

# An Investigation into the Ancestry of Marie Weir nee Hamilton



An Introduction to Family History  
Centre for Lifelong Learning  
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Marie Weir nee Hamilton was my grandmother and the aim of this report is to provide details of an investigation into her ancestry; what information I found and the methods I used to find it, as well as any problems I faced while conducting the research. The first part of the report will cover a background history of Marie and the information on her family tree that I extracted from the records and provide a narrative for it in its historical context. The second part of the report will provide a discussion and evaluation of the resources used and will conclude with ideas on how such information can be used other than for private inspection. I will also address the issue of preservation for the original records I possess.

### Short Biography of Marie Hamilton

Marie Hamilton was born at home on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1925 at 38 Kirklandpark Avenue in Strathaven, South Lanarkshire in Scotland to parents John Hamilton and Helen Mary Flannigan. John and Helen were married four years earlier on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1921 in the Gorbals area of Glasgow<sup>1</sup>. What is unusual is that while Helen was 36 years old, her husband John Hamilton was only 27 years old. Their usual residences were both given as 124 Wallace Street, South Glasgow, meaning that they were already living together when they got married<sup>2</sup>. Marie married my grandfather Charles Douglas Weir on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1949 in the District of Avondale and Glassford in Lanark at Drumclog Church in Strathaven after Banns according to the forms of the Church of Scotland<sup>3</sup>. Charles was aged 25, a research engineer and living at 11 Townpark House on Commercial Road in Strathaven. Marie was aged 23, a school teacher and living at her parents' house where she was born<sup>4</sup>. They were to eventually divorce however not before having a son Michael and a daughter Lillian, my mother.

### Ancestral Information: John Hamilton Line

I will first look into the paternal ancestral line of Marie by looking into John Hamilton. My family are lucky to possess his original birth certificate from which I extracted the following information. He was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1893 at the Royal Oak Tavern in Commongreen, Strathaven. The writing on the back of his birth certificate stated he was baptized according to the rites of the Church of Scotland on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1893<sup>5</sup>. On John's marriage certificate, which states that he was married to Helen at St John's Church, Portugal Street, Glasgow after publication according to the forms of the Roman Catholic Church, his occupation is given as a motor mechanic. John died

on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1974 in Stonehouse Hospital of Cardio-vascular Degeneration and General Arteriosclerosis<sup>6</sup>.

His parents are listed as Gavin Hamilton, whose occupation was Spirit Merchant, and Catherine Nairn on his birth certificate. Gavin's occupation perhaps explains why John was born in a public house. Their marriage is given as 24<sup>th</sup> November 1885 at Dykehead in the Parish of Loudoun<sup>7</sup>. As their marriage was after 1855 I checked the Statutory Registers on the Scotland's People website for the record of it. This produced one result which then enabled me to check for the marriage on the genealogy website run by the Church of the Latter Day Saints entitled Family Search. I chose to look at this website first to see whether I could get the information I was looking for without using up credits on the website for Scotland's People. It did not yield as much information as the latter. However it did reveal that Gavin was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1862 in Avondale, Lanark and died on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1927 in Strathaven. His wife Catherine Nairn was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1859 in Avondale as well. It did not list her death<sup>8</sup>.

I used Family Search again to search for a record of Gavin's birth. Seven matches were produced and only two exact ones. One was the marriage record previously looked at and the second was the birth record. It revealed that his parents were James Hamilton and Sarah Marshall. To obtain further details of Gavin's birth I then searched for the actual record on Scotland's People which produced two matches. However it was easy to eliminate the second one as it was for the district of Glassford. The birth certificate revealed that Gavin was born at home in Barn Street. His father James Hamilton worked as a Weaver's Heddle Maker<sup>9</sup>. The website Genuki gave a link to a website that lists descriptions of old occupations. The following description was given for James' occupation: 'manufacturer of healds used on looms. The warp yarns are passed through loops known as healds, which raise and lower the yarns after the shuttle has passed the weft across the width of the loom'<sup>10</sup>.

I repeated the search for Catherine Nairn which revealed that her parents were Andrew Nairn and Mary McKechnie. To obtain further details of Catherine's birth I searched for this birth record on Scotland's People which produced one result. It showed that Catherine was born in Meadowland in the Parish of Avondale. Her father Andrew Nairn worked as a Coal Miner<sup>11</sup>.

However to get a more detailed account of Gavin and Catherine's life and that of their parents I returned to Scotlands People to consult the image of their marriage certificate. On it was stated they were married after Banns according to the forms of the Established Church of Scotland. Gavin's occupation here is given as Farm Servant, he is 23 years old and living at High Hewland in the Parish of Avondale. Catherine's occupation is Domestic Servant, she is 24 years old and living at Waterside Street, Strathaven. James Hamilton, now deceased, was most recently a Weaver's Card Cutter. This meant that he had changed from making healds to making the tools used to 'comb' wool<sup>12</sup>. Andrew Nairn, as noted previously, was a Coal Miner. The witnesses were (presumably) relations of the bride and groom namely George Hamilton and Eliza Nairn<sup>13</sup>.

I searched the census records for 1881 to investigate who Gavin and Catherine were working for before they were married. The search for Gavin produced 7 results but as I knew his age I narrowed it down to one. It shows that he was living and working on the farm with James and Maggie Young and two other general servants; Maggie Mackie and Helen Struthers<sup>14</sup>. Unfortunately I cannot be certain that this record does refer to Gavin as the address is West Linbank as opposed to High Hewland. However the district, occupation and age correlate. The same type of search performed for Catherine did not produce any results.

I then decided to search for a record of Gavin's parents James and Sarah in the Census to try to obtain a possible year date for each of their births. I initially looked for Barn Street on the website entitled FreeCEN in 1861 however no matches were returned for the Lanarkshire area. I then searched by the names of James and Sarah on Scotland's People and one match was found. However this was for a James Hamilton of Avondale who was age 15 years in the 1861 Census, too young for my ancestor. I then decided to search the 1851 census records for them. I hoped this search would be more useful anyway as exact ages were given here as opposed to being rounded to the nearest five years. Two matches were produced; one for a James aged 5 and one aged 26. I chose the latter. This showed James at 26 and Sarah at 23 living at 17 or 19 Waterside Road in the parish of Avondale in the town of Strathaven. James is described as working as a Hand Loom Weaver and Sarah is a Card Cutter. The cotton industry was large in Scotland at this time though as the 19thC continued it became an increasingly difficult industry to work in due to changing fashions and the technological achievements of the Industrial Revolution<sup>15</sup>.

They had two sons at this point; James who is 5 and William who is 2. Both James and Sarah were born in Lanarkshire; James in Strathaven and Sarah in Chapelton<sup>16</sup>.

I then searched for their marriage on Family Search and found only one match which proved to be correct. It showed that James and Sarah were married on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1845 in Avondale, Lanark. It gives James' birth as c.1820 in Avondale and Sarah's as c.1824 in Avondale. A search for their births on Family Search did not prove to be fruitful so I returned to Scotland's People to try to search for them there using the Old Parish Registers as the dates were pre-1855. I first searched for the marriage of James and Sarah in order to hopefully gain the names of their parents, which would better enable me to search for their births. I searched for the marriage taking place between 1841 and 1847, when their son James was born.

My search produced one result which was the right one. However the record did not give any details to the marriage except their names and the date which I had already obtained<sup>17</sup>. For the purpose of this report I suspended my search for further details on James at this point and changed to searching for details of Catherine Nairn's parents.

To try to obtain ages for Andrew and Mary Nairn I searched for them in the Census records for 1881. This produced 2 results; one for an Andrew age 9 and one age 48. I chose the latter. It showed that Andrew age 48 and Mary age 47 were living at Eastertwon with 3 sons; John age 12, Andrew age 9 and Archibald age 7 who were all at school. It also shows that Andrew was born in Avondale but Mary was born in Billhatten. They were living in a property with 2 rooms that had windows<sup>18</sup>. Unfortunately a search for the births of Andrew and Mary did not prove fruitful, nor did one for their marriage.

#### Ancestral Information: Helen Flannigan Line

I will now look into the maternal ancestral line of Marie by starting with Helen Mary Flannigan. On the copy of the birth certificate it states that she was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1885 at home in 103 Dale Street Glasgow. Her parents are listed as Hugh Flannigan, whose occupation was Gas Work Stoker, and Rachel Lamond. Their marriage is given as 29<sup>th</sup> March 1869 in Dunfermline, Fife<sup>19</sup>. A search was taken of the census records for 1861 and 1871 for Dunfermline but no matches were found. I then searched the 1881 census for Glasgow on Scotland's People and found one result. It shows that Hugh and Rachel were living at 88 Centre Street in Govan along

with children George, age 11 and at school, Lizzie age 9, James age 7 and Maria I. age 4 months. It was a flat with 2 rooms having windows. While the children were born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, Hugh and Rachel were both born in Ireland. Unfortunately it does not state what county in Ireland which creates difficulties for searching for their Irish records. Hugh's occupation in this record is given as Labourer in Gas Works. It is very difficult to view what age Hugh is as there is a line through it although it looks like 38 or 39 years old. Rachel is 35 years old.

I then searched the 1891 census to get a record for Helen living in the household. A search using both the names of Hugh and Rachel produced no results so I searched only for Hugh which produced several results. The one that looked most likely was one for a 48 year old man named Hugh 'Flanagan' living in Tradeston. After viewing the image this proved to yield the correct information. It shows Hugh and 'Rachael' living at 134 Dale Street. Hugh is now listed as a General Labourer. George and James are Spirit Salesmen, Elizabeth is a Dressmaker, Maria is at school and Helen is age 5. It again just gives Hugh and Rachel's birthplaces as Ireland. They now live in a flat that has 3 rooms with windows<sup>20</sup>.

I searched for the marriage of Hugh and Rachel to try to obtain details of their parents. I first searched on Family Search for around 1870 as this was when George, their eldest son was born. There was one result for 'Rachal Lamond' and Hugh Flannigan being married on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1869 in Dunfermline, Fife<sup>21</sup>. It does not give names for their parents but I used the date to search for the record on Scotlands People. I used the search parameters 'fuzzy matching' as these names seem to be prone to possible misspellings and one result was produced. It shows they were married at the Catholic Chapel, Dunfermline, after Banns according to the forms of the Roman Catholic Church. Hugh is listed as a Coal Miner and aged 28. Rachel's age is 24 years old. He is living at East Port Street and his parents names are George and Mary Flannigan nee Glen. George's occupation is Labourer. Rachel is living at North Chapel Street and her parents' names are Daniel and Mary Lamond nee Clish. Daniel's occupation is Coal Miner<sup>22</sup>. Coal Mining was a large industry in Dunfermline and there were a number of pits that both Daniel and Hugh could have worked in<sup>23</sup>.

A search for George and Mary and then just Hugh in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 Census' unfortunately produced no results. I then searched for Rachel in the 1861 Census for Dunfermline and found one result for a Rachel aged 17 living there.

Though the record shows that Rachel is living with her father Daniel, the name of the wife is Betsy and Daniel's occupation is given as Shoe Maker. Unfortunately while the search for my ancestors had not yielded any information as to which county in Ireland they were born in, those details are given for this family. Hugh was likely to have been born around 1842 and Rachel around 1846. Using this information as well as the names of both their parents will help me to search for their Irish records. The best resource to use is likely to be the website entitled Roots Ireland; however it places a charge of five euros per view making it an expensive search engine. Therefore this is a search I will currently postpone.

### Conclusion

The resource that was most used was the website for Scotland's People. Although it can be an expensive way of researching family history it is an excellent tool due to the sheer number of records that have been digitised and are available to view online. I did not encounter many problems with the website and managed to find the information I was looking for relatively easily. This was in part due to my use of the Church of the Latter Day Saints website Family Search in conjunction with Scotland's People. This enabled me to narrow my search terms by checking certain dates and names for free before committing to paying for images on Scotland's People. Inevitably the further back in time my search progressed, particularly as I started searching for records before Civil Registration in 1855, the more difficult it was to find the existence of records referring to my ancestors. This was even truer regarding the search for my Irish ancestors. However with more time at my disposal and more experience in using the different search engines I hope to be able to continue with the threads.

I possess a number of original records and copies. The most effective way of preserving these would be to place them in transparent polyester wallets so that they are not exposed to chemicals or dust and can be consulted without handling the actual documents. I have also taken photos of these records to store digitally alongside the images I have downloaded from the Scotland's People website.

Such a family history can be helpful not only for personal use but as an educational tool in schools and higher education institutions that relates the change in the living and working conditions of a family through the generations. Genealogical trees such as this one could be incorporated into an historical account of Scottish social,

economic and political identity by lending it a 'human face'. My family tree involves the industries of Weaving and Mining, two substantial job markets in 19thC Scotland, and Irish immigration, which had a significant impact on the West of Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup> From a copy of the Birth certificate extracted from the Register Book of Births for the Parish of Avondale in the County of Lanark on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1942. Entry No. 110.

<sup>2</sup> From a copy of the Marriage certificate extracted from the Register Book of Marriages for the District of Gorbals in the Burgh of Glasgow on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1950. Entry No. 227.

<sup>3</sup> Marriages. (Statutory Registers). Scotland, Lanark, Avondale and Glassford. 1949/03/22. GROS data 621/00 0014. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 13/11/10

<sup>4</sup> From the original Marriage certificate extracted from the Register Book of Marriages for the District of Avondale and Glassford in the County of Lanark on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1950. Entry No. 14.

<sup>5</sup> From the original Birth certificate extracted from the Register Book of Births for the Parish of Avondale in the County of Lanark on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1893. Entry No. 64.

<sup>6</sup> From the original Death certificate from the Register of Deaths for the District of Strathaven on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1974. District No. 579. Entry No. 42.

<sup>7</sup> From the original Birth certificate extracted from the Register Book of Births for the Parish of Avondale in the County of Lanark on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1893. Entry No. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Marriages. (Statutory Registers) Scotland, Lanark, Avondale. 1885/11/24. Available from [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) accessed on 13/11/10.

<sup>9</sup> Births. (Statutory Registers) Scotland, Lanark, Avondale. 1862/07/07. GROS data 621/00 0115. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 16/11/10.

<sup>10</sup> Hall Genealogy Website. Old Occupation Names. Available at <http://rmhh.co.uk/occup/index.html> accessed on 17/11/10.

<sup>11</sup> Births. (Statutory Registers) Scotland, Lanark, Avondale. 1859/07/07. GROS data 621/00 0123. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 16/11/10.

<sup>12</sup> Hall Genealogy Website. Old Occupation Names. Available at <http://rmhh.co.uk/occup/index.html> accessed on 17/11/10.

<sup>13</sup> Marriages. (Statutory Registers) Scotland, Lanark, Avondale. 1885/11/24. GROS data 603/00 0035. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 13/11/10.

<sup>14</sup> Census. 1881. GROS data 621/00 002/00 006. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 17/11/10.

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Textile Heritage project. Article on Weaving. Available from <http://scottishtextileheritage.org.uk/onlineresources/articles/articlesTem2.asp?articleNo=39> accessed on 17/11/10.

<sup>16</sup> Census. 1851. GROS data 621/00 012/00 005. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 16/11/10.

<sup>17</sup> Marriages. (OPRs) Scotland, Lanark, Avondale. 1845/06/28. GROS data 621/00 0040 0269. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 13/11/10

<sup>18</sup> Census. 1881. GROS data 621/00 004/00 001. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 16/11/10

<sup>19</sup> From a copy of the Birth certificate extracted from the Register Book of Births for the District of Tradeston in the County of Lanark at the General Registry Office, Edinburgh on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1950. Entry No. 377.

<sup>20</sup> Census. 1891. GROS data 644/13 018/00 025. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 16/11/10.

<sup>21</sup> Marriages. (Statutory Registers) Scotland, Lanark, Avondale. 1869/03/29. <http://www.familysearch.org> accessed on 16/11/10.

<sup>22</sup> Marriages. (Statutory Records). Scotland, Fife, Dunfermline. 1869/03/29. GROS data 421/01 0021. Available from [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) accessed on 16/11/10

<sup>23</sup> Dunfermline Heritage Roots. Living in the Past. Coal. Available from <http://www.dunfermlineheritage.org/index.php> accessed on 17/11/10.