

*'LAST POST' FOR JOHN D.  
MAXWELL, A HARDY  
SURVIVOR  
BY JANET AMOS*

*"There died on Sunday last at Braeport, Dunblane, one of the fast diminishing circle of Crimean and Indian Mutiny veterans in the person of Mr John Davy Maxwell".*

So ran the obituary of a rural postman who had served the area to the North of Dunblane for around twenty-five years before his retirement, aged sixty-five, in 1901.

John was born in Lanarkshire in 1835 to Catherine Davies (b.1805), a washer, and they lived in Tarbet Street, in Rottenrow, Glasgow at the 1841 Census, with Janet Davie, fifteen years her senior, a sewer. His father, James Maxwell, a shepherd, was cited on John's birth record. At that time, Glasgow was burgeoning with incomers, many from Ireland, attracted by the work created by the Industrial Revolution and repelled by the potato famine in their home country.

There was no reliable, clean water supply to the city until 1859, when water began to be brought using gravity alone from Loch Katrine, fifty-five kilometres distant. In the Glasgow burghs in the 1830s and 1840s many succumbed to typhus and cholera. John's mother would have been exposed to contaminated water every day of her working life. By the time of the 1851 Census, her son was living with his aunt and uncle on the South Side of the Turnpike Road at Sauchie, presumably orphaned, and working as a woolen weaver.

It is no great wonder that he enlisted in the 71st Foot Regiment in Stirling as a volunteer. His career in the army spanned twenty-one years and five days, meticulously recorded in his army records, the first 115 days being unpaid, as he was under-age.

Five months after his eighteenth birthday, on 15th March 1854, he was transferred to the 93rd Regiment of Foot, which took him to the Crimean War for the following three years. He would have been part of 'The Thin Red Line' (at the Battle of Balaklava), which became synonymous with extreme bravery and discipline, as indeed it was, although some historians regarded the battle plan as flawed, since it served the purpose of revealing to the Russian army exactly how few soldiers the British Army had at their disposal.

He was re-deployed to serve in the East Indies during the time of the Indian Rebellions, from 1857 to 1859, where he would no doubt have been involved in desperate conflict in Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow. The ferocity of the fighting and carnage that took place there would be hard to overstate. And yet, his obituary in the local paper recounts that, *"when in the mood, Maxwell could give a graphic description of the fighting in the streets of Lucknow and especially that terrible scene in the Alumbagh. During the running fight he was severely wounded in the head, and his eyesight was affected by a shot fired at close quarters."*

In some ways, the following nine years would have been a period of calm in his army life, as the purpose of his regiment then was to act as a garrison to allow the smooth transition of power from the East India Company to the British Crown. His army records show that during this time he

forfeited his good conduct pay for a period of three weeks, although his discharge papers show that he was *"in possession of four Good Conduct badges and (would) be entitled to a fifth badge on completion of 21 years service."*

He was married at Stirling Castle in 1869, five years before his discharge, to Jane Maule, a livestock and dairy maid from Dunblane, who already had a daughter, aged four, also called Jane. On his release from the army, he was awarded a Good Conduct Medal and a gratuity of £5. He and his wife and daughter lived together at Ramoyle in Dunblane and he found employment as a rural postman, making two deliveries each day on the route between Dunblane and Cromlix, where Andy Murray, well-known for his success in the world of tennis, now owns a hotel. His physical description was detailed thus in the discharge papers: five foot ten inches tall, with light brown hair and grey eyes. It was noted that he had a small scar on his head and a cast in his left eye. As to his medical notes from the army, the document is signed but gives no detail of any disability, however caused.

He died at home in 1909, at the age of seventy-three, of Chronic Bronchitis. Both his wife, at fifty, and daughter, at thirty-two, predeceased him, his wife having spent her final months at the asylum at Little Dunkeld. Had the undertaker not taken care to make note of John's army pensioner status and regiment on the death certificate, the details of his eventful life might have remained undiscovered. His funeral was a ceremonious one, and was reported in detail in 'The Strathearn Herald':

*"The remains of deceased were laid to rest with military and Masonic orders in Dunblane Cathedral Churchyard on Tuesday. The firing party was furnished by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the members of the Dunblane Lodge of Freemasons attended in full regalia.... , the piper played 'Lochaber No More' and the bugler sounded 'The Last Post'."*

## SOURCES

- **Books and Other Printed Material**

- 'Dunblane Crimean Man Passes Away', *Strathearn Herald* (24<sup>th</sup> April 1909): p.5

- **Websites**

- Details about Rottenrow and the Glasgow Waterworks Corporation <https://theglasgowstory.com/story/?id=TGSD0>
- A History of the 93rd Regiment of Foot <http://theargylls.co.uk/service93rd.php>
- History of Cromlix House [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cromlix\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cromlix_House)
- Dunblane History <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-dict/scotland/pp310-320>

## Genealogical Material

- Army Record.  
<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM/WO97/2048/213/001&parentid=GBM/WO97/2048/445044>

## Fact Sheet: John D. Maxwell

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> John D. Maxwell
<i>Person ID:</i>
<i>Your name:</i>
<i>U3A group:</i>
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
John was born on 22nd October 1836 in Glasgow, Lanarkshire.
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>His father was James Maxwell, listed as a shepherd, deceased, on John's marriage record. His mother was Catherine Davies and was also deceased at the time of John's marriage. At the 1841 Census, John was living with his mother, Catherine Davies, and Janet Davie, who was 15 years her senior. The women's relationships to each other are not specified. At the 1841 Census, Catherine's occupation is given as Washer and Janet Davie's occupation is a Sewer.</p> <p>There is no direct references to the religion of his parents, but his marriage banns were read according to the terms of the Church of Scotland, and he became a Freemason while serving in India.</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)
There is no record of John having had siblings.
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)
<p>John married <b>Jane Maule</b>, in Stirling, in 1869. Jane was a spinster, born 1842 and her occupation was given as a Dairymaid/livestock at the time of their marriage. Her usual residence was Cowane Street, Stirling. At the time of the marriage, she was already the mother of her only child, also called Jane Maule.</p> <p>She was the daughter of David Maule b.1806, an agricultural labourer, and Jane Maule, nee Anderson, b1798. At the time of the 1851 Census, Jane was living with her parents at Cross Wynd, Dunblane. She was not listed as a scholar and her mother's occupation is not listed.</p> <p>In 1871, Jane was living at Cross (Wynd) with her mother, also Jane Maule, who was listed as Head of the house and a pauper. Jane herself was working as a Mill worker. Her daughter, later</p>

to become Jane Maxwell, is listed as a scholar. In subsequent censuses she is listed simply as Wife, with no occupation given.

Jane died at Perth Asylum in 1892.

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)

John and Jane had no children together after their marriage, but young Jane is referred to as his daughter in subsequent censuses, and has taken the name **Jane Maxwell, or Jane Robertson Maxwell**. She was born in 1864 in Dunblane and lived with John Maxwell from before the census in 1881, where she was listed as a Millworker, woollen until after the 1891 Census. At the 1891 Census, she is not listed as working. Jane died in 1897, in Dunblane.

### 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

At the 1841 census, John was listed in the household of Catherine Davie with Janet Davies.

At the 1851 census, John is listed in the household of James Maxwell, his uncle, near Sauchie and working as a woollen weaver.

He enlisted in the army, as a volunteer, before his 18th birthday, in 1853, where he served until his discharge in 1875. His full army records are cited in the Sources section and aspects elaborated on in the article from the Strathearn Herald. Between the years of 1854 and 1875, he served first with the 93rd Regiment of Foot in the Crimean War and later with the 79th Regiment of Foot during the time of the Indian rebellion. Just before his discharge, he was a member of the Home Guard, based at Stirling Castle.

In 1869, at the time of his marriage to Jane, he was still serving in the army and his usual residence is given as Stirling Castle.

At the 1881 census, he is living at Ramoyle, Dunblane, with his wife and daughter, listed as a postman and Chelsea pensioner.

At the 1891 census, he is a widower, listed as a postman and living at Ramoyle, Dunblane, with his daughter, Jane.

At the 1901 census he is living alone at Sinclair Street, Dunblane.

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

At the 1851 Census, John was living with his Uncle, George Maxwell b.1794, and his wife, Mary Maxwell, b.1796, both born in Callander, Perthshire. They were living at the south side of the Turnpike Road at Sauchie. George was working as an agricultural labourer, but no occupation is given for Mary. Also resident was James Campbell, a railway labourer.

## Part Four: Anything Else

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

## Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

### Births

1864 Jane Maule, step-daughter or daughter:

[https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=R\\_689488254](https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=R_689488254)

### Marriage

1869. Marriage of John Davie Maxwell and Jane Maule:

[https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=R\\_695238702%2F1](https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=R_695238702%2F1)

### Censuses

- 1841 Census John Maxwell aged 5, living with Catherine Davies and Janet Davie  
<https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBC/1841/0017078076>
- 1851 Census, aged 16, living with his uncle, George Maxwell, in Sauchie, Clackmannan.  
<https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBC%2F1851%2F0019639969>  
Parish: Dunblane; ED: 1; Page: 44; Line: 5; Roll: CSSCT1851\_74; Year: 1851
- 1881 Census, the Maxwell household at Ramoyle, Dunblane  
Source : FHL Film 0203505 GRO Ref Volume 348 EnumDist 1 Page 1  
Reference Number : 231531  
Census Place : Dunblane, Perth, Scotland
- 1891 Census, John Davie Maxwell (now a widower) and Jane Maxwell . Her year of birth is given here as 1865, which does not accord with the Birth record, above.  
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC/1891/0035912875>
- 1901 census John D Maxwell living alone in Dunblane.  
Parish: Dunblane and Lecropt; ED: 2; Page: 12; Line: 20; Roll: CSSCT1901\_119

### Deaths

1889            Jane Maule, wife

- General Register of Lunatics in Asylums', Perth District Asylum, Perthshire, NRS Reference MC7/6 p. 488; Index, Scottish Indexes (<https://www.scottishindexes.com/mcrtranscript.aspx?mcrid=648804>: accessed 03 Feb 2021); Original Source: Mental Health Records, National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 1897 Death Record for Jane Maxwell: [https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/view-image/nrs\\_stat\\_deaths/4182007?return\\_row=0](https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/view-image/nrs_stat_deaths/4182007?return_row=0)

1909      John D. Maxwell

- 1909 John Davie Maxwell: [https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-results?search\\_type=People&surname=Maxwell&forename=John%20Davie&forename\\_s\\_o=starts&from\\_year=1836&to\\_year=1909&surname\\_so=exact&record\\_type=stat\\_deaths](https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-results?search_type=People&surname=Maxwell&forename=John%20Davie&forename_s_o=starts&from_year=1836&to_year=1909&surname_so=exact&record_type=stat_deaths)
- 1909 Obituary in Strathearn Herald: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0002713%2f19090424%2f102&stringtohighlight=john%20maxwell%20postman>

### **Army Record**

1853 - 1875 John D Maxwell, private

Source: Find my Past: British Army Service Record:

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FWO97%2F2048%2F213%2F001&parentid=GBM%2FWO97%2F2048%2F445044>