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The Shocking Demise of Young John Kirkpatrick, 1858

John Kirkpatrick was the son of Joseph & Elizabeth [nee Greer] Kirkpatrick. In 1858, Joseph was employed as a ‘cotton spinner’ at the large cotton spinning factory located in the village of Eaglesham, in Renfrewshire, Scotland. Both Joseph and Elizabeth had been born in Ireland (the specific place of Joseph’s birth is not presently known, but was most likely somewhere within the boundaries of the Province of Ulster in what is now Northern Ireland; Elizabeth was reputedly born in County Tyrone)ⁱ. John’s older siblings had all been born in Ireland, and a younger brother – James, had also been born there in about 1854. John himself had undoubtedly been born in Ireland, as well, and on the 10th of April, 1858, he was 7 years old.

Saturday the 10th of April 1858 dawned cool and windy in the village of Eaglesham. Shipping in the Firth of Clyde off Greenock, about 30 miles north-west of Eaglesham, had been disrupted from the 8th by very high gale force winds, and a considerable amount of snow had fallen and drifted well inlandⁱⁱ. The cold winds continued through the 10th, and the weather was reported in newspapers from Glasgow (about 15 miles due north) as ‘brisk’ⁱⁱⁱ. It was the weekend after Easter Sunday.

School was out for the weekend, on Saturday the 10th of April, 1858, and on such days, young boys like to run and race around in any open space that’s available to them. And that’s exactly what young John was doing that Saturday morning, on the public road on Eaglesham Moor, about 1 ¾ miles from the village centre. John and some other boys were running a race on the road, but then, between 12 noon and 1:00 in the afternoon, John “*lay down suddenly*”. Mrs James Russell rushed to see what had happened. She leaned down to lift John’s head, and as she did so he died. The specific wording recorded when John’s death was registered with the district Registrar on 12 April was that John was “*raised by Mrs Russell, in whose hands he expired*”^{iv}. It was also recorded that at the time of his death “*he was in the act of running a race with other boys*”. The specific cause of his death was stated to be “*Unknown*”.

Joseph Kirkpatrick, John's father, and Mrs. James Russell, a neighbour, reported John's death to the Registrar on the 12th of April, 2 days after the death occurred. Joseph declared that he was 'not present' at the time of death, while Mrs Russell, who signed the Register with her (x) mark, declared that she *was* 'present'. James B. Miller, Registrar, noted in the 8th column on the Deaths Register page that he had witnessed Joseph's and Mrs. James Russell's declarations. Robert Hamilton certified that John Kirkpatrick's remains had been interred in the Church Yard of Eaglesham parish church.

The Deaths Register entry which pertains to John Kirkpatrick reveals that Robert Hamilton was the man who dug John's grave, and gave his certification for the interment as '*Gravedigger*'. Hamilton was a busy man – he had dug 3 graves in the parish Church Yard between about the 7th and the 15th of April, all for children – Margaret Boylin, 7 years of age, died on the 7th of April; John Kirkpatrick, 7 years, died on the 10th; and John Gilmour, 10 years, died on the 15th, and Hamilton certified that he had dug the graves for all three.

Mrs. James Russell was probably Agnes, aged about 48 years in 1858, who lived with her husband James at 33 Montgomery Street in Eaglesham (according to 1861 Census of Scotland schedules). This address was close to the village centre, and was located opposite to the site of the large, multistory cotton mill in the centre of the village. James Russell was described at the time of the 1861 enumeration as being a 'Chelsea Pensioner' – a pensioned ex-soldier. Agnes Russell appears to have died in Eaglesham in 1870^v, and James her husband died there in 1876^{vi}.

The cotton mill opposite the Russell home was powered by water, and had been built in 1823 on a site previously occupied by a smaller mill. The older, smaller mill was built in 1794 and burned to the ground in 1820. The newer, larger factory where Joseph Kirkpatrick was most likely employed was itself destroyed by fire in 1876, and never rebuilt^{vii}.

Robert Hamilton was probably the man so named who, according to another 1861 Census of Scotland schedule, lived a bit farther east in the village at No 10, Cheapside Street. This man was employed as a weaver, and was aged about 41 years in 1858 (and also married to a woman named Agnes!). Robert had been born in Eaglesham, and resided there until his death in 1894^{viii}.

The Eaglesham Parish Church was and is situated on Montgomery Street, just west of the junction of Montgomery Street, Cheapside Street to the east, and Gilmour Street running roughly north-south. The church yard was about a dozen houses east of the Russell's residence on Montgomery Street, and about the same number of houses west of the Hamilton residence on Cheapside Street, on the other side of the Gilmour Street junction. There appears to be no memorial stone in the church yard today which memorializes John Kirkpatrick^{ix}.

The shocking death of young John Kirkpatrick must have shaken the family. It seems probable that the family had arrived from Ireland some time after the 15th of August, 1855, when the Valuation Rolls for Renfrew County for 1855 were published – there is no trace of the Kirkpatricks anywhere in the County at that time^x. The family do not appear to have remained in Eaglesham for a very long time after John’s death. By Census Day in Scotland in 1861 (April 7), Joseph and Elizabeth and 4 children were living in the Society House in the Burgh of Rothesay, County of Bute, on the western side of the Firth of Clyde^{xi}. But Joseph seems to have been somewhat itinerant in his employment, and the family seems to have lived in quite extreme poverty, so not readily evident in Valuation Rolls. He was most certainly not the man so named who was renting a house for a short term in the village of Troqueer, County of Kirkcudbright (just north-east of Glasgow) in 1862^{xii}. Unquestionably, though, by Census Day in 1871 (April 2), the family was residing in a block of houses located at 30 William Street in Barony Parish, Glasgow.^{xiii} In both census locations, Joseph was said to have been employed as a cotton spinner. Joseph Kirkpatrick died in Glasgow in 1875^{xiv}. His wife Elizabeth survived him by about 4 years^{xv}, but she had been admitted to the Barony Parish Poorhouse at Barnhill^{xvi} in early September 1871, and then transferred to the relatively new Woodilee Lunatic Pauper Asylum^{xvii} at Lenzie, East Dunbartonshire, north-east of Glasgow, in 1876.

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- i Joseph Kirkpatrick was born in Ireland some time between about 1807 and 1815. The variance is due to the ages recorded for him in the 1861 Census of Scotland (46 years, so born about 1815 [*Parish of Rothesay, County of Bute, Enumeration District 7, Household No 107, Page 21, Line 17, accessed through <www.ancestry.ca> on 10 April 2021*]), in the 1871 census (62 years, so born about 1809 [*Parish of Glasgow Barony, County of Lanark, Enumeration District 20, Household No 10, Page 2, Line 8, accessed through <www.ancestry.ca> on 3 April 2021*]), and when his death was registered in 1875 (68 years, so born about 1807).

Elizabeth [nee Greer] Kirkpatrick was born some time between about about 1811 and 1817, according to the same sets of records. The 1871 record suggests that she may have been born somewhere in County Tyrone.

There is no doubt but that the 1861 and 1871 census schedule details all pertain to members of the same family.

- ii See “*Winds and Weather Report – Saturday*”, *North British Daily Mail* (Glasgow, Scotland), Saturday 10 April 1858, Page 4, and “*Greenock*”, Page 2. Both articles accessed through <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>> and <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>> on 7 April 2021.
- iii See “*The Weather*”, *Glasgow Free Press* (Scotland), 10 April 1858, Page 2. Accessed through <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>> and <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>> on 7 April 2021.
- iv *Statutory Register of Deaths, Scotland, County of Renfrew, Parish of Eaglesham, 1858*, Page [5 ?], Entry No. 14 – Kirkpatrick, John, single; died 1858 April tenth between the hours of 12 & 1 Noon, Public Road, Eaglesham Moore about 1 ¾ miles from the village; M[ale]; age: 7 years; Parents: Joseph Kirkpatrick, Cotton Spinning, [and] Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, Maiden name Greer; Cause: Unknown – lay down suddenly but was raised by Mrs. Russell in whose hands he expired, He was in the act of running a race with other boys; Burial: Church Yard of Eaglesham as Certified by Rob’t Hamilton, Gravedigger; Informant: Joseph Kirkpatrick, father, not present, and Mrs James Russell, Her (X) Mark, Neighbour, Present, James B. Miller, Registrar Witness; Date Registered: 1858 April 12th at Eaglesham, Jas B. Miller, Registrar. [National Records of Scotland: Deaths, 1858 - 561/00-0014, No. 14, Page [5 ?]]
- v *Index to Statutory Registers of Deaths, Scotland, 1870*: Russell, Agnes, 61 years, Mother’s maiden surname = Nelson, died 1870, reference 561/6, Parish of Eaglesham. Accessed through <www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk> on 5 May 2021.
- vi *Index to Statutory Registers of Deaths, Scotland, 1877*: Russell, James, 65 years, Mother’s maiden surname = Stewart, died 1877, reference 561/7, Parish of Eaglesham. Accessed through <www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk> on 5 May 2021.
- vii Details about the circumstances of the various cotton mills that existed in Eaglesham itself, and in the broader area in general, were obtained from various sources, notably
“*Archaeology Notes – Event 702186*” through <<https://canmore.org.uk/event/702186>>;
“*The Village of Eaglesham*” through <<https://new.eagleshamhs.com/home/the-village/>>;
“*Eaglesham Cotton Mills*” by Stuart Nisbet, Section 5, Renfrewshire Local History Forum Vol 7 (1996)
<<http://rlhf.info/wp-content/uploads/7.5-Eaglesham-Nisbet.pdf>>;
“*Our Story – The Orry Mill*” through <<https://theorrymill.co.uk/pages/about-us>>;
“*The Orry Cotton Spinning Mill*”, by published 11 December 2014 by Kenneth Mallard
of the Eaglesham History Society, through <<https://www.facebook.com/EagleshamHistorySociety/>>; and
“*Eaglesham*” through <<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/eaglesham/eaglesham/index.html>>;
all accessed 7 April 2021.
- viii *Index to Statutory Registers of Deaths, Scotland, 1894*: Hamilton, Robert, 79 years, Mother’s maiden surname = Beaton, died 1894, reference 561/21, Parish of Eaglesham. Accessed through <www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk> on 5 May 2021.
- ix Virtually all (97%, 526) of the memorial stones residing in the Eaglesham Church Yard have been photographed and indexed on <www.findagrave.com>. As of 5 May 2021, there are no inscriptions on any stone in the Yard which bear the name Kirkpatrick. Similarly, there are no memorial stones for Margaret Boylin, John Gilmour, James or Agnes Russell, or Robert Hamilton.
- x Valuation Rolls were drawn up for taxation purposes in each County or Parliamentary Borough by 15 August each year, subsequent to any appeals and formal setting on 15 September. The Rolls for 1855 are accessible online, through <www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk>. Assuming that Joseph Kirkpatrick might have been listed as a tenant in a Valuation

Roll for 1856, 1857, and/or 1858, it appears that these are accessible by paper copies only in the Scottish Records Centre in Edinburgh. A very good guide to the Valuation Rolls can be found through <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/valuation-rolls>.

- xi *1861 Census of Scotland* details for the family can be found through www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk as follows: County of Bute (No 20), District 558, Rothesay; Parish, Royal Burgh & Civil Parish of Rothesay; Enumeration District 7; Page 21, Household 107, Lines 17-22 – Joseph Kirkpatrick, 46, cotton spinner, born Ireland; Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, wife, 45, born Ireland; Mary Jane Kirkpatrick, daughter, 19, born Ireland, cotton factory worker; Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, daughter, 17, born Ireland, cotton factory worker; William Kirkpatrick, son, 13, born Ireland, cotton factory worker; James Kirkpatrick, son, 7, born Ireland, scholar; The family was occupying 2 rooms in the Society House. Note that these details are abstracted / indexed on www.ancestry.com, where the surname has been entered as ‘Fitchpatrick’. This record was also accessed through LDS microfilm 103813 in April 2005. The Kirkpatricks were only one of several families living at this place. Just what the ‘Society House’ in Rothesay was, is not presently known. A photograph of the structure as it existed can be seen in an undated photograph found at <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/397231629609560533/>.
- xii According to details found in the 1861 Census of Scotland, this man was 64 years old at the time of enumeration, was a labourer living at 15 Torregles Street in Troqueer, living with his wife Agnes and his nephew Andrew Kirkpatrick. www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk Reference 882/9/31. These details are indexed through ancestry.com as follows: Registration District 882, Enumeration District 9, Page 31, Household 188, Lines 3-5, Roll CSSCT1861_147.
- xiii *1871 Census of Scotland*; County of Lanarkshire; Registration District: No. 644/8, Anderston; Civil Parish of Glasgow Barony; 30 William Street; Enumeration District 20; Page 2, Household No 10, Lines 8-17: Joseph Kirkpatrick, 62, head, cotton spinner, born Ireland; Elizabeth Grier, wife, 60, born Tyrone; Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, daughter, 24, born Belfast, sewing machinist; James Kirkpatrick, son, 16 years, born Ballynure, printer’s apprentice; Mary Kirkpatrick, daughter, 27, born Belfast [wife of Archibald Lamont]; Archibald Lamont, son-in-law, 33 born Rothesay, ship building lab[ourer]; Joseph Lamont, son, born Rothesay, scholar; Robert Lamont, son, 3, born Rothesay; Elizabeth J Lamont, daughter, 1 month, born Glasgow; Marion [Freeman ?], visitor, Unm[arried],[23 years ?], born Glasgow, white worker. 30 William Street must have been a substantial tenement because at least 5 families were shown on this census schedule to have been residing at that address. Accessed through www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk. These details are also abstracted / indexed on www.ancestry.com, but note that the surname Lamont has been entered as ‘Fremont’, which is also the surname that has been entered for the visitor named Marion.
- xiv *Statutory Register of Deaths, Scotland, County of Lanark, District of Govan Church, 1875*, Entry No. 1083 – Joseph Kirkpatrick, cotton spinner (married to Elizabeth Greer); died 1875, November Eleventh 7h 0m am, at 83 Queen Street, Govan; M[ale], 68 years; son of Joseph Kirkpatrick, linen draper (deceased) and Elizabeth Jane Kirkpatrick, M[aiden] S[urname] Allan (deceased); Cause: Died suddenly, cause unknown, not certified; Informant: Elizabeth Mawhinney, Daughter, [9 Hill ?] Street, Greenock; Registered 1875 November 12th at Govan, Thomas Steel, Registrar. Accessed through www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk on 19 Jan 2012; National Records of Scotland Reference: 646 / 01 1083.
- xv *Statutory Register of Deaths, Scotland, County of Dunbarton, Parish of Kirkudbright, 1879*, Entry No. 249 – Elizabeth Greer or Kirkpatrick, housewife, married; died 1879, December Sixteenth 11h 30m am, at Woodilee Asylum, Lenzie, Kirkintilloch; F[emale], 67 years; [parents’ names and details not apparently known]; Cause: Chronic Bronchitis, [?] Cert. By John Criswell, L. R. C. P. E.[?] P. S. G.; Informant: William Gedson, attendant, Present; Registered 1879 December 19th at Kirkintilloch, Robert Adams. Accessed through www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk on 19 Jan 2012; National Records of Scotland Reference: 498 / 00 0249.
- xvi See <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Barony/> for minimal details about this facility, including a good photograph and a map extract showing it’s footprint and environs. See also <https://www.scottishindexes.com/institutions/6.aspx>. For details of Elizabeth Kirkpatrick’s admission, see the “*General Register of Lunatics in Asylums, Barony Poorhouse, Barnhill, Glasgow, Lanarkshire*”: Patient No. 20885, Mrs Elizabeth Grier al[ia]s Kirkpatrick; Mental Health Records, National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland; MC7/3 Page 121.
- xvii See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodilee_Hospital for details about this facility. For details of Elizabeth Kirkpatrick’s transfer to this facility, see the “*General Register of Lunatics in Asylums, Woodilee Asylum, Dunbartonshire*”: Patient No. 20885, Mrs Elizabeth Grier al[ia]s Kirkpatrick; Mental Health Records, National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland; MC7/3 Page 581.