

The Ravenscroft Cousins.

Dr John Ravenscroft was an American, born at York in Virginia in about 1750, the son of John Ravenscroft senior and his wife Ann or Rebecca Stark or Starke. He had a sister Jane. He studied medicine at Edinburgh University, and it was on his return to Virginia that he was married to Lillias Miller, the daughter of Hugh Miller and Jane Bolling, reputed to be his cousin and seemingly about eighteen years old. Their first child was born at Petersburg, Virginia. They then moved to England, where their second son was born a year later at Papcastle in Bridekirk parish, Cumbria : Papcastle lies close to Seaton, where Bengamin Ravenscroft the founder of the Seaton Iron Works died in 1778 – perhaps a relation. About the time of the birth of his second son, Dr John bought Cairnsmore in Kirkmabreck parish, by a deed of 1773. He was a wealthy young man, following the death of his father. His mother had been married secondly to George McMurdo, who had moved to Galloway, which perhaps brought him to Cairnsmore. His five children were :-

John Stark Ravenscroft (1772 - 1830) returned to America, ending up as Bishop of North Carolina. He married twice but had no children.

George Ravenscroft (1773 -) died young

Peyton Ravenscroft (177? -) died young

Jane Ravenscroft (1778 - 1848) was married in 1805 at Penninghame Kirk to William McKeand (1743 - 1826) an elderly banker at Newton Stewart : they had no children. They were both buried in his father's lair at Clachan of Penninghame Kirkyard, he described as late of Challoch living at Flowerbank in Minnigaff parish : Jane was still at Flowerbank when she died twenty two years later.

Ann Ravenscroft (1778 - 1844) was married in 1808 at Girthon Kirk to Alex. Craig (1773 - 1856). Her family is detailed above.

Dr John perhaps did not accord with the local Presbyterian minister, as there are no records at Kirkmabreck of the baptisms of his last three children, nor of the deaths of his younger sons and his own. The dates of the sisters' births and deaths come from grave memorials. They may have been twins. Sadly, Dr John died in intestate July 1781 – his inventory was filed at Wigtown two years later. He seems to have been only in his early thirties. He was buried at the old Kirkmabreck Kirkyard.

Meanwhile, Patrick Stewart (1734 - 1814) the son of James Stewart in Kirkcowan parish and his wife Margaret Milligan had four children with his first wife Helen Dunlop :-

Peter Stewart, (1781 - 1808) Captain, R.N., who died a bachelor.

Margaret Stewart (1783 - 1845) who was married in 1831 to the Rev. David Wilson of Stranraer (he has been mentioned above). They both died in the same year, without issue.

Harriet Stewart (1784 - 1872) who was married to Rear Admiral John McKerlie (1774 - 1848), the builder of Corvisel House. Their only child Lillias was born in 1821 and married in 1839 to the Rev M.S.S.Johnstone, minister at Minnigaff for many years – she has been mentioned in the Craig sisters' wills above.

Dunlop Stewart (1785 - 1871) who died a spinster, living at Cairnsmore.

Helen Stewart died in 1785. Three years later, Patrick Stewart was married to Dr John's widow, Lillias Ravenscroft. In 1793 he bought Cairnsmore from the then twenty-one-year-old John S. Ravenscroft who had inherited it upon the death of his father. With Lillias Ravenscroft, Patrick Stewart had three more children :-

James Stewart (1791 - 1877) who inherited the Cairnsmore Estate. He was married to Elizabeth McLeod and had ten sons and three daughters – the survivors of these inherited under the Craig sisters' will.

Keith Stewart who died unmarried in the Navy.

Stair Stewart, who died young.

Lillias Miller/Ravenscroft/Stewart died in 1833. Her death is recorded on the Stewart memorial at Minnigaff church, her birth given as 1753.

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Sources of Information.

Published Maps.

Site Inspections.

The Craig Letters held by the Kirkcudbright Museum.

Cemetery Recording for Kirkcudbrightshire, in the Ewart Library, Dumfries.

Cemetery Recording for Ruthwell, in the Ewart Library, Dumfries.

Cemetery Recording for Clachan of Penninghame, in the Ewart Library.

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The minutes of the Roads Trustees for the Stewartry, held in the Ewart Library.

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The National Census of Scotland - 1841.

The 1841 Statistical Account (Parish of Girthon) .

Statistical, Historical and Miscellaneous Memoranda of Kirkmaden, by William Todd - 1854 – unpublished.

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History of the Lands and their Owners in Galloway, by P.H.McKerlie - 1878

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The Ruthwell Cross, by J.L.Dinwiddie - 1971.

Covenant and Hearth Tax, by R.A.Shannon - 1973.

The Broughton and Cally Muniments, held by the National Archives of Scotland.

The Records of Scottish testaments, held by the National Archives of Scotland.

The Kirkmabreck Parish Records, held by the National Archives of Scotland.

The Girthon Parish Records, held in the National Archives of Scotland.

The Bridekirk Parish Registers, held at the Carlisle Library.

Edinburgh Death Records, held in the National Archives of Scotland.

Information from the National Library Map Room staff.

Records of the Signet Library, Edinburgh.

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London wills at the Principle Registry of the Family Division Probate Department.

London census returns

www.familysearch.org

www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

www.1837online.com

