

*WILLIAM RUSSELL
BY RENA MITCHELL*

William Russell was born into a working family in the village of Douglas, Lanarkshire. Douglas is a historic small town with an ancient church, St Bride's, where William and many of his relatives were buried, around fourteen miles from the town of Lanark. His parents were both hand loom cotton weavers in 1841, probably working from their own home in one of the hundreds of weavers' cottages in Lanarkshire at that time. When power loom weaving took over and moved from a cottage industry to factories, many cottage weavers had to find other employment. A place as small as Douglas would probably not support a large power loom enterprise so by 1851 William's father had branched into spirit dealing and running an inn, the Black Bull, in Douglas. It is likely that Alexander Russell was a tenant innkeeper.

William was an apprentice weaver aged thirteen in 1851 and by 1861 three of his brothers had taken up that trade. However William Russell, himself, had moved into his maternal grandparents home in Douglas and had joined the Post Office as a foot postman, having changed occupation in 1858, aged about twenty years. His grandfather was a cooper, or barrel maker. Both he and his wife were elderly and it is possible that William moved in to their cottage as a support to them.

Almost all of William's life events took place in Douglas, where he worked as a rural letter carrier for thirty-five years. I believe both his grandparents died in the 1860s. As far as I know his uncles continued as cotton weavers for many years. However his father, Alexander Russell branched out and is recorded as a mail contractor as well as an innkeeper in 1861. By 1871 his father had moved from the Black Bull in to Curries Close in Douglas and was a full time Mail contractor. Possibly this involved carrying mail to and from either Lanark, the chief town in the area, or to and from one of the new stations on the rail lines in the area. Douglas itself didn't have a station but there were halts at Douglas West, nearby and at other places in the area. There was a large railway complex at Carstairs Junction, around five miles from Lanark. In 1881 his father is listed as a late mail gig driver which suggests they had at least one horse and cart for transporting the mail sacks, indeed two of his lodgers are recorded as being carters. There were numerous smaller villages and hamlets in the Douglas area which would have required mail transport, either by foot postmen or by cart.

William, however, seems to have stuck with the post of letter carrier for the remainder of his working life.

William married Margaret Law of Lesmahagow parish in 1862 and together they had 8 children, while he continued to work for the PO. She was born in Midlothian but her family must have moved to Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire prior to 1862. Sadly in 1882 the youngest of those children, Margaret was born only four days before his wife died and one day before the death of her oldest sibling Alexander, aged only nineteen years. This terrible month must

have taken a toll on William Russell but he continued to work as a post runner through it, and through the deaths in 1892 and 1893 of his parents, and to raise his children. Only one son, John Law Russell had left home before his mother's death. He moved to Avondale parish, Lanarkshire and worked as a sandpits labourer.

In later years two of William's daughters, Jane and Agnes took turns acting as his housekeeper, still in Douglas, till his death in 1904. Jane married James Carmichael of Glasgow between 1891 and 1901 and Barbara married William Fulton of Kilmarnock, Ayrshire in 1896. Agnes did not marry Thomas Wharrie till 1907 and moved to the Muirkirk, Ayrshire area.

One son, James Russell who left home in the 1880s, had returned by 1901 and is recorded as living with his father that year, a Railway Clerk. Another son, William, was by that year a salesman in the local cooperative store in Douglas.

Fact Sheet: William Russell

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> William Russell
<i>Person ID:</i> SC1034
<i>Your name:</i> Rena Mitchell
<i>U3A group:</i> Scotland
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
<p>William Russell was born/ baptised on 27th August 1837 in Douglas, Lanarkshire. Grave record says birth 13th August. His birth or baptism was recorded in Church of Scotland records in Douglas parish.</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>His parents were Alexander Russell and Barbara Watson. They married in 1835.</p> <p>Alexander Russell (father) Father; Alexander Russell was born in Douglas, Scotland in 1815. (record not found) 1841 census listed as Alexander Russel age 25, born Lanarkshire, at Townhead, Douglas, Lanarkshire, cotton handloom weaver; with wife Barbara Russel age 25 born Lanarkshire, cotton handloom weaver; son William Russel age 3 born Lanarkshire; son Ninian Russell age 1 born Lanarkshire' 1851 census Alexander Russell age 36 Spirit dealer and Innkeeper living in the Black bull Inn , Main Street, Douglas; wife Barbary Russell age 34, no occupation; son William Russell age 13, apprentice weaver; son Ninian age 10, scholar; son Alexander age 7 born Douglas, Lanarkshire; son Adam Russell age 6 months, born Douglas Lanarkshire; and Isabella Clarkson age 26, born Douglas Lanarkshire, house servant. 1861 census Alexander Russell age 45 listed as Innkeeper and Mail contractor, still living at Black Bull Inn (5 rooms); wife Barbara age 44, no occupation; son James age 25, cotton weaver; son Ninian age 20, cotton weaver; son Alexander age 18, cotton weaver; son Adam age 10, scholar 1861 census his son William Russell foot postman age 24 is living with his maternal grandparents, (James Watson, cooper, b 1791 in Douglas and Margaret Watson, b. 1790 in Douglas,) at Townhead, Douglas, Lanarkshire, in 3 room cottage. 1871 census Alex age 56 listed as mail contractor in Currie's Close, Douglas with wife Barbara age 55. (1 room) and William MacLeod, lodger, Ag Labourer in other room. 1881 census Alexander Russell listed at Curries Close, Douglas age 63, late Mail gig Driver; with wife Barbara age 64; lodger James Demsey age 58, born Douglas, mason's labourer; lodger Andrew Hamilton age 48, born Dalsersf LKS, carter; Lodger William Russell age 51 born Crawford, LKS, carter. Alexander Russell died in Douglas a year later than his wife on 19th August 1893 aged 78 years.</p>

Barbara Russell (nee Watson) Mother.

Mother: Barbara Watson was born in Douglas, Scotland in 1817.

Her father James Watson, cooper, was born 1791 in Douglas Lanarkshire.

Her Mother Margaret was born in 1790 in Douglas, Lanarkshire.

Censuses 1841 to 1881 see husband's records above.

Barbara Russell died 2nd July 1892 aged 77 years in Douglas

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)

Siblings listed in censuses

Brother James Russell born Douglas in 1836, listed as cotton weaver in 1861.

In 1851 living with maternal grandparents at Weavers Yards, Douglas, apprentice weaver age 14

Brother Ninian Russell, born Douglas, Lanarkshire in 1841, 1851 listed as scholar, 1861 listed as Cotton Weaver (and wrongly transcribed as Hernan Russell.)

Brother Alexander Russell, born Douglas, Lanarkshire in 1844, 1851 listed as scholar. 1861 age 18 and a cotton weaver

Brother Adam Russell, born Douglas, Lanarkshire in 1851, 1861 listed as scholar aged 10

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). **Note:** *You can also use this space to record any details about people your pensioner boarded with.*

William Russell married **Margaret Law** in 1862 in Lesmahagow parish Lanarkshire.

William died in 1905. His death was registered by his oldest surviving son John L Russell who was living at Beerbriggs Farm Avondale (Strathaven) LKS

1871 and 1881 census see records of wife, below

1891 census at Main Street Douglas William Russell, widower age 53 Post runner; with daughter Jane Russell age 26, housekeeper, daughter Agnes Russell age 16, no occupation, son William Russell age 14, scholar; daughter Margaret. Born Douglas, age 8, scholar.

1901 census at Doctor's Close, Douglas, William Russell, age 63, retired postman; with son James Russell, age 28, railway clerk; daughter Agnes, age 26,, housekeeper; son William Russell age 24, cooperative salesman; daughter Margaret Russell age 18, no occupation.

1904 died Douglas Lanarkshire on 30 June 1905 at Comister Cottage, Douglas, age 66 of cardiac disease and senile debility. Informant was son John Russell, living at Beerbriggs Farm Strathaven.

Margaret Law (wife)

In 1881 census she is listed as age 39, born in Carrington, Midlothian, Scotland.

Grave record says she was born 1841 with age 40/41 at death.

She died 29th December 1882 in Douglas. Her daughter Margaret Law Russell (1882-1958) was born 4 days earlier and their son Alexander Russell (1863-1882) also died in Douglas on 26th December 1882

1871 census at Main Street Douglas age 29, born Carrington Midlothian, no occupation with husband **William Russell** age 33, **Post Messenger**; son Alexander Russell age 8, born 1863 Douglas LKS, scholar; daughter Jean Russell age 6, born 1865 Douglas LKS, scholar; son John Russell, age 3 born 1868 Douglas LKS; daughter Barbara Russell, age 1 born 1870 Douglas LKS in one room cottage.

1881 census at Main Street Douglas LKS age 39, born Carrington Edinburgh, no occupation; with Husband **William Russell** age 43, **Rural Letter Carrier**; son Alexander Russell, age 18, no occupation; daughter Barbara Russell age 11, scholar; son James Russell age 8 born Douglas LKS, scholar; daughter Agnes Russell age 6, born Douglas LKS, scholar; son William Russell age 4 born Douglas LKS.

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)

Son Alexander Russell born 28 January 1863 in Douglas, 1871 listed as scholar age 8; 1881 age 18 with family, no occupation, died 25th December 1882 age 19 years.

Daughter Jane Paterson Russell born in 25 December 1864? in Douglas, Lanarkshire, 1871 listed as Jean age 6. scholar. listed as house keeper (for father) in 1891.

Married James Carmichael, Died Glasgow 1945 aged 80

son John Law Russell, born 22 May 1867 in Douglas. 1871 with parents age 3; 1881 not listed with family; **1901** at Beerbriggs Farm, Avondale LKS, (4 rooms) age 33, Sandpits Labourer, with wife Ellen and daughter Cary age 4.

Married Helen Pate and died 21 Feb 1942, buried in Strathaven cemetery.

daughter Barbara Watson Russell born 1870 Douglas, Lanarkshire. 1871 with parents age 1; 1881 Listed as age 11, scholar. Barbara married William Fulton of Kilmarnock in Douglas in 1896 age 26.

son James Russell born 1873 in Douglas, Lanarkshire, listed as age 8, scholar in 1881: 1891 not found. Railway clerk in 1901 with father

daughter Agnes Russell born 15 January 1875 in Douglas, Lanarkshire listed as age 6, scholar in 1881, father's housekeeper in 1901. Married Thomas Wharrie in 1907, died in 1952 in Muirkirk, Ayrshire age 77.

son William Russell born 1877 in Douglas Lanarkshire. 1881 with parents age 4; Listed as age 14 scholar in 1891, cooperative salesman in 1901 with father

daughter Margaret Law Russell born 22 December 1882 in Douglas, Lanarkshire, listed as age 11, scholar in 1891, still with father in 1901. Margaret died 14th May 1958 in Glasgow age 75. Buried Douglas, St Bride's cemetery.

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: Listed as child age 3

1851: Listed as apprentice weaver age 13, living with parents & siblings

1858: started work as a letter carrier

1861: Listed as foot postman age 24 , living with maternal grandparents in Douglas

1871: Listed as Post messenger 34, living with own family Main Street, Douglas

1881: Listed as rural letter carrier age 43, Main Street Douglas

1891: Listed as post runner age 53, widower, Main Street Douglas

1901: Listed as retired Postman age 63, Doctor's Close, Main Street Douglas

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

1841: father Alexander Russel age 25 listed as Cotton Handloom Weaver.

1841: mother Barbara Russel age 25 listed as Cotton Handloom Weaver

1851 father Alexander Russell age 36 listed as spirit dealer and innkeeper of Black Bull Inn Douglas

1851 Isabella Clarkson age 26 b Douglas listed as house servant

1861: Grandfather James Watson age 75 b 1786 in Douglas, Lanarkshire listed as Cooper.

1871 Father Alexander Russell age 56 listed as Mail contractor.

1881: Father Alexander Russell age 63 listed as Late Mail Gig Driver (separate house)

1881: son Alexander age 18 no occupation listed

1891: daughter Jane Russell age 26 listed as Housekeeper.

1891: daughter Agness Russell age 16, no occupation listed

1901: son James Russell listed as railway clerk age 28

1901: daughter Agnes Russell listed as housekeeper age 26

1901: son William Russell listed as cooperative salesman age 24.

1901: daughter Margaret age 18 no occupation listed

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?

From Scottish Monumental Inscriptions via FindMyPast

Monumental Inscription, St Bride's Churchyard, Douglas Lanarkshire: [fallen, face up]

Erected by William Russell in memory of his wife Margaret Law who died 29th Dec 1882 aged 39 years;

also their son Alexander who died 25th Dec 1882 aged 19 years;

also Barbara Watson his mother who died 2nd July 1892 aged 77 years;

also Alexander Russell his father who died 19th August 1893 aged 78 years;

the said William Russell died 30th June 1904 aged 66 years;

also Margaret Law youngest daughter of the said William Russell died 15th May 1958 aged 75 years.

I have downloaded 2 valuation roll entries from 1885 and 1895 for William Russell, tenant in Douglas, Lanarkshire.

- In 1885 William Russell, letter carrier, rented a house at 38 Main Street Douglas for £3 per annum from William Harkness, Joiner, Main Street, Douglas.
- In 1895 William Russell Postman, rented a house in Main Street Douglas from John Brown, Farmer, Carnwath, for £4.15.00 per annum.

Part Five: Your Sources

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

William Russell

1838 Birth record for William Russell NRS: Parish birth record;1837;
Douglas;LKS;641/30/165/1837

1841 Census for William Russell Parish: *Douglas*; ED: 1; Page: 8; Line: 1580; Year: 1841

1851 Census for William Russell Parish: *Douglas*; ED: 2; Page: 27; Line: 16;
Roll: *CSSCT1851_152*; Year: 1851

1861 Census for William Russell Parish: *Douglas*; ED: 4; Page: 9; Line: 5; Roll: *CSSCT1861_95*

1861 Marriage for William Russell NRS Statutory Records; Marriage; LKS Lesmahagow; 1862
649/57

1871 Census for William Russell Parish: *Douglas*; ED: 4; Page: 21; Line: 1;
Roll: *CSSCT1871_122*

1881 Census for William Russell Parish: *Douglas*; ED: 5; Page: 7; Line: 5; Roll: *cssct1881_213*
Source :FHL Film 0203628 GRO Ref Volume 641 EnumDist 5 Page 7

1885 Valuation roll for William Russell

1891 Census for William Russell Parish: *Douglas*; ED: 6; Page: 11; Line: 9;
Roll: *CSSCT1891_237*

1895 Valuation roll for William Russell

1901 census For William Russell Parish: *Douglas*; ED: 6; Page: 16; Line: 1;
Roll: *CSSCT1901_262*

1904 Death of William Russell NRS Statutory deaths 1904/ Douglas parish; LKS; 641/ 231864

Family sources

1861 census for father Alexander Russel NROS 1861 census Douglas LKS 641/4/21

1871 census for father Alexander Russell NROS 1871 census Douglas LKS 641/4/13

1881 census for father Alexander Russell NROS 1881 census Douglas LKS :FHL Film 0203628
GRO Ref Volume 641 EnumDist 4 Page 7

1896 marriage for daughter Barbara Russell NROS 1806 marriages Douglas LKS 641/6

1901 census for son John L Russell NROS 1901 census Avondale LKS 621/8/7