

JOHN REID (1855-1906)
BY JEAN JONES

John Reid hailed from the Isle of Bute, the clan home of the Stuarts (now Chrichton-Stuarts), who lived at Mount Stuart Castle in Kingarth. But as a postman John Reid lived in totally different surroundings to his aristocratic neighbours

The Stuarts who can trace their family back to the first Scottish monarch Robert II in the fourteenth century and further back still to the 1100s with Walter Fitz Allan, first High Steward of Scotland. They were large land-owners in Scotland and also Wales where they owned coal mines and docks in Cardiff.

John's family also lived on Bute for many generations. His father Archibald was born in 1826 in Rothsay, the main town of Bute, the only son of John and Margaret Reid. He was baptised on 26th November and three years later in 1829 the family was completed by the birth of his sister Margaret. John's paternal grandfather John was a stone mason and his parents had also lived on Bute, so there we have four generations.

Archibald started his working life as a mason the same as his father, but later became a joiner, transitioning from working with wood instead of stone. He lived with his parents till mid 1850s when he moved to the mainland and married Glasgow-born Mary McAllister in 1855. His occupation was a ship's joiner. They married on the 1st June in Anderston, Glasgow and on the 19th of June. John was born in 8, William Street, Dissington Dumbarton. Mary was twenty-two years old and John was her first child.

The 1861 census tells us that the family lived in Bonhill, Dumbarton and two more children had been born: a second son Colin in 1857 and a daughter Margaret in 1859. Archibald was still a joiner. We next find mention of them in 1867 when unfortunately Archibald dies of consumption when he is only forty-one. The family are now back on the Isle of Bute as he died at Kilchattan Butts, Kingarth in the south of the island.

These years must have been very traumatic for the family. The children moved from Dumbarton to the Isle and may have got to know their father's family for the first time. There were grandparents and an aunt Margaret and her family. This change may have been made more difficult by the illness of their father and his subsequent death. There was also another death in the family just a month later as aunt Margaret's husband James McFie-- one of a large clan in Kilchatten Bay area-- also died. James was seventy-six when he died. He was well known in the area as he had been the Kingarth Parish postman for twenty-two years. Did this have any influence on John's decision to become a postman?

We find that by 1871 the family had completely split up. Mother Mary and her daughter Margaret appeared to have left the island and lived back in Dumbartonshire. Colin aged thirteen was registered as a visitor of James Tannock, a steamboat agent, in Castle Street Rothsay. John was boarding and working as a farm servant at Kulevin Farm in Kingarth. The family do not appear to have lived together again

The following year John changed career and aged sixteen became a letter carrier in Kingarth, the job which he continued to do till he retired in 1901. The postal system he joined was expanding. For years the bulk of the post in its early years was generated by Mount Stuart but the population started to expand and by 1872 Kingarth had its own sub-post office and the postman was also responsible for emptying a wall box in Kilchattan. Post was taken up to Mount Stuart four times a week. In 1883 the first of the horse-posts began on Bute to Kingarth and Kilchattan. I wonder if John was a horse-post man? These continued till 1909 when they were replaced by a horse-bus or mail bus. John would also have seen the increase in post in later years as the island attracted more tourists who sent postcards to family and friends.

Life in the 1870s life changed for the Stuarts in Mount Stewart as there was a devastating fire in the castle in 1877. The main part of the building was destroyed leaving just the wings standing. These wings were retained within the new designs. Fortunately with a lot of help locally most of the furniture was saved. The task of rebuilding was taken on by the 3rd Marquess of Bute who might have looked upon the fire as a blessing as he had already commissioned a significant restructure. In 1877 the architect chosen was Robert Roland Anderson and he led a twenty-one year project which resulted in a magnificent gothic style palace. The first house in Scotland to have electricity, a lift, a heated swimming pool and central heating-- all of which are still working today. The marquess used a lot of Welsh workmen who had worked on Cardiff Castle. This must have made changes in the area with accommodation needed and the generation of more post perhaps between Wales and Scotland.

John continued as rural letter carrier and was still a single man. In 1881 he was living in 4 Cummings Buildings Kingarth. However in 1883 his life changed when he got married to Christina McRae in Glasgow. We can only speculate on how the couple met. Did John go to the mainland to visit his sister or was Christina a servant on the island? However, they married on 16th November 1883 in the Free Church, Union Street, Glasgow. It was witnessed by John's brother Colin and Christina's sister Maggie. Sadly by then both sets of parents were dead. John was now living in Kilchattan Bay, and the minister came from there to officiate at the ceremony. Back they came to live on Bute, but Christina was no stranger to island life as she was born in Bracadale on the Isle of Skye,

From the 1891 census we find them still in Kilchattan Bay but now they have three children. The first child-- a daughter, Flora McRae-- was born in 1886 and then a year later John's first son was born, named Archibald after John's father. Later in 1891 a second son was born and named Angus McRae. Now at last John has a family about him. The census also shows us that they have a domestic servant Maggie White living with them and a niece Mary Ann McFie, with a nurse as a visitor.

For the next ten years they lived in Kilchattan Bay. The children would have gone to school in Kingarth as a new school was built in the 1890s. The family were members of Kingarth Parish Church and John was a church officer. During this time he was also a sanitary inspector for the Parochial Board. A busy life for them which would have got harder for John as the years went by as by 1901 ill health caused him to retire from the Post Office. Also Flora was perhaps not such a strong girl. Now they had to live on John's pension of £35 and 16 shillings instead of the £74 and 1 shilling he was earning as a postman.

By 1901 John was probably getting worse with aches and pains connected with arthritis, but there was little that could be done for them at the time and little spare money for medication. They still

lived in Kilchattan Bay but moved to Rothsay before 1906. Flora's health was a continued concern and things came to a head in 1906 when at 6.35am on 6th March she died of tuberculosis at their house at 7 Tower Street Rothsay: she was twenty years old. John was perhaps too ill to register the death so her brother Archibald-- who was present at the death-- had to do it. This must have been a blow for the family only to be made worse when at 12.30pm on the 20th April John died. Again Archibald was the one to register the death. The cause of death was given as rheumatoid arthritis.

Christina is left to look after the two boys. In 1901 both had been put on the census as scholars but five years later Archibald probably had a job, but we do not know what. In fact we know very little about the boys. Christina was living in 3 Battery Place Rothsay in 1907 and 1908 but we don't know if her sons are living with her.

The next census in 1911 shows Christina living by herself in East Princes Street Rothsay. She is a housekeeper and lets rooms in the house which has four rooms with windows. We see also that she is a Gaelic speaker but we do not know if John was one too. The boys are not on any census on the island at all in 1911. It seems they moved to the mainland but with their names being quite common nothing definite can be found of them.

So again death split the Reid family. Christina lived the rest of her life on Bute. She died in 1933 at 8.30 on March 9th in 3, Union Street Rothsay. She was seventy-three years old. The cause of death was a secondary tumour of epithelioma. A friend Kenneth MacRae was present when she died and registered her death in Rothsay.

During this time the 'new' Mount Stuart Castle was completely rebuilt and is still the family home of the Crichton-Stuart. They continue to live in the castle although it is now looked after by the Mount Stuart Trust. Death in the family does not mean a total break up in the same way as it did for the Reids. Today the John 7th Marquess of Bute is head of the family and there is a son who will be the 8th Marquess already born, but we know nothing about anyone alive who might be a descendant of John Reid.

Fact Sheet: John Reid

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> John Reid
<i>Person ID:</i> SC1032
<i>Your name:</i> Jean Jones
<i>U3A group:</i> Stewartry
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
<p>Born on 19th June 1855 in Dunbartonshire in 81, William Street Dessington??</p> <p>Father Archibald Reid- Ships Joiner 24yrs old. birthplace Rothsay Bute</p> <p>Mother Mary Reid nee, McAlister – it was her 1st child. She was aged 22years. Birthplace Glasgow?</p> <p>They married in In Anderston Glasgow on 1st June 1855</p> <p>Archibald was the informant and he was present at birth</p>
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
<p>Father – ARCHIBALD REID – born in 1826 in Rothsay Bute, Baptised on 26th November 1826 in Rothsay, Bute. His parents were John Reid and Margaret McConochy</p> <p>1841- Archibald lived with parents John and Margaret Reid (John's grandparents) and Margaret. His sister who was born in Buteshire in 1859</p> <p>1851 – Archibald lived with parents . His father John was born in Kilpatrick Lanarkshire ,his occupation was a mason. Margaret is put as a mason's wife. They lived in 15 Bridge Street Rothsay.</p> <p>1861 – John and Margaret (grandfather) living in Bridge Street Rothsay – John aged 65 was a mason and Margaret aged 67 was born in Rothsay.</p> <p>Archibald died in 1867 in Kingarth</p> <p>Mother - MARY McALISTER– born in Glasgow in 1833? on census-or sometimes McAllester</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, later life)

COLIN REID born in Dumbarton in 1857

1861 – living with parents & siblings in McFarlanes Land Bonhill Dunbartonshire age 3

1871 – was registered as a visitor in the household of James Tannock at 7 Castle Street

Rothsay. James was a steamboat agent. Colin was aged 13-no occupation on form

1881 – he was a boarder with Henry Seath and family at 1, Lennox Land Port Glasgow Road Greenock . His occupation was boat building. He was 23, unmarried and birth place Dumbarton in 1858

I have not been able to find him on any census after this & cannot find a death for him.

MAGARET REID-born in Dumbarton in 1859

1861 -living with parents & siblings in McFarlanes Land Bonhill, DunbartonshireCannot find any definite information about Margaret after this as the family appears to split up after the father Archibald died in 1867. There is a possibility in 1871 of her still living with mother in Dunbartonshire. Have not looked at record.

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).

CHRISTINA MCRAE – born on 3rd May 1858 Bracadale, Isle of Skye in Carbost, Invernesshire. Parents Angus McRae and Flora McRae nee McRae . Angus worked in distillery and Flora was a ? maker – the birth was registered by John McRae, a brother of Christina who was present at birth.

Christina and John married on 16th November 1883 at the Free Church of Scotland Union Street, Glasgow after the Banns had been read. John Lived at 2 St. Blanes Terrace Kilchatton Bay Bute and was a Post Office Letter Carrier. Christine lived at 10 Gardenia Terrace. The name of the town is unclear-seems to end in Hill? She was a domestic servant. Parents Angus McRae and Flora McRae nee McRae both deceased. John's parents were Archibald Reid deceased (joiner) and Mary Reid nee, McAlister deceased. John and Archibald signed the form

Christina continued to live in Rothsay on 1911 census and on valuation rolls up to years 1931-32.

1907-9 – she lived as Mrs John Reid in 3 Battery Place. She died in Rothsay in 1933 – have not got record so do not know how she died. On valuation rolls she lived in 71, Victoria Street Rothsay as a tenant and her rates were £28.10d. Referred to as Mrs Christina Reid Widow

Christina died in 1933 in Rothsay. She was 73 years old

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)

FLORA McRAE REID –Oldest and only daughter, born 1886 in Kingarth

She was on the family census returns for 1891 and 1901.

1906 - Flora died on 6th March 1906 at 6.35pm at 7, Tower Street Rothsay. She died of general tuberculosis. Her brother Archibald registered the death. Father John Reid (retired postman) and mother Christina Reid nee McRae.

ARCHIBALD REID – born 1887 in Kingarth

He was on the family census for 1891 and 1901

I have checked records on FMP and Scotlands People it seems that Archibald left Bute. He is on no census record for 1911 in Bute and there are so many records for the rest of Scotland that it is impossible to find the correct ones. I can find no service record which could be his.

ANGUS McRAE – born 1891 in Kingarth

On the transcript of birth father John Reid and mother is Christina McRae Reid. He is on the family census for 1891 and 1901. He is not on the 1911 census for his mother and not on his mother's census return

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

1861 – recorded living with parents in Dunbartonshire aged 5

1871 – Is living in Kulevin Farm Kingarth Buteshire. He is a Farm Servant for James Duncan

1881 – living in 4 Cummings Building Kingarth. He is a rural letter carrier-unmarried

1891 - Now married he is living in Kilchattan Bay South, St. Blanes Terrace Kingarth. He is a rural letter Carrier.

1901 - He is living in 4, St. Blanes Terrace Kingarth and is post office pensioner

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

1861 – Father Archibold was a joiner. He was also a joiner on the 1851 census which was before John was born.

1871 - Head of house was James Duncan – he was a farmer of 168 acres employing 6 Labourers and 1 boy. He was married with one daughter. John was one of his employees

1881 - John was lived alone and was unmarried

1891 -

- John head of house
- Wife and three children living there – no occupations
- Mary Ann McFie – relationship to John a visitor-aged 54 unmarried and born in Rothsay. Occupation: Nurse
- Maggie White – relationship to John a servant aged 15 unmarried and born in Rothsay, Occupation Domestic servant.

1901 – John Head of house

Wife and 3 children living with him. Christina has no occupation and the children are all scholars.

1911 – Christina continued to live in Bute. In 1911 she lived in Rothsay at 18 East Princes Street. She was by herself and was a housekeeper, but she did house letting. The house had 4 rooms with windows. She was aged 48 and spoke English and Gaelic

Part Four: Anything Else/Later Life

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

John appears on various directories for Kingarth and we find in 1890 he is a church officer at Kingarth Parish Church and also is the sanitary inspector for Kingarth Parochial board. In 1901-5 he lived in Colbeck Place no.4. In Kingarth. After this he moved to 7, Tower Street where he died, again in Kingarth

Margaret Reid – Aunt to John Reid.

- Margaret was John's father Archibald's sister.
- She was born in 1824 in Rothsay and on 13th June 1848 she married James McFie .
- 1851 census tells us that James was a letter carrier.
- James was born in Kingarth and the McFies appear to be the dominant family in that area of Kilchatton Bay.
- James died on June 1867 – his birth is unclear either 1795 or 1802. On the family tombstone (see below) he is said to have been a letter carrier for 22 years.
- They had 6 children all born in Kingarth.
- The oldest Archibald married Ann Mclea and one of their children Mary Ann McFie was on the 1891 census of John and Christina as a visitor.
- On 1891 and 1901 Margaret is living with son Alexander and she is an Annuitant of the Post Office

Family tombstone

Erected by Alexander McFie a tenant of Kerrymenoch Stewart died age 98 in 1833. This was erected in Kingarth Old Parish Churchyard Kingarth:

In memory of wife Margaret Stewart died 4.3.1801 age 46

son Robert late ship master died 3.12.1824 age 30

son James for 22yrs. Letter Carrier for the parish of Kingarth died 26.7.1867 Age 76 (his wife Margaret Reid died 26.8.1908 age 86)

son Alexander 23.4.1931 (his wife Jane Currie 23.12.1887)

Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

Archibald (father) birth certificate from Scotlands People

https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=R_685144925

1841 census- Archibald (Father) & John (Grandfather) Census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1841%2F0016000550P>

1851 census- Archibald (Father) & John (Grandfather) Census

FMP<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1851%2F0019118496>

1861 Census Archibald (Father) & family Census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1861%2F0022976933>

1871 Census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1871%2F0023068348>

1881 Census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1881%2F0029426834>

1891 Census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1891%2F0035265748>

1901 Census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1901%2F0035951440>

1911 Census – Christina Reid-wife – ScotlandsPeople

Reid, Christina Census 558/15/7 Page 7 of 15

Death – Flora (Daughter) certificate from ScotlandsPeople.

1906 Reid, Flora McCrae Death Certificate (1906): 558/24

Marriage-John (Postman) certificate from ScotlandsPeople

1881 Reid, John Statutory Registers Marriage (1881): 664/7 406

1871 census – Colin (brother) census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1871%2F0023076965>

1881 Census – Colin (brother) census

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1881%2F0029517944>

Valuation Rolls – Christina (Wife) – Scotlands People – REID, Christina VR009300022-/467

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Different Scottish PO Directories on FMP

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=S2%2FUS%2FMCV%2FBUTECOUNTYDIRECT188990ROT%2F0053&parentid=S2%2FUS%2FMCV%2FBUTECOUNTYDIRECT188990ROT%2F0053>

1851 census Margaret McFie (Aunt) & family

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1851%2F0019355648>

1881 census Margaret McFie & children

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1881%2F0029426097>

Death-Christina Reid – ScotlandsPeople Statutory Death Registers (1933): 558/37 Rothsay