

*MARGARET GRIEVE 1839-1913*  
*BY ANONYMOUS*

*'She was greatly respected.....her retirement was marked by a handsome testimonial from the inhabitants.'*

Scotsman, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1901

When Margaret Grieve was born in Moffat in 1839 it was a thriving and attractive watering village with two medical springs, an elegant set of baths and a long room for assemblies and reading. Drinking the waters at Moffat was considered to be beneficial to one's health, curing a wide variety of problems from gout and rheumatism to skin conditions and digestive complaints. The Moffat Well had a sulphurous character, although it was reputed to be pleasant to the taste and to sparkle like champagne when drawn straight from the fountain. It was also possible to bathe in the spring water which was piped to the warm baths. The Hartfell Spa was a chalybeate well, where to gain maximum health benefits one was expected to drink a large full wineglass two or three times a day.

Along with the attractions of the spa, Moffat had new villas, paved streets, a constabulary, an industrious population and an Post Office run by Thomas Grieve, Margaret's grandfather. In 1825, as Postmaster, Thomas Grieve is recorded as collecting and sorting mail for the daily coach services to Portpatrick (for Ireland), Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dumfries. There were also daily connections to London via Carlisle. In 1847, a few years after Margaret's birth, the Caledonian railway line to Beattock was built. Although Beattock was just a couple of miles from Moffat it was not until 1883 that a short branch line went to the spa village.

In 1843 when Margaret was just five years old her father died of measles. Archibald Grieve had been a master tailor. Measles was generally thought of though as a killer of children not adults. The treatment for both children and adults at this time involved laxative powders and mustard poultices. Elizabeth and Margaret's mother and younger sister Jane seem to disappear from the records, although at some stage her mother re-married someone called Bell.

After her father's death Margaret and her elder sister Elizabeth went to live in the Star Inn in Moffat. Elizabeth lived with her paternal grandparents, Thomas and Elizabeth. Thomas was also looking after his grandson William. Other members of the Grieve family also lived at the Star Inn: Margaret's aunt Marion also lived there and was working as her father's assistant in the Post Office. Another resident – Margaret's aunt Jane-- was working as a milliner and dressmaker. Margaret instead went to live with her unmarried cousin Mary Welsh, a seamstress.

Why were the Grieves living in the Star Inn? Around this time it is recorded as being an inn in good repair with stabling attached and occupied by the licensee, Mr Romsay. He was also able to sell spirits and wines by retail. As Moffat was a spa village it is probable that accommodation was in much demand by visitors.

Both Margaret and Elizabeth would have attended school. There were several schools in Moffat which the children could have attended. It is possible that Elizabeth and Margaret retained some

fond memories of the Star Inn, as it is a quirky shape. It is the narrowest hotel in the world at 6m wide by 49.4m long. One can imagine the sisters racing or playing ball down long corridors. Sadly Thomas died in 1857 when he was seventy-eight years old, his wife dying a year later. Their gravestone can still be seen in Moffat Old Churchyard.

Margaret probably went to work in the Post Office in 1854, possibly helping her grandfather the postmaster. According to the Grieve family gravestone she worked in the Post Office for forty-seven years. In 1861 it is probable she went to visit her uncle Walter Grieve in Dunoon Argyll. Certainly by 1871 she was living in the High Street, with her border, Edinburgh born Agnes Blackstock. Margaret was by then employed as an assistant in the Post Office. Agnes worked as a telegraph clerk.

At some stage Ann Black took over the Post Office, as by 1881 Margaret was boarding with Ann in the High Street. Ann had her widowed sister Elizabeth living with them, alongside William Greig (a builder and wright), and his wife and daughter. Margaret was now the Post Office clerk, after being the assistant post mistress, it must have felt a bit of a come down. The building must have seemed very crowded to Margaret after she had lived with just Agnes before.

By 1891 when Margaret was fifty-two she still was boarding with the post mistress Ann Black and Ann's niece Elizabeth was the assistant post mistress. They had a servant Isabella Goodfellow to do the chores.

Eventually in April 1892 Margaret became the Moffat postmistress. By 1895 Margaret was renting a house and office in her own name in Moffat High Street for an annual rent of £50. Although Margaret retired in 1901 of old age, at the time of the census she was working as the postmistress and still living in the High Street. After her retirement Margaret went to live at 3, Cane Cottages, Grange Road, Moffat. There she paid a yearly rent of £15 to the proprietor James Grieve, the Inspector of the Poor. There were a lot of Grieves in Moffat.

The Cottage Hospital in Moffat had opened in 1906 so it is possible that Margaret had been treated there when she began to suffer from angina pectoris. Whereas angina pectoris was a common disease it was considered to be a male disease often associated with smoking, so it is to be hoped that Margaret was taken seriously when she consulted her physician. She may well have had her blood pressure taken with a new sphygmograph.

Margaret had been suffering from angina pectoris for several months when she went to visit her niece in Hamilton. She would have perhaps been carrying her glass capsule of nitrate of amyl, the treatment for angina pectoris at the time. At the onset of pain she would have had to crush the capsule in her handkerchief and inhale the vapour. Inhaling nitrate of amyl lowered blood pressure and relived the pain. It was whilst staying in Hamilton that she died of heart failure at twelve noon on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1913 at the age of seventy-three.

Margaret was well respected in Moffat and received a short obituary in the Scotsman commending her forty years of service in the Post Office. The obituary recorded that when Margaret (or Miss Grieve) retired twelve years ago, after a life long connection to the Post Office in Moffat her retirement was marked 'by a handsome testimonial from the inhabitants.' Margaret is recorded on the family gravestone in Moffat Old Churchyard.

## References

### Books and other printed material

- J Gordon (ed), *The New Statistical Account of Scotland by the ministers of the respective parishes, under the superintendence of a committee of the Society for the Benefit of the Sons and Daughters of the Clergy*. Moffat, Dumfries, Vol. 4, Edinburgh: Blackwoods and Sons, 1845, p. 102. University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow. (1999) The Statistical Accounts of Scotland online service: <https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk:443/link/nsa-vol4-p102-parish-dumfries-moffat>
- *Ordinary Survey Name Book Vol. 39* (1848-1858): <https://scotlandspplaces.gov.uk/digital-volumes/ordnance-survey-name-books/dumfriesshire-os-name-books-1848-1858/dumfriesshire-volume-39>
- G.A. Gibson, *Certain Clinical Features of Cardiac Disease* (1908): <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/n3psb5qn>

### Websites

- 'Moffat Railway', RailScot: [https://www.railscot.co.uk/companies/M/Moffat\\_Railway](https://www.railscot.co.uk/companies/M/Moffat_Railway)
- *The Famous Star Hotel*: <https://www.famousstarhotel.co.uk>

## Fact Sheet: Margaret Grieve

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner Name:</i> Margaret Grieve
<i>Person ID:</i> SC1014
<i>Your name:</i> Anonymous
<i>U3A Group:</i> Scotland
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
Margaret Grieve was probably born in 1839 in Moffat, Dumfries-shire.
2: Who were your pensioner's parents? Record any details you can find out about them here (e.g. occupation, religious affiliation, whether they could read or write)
Father: Archibald Archibald Grieve was born on the 26 <sup>th</sup> September 1810 at Moffat. He was a master tailor. He died from measles on the 6 <sup>th</sup> November 1843.  Mother: Mary Before Archibald's death the family were living at ?Gasey Lead in Moffat. After Archibald's death Mary Grieve remarried a person named Bell.
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, later life)
Margaret had two sisters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elizabeth born around 1837</li><li>• Jane born around 1839</li></ul> 1851 census: Elizabeth Grieve aged 14, a scholar lived with her grandparents Thomas Grieve aged 68 and Elizabeth aged 64 at the Star Inn at Moffat.  Unable to find anything else about the sisters, although one must have got married and lived at 18, Hope Street, Hamilton in 1913 with her husband Robert [S]rontree.

## Part Two: Marriage and children/ boarders

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).

Margaret did not marry.

- 1851 census: After her father's death Margaret aged 12 lived with her cousin Mary Welsh aged 45, a seamstress at the Star Inn Moffat. Her sister Elizabeth aged 14 also lived at the Star Inn but with her grandfather Thomas aged 68 and grandmother 64. Her grandfather Thomas was the Moffat Postmaster.
- ?1861 census: A Margaret aged 19 and an Elizabeth Grieve 17 were staying at their Uncle Walter Grieve at Toward Cottages, Dunoon, Argyll.
- 1871 census: At age 31 Margaret lived in the High Street and worked as an assistant in the Post Office. She had a boarder, Agnes Blackstock aged 18 who worked as a Telegraph Clerk. Agnes was born in Edinburgh.
- 1881 census: Margaret aged 42 was a boarder living with Ann Black aged 34 in the High Street, Moffat. Margaret was working as a clerk in the Post Office. Ann was the Post Mistress. Also boarding with Ann Black were Elizabeth Lloyd a widow and Ann's sister, William Grieg aged 46 a wright and builder, his wife Margaret aged 39 and their daughter Mary aged 19.
- 1891 census: Margaret aged 52 was still a boarder living with Ann Black aged 44 the Postmistress and Elizabeth Black aged 19 her niece, who was working as an assistant Post Mistress. Margaret was the clerk. Also living with them was Isabella Goodfellow a general servant.
- 1901 census: At the time of the census Margaret aged 62 was still working as the Postmistress, and was living in Moffat High Street.
- 1911 census: Unable to find Margaret

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)

Margaret Grieve did not marry. I can find no record of her having any children.

### 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

- 1841 census: aged 3
- 1851 census: aged 12 listed as scholar
- ?1861 census: aged 19 visitor at Uncle Walters house.
- 1871 census Assistant in Post Office
- 1881 census: aged 42 Assistant Post Mistress
- 1891 census: aged 52 Clerk in Post Office
- 1901 census: aged 62 Post Mistress

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

Thomas Grieve was Margaret Grieve's Grandfather. He was the Postmaster in Moffat. In 1825 he was collecting and sorting mail for the daily coach services to London, Carlisle, Glasgow and Edinburgh, Dumfries and Portpatrick (for the Irish ferry).

Thomas died on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1857 at 78 years old and his wife Eliza Johnstone on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1858 at 76 years old. Their gravestone can be seen in Moffat Old Churchyard. It also records Margaret as having worked in the Post Office at Moffat for 47 years.

I can find no record of Ann Black

1881 census: Agnes Blackstock now aged 28 was back home living with her parents Walter and. Agnes was working as a clerk.

#### Part Four: Anything Else/Later Life

Please use this space to record anything else you have found out about your pensioner. For example: what do we know about their life after retirement?

In 1895 Margaret was renting a house and office in Moffat High Street for an annual rent of £50. When she lived here she was the Post Mistress.

In 1905 after Margaret had retired, she was living as a tenant at 3, Cane Cottages, Grange Road in Moffat. She paid a yearly rent of £15 to James Grieve an Inspector of the Poor.

Margaret Grieve died at 12 noon on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1913 whilst she was staying with her niece at Donaghadee, Orchard Street, Hamilton. Her usual residence was 3, Grange Rd, Moffat. She died of heart failure after suffering from angina pectoris for the previous three months.

She was well respected in Moffat and received an obituary in the Scotsman commending her forty years in the Post Office. She is also recorded on the family gravestone in Moffat Old Churchyard

#### Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

- 1841 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Census 842/ 7/ 15) Page 15 of 23
- 1851 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Census 842/ 6/ 15) Page 15 of 23
- 1871 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Census 842/ 5/ 17) Page 17 of 29
- 1881 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Census 842/ 5/ 14) Page 14 of 33
- 1891 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Census 842/ 4/ 9) Page 9 of 29
- 1901 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Census 842/ 4/ 8) Page 8 of 28
- 1913 GRIEVE, MARGARET Statutory register Deaths 647/573
- 1895 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Valuation Rolls VR009700023-/313, DUMFRIES COUNTY) Page 313 of 422
- 1905 GRIEVE, MARGARET (Valuation Rolls VR009700033-/340, DUMFRIES COUNTY) Page 340 of 448
- Pigot & Co's New Commercial Directory of Scotland 1825-6 p343
- <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/166669518/thomas-grieve>
- Edinburgh St Cuthberts; ED: 50; Page: 6; Line: 8; Roll: cssct1881\_281
- Scotsman 1<sup>st</sup> November 1901