

Matthew Hay Hoggan (1819-1889) and Elizabeth Paton (1825-1868)

1. Hollandbush, Parish of Denny -- June 1841

Life in the Campsie Fells was often short and brutal, but there were days when the sun shone bright, and the old folk put their chairs and stools out of doors and enjoyed the brief warming of a northern sun. June of 1841 had proven to be a showery and generally cool month, but as it reached its conclusion it began to find its strength. The stonewalls of the miner's row at Hollandbush faced south onto the valley of the Bonny Water and the Kelvin. This was the very centre of Scotland, and on the far side of the valley the Romans had chosen to build their wall in the reign of Antonius Pius. It snaked along the crest opposite, and the remains of a fort could just be seen from Hollandbush on the skyline.

Down from the high meadows behind the cottages came two women. They moved slowly in the hot sunlight, and stopped every few yards for breath. Both were pregnant. The older was in her mid thirties, and looked surprisingly old for her years. Already she was quite grey, and the dry hair was pulled fiercely backwards in a savage bun. The other was equally pregnant but much younger and dark; almost Spanish in complexion and only in her mid teens.

They got as far as the wall of the miner's row, where the stone was now warm to the touch, and nodded to a few neighbours as they passed along it. At a black door, they stopped by two stools and slowly descended on the battered relics.

The older woman spoke. "So there is nothing to be worried about Liz. When your time comes, we'll all be there with you. There is more knowledge here in this village than in any infirmary that is for sure. There are few things, which I ken about more. I'm an expert. "

"It is fine for you Jean, but you've already had ten or more, and know what is to come. For me this is the first, and I can't help fearing the next few weeks."

"You'll be fine lassie. You have a good figure for it --- there is always Dr Hoggan in any event but I doubt that he'll be needed."

From the other end of the village the lane began to fill with miners coming off shift from the colliery. At the back, walked a crowd of about fifteen men. They were either brothers or cousins or uncles. These were the Hoggans en-masse. In the midst of them, Matt Hoggan spoke to his older brother David, and glanced up at the girl.

"So Liz, your father was saying that you and Jean were going out for a walk today. How was it?" said Matthew

"Just fine. But good to be sitting down now!" replied Elizabeth.

David Hoggan looked fondly at his wife and said “ well not long now lass. Have you given any thought to a name? I doubt that we’ll be running out of family shortly to name them after!”

“Well I have as it happens. I think we should call it Elizabeth after Liz here if it is a girl and Matthew if it’s a boy. How would that be?”

“Just grand by me. How about that Matt --- another Matthew Hoggan! Or maybe a Liz Hoggan before you get there. Whenever are you two going to get married? If you’re waiting for a palace then you’ll wait long enough.”

“No palace required – just somewhere which isn’t a damp hovel. It’s bad enough with children living here, but the rows down at Parkfoot are twice as damp.”

Notes

1. The census of 1841 shows David Hoggan and his wife Jean Welsh with five children living in Hollandbush. Two doors away are the Patons, with four children still living at home – the eldest of which is Elizabeth Paton, age given as 15. Matthew Hay Hoggan was David’s younger brother, and one of a large family. In 1802, when he got married, their father Robert Hoggan was living in Hollandbush.

2. Hollandbush today is only denoted by the Hollandbush Tavern in the middle of Banknock. The old miner’s row has long gone – and only some disturbed ground beyond shows where the colliery was. Opposite the Tavern is a grassy verge where a line of shops used to stand. It was there that Elizabeth Paton’s first child, Marion, lived as an adult in the late 19th century. The girl was named Marion after Elizabeth’s own mother, and was born in 1841 (or possibly 1842) --- certainly after the census of that year. Marion Hoggan married John Fleming in Slamannan in 1858 (where Matthew Hay Hoggan and Elizabeth Paton moved to in the early 1850’s.). John Fleming was originally a miner but became a butcher, and had a shop and several flats in the buildings, which stood opposite the Hollandbush Tavern. John Fleming died there in 1913, and his wife, Marion just four months later in 1914.

3. Matthew Hay Hoggan and Elizabeth Paton had nine children who lived to maturity. This started with the birth of Marion in 1841 as noted above. It seems highly likely that there were also at least four other births of children who died young or at birth. We have:

Marion –1841

Alexander –1846

Matthew – 1848

Elizabeth – 1850

Jane – 1853

Robert – 1856

Helen – 1859

David – 1863

James – 1865

In addition we have two children called John who died young. These were born in 1857 and 1863. It also seems likely because of the Scottish naming convention which was followed otherwise that two more children were born to them between 1841 and 1846, being called Robert and Jean or Jane, and these too died young or at birth.

4. Matthew Hay Hoggan married Elizabeth Paton on 7 September 1844 in the Parish of Denny. Her parents had moved to Falkirk in the three years following the census of 1841, and she is recorded in 1844 as being a resident of the parish of Bantaskine, Falkirk.

5. Curiously, the only other Hoggans in the mid nineteenth century, in Denny Parish, were the family of the doctor. They were no connection to our Hoggans coming from Dumfriesshire. The doctor was a retired surgeon of the Hon East India Company.

6. David Hoggan and his wife Jean Welsh married in Denny Parish in 1824. They had at least 16 children, starting in 1824, and happening at less than two year intervals until 1850. Many of these died in infancy. In 1841, they had had eleven children but only five of these were living at home. On 30 June 1841, they had a baby girl. They called it, Elizabeth --- which was not a family name, and may well have been in honour of Elizabeth Paton. They named their last son, Matthew in 1850.

Fig 1: Report of housing conditions in 1932 for Banknock and Hollandbush area. Following World War II, the Banknock mining rows were replaced by Council Houses.

Banknock Rows

Owners, Banknock Coal Company. These houses are of brick, and consist of two rows of room and kitchen houses.

Owing to pressure by County Health Authority great improvements have been carried out here recently, as there has been an epidemic of fever in the village. They are fair-sized room and kitchen houses, with the usual two box-beds in kitchen. The water supply is from street wells. The rent is 3s. 3d. per week.

There are now splendid water-closets, and a daily removal of refuse by bucket system.

There are good washhouses, but not enough, being in proportion of one for eight tenants.

The streets are in a deplorable condition, but are in process of being repaired.

The walls are solid brick without lathing, and in consequence in wet weather the houses are very damp inside. Some houses are badly in need of repair owing to broken walls. There is no pavement in front, except what is formed by engine ashes, which makes streets very soft in wet weather.

Dennyloanhead

Watson Place consists of two rows, and is owned by Banknock Coal Company. They contain room and kitchen houses, the rents of which are 3s. 9d. per week, and the water supply is here led into the houses. There are also water-closets and washhouses for every six tenants.

The houses are in need of repairs owing to broken plaster in ceilings and walls, which tenants have difficulty in getting repaired. The cause of this is in some way attributable to the underground workings, as part of a wall in front of houses has collapsed, and the remaining portion is a positive danger to children going about.

Hollandbush Here there is a row of eleven old houses which I am informed belong to a firm of lawyers named Motherwell, M'Murdo & Mitchell of Airdrie.

They consist of room and kitchen houses, and are small and low-roofed. There are no washhouses or coal-houses. They have open ash-pits, with wooden dry-closets at back of houses in the gardens. There is an open drain close to houses at back. The rents of this lot are £7s. 4s. per annum.

Kilsyth Burgh

Kingston Rows consist of four rows of fifty-seven houses owned by Messrs Wm. Baird & Company, Limited. Coalmasters. They are situated in the burgh on the side of Edinburgh and Glasgow main road.

It is cold in the Stirlingshire high country even in summer. The moors can look bleak at any time of year, and in December take on a depressing hue in the pale, mid-winter daylight. Drumclair colliery was close by Limerigg village, and beside it stood several rows of miner's cottages, which looked almost new. To the south, the Black Loch was already fringed with ice, whilst a couple of miles to the north, stood Slamannan, an ancient village built round its crossroads and the church dedicated to St Lawrence since ancient times. The trees had a stunted aspect, and notably shrunk from the prevailing winds with an east leaning aspect. Here and there little farmhouses were strung out across the landscape.

In Drumclair, there was new building still in progress, with a school to be built shortly for the miner's children. All over the parish, new small mines had opened in the past twenty years, and villages like Drumclair arose where nothing had been before. At Drumclair, the owner was John Nimmo; a self-made man on the up. Nimmo had started as a miner, and by dint of industry and personality he now owned Drumclair and also Limerigg collieries and he wanted more. He stood just outside the main pit building talking to another man in a black frock coat, with a velvet collar.

"For goodness sake, Matt. What the devil happened here. We'll have to close the pit until tomorrow, and no doubt there will be a Mine Inspector's report to be faced."

"It was nobody's fault John. You understand well that the hewing of coal is a chancy business. I'd just got the man in from Ireland along with a couple more, and they are new to the trade. They were down the pit with Walter and Alex, and a dozen or so others working in the west gallery. Alex says that the new men just hadn't put in enough propping. Too keen to get their money."

"Well it was damn slack Matt. You tell your brothers that I expect better of a Hoggan. I let you work here on favourable terms, and buy all the coal that your gang produces. You know this mine better than any, and you know that farm labourers need time to get used to it. We've got a dead man and a dead man's family to worry about."

"Well at least you don't have to worry about that. The family are in one of my cottages and can stay until they go back to Ireland or Glasgow or wherever."

"Well you sank the pit, so make sure that everything else is in good order. We can't afford any more accidents or shoddy workmanship when the Inspector comes."

At this point, Alex and Walter Hoggan came round the end of the row of cottages. They had their old mining clothes on, and were still blackened with the coal dust of a long shift. They made an odd contrast with the smartness of their younger brother and the austere finery of John Nimmo. They had bits of sacking tied up with "nicky tams" around their lower legs, and more over their shoulders.

"Matt, we've just carried the body into the house. Thankfully there are nae bairns. The wee lassie wonders if she could have a wake and the priest over from Slamannan. She says she is going back to Ireland."

"I'll let her know that would be fine. I'll start a collection for her too. No doubt Mr Nimmo, you would want to start the fund.".

Notes

1. On 21 December 1854, Samuel Duffy died in Drumclair pit as the result of a fall of coal at the face. This comes from the Mine Inspectors Report. The owner is shown as John Nimmo. It seems likely that he was Irish, and certainly large numbers of poor Irish workers were attracted into the Scottish mines at this period.
2. The Slamannan Railway was opened in 1840, and with it came a boom as new coalmines could be opened up around the village, and the coal moved cheaply by train. Many coal railways crossed the area. Prominent among the men opening up these coalmines was John Nimmo, and he seems to have been the man who opened up Drumclair, around 1850. Oral history in the family (see Marion Hoggan Redmond's "Reminiscences" – compiled by her grand-son, Guy Redmond), recall that Matthew Hay Hoggan was in "partnership" with John Nimmo. John Nimmo and Son, coal masters, went on to own a number of coalmines in Scotland including expanding outside Stirlingshire after 1900.
3. Matthew Hay Hoggan was a pit sinker – that is a man who sank the shafts, which were the starting point for a colliery. It is not likely that he was in partnership with John Nimmo, but rather that he sank the pit with the help of his brothers, and then put together a gang of workers who mined coal and put them into ticketed hutches which were weighed on the surface, with the coal being bought at agreed prices by Nimmo. In addition, Matthew Hay Hoggan owned a number of miner's cottages in Drumclair and received rental for these.
4. In December 1854, Britain was fully occupied with the Crimean War. The battles of the Alma, Balaklava, and Inkerman had just been fought in the past six months, and the British and French Armies were sitting down in the bitter cold to besiege Sevastopol.
5. In the census of 1861, you will not find Matthew, Walter or Alexander Hoggan or their families. In 1851 they were working in the pits around Denny. We know that they were in and around Drumclair from family birth/marriage/death certificates in the late 1850s and 1860s, and Matthew's son Robert was born in Slamannan in 1856, as well as five other Hoggans. My great grandfather was born there in 1863. There were five Hoggan birth registered in the parish of Slamannan in 1854 but none before that date. Matthew died at Drumclair in 1889, Alexander in 1881 and Walter in 1870. It seems likely that the census enumerator didn't pick up the Hoggans in the new village of Drumclair in 1861, and that they had moved there on or just before 1854. It is less than 10 miles from Denny to Drumclair.
6. Family legend has it that Matthew Hay Hoggan was an able miner and something of a businessman but that he squandered his time and talents in a liking for alcohol.
7. Slamannan was at its peak at this time, with the building of new houses in a series of mining villages around it, and the development of the village centre.
8. Drumclair school was one of five state funded schools in the parish, and could take 120 children
9. Today, you will not find Drumclair. It has disappeared again like a grimy version of Brig O' Doon. Whilst it was working in 1869, it appears to have

had no workers by 1896. The village was eventually bulldozed in the 20th century, and the site subject to extensive open-cast mining. Today, it is being planted with trees, and cycle paths run on the lines of the old mineral railways.

Fig 1: Extract from Inspector's Reports into Mining Deaths in Scotland. This represents the deaths in just three weeks in December 1854. Notes the death of Samuel Duffy at Drumclair Colliery.

			Wishaw		Muir	"stemming" a shot in a sinking pit it went off	
December	8	Dalmacouther	Near Airdrie	William Simpson	John Whitten	Fell down the pit	
December	9	Eastfield	Near Glasgow	J G Buchanan	John Proudfoot	Fall of coal at face	
December	20	Hurlford	Near Kilmarnock	John Howie	Robert Porter	By coming in contact with the fly-wheel of the winding engine	
December	21	Drumclair	Near Slamannan	John Nimmo	Samuel Duffy	Fall of coal at face	
December	21	Coltness Iron Works	Near Wishaw	Coltness Iron Co	William McDede	Crushed by cage at pit bottom	
December	22	Dalmellington	Near Ayr	Dalmellington Iron Co	James Craig	Fell from an upper working to the pit bottom	
December	28	Farm	Near Glasgow	James Farie	James Boyle	Fall of roof at face	

Return to Scottish Mining Villages

Last Updated 27th October 2006

The light was fading as Matthew Hay Hoggan strode down the miner's row looking for the new house of his eldest son. Drumbowie was perhaps five miles from his own residence at Arncloss Colliery. Without hesitation he rapped on a green door, and strode into the main room of the cottage. At the table sat three of his sons, his daughter in law and his grandson. Matthew placed a small carpet bag on the table and looked balefully at his oldest son. The young man, named in honour of his father, looked straight back. He was 23 years old, just married less than 18 months and already with a son of four months --- yet another Matthew Hoggan. Beside him sat his two brothers David and James. These boys were only seven and five, and their legs swung well off the stone floor of the parlour, as they sat on a pair of rickety chairs.

“Seeing as you are prepared to keep them, I have brought the boys’ stuff. It is all in here. “

“Look Father, I want no quarrel with you, but the boys have run away time and time again, and Mary and I have room for them here. Your new wife has made it pretty plain to them that she has no time for them and maybe it is better that they bide where they are wanted.”

“I’ll not pretend that they have had an easy time with their mother dying, and me re-marrying Maggie Gray, but equally they have not made it easy for her or her children.”

“Well we’ll keep them. David and James can go to school here, and maybe help Mary too. We’ve got plans to set up a wee shop.”

“Well good luck to you all since you seem set on it. I’ll come and visit my boys as often as I can. Perhaps Matt, you and I could go to the “Squeech” for a wee dram on my way home?”

Young Matthew looked over at his wife, the youthful Mary Wotherspoon, and her face was set in a disapproving frown. “Perhaps not tonight. We’ve only just begun to get things to right here, and we’ve no money to waste in the inn. Likely you’ll see the doctor and George Mackay, the new teacher there?”

The older man shrugged his shoulders at his son. “So what’s it like in this pit then? I had to work awfully hard to stop auld Watt from taking you to Court like he did the others. Not that I got much thanks from you.”

“Well, as you can see we’ve got a decent, dry cottage, and the job as the Pit Engine Man is working out pretty well for me. No more hacking away with an axe on my side anyways. I just had to get here before anyone else was hired on.”

“I can tell you that if you had been called anything else, Jamesy Watt would have sued you for sure. Imagine just walking out of the place and giving no notice at all. It wasn’t what we were brought up to do anyway.”

“No doubt Mr Watt will manage – but how are you doing? Those Grays helping you out? I doubt it.”

“I’ve hired in some good Irish lads and we’re doing fine. Thanks for asking.”

With that exchange, the visit was ended. The two young boys watched their father retreat from the cottage and suddenly the atmosphere became less tense.

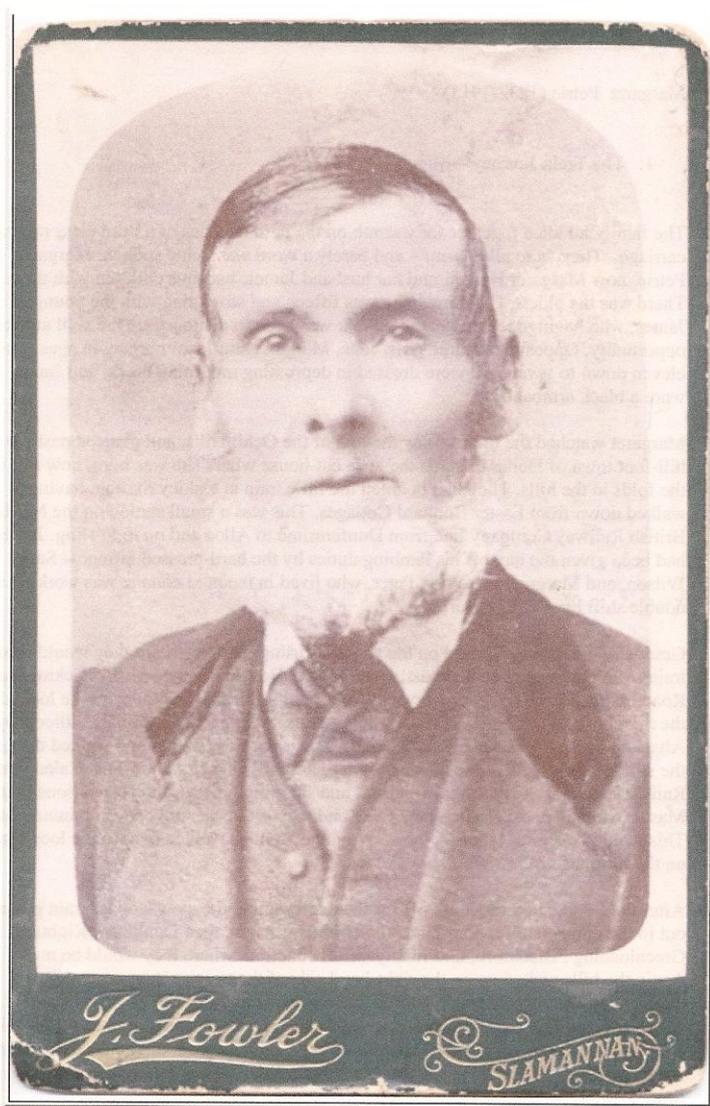
Matthew looked at David and James. “Well, tell me from your arithmetic how your Dad and Maggie have each had ten children but they only have nineteen between them. Have they lost some one? Puzzle me that one!”

Notes

1. On October 1, 1869, Matthew Hay Hoggan married the widow Margaret Alexander Gray. Both had nine children by their deceased partners, and they went on to have two children between themselves – William (B 1870) and Agnes (B 1873). In the census of 1871, Matthew Hay Hoggan was living at Arnloss Colliery with Margaret and four of her children (Mary 11, Thomas, 9, Margaret 7, and Jessie 4) plus David Hoggan (aged 7) and James Hoggan (aged 5). Their new joint baby, William was 10 months old – placing the census date at March 1871.
2. In Marion Redmond’s “Reminiscences” 1982, she talks about how her father (David Hoggan) had run away from his father and stepmother. She says “when he ran away, my father was maybe five or six, and Uncle Jimmy was with him. Uncle Jimmy was two years younger.He stayed with Uncle Matthew and Aunt Mary until he was married.” This tallies with what my grandmother, her sister, told me too. It is quite impressive that the objective facts seem to back up her unaided memories of almost a hundred years before. In the 1881 census, David Hoggan is indeed living with his older brother Matthew at Drumbowie, Standburn – he is then aged 17 and a coal miner.
3. Marion Redmond says ” Uncle Matthew and Aunt Mary were a very thrifty couple, andUncle Matthew always had a good job like maybe a winding engineman, somebody that brought men up and down the pit.” In the 1891 census, his precise job is given as pit engineman.
4. In August 1870, six miners were brought before the Sheriff at Falkirk, charged with desertion of service. Apparently at that time, there was a “Desertion of Service” law which said that two weeks notice must be given before a collier could leave a mine, and that 10 actual days must be worked. This might be seen as a vestige of the old mining slavery conditions, which were abolished at the end of the 18th century. Four of the miners worked for Messrs McKillop and Nimmo at Drumclair, and two for James Watt at Arnloss Colliery – both Slamannan. Mathew and his sons worked in both pits at this time. They were ordered to return to their previous pits for two weeks, and pay 30 shillings as costs. As they were unable to do this, they were sent to Stirling jail for 14 days.
5. James Watt lived at Arnloss Cottage, was born nearby in 1806, and is shown as a coal master employing about 80 colliers at his small pit in 1871, which was behind Drumclair and just east of Slamannan. Matthew Hay Hoggan would certainly have known him well.

6. The “Squeeck” was the slang name for the tavern in Standburn. A hundred years later, his granddaughter had this to say about Matthew Hay Hoggan: “ he had money to spend and whenever he had time at all he was sitting in the Squeeck. The Squeeck, that was the name of the pub at Standburn and there was a parlour for those at the back for those who could afford to sit there. Where he would be sitting with the doctor and old George Mackay the headmaster at the school and two or three people like that.” . In the 1891 Census, George Mackay, schoolmaster, was resident in the Drumbowie schoolhouse. To this day, the primary school in Standburn is called Drumbowie Primary.
7. Marion Redmond says this about Mary Wotherspoon who married Matthew Hoggan (junior) in 1869 “ Anyway, she made a lot of my father (ie David Hoggan) and she was very displeased when he married one of the Wilsons because that was one less pay coming into the house. And she kept a shop including selling bread.....and she bought the bread from the Redding Co-operative. My father used to be sent away when he was quite a young boy to walk to Redding Muirhead. He had to go across by a place called Snabhead with a pillowcase and got the bread – all loaves—in that. And she made a big pot of broth every day and she had the bread of course, and some children from outlying farms, used to come to her house every day for a plate of soup and a slice of bread. And then she started a shop and kept the post office so she was always one for making money, and of course my father was hardly ever at school.his aunty Mary was so mean, she didn’t feed him properly.” So for young David and James Hoggan the death of their mother Elizabeth in 1868 was a disaster. They had a stepmother who didn’t want them, and an aunt who saw them as work objects from a very early age.
8. Young David Hoggan apparently left school at nine and soon entered the mines. This would have been around 1872 or 1873. Marion Redmond comments thus about the school at Drumbowie “They had a headmaster who had a funny way of treating him. Of course my father fell behind in his lessons. And the headmaster put a stick down his back and his lum hat on top of the stick and made him walk through the room. So he decided that he wasn’t going back, and he put his books, which they had to pay for, down the lavatory.”

Fig 1: Photograph of Matthew Hay Hoggan taken around the time of his second marriage – to Margaret Gray in 1869.



Family of Matthew Hay Hoggan and Elizabeth Paton . This also records the children that Matthew had with Margaret Gray.

FAMILY OF MATTHEW HOGGAN.

