

*AREN'T YOU GLAD  
PHYSICIANS DON'T USE  
BLOODLETTING ANYMORE?  
BY JULIA TRINDER*

Pneumonia is an acute infection of the lungs that produces coughing, fever, chills, muscle aches and difficulty in breathing. This disease has been mentioned as far back as early Greek civilization and today -- especially with complications arising from COVID 19 -- remains a serious medical concern with millions of deaths and hospitalizations throughout the world. Every year 1.5 million children, many of them in developing countries, die of pneumonia. The bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, discovered in 1881, is one of the most common causes.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s (my pensioner David Gilmore died in 1907), pneumonia was one of the leading cause of death in the British Isles and a lot of research was going into possible treatments. But as usual those in the scientific world were slow to accept the pioneering work being done. (This changed thank goodness during the search for COVID 19 vaccines.)

Up until the late 1800s bloodletting had been a common remedy for pneumonia. Around the turn of the century Sir William Osler advocated using it in his famous book *Principles and Practice of Medicine* (first published 1892):-

“Pneumonia is one of the diseases in which a timely venesection may save a life. To be of service it should be done early ..... the abstraction of 20 to 30 ounces of blood is in every way beneficial.”

It is interesting to note that the application of leeches has a similar history to bloodletting which was popular in the 19th century. In Paris millions of leeches were used each year and in London leeches were stored in hospitals up until the 1950s.

The first antibacterial agent for pneumonia was introduced in the 1930s. It worked slowly and was expensive and once penicillin was discovered in the early 1940s it was quickly discarded. Penicillin was the new wonder drug but widespread overuse of antibiotics led to the emergence of penicillin-resistant variants of *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. Today a lot of pathogens that cause pneumonia are resistant to all but the strongest antibiotics.

The first anti-pneumonia vaccine, pneumococcal polysaccharide (PPV) appeared in 1977 but only protected against certain strains of infection. Then in 2000 a new vaccine called PCV7 emerged offering protection against many more strains including ones that had been resistant to antibiotics. Many children in developed countries now receive the PCV vaccine and the WHO's Millennium Development Goal was to decrease mortality in under 5s by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. I have not been able to discover if the WHO achieved this target.

So, you have probably guessed by now that when my postal pensioner, David Baxter Gilmore, died on 26th September 1907 the recorded cause was pneumonia along with cardiac failure. His life story is quite a sad one although it seemed to start out okay. David was born around 1858 to William, a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and his wife Martha. William served 1843 – 1872 and retired on a pension of £34 per annum.

David and Harriet Corlett were married on 4th July 1887. Harriet's dad had been a barrister so she probably had had quite a middle-class background whereas David's address was listed as a street of several small dwellings, apparently with rents too insignificant to record.

Their first child William Baxter was born in 1888 while they were living in Third Street, now demolished. Baby William passed away of convulsions in 1892 but in 1893 Harriet and David had a baby girl named Margaret Baxter and the family had moved house to Euston Street. David Baxter junior was born in 1895 and the family of four had moved again, this time to Dee Street.

From 1897 life became very taxing for the parents, especially David. His dad William passed in October. A new baby girl -- Mabel Isobel -- had arrived a couple of weeks before William's passing but succumbed to cholera eleven months later in September 1898. Six-and-a-half-year-old Margaret Baxter had died of typhoid in August and to crown it all David's brother Robert died early in November of Bright's disease. The family now had one son left but he was joined by a brother, Thomas Arthur Corlett, in August 1899.

1904 was another really bad year for the family and found them living in Banbury Street. A third son Charles Walker was born in January but died of diarrhoea in August and by this time they had moved to Klondyke Street. David's sister Margaret who had got married in 1901 and was about ten years younger than him then died of cardiac disease in June.

Can you imagine what life was like for this poor man and his poor wife? Since retirement in 1901 he only seemed to be able to find work as a labourer. It was probably part time and not well paid. He had had to deal with umpteen close family deaths which would have been emotionally and financially exhausting and he and his wife and remaining children moved house at least four times, piling up the stress even more. No wonder he succumbed to pneumonia on 26th September 1907 aged probably forty-nine.

Unfortunately, David's wife Harriet was pregnant again. The baby girl Elizabeth was born prematurely on 18th October and only lived for four weeks, dying on 24th November.

A poignant footnote concerns the passing of Harriet. She survived until 1917 but by then the grave containing her husband and her sister-in-law and four of her children was full as was the one containing her remaining in-laws and her first-born son and she ended up being buried alone in public ground.

To finish on a happier note the two surviving sons got married exactly a week apart in the same church in December 1920 and I like to imagine it was because they were planning a more positive future with a chance to make their fortunes. Their dad's attempt to carry on his mum's and wife's maiden names, Baxter and Corlett, succeeded against all odds as the young men were David Baxter and Thomas Arthur Corlett.

Doing this research in 2020 –2021 while the COVID-19 virus and its variants rage around the earth has made me realize how well off we are at this time even during a global pandemic. Poor living conditions were pretty much the norm for many people around the turn of the previous century and although they certainly still exist at least they are not the norm in developed countries. Scientists cooperated to produce vaccines in record times and then other companies managed to get them distributed and dispensed also in record time.

That is not to say that in a hundred years or so people won't be saying “Thank goodness they don't do injections anymore”.

## REFERENCES

### Websites

- Susan Chow, 'Pneumonia History': <https://www.news-medical.net/health/Pneumonia-History.aspx>

## Fact Sheet: David Gilmore

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> David Gilmore
<i>Person ID:</i> IR1004
<i>Your name:</i> Julia Trinder
<i>U3A group:</i> Belfast
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
David Baxter Gilmore was born around 1858 in County Down, which was where his father had been posted as a sub-Constable.
2: Who were your pensioners' parents? Record any details you can find out about them here (e.g. occupation, religious affiliation, whether they could read or write)
<p>David's parents were William and Martha Gilmore, both were living in Ballymacarrett, Knockbreda at the time of their marriage in Belfast Registry office on 10 November 1848. William, 28 years old is listed as belonging to the Constabulary and Martha Baxter, 22 years old was a spinster. Both of their fathers were called Robert and both are listed on the marriage certificate as farmers.</p> <p>Presumably William could both read and write as he was a policeman.</p> <p>William joined the Royal Irish Constabulary on 16 August 1843 when he was 24 years old. He was 5'10" tall and a Protestant from County Cavan. He had been recommended for service by Samuel Adams JP. He was allocated to serve in County Down.</p> <p>The RIC record states he was married in October 1848 although the marriage certificate states November. At the time he only had 5 years service and not the 7 normally required before marrying. Also the marriage took place in Belfast Registry office so it could be he got permission to marry early because his wife was pregnant. However the first offspring I can find was born around 1852.</p> <p>William was promoted from sub-Constable to Acting Constable in December 1847 and to Constable in 1849. He was discharged on pension on 15 February 1872 after 28 years and 5 months service. His pension was £34 per annum.</p> <p>William died of senile decay and exhaustion on 23 October 1897 in Belfast Asylum. His pension record shows that from October 1896, 4 shillings a week was paid to the asylum and after his death his widow receive one quarter of his salary.</p> <p>William's wife Martha aged 73, died of Erysipelas on 3 May 1900 at 43 Lindsay St. Her cousin, Mary Ann McKinney of the same address was present. Mary Ann could not sign her name.</p>

3: Did your pensioner have any siblings? What were their names, and how old were they in relation to your pensioner? Use this space to record anything else you have found out about them (e.g. occupation)

I found two siblings.

ROBERT GILMORE, his brother, died on November 3rd 1898 from bright's disease and cardiac problems. He was 46 years old which places his birth around 1852 and makes him about 4 years older than David. He is listed as a labourer living at 26 Paxton St, his father William's address at the time. It appears he never married.

MARGARET ANN MCBRIDE GILMORE, his sister was probably born around 1869 which would make her 10/11 years younger than David. She married George McGuiness, an invoice clerk of 6 Distillery St on 29 April 1901 in the Methodist Church, Knockbreda. Her address is given as 79 Rosberry Road.

Margaret, now 35, passed away from cardiac disease just over 3 years later on 1 June 1904 at 100 Omeath St, which appears to be where she and her husband lived as he was present and had the same address. She was buried in Belfast City cemetery in the same plot as her brother, David and 4 of his children

#### Part Two: Marriage and children

1: Did your pensioner marry? What was their spouse's name, and when and where did they marry them? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about their spouse (e.g. when/where they were born, their occupation)

David and Harriet Isabella Corlett were married on 4 July 1887 in Willowfield Church according to the rites of the Church of Ireland. David's address is listed as 4 Baxters Place, Ballymacarrett which in the street directory is described as several small dwellings, apparently with rents too insignificant to record.

Harriet's address is given as 45 Douglas St, Ballymacarrett. Her father, Thomas Arthur Corlett deceased had been a barrister. Harriet is listed on the 1901 census form as being born in Scotland.

2: Did your pensioner have any children? What were their names, and when they were born? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about them (e.g. occupation, where they lived later in life)

I found 7 children

1. WILLIAM BAXTER was born on 9 July 1888 when the family lived at 5 Third St and when he died four years later of convulsions on 1 October 1892 the family had moved to 53 Euston St.
2. MARGARET BAXTER was born on 20 January 1893 and passed away 6.5 years later of typhoid fever and bronchitis on 1 August 1898. The family were still at 53 Euston St. Her uncle Robert is listed on her death certificate as being present
3. DAVID BAXTER Jn was born on 28 February 1895. The family had moved to 2 Dee St. David Jn, 27, married Jennie Campbell, 21, a mill worker on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1920

in St Anne's Parish church according to the rites of the Church of Ireland. David is listed as a labourer of 88 Mateer St and Jennie lived at 96 Mateer St. I have been unable to find any birth/death certificates for children or death certificates for the parents.

4. MABEL ISOBEL was born on 6 October 1897 and died of cholera and exhaustion 11 months later on 7 September 1898.
5. THOMAS ARTHUR CORLETT was born on 21 August 1899. Thomas, 21, married Agnes Mitchell, 21, a mill worker on 08 December 1920 in St Anne's Parish Church according to the rites of the Church of Ireland. Thomas' profession is listed as labourer with an address at 108 Fortingale St and Agnes' address was 100 Fortingale St. I have been unable to find any birth/death certificates for children or death certificated for the parents.
6. CHARLES WALKER was born on 24 January 1904 while the family seem to have been living at 27 Banbury St. Just over 6 months later, on 09 August 1904, when this little baby died of diarrhoea the family were living at 28 Klondyke St.
7. ELIZABETH was born prematurely on 18 October 1907, less than 6 weeks after her father David, had died and passed away herself 5 weeks later on 24 November 1907.

NB: It appears odd that the 2 surviving brothers, David and Tomas got married within a week, one on 01 December and the other on 08 December 1920. At this point all of their relatives were dead, mother, father, brothers, sisters and grandparents, uncle and aunt. Were they intending to emigrate together to perhaps their mother's Scottish relations or to Australia or America?

### Part Three: Work

1: What occupation was your pensioner recorded as doing in census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

1901 census: David is listed as a PENSIONED POSTMAN  
1987: on his MC David is listed as a POSTMAN  
1988: on son William's BC David is listed as a POSTMAN  
1993: on his daughter Margaret's BC David is listed as a LETTER CARRIER  
1995: on his son David's BC David is listed as a POSTMAN  
1997: on his daughter Mabel's BC David is listed as a POSTMAN  
1999: on his son Thomas' BC David is listed as a LETTER CARRIER  
1904: on his son Charles' BC David is listed as a LABOURER  
1907: on his own DC David is listed as a LABOURER  
1907: on his daughter Elisabeth's BC David is list as a POST OFFICE PENSIONER  
1917: on his wife's DC David is listed as a POSTMAN  
1920: on both of his sons' (David Jn and Arthur) MC David is listed as a POSTMAN

MC - marriage certificate

BC - birth certificate  
DC - death certificate

2: What occupations were people living with your pensioner (e.g. spouse, children, boarders) doing in the census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

1901 CENSUS: only 2 children were alive in 1901 aged 1 and 6 years old. David's wife, Harriet is listed as a HOUSEWIFE. No occupations are mentioned for David's spouse or children while he was alive.

1920: on both David Jn's and Arthur's marriage certificates they are listed as LABOURERS.

1901: there were 3 boarders living with the Gilmore family at 2 Dee St.

- ROBERT HOLMES, 30, Presbyterian, was a GLAZIER who could read and write. He was born in County Antrim and was unmarried.
- MARIA QUIGLEY, 24, Church of Ireland, was a ROPE SPINNER who could read and write. She was born in Belfast City and was married.
- MAUD COOPER, 25, Presbyterian, was a MACHINIST in a FACTORY who could read and write. She was born in England and was unmarried

#### Part Four: Anything Else

Please use this space to record anything else you have found out about your pensioner

It would appear that David could only get work as a labourer after his enforced early retirement, due to ill-health, from the Post Office as this was the only occupation recorded for him on the birth, marriage and death certificates pertaining to his family, other than retired postman. Not an ideal job for someone who retired due to ill-health at 43 years of age. Although his death certificate states his age as 45 if he was 43 in 1901 then he would have been around 49 when he died.

His wife, Harriet's death certificate states she was 40 when she died in 1917 but this would mean she was 10 years old when she married David in 1887 and 11 years old when she had her first child. So I reckon she was more likely to have been 50 in 1917.

When Harriet died in 1917 we know for certain her father, her in-laws, and 5 of her 7 children were all dead. Her two remaining sons were 16 and 22 years old. The plot in which her husband, her sister-in-law and 4 of her children were buried was full, as was another one containing her in-laws, father, mother and brother and as there was evidently no money for a new plot Harriet was buried in public ground.

## Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

### DAVID BAXTER GILMORE

- Marriage:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage\\_returns/marriages\\_1887/10807/5941618.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1887/10807/5941618.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1907/05524/4548476.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1907/05524/4548476.pdf)
- Burial:  
<https://dof.belfastcity.gov.uk/burialsearch/BurialRecordDetails.aspx?RecordID=6121.32604>
- 1901 Census:  
[http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Down/Victoria/Dee\\_Street/1217693/](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Down/Victoria/Dee_Street/1217693/)

### HARRIET ISABELLA GILMORE (David's wife)

- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1917/05216/4443115.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1917/05216/4443115.pdf)
- Burial:  
<https://dof.belfastcity.gov.uk/burialsearch/BurialRecordDetails.aspx?RecordID=7661.33176>

### WILLIAM BAXTER (Son)

- Birth:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1888/02508/1930114.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1888/02508/1930114.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1892/06021/4714493.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1892/06021/4714493.pdf)

### MARGARET BAXTER (Daughter)

- Birth:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1893/02318/1868640.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1893/02318/1868640.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1898/05823/4649042.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1898/05823/4649042.pdf)

### DAVID BAXTER (Son)

- Birth:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1895/02220/1837602.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1895/02220/1837602.pdf)



- Marriage:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage\\_returns/marriages\\_1920/09275/5358263.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1920/09275/5358263.pdf)

#### MABEL ISOBEL (Daughter)

- Birth:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1897/02109/1802977.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1897/02109/1802977.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1898/05823/4649051.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1898/05823/4649051.pdf)

#### THOMAS ARTHUR CORLETT (Son)

- Birth:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1899/02033/1779122.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1899/02033/1779122.pdf)
- Marriage:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage\\_returns/marriages\\_1920/09275/5358267.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1920/09275/5358267.pdf)

#### CHARLES WALKER (Son)

- Birth:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1904/01842/1718872.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1904/01842/1718872.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1904/05621/4581154.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1904/05621/4581154.pdf)

#### ELIZABETH SCANLAN (DAUGHTER)

- Birth:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1907/01679/1667911.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1907/01679/1667911.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1907/05516/4545927.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1907/05516/4545927.pdf)

#### WILLIAM GILMORE SN (Father of David)

- Marriage:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage\\_returns/marriages\\_1848/09344/5383320.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1848/09344/5383320.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1897/05850/4657796.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1897/05850/4657796.pdf)
- RIC Pension record:  
<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=IRE%2FRIC%2FPMG48-27%2F059&parentid=IRE%2FRIC%2FPENSIONS%2F0035470v>

- RIC Service record:  
<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=IRE%2FRIC%2FPMG48-27%2F059&parentid=IRE%2FRIC%2FPENSIONS%2F0035470>

**MARTHA GILMORE** (Mother of David)

- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1900/05763/4628573.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1900/05763/4628573.pdf)
- Burial/ Grave:  
<https://dof.belfastcity.gov.uk/burialsearch/BurialRecordDetails.aspx?RecordID=6383.15959>

**ROBERT GILMORE** (Brother of David)

- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1898/05815/4646352.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1898/05815/4646352.pdf)

**MARGARET ANN MCBRIDE GILMORE** (Sister of David)

- Marriage:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage\\_returns/marriages\\_1901/10306/5751610.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1901/10306/5751610.pdf)
- Death:  
[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths\\_returns/deaths\\_1904/05630/4584093.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1904/05630/4584093.pdf)