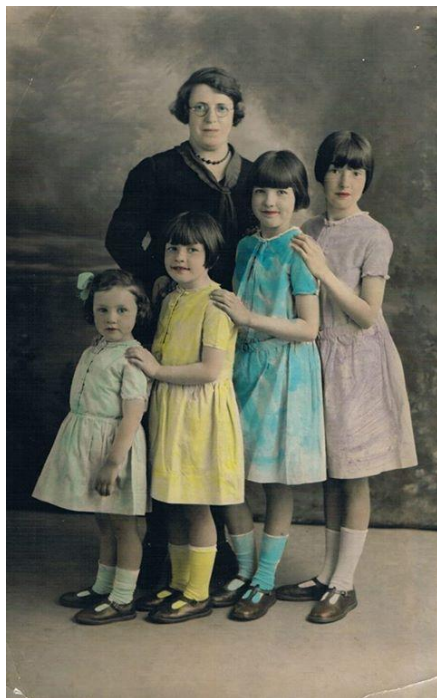
Three of the children had started at various schools; Maria at Lorne Street, Magga at Tollcross and Isa at Ballgreen Primary schools. All were doing well and there was talk of a bursary for Maria to enable her to go to James Gillespie’s Secondary School. Meg was patient with them all and encouraged their studying.

Maria was successful in gaining a bursary in 1933 and was followed by Magga two years later and Isa two years after that. Shortly after Maria had started attending James Gillespie's Meg's father William died in the Spring of 1934. Not yet thirty-seven, Meg had now lost both parents.

The 30's were busy too on the home front. The family moved regularly during the decade and after starting off in 1928 at 16 Downfield Place, where Jean was born, they moved in 1932 to 77 Dickson Street, Edinburgh, then 81 Morrison Street, Edinburgh in 1933, followed by 68 Whitson Road, Edinburgh in 1937.

The change, during the 30's, from the roaring twenties, was significant. During the Great Depression (1929 – 1933), which had started in America, Britain's world trade² fell by half, the output of heavy industry fell by a third, employment profits plunged in nearly all sectors. At the depth in summer 1932, the registered unemployed numbered 3.5 million, and many more had only part-time employment.

Industrial areas such as southern Wales, the north-east of England and parts of Scotland were greatly affected due to the staple industries of coal, iron, steel and shipbuilding experiencing the worst of the economic hit. Jobs subsequently suffered and the areas which had flourished in the industrial revolution were now suffering badly. Men were left unable to provide for their families and many resorted to queuing at soup kitchens.



Meg with (from right to left), Maria, Margaret, Isabella and Jean c1932 – Private Collection

The holidays in the summer of each year looked idyllic, the children were away exploring on their bikes whilst Meg had a chance to catch up with friends and family? Duncan was on the holidays as well but is rarely seen smiling in photographs.

Bursaries were designed to help with school fees and uniform. James Gillespie's High School was founded in Bruntsfield Place in 1803 as a result of the legacy of James Gillespie, an Edinburgh tobacco merchant, and was administered by the Merchant Company of Edinburgh. The first class consisted of 65 students and one master. In 1870, the school moved into a larger building on the south side of what is now Gillespie Crescent. The number of students at the school would later exceed 1,000 and include female students

It has yet to be confirmed whether Duncan remained in full time work during this period but if he did, he was one of the lucky ones.

The family did have holidays and between 1937 and 1941, the village of Charlestown appears in numerous photo albums although many individuals sharing the photographs with the family remain unidentified. Charlestown³ was a planned village created by Charles Bruce, the 5th Earl of Elgin in the 1750s. Not only did he give it his name, he also gave it his initials. The original layout of the village, still visible, is in the form of the letters "CE", from his formal title of Charles Elgin.



Map of Charlestown inverted to display "CE". Ordnance Survey Map of Scotland 1900, National Library of Scotland

The economic troubles of the 1930s were worldwide in scope and effect and the instability of that led to political instability in many parts of the world. Political chaos, in turn, gave rise to dictatorial regimes such as Adolf Hitler's in Germany and the militaries in Japan. By 1935 Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime had torn up the Treaty of Versailles and by 1936 the Locarno treaties as well. Armed conflict began in Manchuria in 1931 and spread to Abyssinia in 1935, Spain in 1936, China in 1937, Europe in 1939. When World War Two began in September 1939, Duncan and Meg knew it was unlikely he would be called up. Duncan was in a reserved occupation when The National Service (Armed Forces) Act imposed conscription on all males aged between 18 and 41. Those medically unfit were exempted, as were others in key industries and jobs such as baking, farming, medicine, and engineering and coal mining.

The reserved (or scheduled) occupation scheme was a complicated one, covering five million men in a vast range of jobs. These included railway and dockworkers, miners, farmers, agricultural workers, schoolteachers and doctors. Ages varied, for example a lighthouse keeper was 'reserved' at 18, while a trade-union official could be called up until the age of 30. Engineering was the industry with the highest number of exemptions. After November 1939, employers could ask for the deferment of call-up for men in reserved occupations but outside the reserved age.

Treaty of Versailles peace document signed at the end of World War I by the Allied and associated powers and by Germany in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, France, on June 28, 1919; it took force on January 10, 1920.

Treaty of Locarno or the Pact of Locarno, (Dec. 1, 1925), was a series of agreements whereby Germany, France, Belgium, Great Britain, and Italy mutually guaranteed peace in western Europe. The treaties were initialled at Locarno, Switzerland, on October 16 and signed in London on December 1.

Britannica.com



A rather stern looking Meg and unsmiling Duncan at Charlestown 1937 – Private Collection

Some men in reserved occupations felt frustration at not being allowed to go and fight, while those in the armed forces envied them for not being conscripted. Many in reserved occupations joined civil defence units such as the Home Guard or the ARP, which created additional responsibilities on top of their work. Duncan joined the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) whose main task was to try and protect people during air raids, when enemy planes dropped bombs, especially on cities. They would also hand out gas masks and guide people to shelters.

Family anecdotes suggest Meg too ‘did her bit’, although it is not yet clear what she did or indeed where. As she was keen on knitting, perhaps she

Coal-mining suffered a severe shortage of manpower. In December 1943 the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, decided to select men of call-up age for the mines by a ballot. One in ten men aged between 18 and 25 were to be selected - only those who were on a list of highly skilled occupations or who had been accepted for aircrew or submarine service were exempt. These conscript miners were known as ‘Bevin Boys’.

knitted for the troops, which was a popular pastime.

The photograph of Meg and three friends on the next page, it has been suggested, shows them dressed for work at an armament factory; RNAD Crombie, which is a Royal Navy armaments depot on the Fife side of the Firth of Forth [river]. Whilst this is possible, there is scant evidence to corroborate the story and it was quite a distance from Edinburgh. However, the village of Charlestown is close to the depot.

Meg’s stepmother, Maria, died in January 1940. The witness was her brother Robert.



Meg & Duncan back centre, Front row; daughter Isa, unknown child, daughter Jean. 2nd row; daughters Magga and Maria. Remainder unidentified but bear a familiar resemblance - Charlestown summer 1937



Meg and friends Jean, Cathy and Helen working at Royal Naval Armaments Depot Crombie (tbc) c1938

As the war progressed, not only did daughters Maria and Magga sign up to the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) respectively but first Magga married Alfred Clements then daughter Isa married Edward Birch. The celebrations, such as they were, were constrained by rationing as well the fact that Edward was an Aircraftsman in the RAF so leave was at a premium.

Meg (sitting) with Maria, Magga and friend, September 1944 -Private Collection



On Magga and Alfred's marriage certificate from December 1943, Duncan profession is noted as 'Rat Catcher' although by 1945 this was embellished on daughter Isa's marriage certificate to 'Scientific Rodent Exterminator, Department of Agriculture'. The profession was a difficult and dangerous one for Duncan with individuals exposed to all manner of diseases carried by the vermin. The chemical DDT was being experimented with in 1945 as a way of ridding the generally built-up food processing areas of the vermin. Rats are known to generally forage between 50 to 300 feet of their nest which means there are some that close to you as you read this... There are approximately 70 million rats in the UK in 2024, just over one per person.

As the war in Europe ended, so too did the families connection to 68 Whitson Road and they moved, not far, to 6 Whitson Terrace, Edinburgh. Now that two of the girls were married and had left home, a smaller house would suit them fine.

The war had stripped Britain of virtually all its foreign financial resources, and the country owed several billion pounds to other countries. The economy was in a bad way with a number of industries being decimated after their wartime expansions. The railways and coal mines were desperately short of new equipment and in bad repair and with little or nothing to export, Britain had no way to pay for imports or even for food.

The Labour Government had little option but to nationalise some of the ailing industries including coal-mining and the railways. Soon, other industries followed; road transport, docks and harbours, and the production of electrical power were nationalized.



Meg & Duncan c1944 -Private Collection

In the year when the National Health Service was born, 1947, oldest daughter Maria (Marie to friends and family alike) married Harold Williams, a Welsh soldier. They had met during the war but their service life came first and when they did marry, both were in civilian employment, Marie in the Executive Office at the Department of Agriculture - Scotland and Harold as an Assistant Manager in a shoe shop in Wrexham, Wales. Duncan had also moved employment and was working as a Record Keeper at

the Register General Department – Scotland, known today as Register House. Scotland's births, marriages and death records are maintained and accessed there and Duncan spent some of his free time researching his family tree but apparently destroyed it when he discovered some misdeeds amongst his ancestors. I've yet to re-find any real black sheep.

In late 1947 Meg and Duncan's daughter Jean became ill. Initially a chest cough, it developed into pulmonary tuberculosis and hospitalisation was necessary. There can be nothing worse for a parent than to discover your child is seriously ill and Jean was. Records note at least one of Jean's visits as an in-patient lasted twelve days but hospital records show most patients stayed for a period of several months of treatment for various forms of tuberculosis. Visits daily to the Southfield Sanatorium at Ellen's Glen Road near Gilmerton in Edinburgh were arranged, which, for Meg, meant changing buses in Princes Street, and perhaps some extra shopping in that busy thoroughfare.

Meg's first grandchild, Kenneth Edward Birch, Kenny, was born in April 1948 so celebrations were in order. Then two years later a second grandson, Michael, Mike, was delivered on a wet and windy evening on September 22nd. In the interim, Meg and Duncan had decided to move home once again, this time to 'Hillview', 300 Calder Road; The first house the author remembers visiting them in. No sooner had they moved in than they received news that Duncan's father, also Duncan Dewar Buchanan, had succumbed to Myocardial degeneration and Hypertension at his home in Glasgow and died.

Jean got well and during or soon after her illness, met a kindred spirit in Bernard Francis Connelly, Frank to his friends. After completing his Army service in Egypt, he too had contracted TB and spent many many months in and out of hospitals, they met at some point and Jean also visited Frank, with her sister Magga, when he was convalescing in the Glen O Dee Hospital in the north east of Scotland. They married in 1954.

During the fifties, daughter Magga was divorced from Alfred Clements but married again the month following Jean and Frank's ceremony, this time to James Dean, a joiner from Edinburgh.



Left to Right - Ted Birch, Meg, Isa, Marie, Jean, Harold, Magga and Duncan, Undated c1950 – Private Collection

Meg had four more grandson's: To Marie and Harold, Duncan in 1955 then Owen in 1957; then to Frank and Jean, Frank in 1956 and Peter in 57. There were no granddaughters for her in the 50's.

Duncan, who was by no means humourless, might have had a chuckle when he listened to the wireless on Christmas day 1950 when it was announced that four students had stolen back the 'Stone of Destiny' from Westminster Abbey, which in turn provoked protests about home rule in Scotland. And the couple celebrated when Queen Elizabeth succeeded King George VI in February 1952. Later in the year they were dismayed to learn that there had been vandalism and even explosions of post boxes which carried the Queen's 'EIIR' insignia. One particular pillar box in Edinburgh's Inch district was repeatedly vandalised with tar, paint and a hammer before being blown to pieces less than three months after its unveiling as part of the so called 'Pillar box War'.

The Stone of Destiny, also known as the Stone of Scone, was used in the coronation of Scottish kings for hundreds of years before it was looted during the Wars of Independence and taken to Westminster Abbey where it was lodged in King Edward's carved-oak coronation throne.

With so many births over the following few years, visits by Meg's daughters with her grandchildren were regular events which she delighted in. Marie and Harold could only visit irregularly, simply because they lived so far away but Isa, Jean and the boys were constant guests.

At the end of the decade, Meg was sixty-two and Duncan Fifty-nine. They were both relatively fit [the author doesn't remember Meg ever being ill], although Duncan smoked too much.

Duncan's employment at the records office continued so they managed the occasional holidays to Rhyl or Wrexham to have time with grandsons Duncan and Owen, which was a real pleasure. There are no records suggesting that Meg worked after 1945 but her time was taken up with looking after her home, seeing her family and knitting.

Meg was a prodigious knitter. Jerseys, cardigans, shawls, tea cosy's, mittens, balaclava's, scarfs, toilet roll holders and even football's; her pins never stopped clacking and I remember her fondly, talking and knitting at the same time, never dropping a stitch.

In 1963 Meg and Duncan buried their daughter Margaret. Magga had been diagnosed the year before with incurable cancer and had spent her last week's either at home in 300 Calder Road or the Princess Margaret Rose Hospital. Having divorced James Deans in the Spring of 1960, she had returned with her musical instruments to stay with mum and dad.

The death of a child, of any age, is a profound, difficult, and painful experience. Magga, at thirty-nine, was no longer considered a child but she was their child.

Jean and Frank had given Meg and Duncan another two grandchildren, David in 1961 and their first, and only, granddaughter, Margaret in 1965. The family shawl, knitted by Meg, was used by a girl for the first time.

'During the 60's I visited them regularly, usually in the company of my brothers and sister and mum; usually via bus but once or twice, on my own, on my bike. The journey across town was almost seven miles through busy streets but once I got there, there was always cake and juice; glass bottles of fizzy American Cream Soda or Irn Bru. We called her 'wee granny', not just because she was shorter than the rest of us but to differentiate her from my dad's mum, 'big granny', who was much taller. When we all went for tea, granny would be bustling about setting the table and so on whilst granda would sit by the fire side with the Alsatian dog, Laddie, lying beside him; granda rarely moved and drank his tea out of the saucer. Granny had a wee suitcase full of jokes and tricks including a sugar spoon with a hole in it, plastic chocolate, fake cakes made of foam and a device you put under a plate and controlled via a puffer ball to make it move. I can hear her laughing now'.



Meg & Duncan outside their holiday rental in the West Lothian village of Woolfords 1964 – Private Collection

Frank Connelly, grandson.

By 1969, Duncan had retired officially but still worked, perhaps part time, at a scrap merchant in the town named Asa Wass, which he pronounced 'azi wazi's'. He took home shell casings and other metal 'scrap', which he cleaned and polished up then displayed around the house.

I suppose Meg retired officially at some time too but there were no celebrations that I can remember.

With the house at Calder Road too big to maintain as pensioners, they move to a pensioner's flat at 2 Robb's Loan Grove. The furnishings from the house at Calder Road were unsuited to the new home but were not thrown out, instead they were transported into the care of grandson Kenny Birch, who retains many of them to this day.

The first floor flat suited them. Meg, at sixty-nine, could manage the house easily and Duncan could sit and stare into the coal effect electric fire. His smokers cough had become more persistent recently so medical advice was being sought,

After only a couple of years, daughter Jean convinced her mother and father to move closer to her at the other side of Edinburgh, which they did in early 1970. 6/1 Magdalene Place was only a few hundred yards from daughter Jean's home at Bailie Path and an easy, flat walk.

'Granda always had a packet of Victory V' sweets, probably to hide the smell of smoke, and would break off a corner for you. He wore old trousers and his collarless shirt was unbuttoned at the top with the sleeves held up by metal shirt sleeve holders. When they moved to Magdalene, I went to cut the grass for them one day and cut my finger on some glass; After fainting, granny helped me up and got me home'.

David Connelly, grandson

1970 was a celebratory year; Duncan and Meg had been married fifty years so the Westfield Halls at Gorgie were booked and a celebration planned.

Duncan passed away in October 1972 and the house became too big for one, so Meg moved another couple of hundred yards to a first-floor pensioners house at 31/4 Magdalene Drive.



Duncan and Meg celebrate 50 years of marriage, their Golden Wedding, April 1970 – Private Collection

'She had a glass fronted – picture style, Welsh fireside scene, music box which played 'Men of Harlech' I think and a wee plastic-based doll that, when you sat it on a biscuit tin and drummed your fingers, it danced to the music'. You couldn't visit her on a Saturday between noon and three o'clock because she watched the wrestling on the television. She broke her chair once jumping up and down whilst she hollered at Mick McManus and his antics'.

Margaret Connelly, grand daughter

Daughter Isa, aged forty-six, died just before Christmas in 1972. The brain tumour she had been struggling with for over two years, giving her constant blinding headaches, took their toll and she died in the Western General Hospital just six weeks after watching her son Kenny marry Patricia, Tricia, Horsburgh. She had been divorced from husband Ted since 1961.

In 1982 Meg saw her third daughter, Jean, die of cancer of the ovaries but also, in happier moments, saw great grand-children arrive: Amy (1980) and Lucy (1983) Williams; Adam (1973), Paula (1975) and Sandra (1979) Birch and Sarah (1978), Lisa (1981) and Andrew (1976).

She was less active these days but there were local shops less than two hundred yards away and she could still manage the stairs. Grandchildren still visited and occasionally, daughter Marie made the journey from Wrexham to visit.

Aged ninety, in January 1988 she moved into a Church of Scotland nursing home, Queens Bay Lodge. Age sometimes brings changes that weaken your vision and eyes, and Meg was no different. Her eyes nowadays were rheumy, red, watery and dimmed but she could still see who you were.

Visits nowadays were timed to avoid meal times and regular sleep patterns. Her room had a single bed, a dressing table and chair and a glass fronted China cabinet; one of the few items she had kept since her marriage some sixty-eight years before. A banister or handrail was fitted along corridors and stairs but an arm was needed to steady Meg to and from the day room, where occasionally tea and biscuits could still be had. She still chatted but, at ninety, her focus was not what it used to be. She called you 'son' or 'hen' and always kept her purse, with a few coins in it, handy, just so she could give the younger ones a penny or so for sweets.

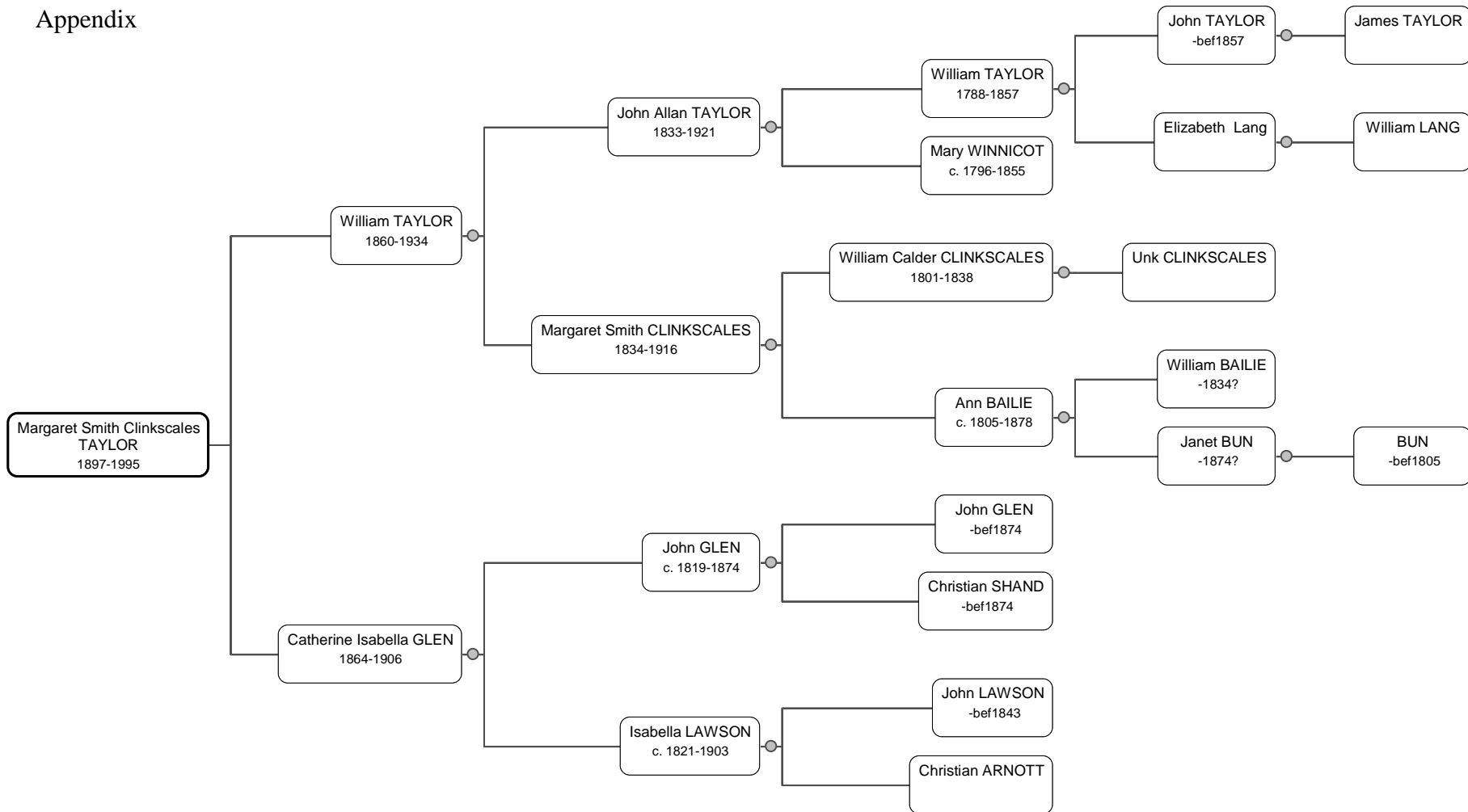
I visited when I could, as did other grand and great grand children and she still had a smile, but conversation was difficult. There were doctor's visits but nothing other than the run-of-the-mill visits, elderly people expect.

In the Summer of 1995 she slipped and fell, fracturing her femur, a very painful episode, resulting in hospitalisation and from which, she never really recovered. On the 26th September 1995 she died in Southfield Hospital aged ninety-eight. God Bless her.



*Meg on her ninetieth birthday with grand daughter Margaret and great grand daughter Lisa, July 1987
– Private Collection*

Appendix



References

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