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SARAH JANE HAMILTON & ALEXANDER BURNS ¹

Sarah Jane was the second child of John and Sarah Hamilton. She was born on 25 September 1853 and was baptized on 10 October 1853 at her parent's home by Rev. Thomas Boyd of the 1st Presbyterian Church of Castleblayney. This tends to indicate that she had been unwell and there was some urgency for her baptism.

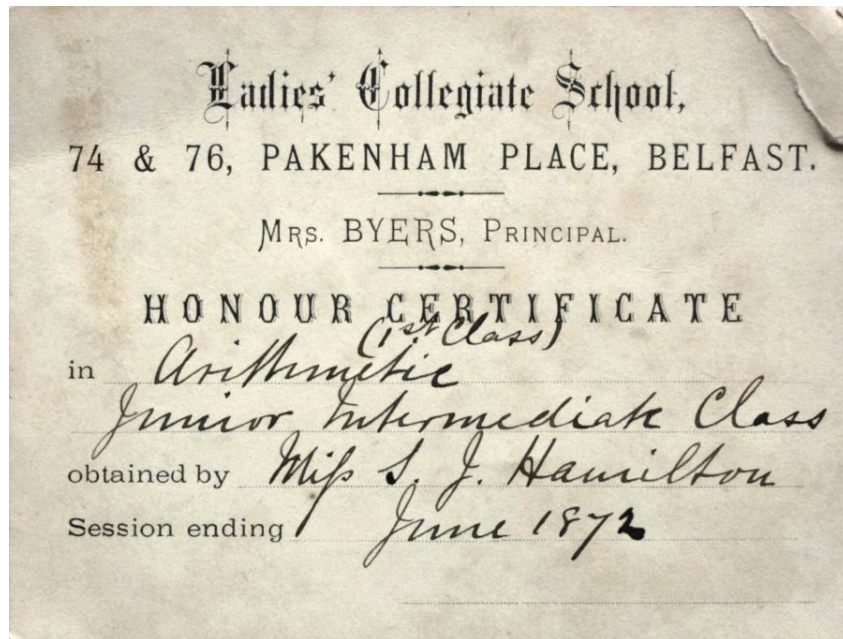
We have no details of Sarah Jane's early life although we have a photograph we believe to be of Sarah Hamilton with one of her daughters. We think the photo is of Sarah Jane because the only other possibility is Lizzie who died when she was 12 years old in March 1871 and the girl appears to be older than 12. The photo is very old and is on metal and we think is about 1866 or 1867.



Sarah Hamilton and daughter believed to be Sarah Jane c1866

¹ Written with the assistance of Gertie Hathaway granddaughter of Sarah Jane and Philip Watt who have provided substantial notes and most of the photographs and reviewed drafts.

The earliest documents we have relating to Sarah Jane are award certificates from a ladies college both she and Dorothea were attending at Belfast. These were all dated June 1872.



Honour Certificate June 1872

Sarah Jane would have been aged 18 at the time and Dorothea aged 20, both quite old for a Junior Intermediate Class by our standards today. However, the important point is that they were receiving a good standard of education for the times. A further issue is how this education was being funded. It would have been difficult for her mother to fund it which leaves her uncle John Rainey as the probable source on the basis that her father would not have supported them as is categorically stated by the Burns descendants.

We are also aware that "*Sarah Hamilton and her daughter Sarah Jane of Annalittin were both admitted to communion at the Broomfield Presbyterian Church on 24 October 1873 "with certificate from second Newtownhamilton".*² Sarah Jane was 20 at the time..This notation also indicates they had been living at Newtownhamilton.

Sarah had moved back to Annalittin to be with her father Walter Rainey. In 1873 Walter was 84 years old and he died about 18 months later on 27 March 1875 of "Senile Decay." He would have required Sarah's help in the time leading up to his death.

Following Walter's death in 1875, Sarah returned to Newtownhamilton and in 1876 the Hamiltons were living in Dundalk St two doors down from the O'Hare's. However, Sarah Jane might have returned there earlier. By this time she was about 23 years old and would have been studying to become a teacher.

² Minute Book Broomfield Presbyterian Church

In 1878 Dorothea migrated to New Zealand and we know that Sarah Jane accompanied her as far as Newry from where Dorothea took the train to Greenore. In her letters Dorothea was very concerned that Sarah Jane may have got into trouble with her mother and her Uncle John for helping her to leave.

In a letter to John Rainey³ Sarah Jane showed that she knew little if anything about her father and what she did know was only partially true:

"I knew very little about him myself, only the people say he is very wealthy. He kept an hotel a while after he went over had some of Andy Hamilton's sons with him so he grew tired of them, gave up the hotel and set it in now living on some land and jobbing in cattle in the country. And for the truth of it I cannot say."

Dorothea seems to have been fairly close to Alexander Burns and it seems likely that they taught at the same school. Alex was also friendly with Sam and they later taught at the Townsend National School at Newtownhamilton. Sarah Jane was also a school teacher and in a letter from Dorothea she was asked whether she had given up teaching. At the time she was pregnant.

Sarah Jane married Alexander Burns on 10 December 1880. The marriage took place at the home of her mother. John was named on the marriage certificate as her father, and his occupation was shown as *"retired from business."* (At the time John was still a very active member of the Gilmer Brothers business partnership and he still owned the hotel at Cobden.) The witnesses were Sarah Hamilton and Samuel Hamilton. This marriage took place two days after the birth of Sarah Jane and Alexander's twin children **John Rainey Burns** and **Lizzie Hamilton Burns** on 8 December 1880.

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
15	Dec 10 1880	Alexander Burns	full	Bachelor	Teacher	Newtownhamilton	Alexander Burns	Farmer
		Sarah Jane Hamilton	full	Spender		Newtownhamilton	John Hamilton	Retired from Business

Married at the house of Newtownhamilton of Mr Hamilton according to the form & discipline of the Presbyterian Church by me, David Jamieson officiating Minister.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Alexander Burns and Sarah Jane Hamilton in the Presence of us, Samuel Hamilton and Sarah Hamilton

Alex Burns was the lessee of a number of houses in Newtownhamilton.⁴ In 1882 Alex was the lessee of a property in Dundalk St next door to where the Burns house now stands. In that year the Burns house was built and in 1883 he and Sarah Jane occupied it with their children. The owner of the property was A. H. Synge but it is clear that Alex purchased it later when it became

³Written between July and October 1878

⁴ Annual Revision Books

available. The Burns family continued to live there for many years until James Burns died in 1977 and the house was sold.

Alex was also the lessor of three properties adjoining the Burns House towards Market Square. Initially, he was probably subleasing them but later appears to have purchased them. Alex Burns also took over as lessor of a property in Castleblayney St in 1882.⁵ This was shown in a later book as next door to the National School and later again as the Schoolmaster's house & garden.

We know that Sarah Hamilton moved in with her daughter and son in law and this made sense with Dorothea in New Zealand and Samuel migrating to Australia. Her house would have been too large for her and the Burns house was quite a large place and could well accommodate her.



Burns House Dundalk St Newtownhamilton 2003 and 2009

Sarah Jane and Alex Burns had nine children:

John Rainey born 8 Dec 1880. Married May in 1947. Died 4 December 1957 at Newtownhamilton.

⁵ Griffiths Reference 39

Lizzie Hamilton born 8 December 1880. Lizzie married Samuel Mitchell and they migrated to the United States arriving in Detroit, Michigan on 15 December 1926. Lizzie was naturalized as a US citizen on 4 March 1943⁶. Her naturalization card showed her address as 1616 N. Kelbourn Chicago. The reverse side of the card indicated that her name had been changed by Court Order from Lizzie Mitchell to **Eliza Hamilton Mitchell**. She died on 2 April 1953 in Chicago, USA and was buried on 4 April 1953 at Montrose Cemetery, 5400 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago Chicago, Illinois, USA. Samuel and Eliza had no children.

Mary Dorothy born 23 March 1883. Died of Diphtheria 6 May 1886 at Newtownhamilton.

Margaret Evans born 4 June 1885. Married Joseph Watt 29 June 1918 at St Donards Church of Ireland, Belfast. Died 6 September 1971 at Lidcombe Hospital, New South Wales. Joseph and Margaret were cremated and their ashes are at Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney.

Joseph and Margaret had three children:

George Alexander Burns born 1919 at Belfast. Married Noeline Mary Donsworth (born 1924). They had four children: Philip, Stephen, Robyn, and Graham

John Rainey born 1921 at Belfast. John married Gladys Rawson and they had five children: David, Heather, Janet, Robert and Elizabeth. John died 30 June 2011, Sydney, NSW

Gertrude born September 1924 at Belfast. Married Hilton James Hathaway. They had two children Margaret and Bruce.

Edith Sarah born 20 May 1887. Never married. Died 29 October 1969 at Newtownhamilton.

James Alexander (Jimmy) born 2 Apr 1891. Died 6 February 1977 at Newtownhamilton

Gertrude Jane born 10 November 1893. Died 5 January 1925 at Newtownhamilton

May Dorothea born 17 July 1896. Married Robert Kirby. May died in February 1972 at Ballykinler Northern Ireland. They had two children Edith and Kenneth.

Samuel George (George) born 3 November 1898. Married Ruby Hawthorne and they had at least two children: John Hamilton, Edith Elizabeth Jean who married Thomas Roy Pontague in Perth 3 March 1951 and possibly a third child named Kenneth. George died October 1961 at Perth, Western Australia.

⁶ Thanks to Philip Watt for locating the details of the Naturalization.



Alex & Sarah Jane about 1886 with Lizzie John & Maggie c1886



Lizzie, Maggie & James Burns 1910

Alexander Burns as a school teacher was paid quarterly and to supplement his income he used to take classes at night at the Burns home. His pay was based on how well the students did in their exams.

John Hamilton did not provide any support to his wife, Sarah, and his daughter Sarah Jane before Sarah died in 1895. However after that money was sent to Sarah Jane. Margaret Burns recalled a payment of 500 Pounds being received and she and her sister Edith rode on their bicycles to the bank in Newry to deposit it. This is believed to have been the first payment from the estate after he died in 1911.

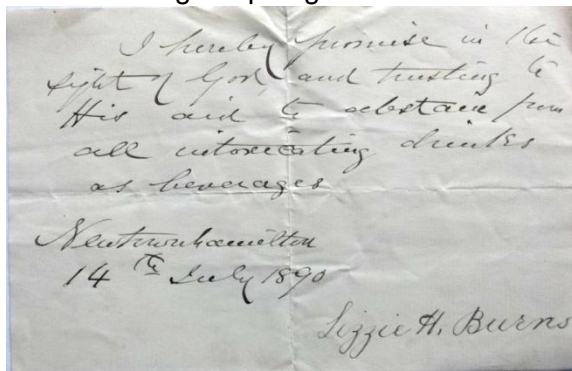
Temperance Union

The Burns family was active in the Newtownhamilton Protestant Total Abstinence Union. This organization had its inaugural meeting in the Lecture hall of the 2nd Newtownhamilton Presbyterian Church on 20 December 1909. At this meeting 76 men and 15 women signed up as members. All names of the men were recorded alphabetically in a book. There was to be a separate women's branch of the union.

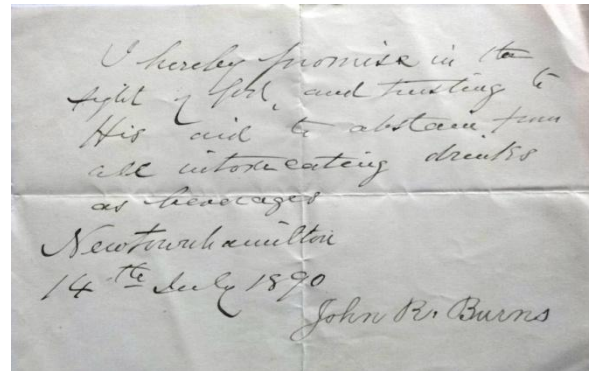
Subsequently there was a second meeting on 27 December at which a further 80 men signed their names to cards and took the pledge to the Union. Alex Burns was active in the meeting and was appointed Secretary of the Union.

The member's book contained the names of Alex and his two sons John and James. It also recorded the name of Joe Watt. The ladies book recorded the names of Mary and Maggie Burns.

The interest in the Temperance was to be expected. There had been a history of the Burns children taking the pledge to abstain from alcohol.

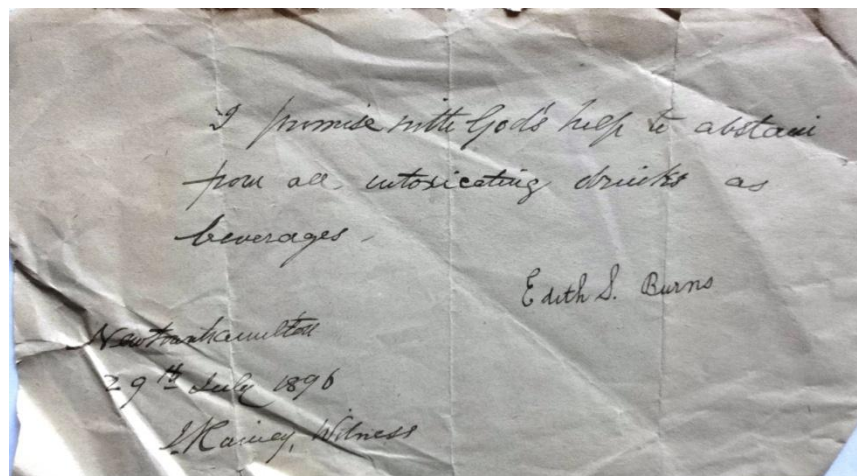


I hereby promise in the
sight of God, and trusting to
His aid to abstain from
all intoxicating drinks
as beverages
Newtownhamilton
14th July 1890
Lizzie H. Burns



I hereby promise in the
sight of God, and trusting to
His aid to abstain from
all intoxicating drinks
as beverages
Newtownhamilton
14th July 1890
John B. Burns

Pledges by Lizzie and John 14 July 1890



I promise with God's help to abstain
from all intoxicating drinks as
beverages
Newtownhamilton
29th July 1896
Edith S. Burns
J. Rainey, Witness

Pledge by Edith 29 July 1896



Alexander Burns and Class Townsend National School 1912

Sarah Jane was a very sick woman for many years and she depended on her daughter Margaret to run the household. On a visit to Ireland her granddaughter Gertie Hathaway met a woman whose husband worked as a servant boy in the Burns house. He recalled Sarah Jane was sick and bedridden and he was required to take up her meals. He described her as a lovely woman would always tell him to be careful walking down the steep stairs.

Sarah Jane died on 30 April 1915 at the relatively young age of 62, only surviving her father by four years. She died of Chronic Cardiac Disease and Heart Failure. Note the Death Certificate below erroneously gives her age as 59 years.

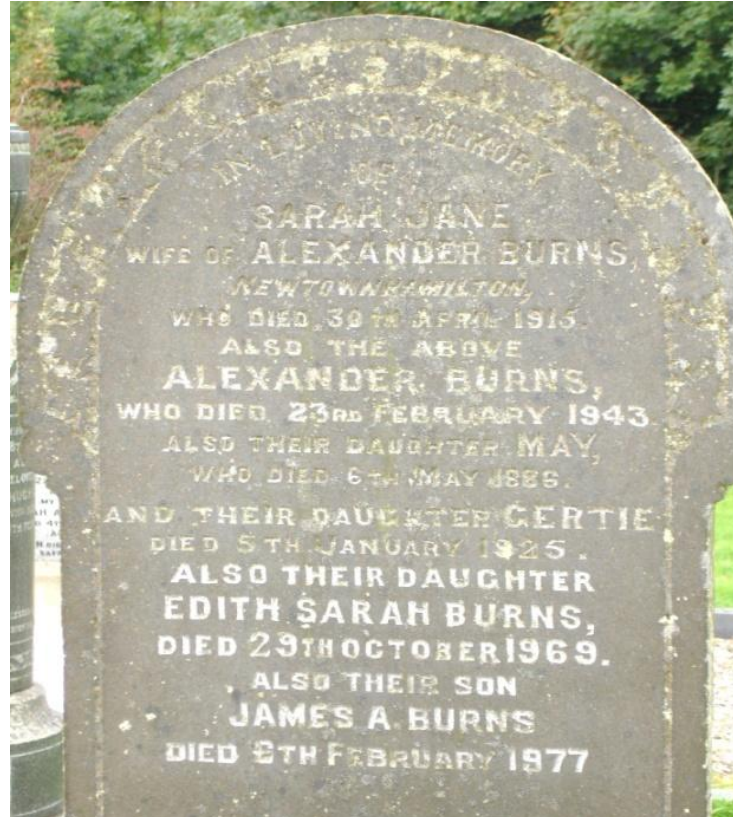
Superintendent Registrar's District <u>Castellary</u>		Registrar's District <u>Castellary No 1</u>								
19 <u>15</u> DEATHS Registered in the District of <u>Castellary No 1</u> in the Union of <u>Castellary</u> in the County of <u>Armagh</u>										
No. (1)	Date and Place of Death (2)	Name and Surname (3)	Sex (4)	Condition (5)	Age last Birthday (6)	Rank, Profession, or Occupation (7)	Certified Cause of Death and Duration of Illness (8)	Signature, Qualification and Residence of Informant (9)	When Registered (10)	Signature of Registrar (11)
368	19 <u>15</u> <u>April</u> <u>Castellary</u> <u>Armagh</u>	<u>Sarah Jane</u> <u>Burns</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>married</u>	<u>59</u> <u>years</u>	<u>School master's</u> <u>wife</u>	<u>Chronic Cardiac</u> <u>disease. Heart</u> <u>failure. Twelve</u> <u>hours</u> <u>Armagh</u>	<u>Lucy Campbell</u> <u>present at death</u> <u>Castellary</u>	<u>Twenty</u> <u>fourth</u> <u>May</u> <u>1915</u>	<u>W J Dawson</u> <u>Registrar</u>

Sarah Jane's Death Certificate



Alexander Burns Later in Life

Alexander Burns died on 23 February 1943. He and Sarah Jane are buried in the family grave at the Presbyterian Church in Newtownhamilton. The grave also contains Gertie, Edith and James Burns.



Headstone Burns Grave Presbyterian Church Cemetery Newtownhamilton

Sarah Jane's Will

Sarah Jane's Will is complicated by the way it has been written. It is not long but it contains no punctuation marks and no segmenting into paragraphs dealing logically with different elements of her Estate. The Will was dated 15 July 1914 by which time there should have been a realization of the wealth of her father's estate. It is reproduced below followed by our interpretation:

"I Sarah Jane Burns of Newtownhamilton in the County of Armagh wife of Alexander Burns hereby revoke all former Wills Codicils and testamentary dispositions made by me and declare this to be my last Will. I leave devise and bequeath all the shares which I hold in the Ulster Bank Ltd all my Estate and interest in the houses in the town of Newtownhamilton now in the occupation of McClure and Hughes and all my interest in the estate of John Hamilton late of Wellington deceased and all other property Real and personal (including as well real and personal property over which I may have any general power of appointment or disposition by Will) subject to and after payment out of my personal estate of my debts funeral and testamentary expenses unto and to the use of my sons John R Burns and James A Burns their heirs executors and Administrators respectively (hereinafter called "My Trustees" which expression shall include the survivor his heirs executors and administrators, according to the nature thereof Upon Trust and subject to the powers and provisions hereinafter declared and contained concerning the same that is to say Upon Trust to pay the net Rents Profits and Income thereof to my two daughters Margaret E and Edith Sarah or the Survivor of them to be used by them or her for the upkeep of the House in which the family shall from time to time be living and for the support and maintenance of my husband Alexander Burns and of our family and for the education for professions of my two sons James A Burns and George S Burns my desire being that said net income shall be expended in such a way that the family may continue to live as they shall have been doing at my death till such time as my said two sons James A Burns and George S Burns shall have been qualified as such professional men or as both of them or the survivor shall attain the ages or age of 23 years which ever shall first occur and from and after that time Upon trust to hold my said Shares in the Ulster Bank in Trust as to four more in addition to those I shall have already given him during my lifetime for my son John R Burns absolutely and as to six more in trust for my daughter Lizzie Burns absolutely and as to eight of said Shares upon trust for my daughter Gertrude J Burns absolutely and as to eight of said shares upon trust for daughter May D Burns absolutely and as to the remainder of said shares upon trust to pay the Dividends thereof to be husband Alexander Burns during his life and after his death to hold the same in trust for my sons James A Burns and George S Burns for their own use absolutely in equal shares as Tenants in common and upon the complete realization of said Estate of John Hamilton deceased I direct that my Trustees shall pay the sums of Two hundred pounds each to my son John R Burns and to my daughters Margaret E Burns and Edith S Burns out of my share of said estate provided always that should such realization take place before the said time of the qualification or attainment of 23 by my said sons then said payment shall not be made until such time and from and after such time I direct that my Trustees shall stand possessed of all the rest and residue of all said Trust premises (including all my property not hereinbefore otherwise disposed of) in trust for all or any of my children or child living at my death and the children or child then living at my death and the children or child then living of any then deceased child of mine who being male attain the age of 21 years or die under the age leaving issue or being female attain that age or marry if more than one as tenants in common in equal shares but so that the children of any deceased child of mine shall take equally between them as tenants in common only the share which their parent would have taken had he or she survived me and attained a vested interest and I declare that all moneys shares or other property advanced or to be advanced by me to my children during my lifetime are intended by me as gifts and are not to be deducted out of their shares under this my Will and I appoint my said sons John

R Burns and James A Burns executors and Trustees of this my Will this fifteenth day of July One thousand nine hundred and fourteen.

Sarah Jane Burns

Signed by the said Testatrix as and for her last Will and Testament in presence of us who in her presence at her request and in presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses

R. O. Hamilton Sol. Newry Alex Fisher Sol. Newry A.Nelson District Registrar"

Sarah Jane appointed her sons John Rainey and James A. Burns as her Executors. Her assets consisted of:

- shares in the Ulster Bank
- two houses in the town occupied by McClure and Hughes
- half share of her father's estate which in 1911 had been valued at 20,000 Pounds for Probate purposes.

Sarah Jane wanted her two sons James and George to become qualified professional men and used her estate to provide funds for their education to achieve this. She wanted the estate held in Trust until both of them had qualified or until they had attained the age of 23. In the interim her daughters Margaret and Edith were to maintain the household so that the family would continue to live as they had been up to her death. This also specified the support and maintenance of her husband Alex Burns even though he had his own income from the renting of properties.

After the qualification milestone had been achieved her shares in the Ulster Bank were to be distributed to: John, four; Lizzie, six; Gertrude, eight and May, eight. Her husband Alex was to have the benefit of the dividends from the remainder of her shares. After his death they were to go to her estate.

After *"the complete realization of her father's estate"* payments of 200 pounds were to be made to John R. Burns and to Margaret and Edith with the residual amount being shared equally between all her children. It was implied that if a beneficiary died without children then their share would be obtained by the others. If a person died with children then the children of that person would take the person's share and if there were more than one they would take that share equally between them.

The Will did not anticipate that John's Estate would continue for such a long period and it continued until the Imperial Hotel in Wellington was sold in 1966. This and his other assets generated a substantial flow of funds for many years. This continuation of his estate must have been agreed between Sam Hamilton in Australia and the Irish beneficiaries.

Sarah would have also been disappointed that her two sons James and George did not achieve the qualifications and professional status she sought for them. While they attended the University of Dublin they did not apply themselves and simply waited for their share of the estate to come to them.

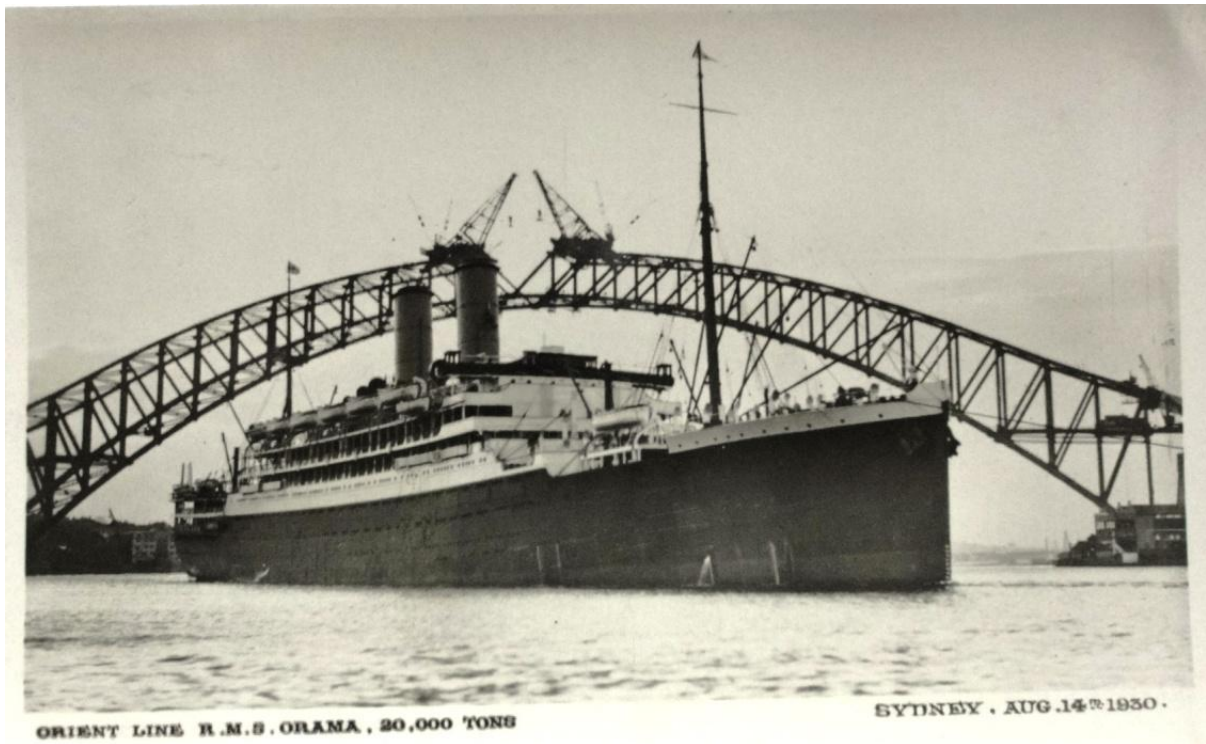
John Rainey Burns 1880 to 1977

John was the twin brother of Eliza. However, he was very much the favourite child of his mother and was spoilt by her. He was a Rate Collector for the County of Armagh. After John Hamilton's money came through Sarah Jane bought him a car, a 1912 Chambers, which was manufactured in Belfast. It was said to be one of the first motor vehicles in all of Co. Armagh.

John's sister, Margaret, used to help him collect the rates driving around in a horse and trap. She received no pay or thanks from him but she used to like doing it because she loved getting out of the house and meeting the country people.

John was the executor of his mother's Will with his brother James and it is clear that Margaret and May (Kirby) were not receiving their share from him. This was remedied in 1925 when Samuel Hamilton visited them from Australia and threatened to take him to court.

John visited Australia in the early 1930 staying with his sister Margaret at Padstow a suburb of Sydney. However, on his return to Ireland he did not correspond with them and the Watts received their news from home from her father Alex. John sent home a number of Postcards of which we have copies. The one below shows the ship we believe he travelled on and especially the near completion of the arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The road at that time had not yet been commenced.

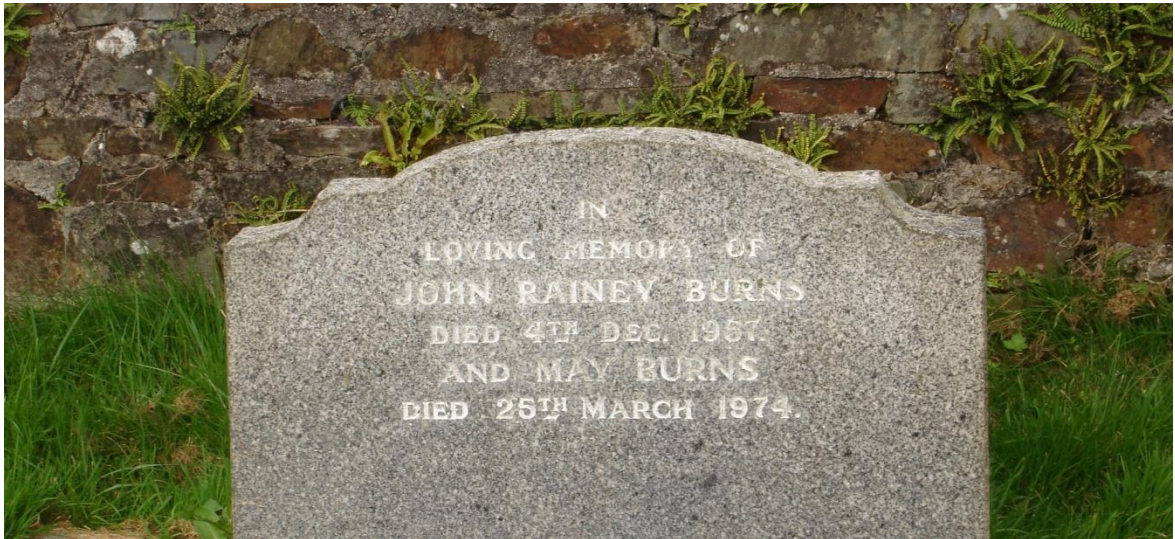


Postcard RMS Orama Sydney Harbour 1930

John married when he was 67 years of age in 1947 but he and his wife May had no children.



1912 Chambers similar to the vehicle owned by John Rainey Burns



Grave John Rainey Burns and his wife May

Eliza Burns 1880 to 1953

Eliza was always known as Lizzie. She married Samuel Mitchell and they went to the USA where they settled in Chicago. Eliza and her sister Margaret corresponded on a regular basis of about four times a year.

Eliza died on 2 April 1953 and the family received shares in her estate. Her husband had predeceased her and they had no children. She is buried at Montrose Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois.



Margaret, John, James & Lizzie Burns

Margaret Evans Burns 1885 to 1971

Margaret left school at an early age to care for her sick mother and to manage the household. She quickly became a very efficient housekeeper. She had responsibility for hiring the servant girl and ensuring that she was always dressed in a clean well ironed white apron and that she walked briskly and not slovenly as *"if the dead lice were dropping off her"*.

When she decided to marry Joseph Watt most of her brothers and sisters were not in favour realizing that the duties of the house would fall on one of them. There was no real reason to object to Joseph as he was well respected in Newtownhamilton. Margaret decided to elope and they went to Belfast and were married in June 1918. Joseph was a coachbuilder, carpenter and joiner and he worked at the Harland and Wolff Shipyard, possibly from around 1918 until a little before they left Ireland

After they married most of the family did not speak to them. They were only visited by Gertie and Alex Burns. When Gertie died Joseph came back for the funeral and helped carry the coffin from the family home to the churchyard grave as was the custom. Margaret did not attend the funeral. After she left the house to marry Joseph she never went back. After the burial Joseph was not invited back for a cup of tea something that hurt both Margaret and Joseph very much.

By 1925 the Watts had three children all with strongly traditional family names, George Alexander Burns, John Rainey, and Gertrude Jane. Samuel Hamilton visited them in Belfast with his daughter Dora in that year and later went to Newtownhamilton where he saw to it that Margaret was receiving her entitlement from John Hamilton's estate. She was reluctant to accept the money as she saw it coming from the sale of alcohol. Joseph also did not want to be seen to be marrying her for her money. Sam insisted and she started receiving her share.

Sam could see how the family was treating them and he advised them to go out to Australia where there were much better prospects for them and their children than in Ireland. Very soon after they travelled on the SS Esperance Bay from Tilbury, London, leaving in September 1926, and arriving in Fremantle late October 1926. They came on to Melbourne where they stayed with Sam and his family at East St Kilda for a couple of weeks. They then went to Wagga Wagga where Joseph worked with John (Jack) Rainey Hamilton who at that time had a hotel there. They rented a house at 53 Beckworth St.

Margaret hated Wagga with its heat and dust storms and knew there were better prospects for employment in Sydney. They moved there and for a year rented a house in Croydon. They bought land in Padstow and Joseph built their home there. In 1939 they decided to rent that home and bought about 6 acres of land. After working very hard they established a successful poultry farm. They retired in 1957.



Joseph & Margaret Watt c1918



George, Gertie, & John Watt

Margaret was small in stature but there was not a lazy bone in her body. She disliked hearing people say they were tired and put this down to laziness. She was very particular in the house which was thoroughly cleaned weekly and she also worked very hard on their farm.

She took great pride in her family being well dressed and groomed. Her children all had to have a good education. They were also expected to behave well at all times and they knew from an early age to obey.

Both Joseph and Margaret hated alcohol as they had seen the tragedy it had caused in Newtownhamilton. Their children were taught from an early age the evils of it and not one of their three children touched alcohol.

Margaret was very generous both to her family and those in need and she was very grateful for those who helped her or her family. She was especially grateful to her Uncle Sam and she never ever complained about Australia. She had no yearning to return to Ireland. Alex Burns wrote to them regularly and sent them copies of the Armagh Guardian and the Belfast Weekly. This was greatly appreciated as his writing and the newspapers kept them in touch with the people in Newtownhamilton. This stopped when her father died.

Joseph and Margaret had a very satisfying and fulfilling life in Australia. Joseph died in 1961 with chronic heart failure, and probably generalised blood infection (septicaemia) resulting from skin infection and ulcer. Margaret died from a Stroke in 1971. They both were cremated and their memorial plaques and ashes are at Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery.



**Philip Watt, Maureen (Hamilton) Mateer, Elizabeth (Hamilton) Harford
Gertie & Jim Hathaway January 2009**

Edith Sarah Burns 1887 to 1969

Edith took over as the housekeeper at the Burns house after Margaret had left and married Joseph Watt. Edith never worked and lived off the income she received from New Zealand and also rents from property adjoining the family home.

On a trip to Ireland Gertie and Jim Hathaway were told by a shopkeeper, Herbie Conlan, that Edith before she died prepared a list of people she wanted at her funeral and that he was one of them. Herbie said the Burns' were of no earthly use and nor did they prepare for the future.

Edith died on 29 October 1969 and is buried in the family grave at Newtownhamilton.

James Alexander Burns 1891 to 1977

Jimmy Burns was fortunate that his mother took the trouble to help shape his future as a professional person. However, he had no interest in studying and failed at university. He returned to Newtownhamilton where he lived with his father and sister Edith.

Jimmy's sole interest was in racing greyhounds many of which were moderately successful. He never worked and lived on the income he received from New Zealand and the stakes won by his racing dogs.

Jimmy died on 6 February 1977 and he was buried in his mother and father's family grave at the 2nd Presbyterian Church Cemetery at Newtownhamilton.



Jimmy Burns 1932 Belfast Coursing Cup

Gertrude Jane Burns 1893 to 1925

Gertie was Margaret's favourite sister and she worked at Brandt's a shop in Belfast. She used to visit the Watts there every Saturday afternoon. While Margaret and Joseph were ostracized by the rest of the family Gertie did not agree. She believed that Margaret was being unjustly treated and also she thought that Joseph Watt was a hard working decent man who was very loving to his wife and children.

Gertie was diagnosed with breast cancer and died in 1925. Margaret always said she was too good for this world. Margaret's daughter was born four months earlier and she was given her name, Gertrude Jane.

An Obituary was published in the newspaper:

The death of Miss Gertrude Jane (Gertie) Burns, daughter of Mr. Alexander Burns and the late Mrs Sarah Burns, who passed away on 5th January 1925, has evoked widespread sorrow in Newtownhamilton and district, where the family are deservedly held in such high esteem and where the many excellent qualities of the deceased young lady caused her to be greatly beloved.

The deceased became ill in February last when she underwent an operation in a private nursing home in Belfast. For a time improvement manifested itself but she suffered a relapse and was sent to a special hospital in Dublin.

For the past four months she has been confined to her bed during which she had the unremitting care and attention of Dr. Dawson, JP and a trained nurse and loving and devoted ministrations of the other members of the family, her sister coming all the way from America to assist in nursing her, whilst her younger brother was seldom absent from her bedside during her long and trying illness.

The funeral on Wednesday evening last was one of the largest and most representative ever seen in Newtownhamilton and spoke eloquently of how the family's great sorrow is shared by the community in general.

Rev. A Brown MA BD officiated both at the house and at the graveside and spoke touchingly of how deceased had passed away so peacefully trusting in her loving Saviour whom she had served so faithfully.

The chief mourners were; Messrs Alex Burns (father) John, James and George Burns (brothers); Robert Kirby, Joseph Watt (brothers in law)

The following were the wreaths:

In affectionate remembrance of dearest Gertie from Father, John, James and George

In affectionate remembrance of dearest Gertie from Lizzie and Edith

In loving memory of Gertie from her sorrowing sister and brother in law Margaret and Joseph Watt; also her little nephews and niece George, John and Gertie.

In affectionate remembrance of dearest Gertie from May, Bob and baby."

May Burns 1886 to 1972

May worked in retail at Belfast and married Robert Kirby. She regularly corresponded with the Watts after they came to Sydney. She and her husband visited Australia in 1960 seeing the Watts in Sydney, her brother George in Perth and Vera and Dora Hamilton in Melbourne. Dora had visited Newtownhamilton in 1925 with her father and Vera had spent three months there with her mother, Teresa, in 1930.

May and Bob had a shop outside the Army Barracks at Ballykinler. Both of them worked in the shop. They had two children Edith and Kenneth and when they retired Kenneth took over the business.

Edith married Dr. Desmond Wright and they lived at Dundonald. They had four children: John, Pamela, Judith and Donald. After the death of James and Edith Burns, Edith inherited the family bible. In it Alexander Burns had written Rainey and Hamilton names and dates. Also included were letters from the Rainey boys who went to America. Surprisingly, Alexander had not written any of the names of his own family.



Robert & May Kirby

Edith regularly corresponded with Gertie Hathaway in Sydney but did not tell her that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer. In the early 1980's her sister in law Netta Kirby wrote that she was ill in hospital and she passed away a short time later.

Kenneth Kirby was without work in Ballykinler but he responded to an advertisement for Bank Tellers in New Zealand and was successful in obtaining a job there. He met and married his wife Netta Malthus there. He took Netta back to Ireland to introduce her to his family and his parents offered him a job in their shop. Consequently they did not return to New Zealand

Kenneth and Netta had four children: Joan, Paul, Dorothy and Alan. We have been fortunate to meet two of them, Alan and Dorothy, both very nice people. Alan lives at Preston in England and is now the custodian of the family bible.



Netta, Elizabeth and Kenneth with the Family Bible 2009



Netta & Kenneth Kirby & Son

Samuel George (George) Burns 1898 to 1961

George married Ruby Hawthorne and moved to Perth, Western Australia. There was never any correspondence with him although the Kirbys visited him in Perth when they came to Australia in 1961. George died in October 1961.

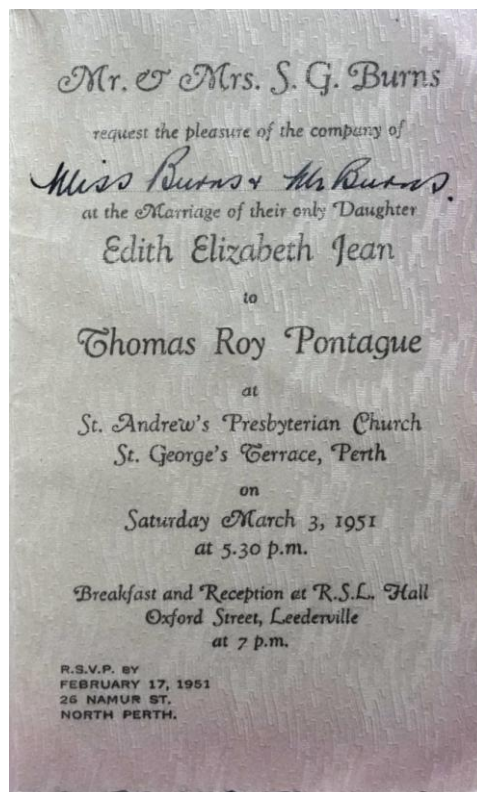


George & Ruby 1957

George and Ruby had three children:

John Hamilton was born about 1926 although there is no birth record in Western Australia.. John successfully applied for entry to the Narrogin School of Agriculture in 1941⁷. He would have been 15 years old at the time. John died in 1955. He was 29 years old.

Edith Elizabeth Jean (Jean) born 1929 at Northam WA. Jean married Thomas Roy Pontague on 3 March 1951.



Wedding Invitation

⁷ The West Australian 20 December 1941



Jean Burns



Jean & George

Albert Kenneth⁸ was George and Ruby's third child but we have been unable to locate any record of events with this name as yet.

⁸ Courtesy of Philip Watt's research