

Bonar Family

OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY

ARTICLES

A Bourtie Will

One searches for documents - certificates, wills etc. - usually to find or confirm a fact. But occasionally the document you find does not only give you some facts but also paints a picture, shows a character, highlights the quirks of the person concerned in a startling way.

I was tracing the history of my ancestors, who came from a number of small villages in Aberdeenshire, and had got to my great-great grandfather. He seems to have been the only one of them to have made anything of himself, and he has a handsome granite tombstone in the churchyard of the Kirk of Bourtie to bear witness to that. He farmed at Smithycroft, near Bourtie, and I was lucky enough to get to the farm before its barns were converted into weekend homes for the yuppies of Aberdeen town (I confess to having taken a slate from the original roof of one barn as a link with him!)

But it was the will that suddenly brought him to life. I print it below. But apart from the deliciously eccentric spelling, it is the character of the man that shines through. Meticulous, determined, pious, clearly less confident of his son's abilities than his daughter's, concerned to be seen to do right both by his family and his Maker. After reading that will, I felt I knew the old boy and respected him.

It is only fair to say that I would never have got this far without the help of the patient and skilled people in King Street, and the invaluable work of the researchers they put me in touch with, Mrs Baptie and Mrs Mekie of Edinburgh.

J Jarrett No. 9055

SC1/37/47 f.183 - Aberdeen Sheriff Court Wills

William Bonar, farmer at Smithycroft

Recorded at Aberdeen, 31 March 1861. David Mitchell, advocate as procurator. The following handwritten documents were reproduced.

'A Legacy for the Poor'

Janauary 1 1857 I William Bonar Presently Residin at Smithy Croft Bourtie Herby Testify And asert that I have aproperiated and set apart at my Decess seven shares of the relable stock of the North of Scotland Bank as a Standing Found for behoof of the poor of the Congrigation of the United Presbeterian Church of Old Meldrum I have been so long a Member of. And to be Distributed Twice A Year at the different periods of the Banks Dividend Sucesively which is commonly in May and November The Aliment is not mearly to those who may be said to be Realy poor But also to those whom the Distrebuters may consider to be in need on account of Infirmity Old Age or any other affliction - And farther this found is not to be Restricted to the members of the United Presbeterian Congregate soly But left in a certain measure to the discession of the Trustees As there might be at a time few Poor in the Congregation or that few in no much need then the found should extend to the nesectous Both of the free and Established Churches at the discession of the distrebutors But is not to extend beyond the Bonds of the villege except to Members of the United Prisbeterian Church - With respect to the distrebution however fare it may go or however far it may benefite none is to get less at a time then Two shillings at a distrebution unless at the end of the distrebution when there may not be but 1/- And none more than seven shillings at any time whatever be there condition And those of the other Churches not



more then Four shillings whatever be there Condition because if the case is
orgent there is other recources for supply - And farther if the Trustees should
think good to Restrict the distrebutioun of the whole amount of the Divedend at
any time when there is so much Necessity they might allow a portion of it to
Remain till Another Season when Provision might be derer or more fire
Requaired in a Stormy Winter or such like But on no account to allow it to
accumelate above one years Divedend To neglect the Present generation to
provide fore the Future - The Transfer is made chiefly to the Revd James
Maccrie as Chief Trustie And Members of the Session as Trustees and
distrebutors for the Legesie to come in force The first Dividend After my Decess
The Revd James Maccrie the present Paster of the Congregation or the
Officiating Cleargymen who is to get his Name Inroled In the Bank Books as
Executor by Presenting this peper And emidiatly After to Nominate for himself
a Member of Session who shall have the Transfer made at the Death of the
Minister to Draw the Dividend During the veconcy till Another Minister was
ordained who is also to Nomenat a Member of Session to act at his Death And
so on to succeddinding generations This I give and appoint this first day of
January one Thousand Eight hundred and Fifty Seven before two Witnesses. I
subscribe my name - A Report of the Distrebutioun to be laid before the
Congregation Anually After every Secon Devision to avoid all partiallity in the
Dividend (signed) William Bonar. James Gellan witness. Francis Downie
witness

'Transfer of property to Margret'

Smithy Croft, Bourtie, Janauary 1 1858

A Transfer of Property - I William Bonar being this day Sound in Memory Body
and Mind Health and Judgment Considering It fit and neceserary to Set my
House in order - Being Sincable of the certenty of Death and the uncertenty of
life. Haveing agried to Transfer the Farm to Margret Bonar my oldest
Daughter with all the necessaries thereto suitable We Both recading at Smithy
Croft Bourtie

Margaret Bonnar I William Bonar your Father this day settle and siell the
agriement formerly made to Transfer the Farm of Smith Croft to you as your
sole right and Property Houses Lands Live Stock Farming outensells Park gates
and hinges However furniter with the exception May Writing Desk Books
Wardrobe And a Third part of the Bedeing and Blankets. The Bedeing the third
part mentioned is for Mary and Hir Daughter But all other within the House -
Greats fendens and fire irons Kitchen floor Milk Sellers Seds? And everything
belonging to the Farm out and in - All the Wooden Houses peet stock etc etc
And you Margret By this Agriement under tak to care for us your parents in
our Declining Years And to suply with all nessaries, such as bed Board and
Washing Seek Bed and Founral Charges etc And also from the profits and
produce of the Farm to pay all my laful dety servants Wages rents etc etc And
All Publick Burdens you are to clear and I oblige my self to settle all accounts
for you in may own Name so long as I am able And when unable to do it for
your self And also along with the Farm I have transfered to you Five Shaers of
the Aberdeen Lime Co

(At this point the clerk remarks that the document continues in a different hand)

At the desplenish of the farm at the end of the lease or if it occur sooner Isabella Grant is to have Ten pounds and William Clark the son of the late Robert Clark is to have Four pounds (signed) William Bonar, Margret Bonar. Francis Downie witness. James Anderson witness.

'Smith Croft Bourtie January 3 1860 To Isobella Grant' (on back)

Smith Croft Bourtie December 31 1859 A Transfer of property to Isobla Gran my grand Daughter the Daughter of the Deaset John grant and his wife Jean Bonar my second Daughter. Isobla Grant according to a Bargan and Contract formerly agried upon Between us I hearby subscribe and settle And this Bargon Assigning to you as your property Five shiars of the Joined Stock of the Aberdeen Lime Company's Stock As your property And the first Dividen to fall to you in one thousand Eight Hundrred Sixty one in April And if I shall Be Removed Before the Deviden of Aprile sixty that Dividen shall go with the Farm. (signed) William Bonar Isabella Grant. James Gellan witness. Francis Downie witness

'January 2 1860 Transfer of property to John Bonar' (on back)

Smith Croft Bourtie January 2 1860 A Transfer of Property

John according to a former Engagement and agriement entered into I Hereby Settle and Siel the Bargon As ye undertake to be Trustie for all the rest, I heirby Testify that I have Transferred to you Five shaers of the Aberdeen Lime Company's Stock as your property for your care And Truble ye may have for your Over sight of the rest of the Family

(Clerk notes handwriting changes)

The Revd James McCrie and Wm Turnbull Lochend to be joint Trustees And further as I have Transferred Four Shaers of the Lime Company to your Daughter Jean Bonar for hir Edication of which ye are to have the oversight Till she is of years to mariage for Hirsself and if any overplush should remain put it in the Seveng Bank for hir Behoof or any other way that may be thought fit And as we know not what is in the Whiles of Providence we most live dark futurities to Him who doth all things well - If in the course of providence she shall be taken from hir state of probation Before you then Hir Four Shers falls into you And if ye be taken Away Before Hir then your Five Shers shall be Hirs If they should Reman or that time But sell if ye chuse (signed) William Bonar. John Bonar, James Gellan witness. Francis Downie witness.

Postage Rates went up on 24th April. Please don't underestimate. Maps in tubes must always be counted separately.

McCombie -- A One-Name Study

The Beginning

How does one get into a one-name study - a never-ending search for people with the same surname, all the while ignoring family members who do not happen to have that name? The answer, as far as I am concerned, is simply that I fell into it through the process of looking for my own family and noting all those with the same name that turned up in the hope that they might fit somewhere in the family tree. I soon realised that not all McCombies were of the same family, but I had gathered so many names that I became intrigued by the question of who was related to whom and began to fit names and places and dates together just like a giant jigsaw puzzle. I have been doing this off and on for about 15 years with the broad objective of seeking out all McCombies everywhere and establishing their relationship to each other. It would appear that there are enough of us to make it a real challenge and few enough to make it feasible.

My father, James George (Hamish) McCombie, while still a young man, died in 1947, a delayed World War II victim, when I was eight years old. He and my mother as newly-weds in 1936, had moved from the west of Aberdeenshire to Longside in the north east of the county where I grew up, a world away from the "home" of the McCombies on upper Donside. My mother, herself part of a large family, and her two sons, gradually lost touch with my father's kin. Nearly half a century later, most of which had been spent abroad, I realised with some regret that I knew very little about the origins of my name and the people who shared it and resolved to do something about it.

A few days in New Register House in Edinburgh soon established my descent from a Joseph McCombie (c. 1730-1798) who married Isobel Grey in Logie Coldstone in May 1756 - of whom more later. But I was immediately struck by the large number of McCombies that appeared in the indexes: were they all part of the same family, descendants of Joseph? Surely not. Apart from my own immediate family and a few cousins, I had never met another McCombie and had imagined the name to be quite rare, confined to a single small family in the Alford area. I was soon to be enlightened. For a start, had I bothered to look, I would have found over 100 listed in the Aberdeen(shire) telephone directory of the late 1980s.

"The" McCombies

I had not gone far in my search before identifying members of what is perhaps the best known family of Aberdeenshire McCombies, containing such illustrious names as William of Tillyfour, an MP and famous breeder of Aberdeen Angus cattle, and William of Easterkene and Lynturk, land owner and very successful farmer. Up to the middle of the twentieth century this family comprised many well-to-do farmers, but it also included several in the professions - ministers, solicitors, doctors and even a member of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria in Australia. A large branch of the family established itself in London in the early 1800s from which a smaller branch moved to the USA in 1890. Australia is home to three other small branches and, although most have now disappeared, there were members of this family, along with sundry other McCom(b)ies, in the West Indies throughout the 19th century. There are relatively few descendants remaining in Aberdeenshire and only one in farming but there are a number still a little further south in Angus.

The history of this family up to the end of the 19th century is well documented in a *Memoir of the Family McCombie*, a fascinating book by William McCombie Smith published in 1887, from which we learn that these McCombies are descended from Donal McComie (1649-1714) whose gravestone is believed to be the oldest in the Tough cemetery. Tradition has it, although proof is hard to establish, that Donal was the youngest son of the renowned Big John McComie (*Jain McThomaid Mor*) of Forter in Glenisla, seventh chief of the McComies - or, in the anglicised form, the McThomases - a splinter group of the Clan Chattan Mackintoshes, which had established themselves as a separate clan in Glenshee in the late 15th century. As a result of the Civil and Covenanter Wars, and ultimately the death of the chief in 1674, the clan had broken up and scattered, many moving north to Aberdeenshire where the name became McCombie.