

Fraser Family History

On an Autumn evening in 1980, my father Graham Fraser said goodbye to his parents in their tiny rented council home in Southway, an estate on the northern edge of the Naval and port city of Plymouth on England's South West coast. Graham walked to the front door, ready to begin the 20-mile journey home from work in the city to his family in rural South Devon. His father, Ninian, who was 80, had been ill and Graham had been trying to visit regularly. That night, on a whim, my father turned and walked back to his father, sitting in his familiar, tobacco-burned armchair close to the TV. The volume, as usual, was blaring to compensate for Ninian's encroaching deafness, which he blamed on his service in the confined spaces of Royal Navy warships in World War One.

For the first time in his life, Graham kissed his father. Graham remembers, with a catch in his throat: "He looked up at me with absolute *astonishment*, as if to say 'what on Earth did you do that for?'"

It was the last time Graham saw his father. Later that evening Ninian was taken into hospital, where his long life drew to its close, alone.

What made Ninian Fraser? Nobody, certainly not his children, had ever really known.

Five years ago I finally began trying to discover more of the history of my father's family, to satisfy a lifetime's curiosity for both of us.

Graham knew little of Ninian's Scottish ancestry. Graham knew his grandmother died when his father was a baby; he had been told his grandfather died in a quarry accident. He knew Ninian had a brother, possibly lost in the First World War. But what became of Ninian after his mother's death, and after his father's presumed death at some subsequent point, we had never known. Nor had we ever known anything of Ninian's father or brother. Ninian never spoke much about his family or his childhood, so the years between his birth in 1899 and his enlistment in the Royal Navy in 1915 had always been a mystery.

I set out to answer these questions:

- Who was Ninian's father, what was his ancestry and what became of him?
- Who was Ninian's brother and what happened to him?
- And what became of Ninian between 1899 and 1915?

Trying to answer these questions uncovered a very remarkable story.

Mysteries remain, but some extraordinary discoveries have helped put back together the story of a family that fell apart amid great hardship and terrible tragedy.

In places, this history is extremely upsetting; and for some readers it has contained evidence that has been unsettling, and has changed their own stories. Others yet to read it may be made unhappy by its contents. I'm genuinely sorry about this.

But I want to pass it on because this is *real* history, about the people often overlooked by the sort of history that tells us of kings and generals, heroes and villains. And I want to record this story because it reclaims members of my family who have been lost for decades.

In passing this on, I dearly hope it may jog some deep-seated long-lost memory from any members of the Fraser family, or associated families, who see it – and if anybody has any memories, pictures or documents they feel may help, I would *really* love to see them.

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A note on sources: Almost all of this research has been carried out on line, a lot of it through the Scotland's People website (www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk) which has digitised Scottish birth, marriage, death and census records. Sources for the World War One material included the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org) and the Scottish National War Memorial (www.snmw.org), as well as regimental museums of the West Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), the Black Watch and the Gordon Highlanders. Material from America was sourced through the pay site www.ancestry.co.uk. Much of the information from newspapers was sourced through the pay site www.findmypast.co.uk Some birth, marriage

and death records have been cross-checked through the free site www.freebmd.org Dundee City Council's Local History Centre (www.dundee.gov.uk) has been generous with help. And there have been many kindnesses from other researchers, specifically family members. Other sources are given in the text. Where ages seem confusing, I have been told not to worry too much as people of the era in question often lied about, or often simply didn't know, their age. This document can be downloaded as a PDF from my website, www.fraserwords.co.uk

1: Introduction



Ninian Fraser with grandson Stuart, in 1965

Where to start? With a birth.

Ninian Fraser was born at seven in the morning of October 20th 1899, at 26 Horsewater Wynd, Dundee. He was the third child of James and Margaret, known as Maggie, Fraser. But he was never to know his mother. His life began in tragedy, and that tragedy is clearly visible on his birth registration:

1899 FRASER, NENIN (Statutory Births 282/02 0706)

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1899. BIRTHS in the District of St Mary in the Burgh of Dunfermline

No.	Name and Surname	When and Where Born.	Sex.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother. Date and Place of Marriage.	Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if one of the houses in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
700	Nenin Fraser	1899, October Dunfermline 7 th 0 th a.m.	M.	James Fraser Fute Mill Worker Margaret Fraser M. S. Burns Deceased 1895, January 1 st , Dunfermline.	James Fraser Father	1899, October 31 st Dunfermline M. Meech Registrar.
	William Duncan	1899, October Dunfermline 4 th 11 th a.m.	M.	William Duncan Tramway Car Conductor Elizabeth Duncan M. S. Scott 1896 December 31 st Leith.	William Duncan Father Mum	1899, October 31 st Dunfermline M. Meech Registrar.
	Alice Elizabeth Robertson	1899, October Dunfermline 2 nd 0 th p.m.	F.	James Robertson Robertson Elizabeth Robertson M. S. Luthbert 1899 June 2 nd Dunfermline.	James Robertson Father Mum	1899, October 31 st Dunfermline M. Meech Registrar.

M. Meech Registrar.

“Margaret Fraser.... Deceased”: Eleven days after Ninian’s birth, his mother was dead.

2: Dundee, 1899

Eleven days after Ninian was born, his mother Margaret, or Maggie, died of puerperal fever. James Fraser registered the birth of his son and the death of his wife on the same day, October 31st 1899.

1899 FRASER, MARGARET (Statutory Deaths 282/02 0612)

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DEATHS in the District of St. Mary in the Burgh of Dundee

No.	Name and Surname Sex and Profession, and whether Single, Married, or Widowed.	When and Where Died.	Sex.	Age.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Cause of Death, Duration of Disease, and Medical Attendants by whom certified.	Signature & Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Death occurred.	When and where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
610	Joseph Paul	1899, October	M	29 years	John Fraser Sailor Second	Acute Pneumonia 3 months	Theresa Fraser Widow	1899, October 30 th Dundee
	Margaret Jute Mill Worker married to Robert Hunter	10 th 10 th A.M. Royal Infirmary Dundee Dr. J. Taylor	F		Margaret Fraser M. S. Griffin Second	As cert. by Dr. G. Fraser M. D.	Dr Taylor & Lane	Mr Meek Registrar.
611	Margaret Douglas Needles Miller	1899, October	F	16 years	David Smith Kellie Battman	Apoplexy 2 or 3 hrs	David Kellie Father	1899, October 30 th Dundee
	Single	15 th P.M. 153 Loches Road Dundee			James Kellie M. S. Gray	As cert. by Robert Smith M. D.		Mr Meek Registrar.
612	Margaret Fraser	1899, October	F	26 years	Thomas Burns Emb. mnr	Puerperal fever 7 days	James Fraser Midwife	1899, October 31 st Dundee
	married to James Fraser Jute mill worker	5 th 01 st A.M. St. Ann's Hospital Dundee			Mary Ann Sater Mrs M. S. White	As cert. by A. Macleod L. R. C. P. S.		Mr Meek Registrar.

Mr Meek Registrar.

Puerperal fever was also known as childbirth fever, and was a serious form of septicaemia contracted after childbirth because of poor hygiene. It was by far the most common cause of death among women in childbirth, before increased awareness of hygiene and the availability of antibiotics brought the condition under control in the 20th century. Margaret had been ill for seven days; she would have suffered acute abdominal pain, fever of probably more than 100 degrees and increasing debility. Worst of all, it seems likely she would have known she was dying.

We can only imagine the gravity of the tragedy. James Fraser had lost his wife, baby Ninian would never know his mother, and two other small children, James (four) and Margaret (two), were left motherless.

Life was to work out very differently for those three Fraser children; their fates would lead them to three countries and two continents. One died on the Western Front aged just 22. The others would lead long lives but never speak much about their childhoods or each other. Indeed, it became as if they had never known they *had* each other.

We do not know the date of Maggie Fraser's funeral, nor who attended. It was customary that only men went to funerals in Scotland; Maggie's own father was long dead, so perhaps the mourners were led by her husband, his father and brothers. According to Dundee City Council's burial records, she was buried in an unmarked grave in the Common Ground – or poor ground – of Dundee's Balgay Cemetery. In other words, she was laid to rest in a pauper's grave.

Her mother, her sisters and her parents-in-law all have known graves (though unadorned with headstones) in Balgay. Why not Margaret? You will find very little conjecture in this document, but one mother's suggestion, from my own partner, seems worth making about Maggie Fraser, because she has left virtually no evidential imprint on history at all: "Perhaps, knowing she was dying, she insisted the family didn't spend money on a grave and kept what little they had for the children."

In 2012, a memorial stone and plaque were unveiled in Balgay Cemetery's Common Ground, commemorating 10,000 people buried there in unmarked graves between 1870 and 1902, Margaret Fraser among them. The plaque reads 'Gone but not forgotten'.



Memorial to those buried in the Common Ground, Balgay Cemetery, Dundee.

James and Maggie were both workers in Dundee's massive jute industry, living in crowded tenements (known as 'pletties') in the city's streets and 'wynds' (Horsewater Wynd is still there today, though its old buildings are long demolished). Jute is one of the most versatile natural fibres known to man.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries jute was indispensable. Its uses included sacking, ropes, boot linings, aprons, carpets, tents, roofing felts, satchels, linoleum backing, tarpaulins, sand bags, meat wrappers, sailcloth, scrim, tapestries, oven cloths, horse covers, cattle bedding, electric cable, even parachutes. Jute's appeal lay in its strength, low cost, durability and versatility.

Source: Verdant Works, Dundee, a preserved jute mill now run as a museum to the industry. It's very near Horsewater Wynd.

Dundee grew mighty on the basis of the industry, and workers crowded into the city to run the mills. Time and again in this story you'll find references to the same crowded streets – Blackness Road, Lyons Close, Brook Street, Littlejohn Street, Scouringburn, Hunter Street.

The jute factories were deafeningly noisy and the atmosphere was full of tiny particles of jute fibre, or 'stour', which filled workers' noses, mouths and lungs. Women and children were the main groups employed in the factories as they could be paid less than men and their smaller bodies and hands could move more easily amidst the dangerous spinning and weaving machines.

Jute production made vast fortunes for "jute barons", such as the Cairds and the Baxters, who lived in splendid villas. Their lives were markedly different from those of the mill workers. Cramped and unsanitary housing, low wages and periods of unemployment meant that life was hard and often short for most mill workers and their families.

Verdant Works, Dundee



Entrance to Verdant Works



Exhibit in Verdant Works

James and his wife married at James's home, 7 Lyons Close, on New Year's Day, 1895 (Maggie lived nearby at 14 Lyons Close). They lived in a town known for its hardships, the sort of hardships that directly contributed to Maggie's death.

At the turn of the last century, Dundee was an industrial city with few pretensions – a hard town. According to the 1901 Census, its crowded streets were home to more than 163,000 people. Poverty and its effects were notable, even by the standards of the day. In 1901, the Registrar General noted that, of the Scottish cities... 'the highest death rates among children in

their second year were 8.13 per cent in Dundee'... and... 'the mortality of infants under 12 months ranged from 13.93 per cent in Paisley... to 21.28 in Dundee.' The Dundee Year Book of 1903 illustrated the cycle of privation and disease. Poor, ill-ventilated rooms... 'with the walls and the ceiling running with moisture or crumbling with decay'... were commonplace in the tenements, where often there were absolutely no sanitary arrangements, or an outdoor convenience serving eight or ten families.

Dundee was an industrial town and the Edwardian period was one of harsh experiences and privation for most of its citizens. Even of those with work as textile operatives and labourers it was said that 'physical deterioration is a necessity of their economic circumstances' and their diet was poor to the extent that 'it compares unfavourably with that of agricultural labourers in England and with that of pauper and criminal inmates of public institutions'. For some, the distant war in South Africa was as much a prospect for square meals as for travel and adventure. Even so, the fitness of potential recruits continued to be a problem.

This state of affairs prompted a Royal Commission of Enquiry, that reported in 1904. In his evidence, Sir Archibald Hunter, who then commanded the Forces in Scotland, stated that they got their 'worst class of recruit, physically, from Dundee' and even people living in the satanic mills of Warrington, Lancashire.... 'working under the same conditions of life exactly as the people that live in Dundee, were of nothing like the inferior quality that these Dundee boys are.'

Among those recruits was Ninian Fraser's namesake uncle, Ninian. As we shall see later, he had turned to petty crime as a young boy, but, in 1897, enlisted in a Black Watch militia battalion. On his papers, he is described as just 5ft 3ins tall.

Part of the reason for this was diet even though, by comparison with previous decades, conditions had improved and food prices were falling. In the 25 years to 1903... 'shop quality bread has fallen from 6½d to 5d (equivalent to £1.19 / \$2.01 in 2005 prices according to the National Archives Currency

Converter) and Danish butter from 1/6 to 1/2 (£3.30 / \$5.56) ... Oatmeal has fallen from 12½d to 10d (£2.38 / \$4.01), boiling beef from 10d or 11d to 7d or 8d (£1.90 / \$3.20)... Australian corned beef in 2lb tins from 1/3 to 10½d... The cheapest tea in 1879 was sold at 2/- to 2/4 per pound, now it is advertised at 1/2 and 1/4 (£3.80 / \$6.40).’ Quite how much difference this made for the very poorest people is not clear. Defective teeth – the second most common cause of rejection for the army – were ascribed to ‘a combination of hot strong tea and soft bread... the most frequent diet taken by the working classes in Dundee’.

Continued concern about the physical condition of the poorest occasioned a report by the Dundee Social Union in 1905. Following a medical inspection of children in a number of local schools, it was concluded that... ‘taken as a whole, the state of nutrition of the boys was bad. At Brown Street they presented a poor, underfed appearance, probably from improper as well as insufficient food’. The common fare of tea, bread and margarine was described as not being... ‘a diet on which bone and muscle can be built up, to say nothing of nerve tissue’. By comparison with national standards, girls as well as boys were generally below average in their height and weight at almost all ages.

Dundee was not... ‘a city of revelry by night. On ordinary evenings the streets are almost deserted shortly after nine and, by midnight, but for the sound of horse-drawn sweepers and a rare belated cab, it might be the city of the dead... Saturday night, however, is an exception. Then the streets are crowded and rough until after eleven o’clock and the echoes of drunken brawls may be heard in the slums far into Sunday morning’.

Source: Dundee City Council Local History Centre

The general average wage for jute in 1886 was £26 (£1,557 / \$2,623) per worker per year, and £25 for linen, both well below the £36 (£2,156 / \$3,633) for cotton. Sack-sewers were paid at the rate of tuppence-halfpenny (less than 75p / \$1.26) per sack, so had to sew all their waking hours to gain 5s. (£14.97 / \$25.23) or so a week and half-timers (ie children aged 10-14

working half-time in the mill, half time in the mill school) earned between 2s. and 3s. 7d. (£10.73 / \$18.08) a week. Adult wage rates were held down as much as possible: if the wife worked also, a family could just keep out of poverty, and a half-timer bringing in a further 3s. could mean the difference between rent-paying and sustenance, or debt and starvation.

Not infrequently were there admissions to the Infirmary because of 'cold and starvation', 'want of food', or 'debility'. Unsurprisingly, trafficking in birth certificates was common, to enable a child to leave school and be fully employed.

Deterioration of diet had been commented upon since mid-century. Slaughterhouse figures suggested that the average Dundonian ate no meat at all. Tea, bread and sugar were not additions to the diet, but tended to replace oatmeal, bone broth and potatoes because they were more rapidly and easily prepared.

Quick meals became important as the number of women at work increased, and the constant sub-division of houses resulted in many families living in rooms without any kind of cooking facilities, or even knowledge about cookery.

Small wonder that the workforce was characterized by low stature and lack of robustness... The Factory Report for 1899 remarked upon the stunted and emaciated condition of the Dundee half-timers, as well as many of the adult workers; Dundee boys aged 11 to 12 were on average four-and-a-half inches shorter than country boys of the same age and a stone lighter. With poor muscular strength, many could do only light work, and even this could prove too exhausting. Some of the bruising from huge jute bales recorded in the Infirmary registers was probably a consequence of this.

There was considerable recourse to spirits, usually whisky, as a social escape. Even though the strength of Dundee women sought to hold the town's social fabric together, much drunkenness was observed in men, women and young

girls, and subsequent physical abuse; illegitimacy rates were considerable, and the Medical Officer of Health's notes on destitute burials nearly always included references to neonates or infants dumped on stairs, in ashpits, at the police-station, or in the harbour.

Weavers generally did far better than spinners, being skilled and hence well-remunerated, so they could afford reasonably good dwellings. Low wages meant difficulty in affording rent, so the town was full of unoccupied houses, despite the severe overcrowding in some areas; in 1880, there were nearly 4,000 un-let houses in Dundee. Building new houses was, in any case, generally unprofitable for the speculator unless they were middle-class villas, and those employers who attempted it for their workers soon gave it up as hopeless. If they did build, it was upwards i.e. a three- or four-storey tenement but with the proprietor's profits in mind rather than the sanitary health of the tenants. Piped water was available only as far as the stair heads, not inside the homes, so there were no facilities for washing water nor flush water-closets; a pail behind the door had to suffice, emptied into the euphemistically termed ashpit, which stank appallingly.

Lax habits resulted in dirty floors, stairs and beds, and children with filthy clothes. If a tenant could afford a two- rather than one-roomed dwelling, he would most likely sub-let the second room for its rental; this would only add to the overcrowding. Small wonder that infant mortality and the incidence of gastro-intestinal and contagious disease was so high.

Source: *The Health of Dundee Jute Workers*, by Dr Anne Hargreaves; paper presented to the Scottish Society of Medicine, 2000-01

It's easy to see why Ninian and his sister Margaret were both so tiny. This was the tough environment in which they and their brother James spent their early years, and in which they lost their mother in 1899.

In the immediate aftermath of Maggie's death, her mother, Mary Ann Slater (formerly Burns, maiden name White) lived at 26 Horsewater Wynd. She may have moved in as a consequence of the tragedy, or she may have already lived there – multiple occupancy was

common. But it seems reasonable to conclude that living in the same dwelling, she helped James cope with her grandchildren, Ninian, James and Margaret. We know she shared the address because two months later, in December, Mary Ann herself died of pneumonia, aged 47. On her death registration, her address is 26 Horsewater Wynd.

We can suggest that Margaret's sister Grace helped out too. Married to an Aberdeen hawker called Thomas Carroll, and mother to a son herself (Edward, born in 1890), it was Grace who registered the death of her mother Mary Ann and who bought the burial plot, or 'lair', in which she lies. On Dundee City Council's record of the ownership of lair number 116 in Section K of Balgay Cemetery, Grace's address is also given as 26 Horsewater Wynd.

So the Burns family had rallied round after Margaret's death.

But what of James's family, the Frasers? Earlier the very same year, in March 1899, Ninian's other grandmother, Euphemia Fraser, had died. Ninian's grandfather, another James, lived nearby at 3 Horsewater Wynd. His aunts and uncles were all living in Dundee. But we have no evidence to show any of them were involved in caring for Ninian, James or Margaret. In fact, what evidence we have (census returns and address records from births, marriages and deaths) suggests they were *not* involved. None of them seems to have been in a well-paid profession.

When I started work, the only certain reference we had to Ninian subsequent to this terrible year of 1899, or to any member of his immediate family, was from Ninian's Royal Navy service record dated from 1915, in which his address at 1 Gateside Cottage, Denhead, just outside St Andrew's in Fife, was given.

What happened to him after his mother's death, between Dundee and Denhead, we had never known. Neither had we known the fate of his father James, nor of his brother James. We hadn't even known his sister Margaret existed.

So what happened to two small children and a babe in arms, born into poverty, left motherless and grandmotherless?

Before going forward to answer – as far as I can - these questions, let me go back and explain what we know of Ninian's immediate ancestors and the close family members we, and perhaps he, never knew he had.

3: Meet the ancestors

The Burns family

Ninian Fraser's mother **Margaret Burns** was the daughter of **Thomas Burns**, a coal miner from Glasgow born in 1852, and **Mary Ann White**, a 'hard wax dealer' from Glasgow at the time of Margaret's birth.

Thomas was the son of John Burns and Margaret Lees. Mary Ann was the daughter of John White, a Belfast-born tinsmith, and Mary Dewar, who was born in Oban.

Margaret can barely have known her father, who met a tragic fate. Thomas died on October 18th, 1878 at the age of 26. According to his death certificate, on which his young widow Mary Ann made her mark ('X'), he 'fractured skull from a fall down stairs while intoxicated'. He was dying for two days; the death certificate makes it clear he had had no medical attention. Possibly the family could not afford it. The couple were living in the Gallowgate area of Glasgow at the time.



Gallowgate, Glasgow, 1868

In fact, Thomas Burns suffered for longer than two days, for his accident was reported in the Glasgow Herald of October 14th, four days before his death:

A collier, named Thomas Burns, residing at 83 Shanrock Street, while going up the stair to his house on Saturday night, accidentally over-balanced himself and fell down four steps, alighting on his head. He was carried upstairs unconscious, and has remained in the same condition ever since. - It is said, he was under the influence of drink at the time of the accident.

Thomas Burns left three children fatherless, of whom Margaret was the youngest. Her older sisters were Grace and Helen. Mary Ann had Grace before her marriage to Thomas; no father is named on her birth certificate so it is likely she was a half-sister (I am indebted to N Murray Tosh for this and other information about the Burns and Lees families).

Between 1870 and 1914, Glasgow ranked as one of the richest and finest cities in Europe. On the other hand, however, the city suffered from appalling social problems of poverty, crime and disease. The massively unequal distribution of wealth meant that the splendid mansions in the West End were a marked contrast to the wynds and closes of the High Street, Saltmarket and Gallowgate areas in the East End.

BBC History: Victorian Glasgow

Mary Ann married again, to a tinsmith from Kirkwall, Orkney, called Thomas Slater, in 1882 in Glasgow. By this time Mary Ann was a hawker. They had at least two children, Thomas (born 1880, fate unknown) and Peter (1890-1949). But Thomas senior died of pneumonia in 1897, a 'pauper' in the City Poorhouse, Glasgow; his widow again made her mark on the registration of the death of a husband, but her address was recorded as 7 Lyons Close in Dundee. Perhaps they had separated.

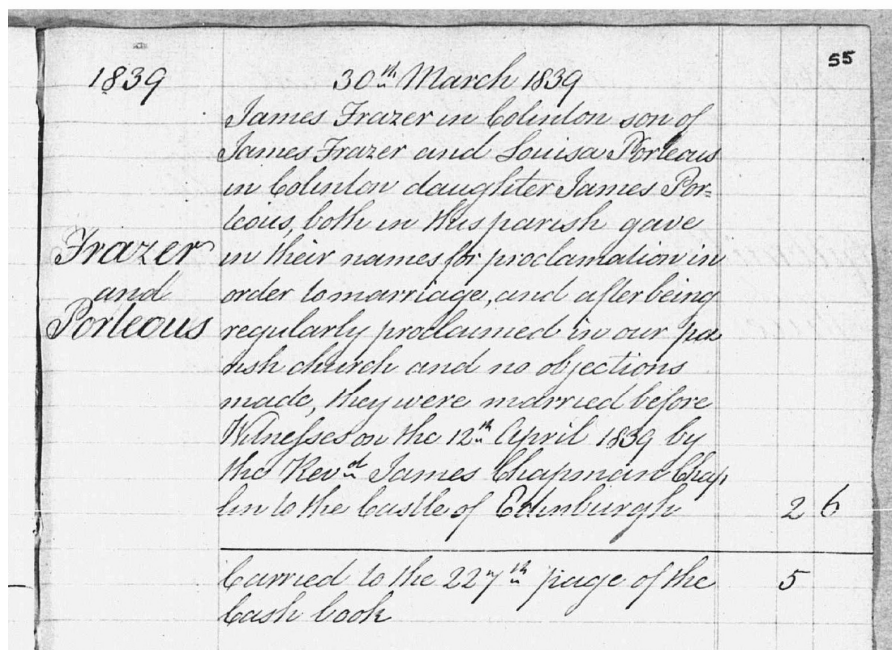
The Frasers

Ninian Fraser's father **James Fraser** was the son of another **James Fraser**, born around 1841, and **Euphemia Lawrie** or **Laurie**, born around 1843.

Grandfather James was the son of *another* James (1811-1889) and his wife Elizabeth, or Louisa, Porteous (1821-1866) who were both born in Colinton, now a suburb of Edinburgh. They married in 1839, on March 30th (my birthday):

**12/04/1839 PORTEOUS, LOUISA (O.P.R. Marriages 677/00 0050
0553 COLINTON (OR HAILES))**

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By 1851 James and Louisa and their nine-year-old son were living at 6 Reigo Street in St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, where James worked as a journeyman blacksmith. He became a railway engine fitter, and his son James, Ninian's grandfather, followed him into the profession. By 1861, the older James was a railway engine fitter lodging in Perth with a family called Bennett. When his wife Louisa Porteous died that year, James remarried, to Marjorie McNaughton (1839-1875). They had eight children, but only two survived infancy, Jemima, later Graham, who died in 1954, and William, who died in 1901. Neither were caring for Ninian, James or Margaret in 1901. James (1811-1889) is said to have died in College Road, Dumbarton in 1889, but I have no confirmation of this.

James Fraser (May 3rd 1811-1889) was the son of yet another James (1786-1839) and his wife Janet Harrower. James and Janet had their son baptised at West Linton, Peebles, on May 13th 1811. The oldest James was a shepherd and then a carter; he 'drowned in the Water of

Leith', the river running through Colinton, in November 1839, leaving ten children. The record of his death and burial makes his resting place very clear:

'Head of grave 14 3/4 feet south from the door of Gillespies Tomb and fifteen feet east from James Andersons Tombstone'

Scotland's People / OPR record

Back to Ninian's grandfather James. He was a 'journ' engine fitter, journeyman being a rank between an apprentice and a master. He died on January 13th 1908 in the Parochial Hospital, Dundee, though he was still living in Horsewater Wynd (at number 12). His death was registered by his eldest son, who signed his name 'Alex'. It seems certain Ninian's grandfather James was in no financial position to help the children, for the Parochial Hospital was attached to Dundee's East Poorhouse workhouse and was specifically for the poor. We have no knowledge of whether the three Fraser children knew of their grandfather's death.

Euphemia Laurie, born around 1843, was the daughter of James Lawrie or Laurie and Janet Moodie or Mudie.

James Laurie was a cotton weaver born in Perth in 1811; his wife Janet, born in Perth in 1808, was a cotton winder. The Scottish burgh was a centre for the weaving industry; after the railway arrived in the city in 1848, it became a key transport centre too. By 1841 the Lauries lived at West Side in the suburb of Pomarium, Perth, and sons Alexander, born 1836, and David, born 1841, were present. By 1851 they'd been joined by Euphemia and moved to 148 South Street, where James and Janet were 'hand loom weavers'. By 1861 they had moved to High Street, but by 1871 James and Janet were on their own, living at Claypots Wynd, 15 East Church, James still at work as a weaver but no occupation given for Janet. This is the year of James Fraser, their grandson's, birth. They were still alive in their 70s in the 1881 census, at Pomarium, 8 West Church. James was still a cotton weaver. But between 1881 and the 1891 census they disappear.

We can surmise that James Fraser's and Euphemia Laurie's marriage in 1866 was a 'shotgun wedding' – they married in Thimblerow, Perth, on July 27th; on August 24th 1866, less than a month later, their first daughter, also Euphemia, was born! All their subsequent children were born in Perth, including Ninian's father James.

Between the census returns of 1881 and 1891, probably before their eldest daughter's marriage in Dundee in 1885, the young family moved from Perth to Dundee, presumably for reasons connected with James's work.

Grandmother Euphemia's age at her death in Dundee in March 1899 is given as 44, making her born in 1855 and meaning she was 11 when she had her daughter in 1866, an unlikely scenario. It seems more likely her widower lied about her age, or had forgotten, or wasn't clear when he gave it.

Euphemia was buried in Section K, lair number 685 at Balgay Cemetery on March 4th 1899. The lair had been bought by her widower James, then of 3 Horsewater Wynd. James was buried with her on January 16th 1908. With them rest two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren: Alfred Watson, buried December 29th 1900, the two-month-old son of their daughter Euphemia and her husband Alfred Watson; Alfred Fraser, buried on March 3rd 1904, aged 15 months, the illegitimate son of Louisa Fraser (possibly Alfred's and Euphemia's daughter Louisa); three-month-old Joseph Fraser, buried on March 23rd 1920, the son of their grandson William Fraser and Catherine McKenna; and one-month-old Robert Fraser, buried on May 27th 1927, the son of their grandson Robert Fraser and Catherine Allan. Both grandsons were the children of their son Alexander Fraser and Winifred Dolan.

Now, let's meet the children of James and Euphemia Fraser, and Thomas and Mary Ann Burns.

4: Ninian Fraser's Uncles, Aunts and Cousins

Mary Ann White had two, possibly three, children with her first husband, the ill-fated coal miner Thomas Burns - Ninian's mother Margaret (Maggie) and his Aunts Grace and Helen (also known as Ellen and Nellie). Grace was born illegitimate on June 29th 1872 at 70 Robertson Street, Glasgow.

Grace Carroll and Helen Donaldson

The three women were all in Dundee by 1891, the family perhaps drawn by the chance of employment in the jute mills.

Grace had married her husband Thomas Brown Carroll in January 1890. Thomas was a Roman Catholic, but clearly not a strict one: their son Edward was born five months later in May 1890. At various points in his life Thomas was first, a ham curer, then a hawker, then a pedlar. I can find no record of the couple having any children after Edward.

By 1891, Grace and her family lived at 219 Overgate and lodging with them were her sisters Maggie and Helen. Helen, born in Glasgow in 1877, was already, at 14, working in the jute industry.

Helen, known as Ellen and / or Nellie, married David Lawson Donaldson in Dundee in 1898, when they were both living at 38 Horsewater Wynd. Thomas and Grace Carroll were witnesses at the wedding. By 1901 the Donaldsons had a son, David, then 3, and were living at 31 Polepark Road in the parish of St Mary, with a 24-year-old boarder called Betty Anderson. Both were working in the jute mills. David gave his birthplace as Abernethy in Perthshire. The couple had at least one other child, Alfred, by 1906.

But tragedy had marked the poor Burns family.

Already, Thomas Burns had died young; his daughter Maggie was only 26 when she died; and in 1906 there was further heartbreak. Helen, just 28, died of pneumonia. She was buried with her mother Mary Ann at Balgay Cemetery on November 11th 1906, the year of her poor son Alfred's birth. You could be forgiven for thinking the family were cursed: Alfred lived to

be just 15. He died of acute rheumatism in 1921 and, on October 5th, was buried with his mother and his grandmother.

Thomas, Grace and Edward Carroll lived at 29 Blackness Road, according to the 1901 census. From Ancestry's transcript, they seem to have been using the surname 'Brown', Thomas's mother's maiden name. In 1901, Thomas was a hawker of crockery.

Grace had moved back to Overgate by 1906, when her address was given as number 27 on the registration of her sister's death.



This photograph shows the eastern end of Dundee's Overgate. No. 29 Overgate was the Dundee Equitable Boot Depot, No. 23 the spirit dealer, Robert Methven, and No. 21 R. & J. Dick, boot and shoe manufacturers.

Edward Carroll enlisted in the Royal Highlanders, better known as the Black Watch, in Dundee in 1908. This brief passage may explain why, and is worth remembering when we come to one of Ninian's uncles later, who also enlisted in the army.

The typical 'Tommy' before 1914 was a young, poorly educated, unskilled, and often unemployed, urban or agricultural labourer. As Robert Edmondson, a socialist and former squadron sergeant major, noted: "Quite 80% of our soldiers are the victims of 'Hobson's choice'. It is the Army or starvation with them." The same sentiments found more poetical expression in the pages of

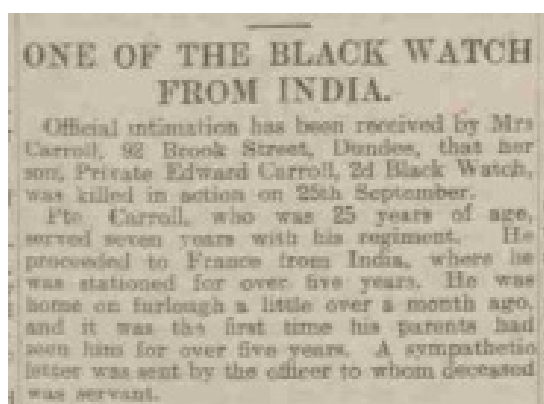
the *Labour Leader*, in a piece entitled 'The Raw Recruit', which included the following lines:

I tramped the streets, old chummy,
until me feet was sore.
I couldn't get a blessed job
an' wouldn't try no more.
I 'adn't 'ad no grub to eat
Nor yet no beer, no tea
For two 'ole days. So, being beat,
I joined the King's arnee.

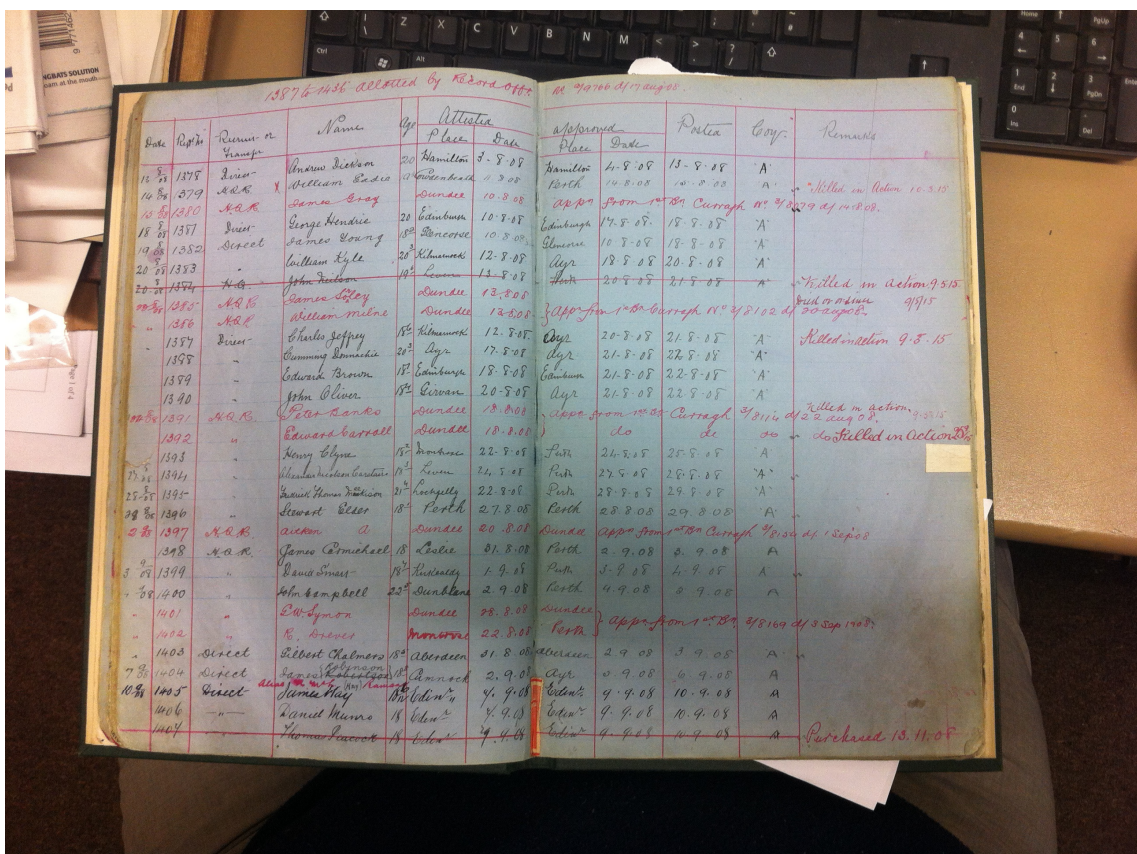
Militarism and the British Left, 1902-1914, Matthew Johnson
(Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013).

By the 1911 census, aged 20, Edward was a Private in A Company, the 2nd Battalion of the Black Watch, serving in India.

But the curse of the Burns family was to claim Edward, too. According to the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh, Private 1392 Edward Carroll of the Black Watch, born in Dundee, died on September 25th 1915 on the Western Front, fighting with A Company. This was the first morning of the Battle of Loos, in which the Black Watch (and other Scots regiments) suffered appalling casualties. The Black Watch's own records confirm this, and Edward is remembered on Dundee's war memorial and on the city's roll of honour. His death was reported in the *Dundee Courier* of October 26th, 1915:

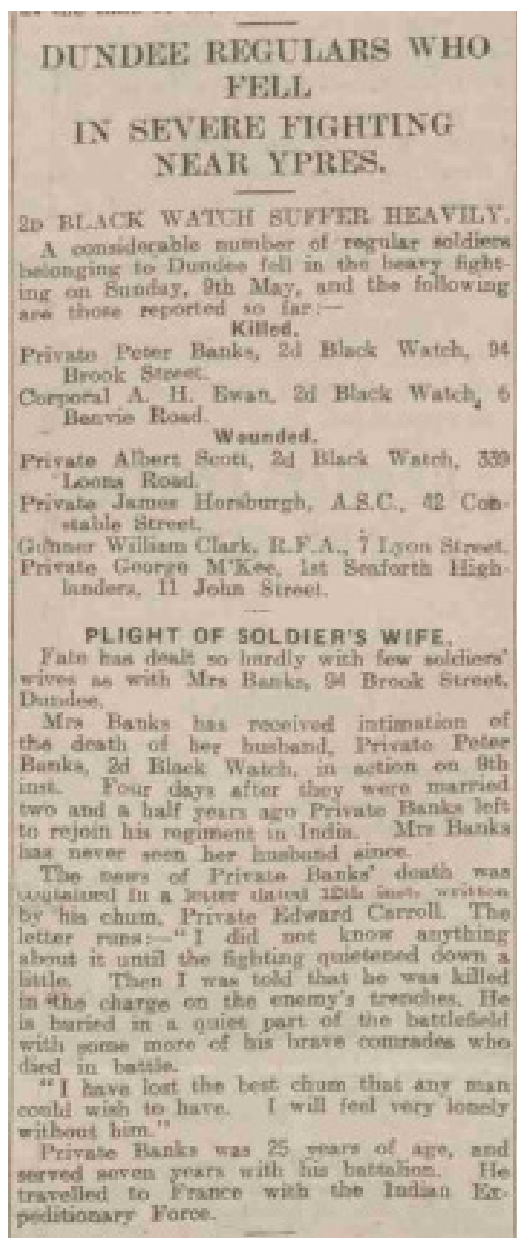


The Commonwealth War Graves Commission had no record of him at all. I queried this, because it seemed certain my grandfather would have been known to Edward Carroll, and because it seemed unfair that he had no record of his life and death in France, where the soldiers he served with are commemorated. His case was heard by a committee of the Army Museum Council, to whom all the evidence in this document was submitted, and they ruled that his name *should* be added to the CWGC's commemoration of the dead. Edward Carroll is now remembered on the memorial to the missing of the Loos battlefields.



Records of the Royal Highlanders supplied by archivists at the Black Watch Museum, Perth.

Half-way down the above photograph, you can see the record of Edward Carroll, recorded beneath the name of Peter Banks. Edward and Peter attested on the same day, 18th August 1908. This long friendship has a very remarkable postscript: we can hear the voice of Edward Carroll in a letter he wrote to the widow of Peter Banks when Peter was killed in action in May 1915 at Ypres. The letter was reported in the *Dundee Courier* of May 17th 1915. Note that the report is of regulars, and is of the 2nd Battalion.



We cannot but feel sorry for Banks, his wife, and lonely Edward Carroll. We know Edward was an officer's batman, and we know he had been in India for five years. We know he had seen his family only once in that time, and we know he had taken the trouble to write a kindly letter to the wife of his lost friend. 'I have lost the best chum that any man could wish to have. I will feel very lonely without him.'

Edward's father Thomas Brown Carroll died in 1938 and was buried in the Burns lair at Balgay on July 26th, aged 66.

Alone of the Burns sisters, Grace lived to a grand old age. Ninian Fraser's Aunt Grace, who had known him, possibly held him, as a baby, died in a nursing home in Lochee, Dundee, in 1956, aged 84. Her death was registered by a niece. Ninian's family has no memory that he ever knew this. On September 28th, 1956, more than half a century after the deaths of her mother and her sisters, Grace Carroll was buried with Mary Ann and Helen, with her nephew Alfred Donaldson and with her husband Thomas, at Balgay Cemetery. Two of the women who, briefly, cared for my grandfather rest together, not far from his mother's unmarked pauper's grave.

James and Euphemia Fraser had eight children, all born in Perth:

Euphemia (1866-1930). She married Alfred Bell Watson (c1863-1944) in 1885. They had four children, more cousins of Ninian's: baby Alfred, who died aged just two months in December 1900; Richard, alive in 1944 when he registered Alfred's death, Louise or Louisa, b c1888, who might have been the mother of illegitimate Alfred who died in 1904, and Mary Ann, b c1892.

One of the girls had a presumably illegitimate daughter, Euphemia, in 1909, judging by the 1911 census return. They were living in Hunter Street, Dundee, in the 1901 census and at 82 Brook Street in 1911. Alfred was a witness at the wedding of his brother-in-law Alexander Fraser and Winifred Dolan in 1895.

When Helen Donaldson, Margaret Fraser's sister, died in 1906 her address was given as 4 Hunter Street, near the address of Alfred and Euphemia Watson in 1901 at 1 Hunter Street.

On their marriage in 1885 in the Episcopal Church in Dundee, Euphemia's mum is the familiar Euphemia Fraser, maiden name Lawrie – but her father is given as Alexander Fraser! Remembering that she was born only a month after James and Euphemia's marriage, we can only wonder if there was some other drama we may never discover....

Alexander (1868 - before 1932). He married Winifred Dolan (1870-1944) in 1895 at 14 Lyons Close, Dundee, where Margaret Burns was living too. Alexander and Winifred had four children: William (b 1894, the year *before* their marriage), Alexander (b 1897), Winifred (b 1899) and Robert (b 1902).

Here's an old Fraser photo – a *very* rare commodity - of Ninian Fraser's first cousin William Peter Fraser, the son of his uncle Alexander, with his wife Catherine McKenna:



William (died 1943) and Catherine's son Joseph died aged just three months in March 1920, and is buried with his great grandparents James and Euphemia Fraser in Balgay Cemetery.

William and Catherine's other children included Elizabeth (1928-1968), who married Alfred Wallace (b1924). Elizabeth and Alf's children included my distant cousin Vivienne Snee, (b 1965). I've been in touch with Alf and Vivienne since they contacted me after an article I wrote appeared in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph*. Alf kindly supplied much of the material pre-dating the Frasers' arrival in Dundee, and the information concerning the branch of the Frasers to whom he was related by marriage.

Robert Fraser married Catherine Allan; their baby son Robert was another member of the family to die tragically young and he, too, is buried with his great-grandparents in Balgay. His burial was on May 27th 1927 and he was just a month old.

Winifred Fraser married Joseph Lamb in 1932. She already had an illegitimate son, Robert, who, Alf Wallace remembers, became a well-known talent scout for the English soccer team Wolverhampton Wanderers.

James Ninian's father, born on July 25th 1871 in Perth, of whom *much* more later. His grandmother Janet Laurie made her mark ('X') to register the birth, and James's parents are given as James Fraser and Euphemia Laurie – though Frazer is spelt with a 'z'.

Robert (1872-1875), who died in 1875, before his third birthday, of a 'scarlatinal or measles infection' and acute infant nephritis (inflammation of the kidneys).

Louisa (1875-1932). She married William Webster (c1873-1936) in 1894. I can't find them in the 1901 census. Louisa's death was registered by her sister Isabella – which may imply the Websters had no children. Louisa was a witness at the wedding of Alexander Fraser and Winifred Dolan.

Ninian (1877-1918). This Ninian Fraser merits a book on his own remarkable story.

The life of Ninian Fraser, 1877-1918

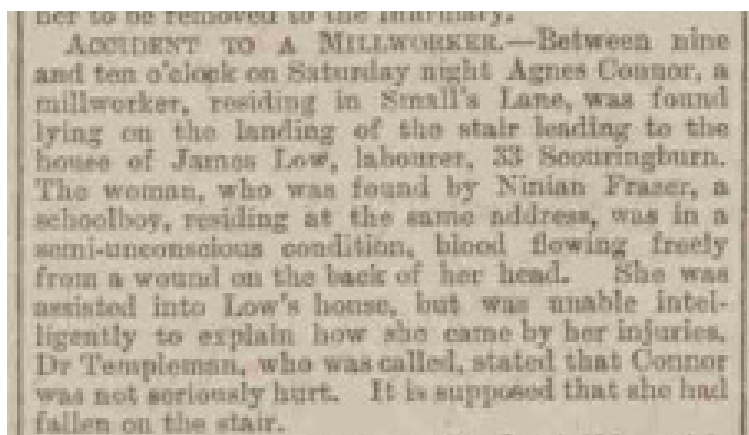
Was my Grandad named for this uncle? The elder Ninian had a remarkable life, and there are some puzzles about him, too.

Perhaps because of the unusual name, or perhaps because of this Ninian's character, we can find a few traces of him in the archives. From a report of the proceedings of Dundee Police Court in the *Dundee Courier* of September 21st 1889, we get an idea how tough the childhood of the Frasers must have been:

A BUNCH OF BUDDING THIEVES

Ninian Fraser (12), Ramsay's Pond, and Joseph Curran (13), Kilgour's Pond, were charged with the theft of 20lbs of barley from a grain loft in Guthrie Street. This was not their first essay in the pilfering line, both having been admonished by the Sherriff for housebreaking. The Bailie gave them another chance, and dismissed them with a suitable admonition.

Three other members of this 'bunch of budding thieves' were admonished – one for stealing two rabbits, and two others for stealing turnips. Ninian had made the papers before, in the *Dundee Courier* of April 22nd 1889:



We can see addresses varying as the family moved, much as the histories of Dundee at this period tell us working class families did. We can also see that times were as hard as our earlier sources have told us. Perhaps, then, it is no surprise to find Ninian enlisting in the Army in 1897, in the 3rd militia battalion of the Royal Highlanders, the Black Watch. The

militia was intended to be seen as an alternative to the Army. Men would volunteer and undertake basic training for several months at an army depot. Thereafter, they would return to civilian life, but report for regular periods of military training (usually on the weapons ranges) and an annual two-week training camp. In return, they would receive military pay and a financial retainer, a useful addition to their civilian wage.

Ninian was living at 14 Lyons Close, a familiar Fraser story address, and gave his age as 18, though we know he was 20. Confusion over age is to recur later in his story. He was a millworker, and his 'master' was named as a Mr Cargill. He was just over 5ft 3 ins tall, of a fresh complexion, with hazel eyes and dark brown hair. He weighed 108lbs and had a 32-inch chest (which could expand to 34 inches!). He was a Presbyterian. I've quoted this in detail because it *may* give us our only clue to the appearance of his brother James, Ninian's father. We also know that Ninian had a problem with the web of his left thumb.

I can't quite make out the details of his service – it seems he completed 16 days' drill on enlistment, but left the battalion on February 28th 1899 to enlist in the Royal Scots Fusiliers. This may well mean he decided to become a fully-fledged soldier in the regular army. We'll need to investigate more.

We do know that he returned to Civvy Street at some point after the turn of the century, for although we can't find him in the 1901 census we meet him again in and after 1910. And his age varies greatly over:

- His first wedding to Rose Ann Crossgrove in 1910, when he said he was 25. He had moved over the Tay from Dundee to Ferry-Port-On-Craig, today known as Tayport.
- At his second wedding, two years later, to Isabella McCulloch, in Ferry-Port-On-Craig, he's 30.
- At his death in 1918, when his wife is recorded as Isabella Fraser of Brook Street, Dundee, he is aged either 43 (death registration) or 45 (Scottish National War Memorial).

Ninian and Rose Ann married on December 30th 1910; very unusually, *five* witnesses were there. The bride was heavily pregnant when they married, but less than a month later, poor

Rose Ann died of ‘acute tubercular disease of both lungs’ on January 24th, 1911. They must have known she was dying when they married. Almost her last act was to give birth to her son, another Ninian – eerily, *another* Ninian destined to grow up motherless. Ninian Fraser was born in Ferry-Port-On-Craig on January 17th, 1911, a week before his mother’s death.

So there were two Ninian Frasers of my grandfather’s generation, and they were first cousins. The other Ninian Fraser died in Bromley, Kent, in the April quarter of 1976, aged 65 (*Bromley 11 1128*). He married Rose V Cutts in Bedford, Bedfordshire in 1944 (*3b 744*). Ninian and Rose appear on electoral registers at various addresses in London, from Brixton and Norwood to Paddington, from 1950 to 1961.

After Rose Ann’s death, Ninian Fraser married again, to Isabella McCulloch, in 1913. An Isabella Fraser is recorded as born in Ferry-Port-On-Craig in 1913 and died in Dundee (surname / maiden name Fraser; mother’s surname McCulloch; other surnames Dempsey / Scott) aged 88 in 2001.

Alf Wallace has confirmed this Isabella was my grandfather’s cousin, the daughter of his Uncle Ninian. She proudly records her father’s name on her tombstone in Dundee. Alf Wallace remembers her well, as a kind woman – she once saved him a long walk home by giving him a 1d bus fare when he was a lad.

At the outbreak of World War One, Ninian Fraser, though by this time approaching middle age, either volunteered for service or, as a former militia man, was called up.

His 4th Battalion of the Black Watch, drawn almost entirely from Dundee, was known as ‘a city at war’ (*The Black Watch*, Eric and Andro Linklater, 1977).



Soldiers at Dundee Station (Bygone Dundee; bygone.dundee.gov.uk)

The third line of the 4th Black Watch (Dundee Territorials) left Dundee on Wednesday to join the second line of the regiment, who are under camp training at Oudenard, Bridge of Earn. The battalion, which was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Harry K. Smith, took their departure for the city in the early morning, and notwithstanding the hour received a hearty send off, a large crowd of spectators gathering in the vicinity of the station. The men presented a very smart appearance, and seemed to be anticipating the chance with keen pleasure. They left from Tay Bridge in two special trains

Source: *The People's Journal*, 1915

The 'keen pleasure' met a cruel fate: after being decimated at the Battle of Loos in 1915, the 4th and 5th battalions amalgamated and after that point Ninian served with them in every subsequent major theatre of war on the Western Front, including the Somme. It seems possible Ninian Fraser and Edward Carroll both fought at the Battle of Loos. Ninian was wounded out of the Black Watch in the earlier stages of the Battle of Passchendaele (3rd Ypres) in 1917. He was reported wounded in *The Scotsman's* casualty lists of September 10th, 1917.

He returned to the Western Front, seemingly posted to the Cameron Highlanders, and suffered the wounds that were to claim his life in the last stages of the final German attack of the war in early 1918.

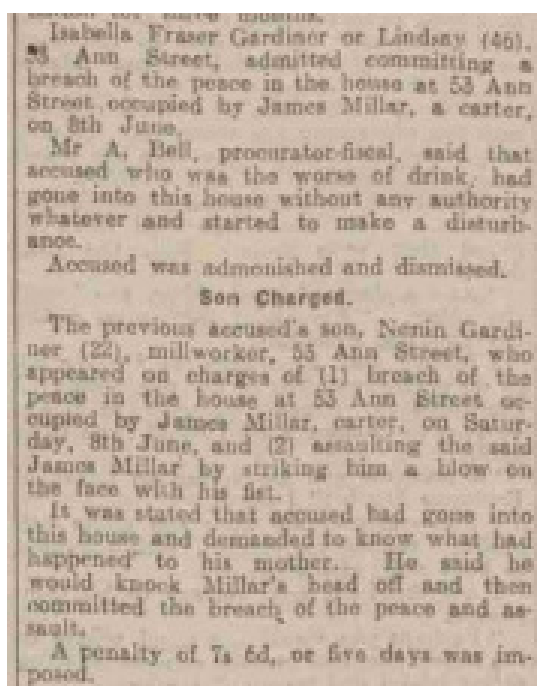
Private Ninian Fraser of the Black Watch ('latterly Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders'), born in Perth, died of wounds on August 22nd 1918, his age given as 45 by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Scottish National War Memorial, but as 43 on the military record of his death. The CWGC records him as 'husband of Isabella Fraser of 69, Brook Street, Dundee'.

He is buried at Longuenesse (St Omer) Military Cemetery; St Omer was the General Headquarters of the British Expeditionary Force from October 1914 to March 1916 and a considerable hospital centre.

After that detour, back to the last of Ninian's uncles, aunts and cousins.

Catherine (1880-1959). She married, in 1903, James Smith. In the 1901 census she was boarding at 3 Littlejohn Street with no other members of her family. (Her sister Isabella was living at 6 Littlejohn Street on her marriage to James Gardiner, of 9 Littlejohn Street, in 1902). James, a glazier, and Catherine were living in Blackness Road, Dundee, in 1911, with their children Jemima (7), Alexander (5) and Catherine (3). Ninian's Aunt Catherine died of a stroke in Dundee Royal Infirmary in 1959, aged 78. Her death was registered by her husband – and we'll return to James Smith later in this story for a key piece of evidence.

Isabella (1882-1964). Isabella married James Gardiner (1882-before 1916) on New Year's Eve 1901; they had at least one son, named as 'Nenin' in a later newspaper report which showed that Isabella shared the Fraser family traits of a fondness for drinking, and of trouble with the law. The *Evening Telegraph* of June 20th 1929 reported:



I think James Gardiner must have been one of the thousands of Scottish victims of the Battle of Loos in 1915 (two James Gardiners are recorded but with no biographical details at all), the reason why Isabella married a second time, to John Lindsay, in 1916. Rose Ann Charles was a witness at this wedding; in 1917 a child called Rose Ann Charles Lindsay was born (her birth certificate can't be read because of the 100-year confidentiality rule on birth

certificates in Scotland). Was Rose Ann Charles Lindsay John and Isabella's daughter? In 1918 we see the birth of John Fraser Lindsay (birth certificate can't be read; no death recorded); was he their son? A J Lindsay was alive in 1957 when he registered the death of his father, John Lindsay. In 1964 the death of Isabella, with the surnames Fraser, Gardiner and Lindsay is recorded.

Isabella maintained close contact with some members of the family – for example, it was Isabella who registered her sister Louisa's death.

We can see that Ninian, far from having no family ties, as was the picture I gathered as a young lad, had many close relatives alive and well and living in and around Dundee until pretty recently.

5: Ninian's lost brother, James Fraser

James Fraser was born to James and Margaret Fraser on November 12th, 1895 at 15 Midkirk Style, Dundee.

1895 FRASER, JAMES (Statutory Births 282/02 0746)

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1895. BIRTHS in the District of St Mary in the burgh of Dundee. Page 249.

No.	Name and Surname.	When and Where Born.	Sex.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father, Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother. Date and Place of Marriage.	Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if not of the House in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
745	Elizabeth Gibson	1895, October 3 rd 30 th a.m.	F	William Gibson Sailer M. S. Mulligan	Bridget Gibson Mother	1895, December 3 rd at Dundee M ^o Meek Registrar.
		50 Polkapack Head, Dundee.		1892, July 26 th Blairgowrie		J. D.
746	James Fraser	1895, November 11 th 30 th a.m.	M	James Fraser Jule Mill Worker Margaret Fraser M. S. Burns	Margaret Fraser Mother	1895, December 3 rd at Dundee M ^o Meek Registrar.
		15 Midkirk Style Dundee.		1895, January 1 st Dundee		J. D.
747	Robert Mackay Nesbet	1895, November 3 rd a.m.	M	William Nesbet Nesbet Shoemaker Charlotte Nesbet M. S. Mackay	William Nesbet Father Present	1895, December 3 rd at Dundee M ^o Meek Registrar.
		12 St Mary Place, Dundee.		1891, August 21 st Dundee.		J. D.

Jas. MacLellan Registrar.



Midkirk Style tenements, late 19th century (Dundee Central Library).

As with Ninian, we had no knowledge at all of James's fate after his mother Margaret's death in 1899.

My father, and, with more clarity, his brother Jim, remembered Ninian saying he had been notified of his brother's death during World War One. Could this one clue lead us to him?

163 J or James Frasers died in the first war; working from the Scottish National War Memorial at Edinburgh Castle and the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, most can be discounted as 'our' James (because of their familial relationships, birthplaces and ages). But 26 of them have no identifying information left whatsoever, so any one of them *could* be our relative.

Ploughing repeatedly through what records survive in search of clues, I eventually stumbled across one mis-spelled Christian name that was to solve the mystery: 'Nenean', appearing in the service record of Driver James Fraser of the Army Service Corps, later Private James Fraser of the West Riding (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment. It was a mis-spelling – as ever – of Ninian's name from the passage on the service record in which he is identified as James Fraser's next of kin – his younger brother.

We had found Ninian's lost brother James.

He enlisted in the Army Service Corps as a Driver in Dundee in 1914, shortly after the outbreak of war. Remarkably, fragments of his service record survive – some 60% of First World War service records were destroyed in the London Blitz of the Second World War, and James's documents still bear marks of damage. But they tell us a great deal about him – and about his unhappy fate.

He joined up just ten days after war began, his attestation dated August 14th 1914 when James was aged 18 years and 275 days. He gave his birthplace as Glasgow and his occupation as ploughman. His birthplace was also given as Glasgow in the 1911 census, as we shall see later, and it seems likely he just assumed he had been born in the city from which his late mother came.

Poor James shared the family traits of lack of stature and weight. He was just five feet three inches tall, the same height as my father, and weighed 115 pounds, just over eight stones, on enlistment. He had a 35-inch chest. The minimum requirements for recruits were a height of five feet three, and a chest capable of expansion to 34 inches, so James just scraped in. His eyes were gold, his hair brown and his complexion fresh. His vision was rated six out of six in both eyes, and he had no noted marks or defects. By religion, he was a Presbyterian. He was certified fit for service, given two vaccinations in his left arm, and four days later had swapped the countryside of Fife for the bustle of wartime Woolwich.

We know his rank was Driver, and we know that he was posted to the beleaguered British Expeditionary Force in France early in the war, arriving on October 6th 1914. On the same page of his record is the crucial piece of evidence, identifying his next of kin:

A scan of a handwritten document, likely a military record, showing the text "Brother (younger) Ninian Fraser Denhead 11 Dundee". The handwriting is in cursive and somewhat faded.

The Denhead address matches the address Ninian gave on enlistment in the Navy in 1915. Clearly, the two brothers were still close 15 years after the death of their mother and, as we shall later discover, nearly ten years after the departure of their father and sister.

James's service record shows he spent the first period of his war at No 6 Reserve Park as a Driver in the Army Service Corps. This means he belonged to a horse transport company, and his role would have been between base depots near the coast and the front line, transporting war materials to the front.

The unsung heroes of the British army in the Great War - the ASC, *Ally Sloper's Cavalry*. Soldiers can not fight without food, equipment and ammunition. In the Great War, the vast majority of this tonnage, supplying a vast army on many fronts, was supplied from Britain. Using horsed and motor vehicles, railways and waterways, the ASC performed prodigious feats of logistics and were one of the great strengths of organisation by which the war was won. Although the British Army was the most mechanised of all in the Great War, it still relied largely on horse power for the transportation of supplies, guns,

ammunition and men. At peak, the ASC numbered an incredible 10,547 officers and 315,334 men. In addition were tens of thousands of Indian, Egyptian, Chinese and other native labourers, carriers and stores men, under orders of the ASC. Yet this vast, sprawling organisation - so vital to enabling the army to fight - merits just four mentions in the Official History of the war.

Source: The Long Long Trail: The British Army in the Great War

(www.1914-1918.net)

This ties with a fragment of memory now recalled by my father, who says Ninian told a story that his brother had gone to war with the horses from the farm where he worked. It is certainly true that agricultural horses were requisitioned, some very early in the war, but we have no documentary evidence to back up this story. However, knowledge of James's job shows that Ninian must have been in touch with his brother up to his departure, and for a time afterwards.

James served with 6 Reserve Park for nearly three years, having been posted there (from 7 Reserve Park) on December 6th 1914. At the moment, I cannot find out where this unit was based.

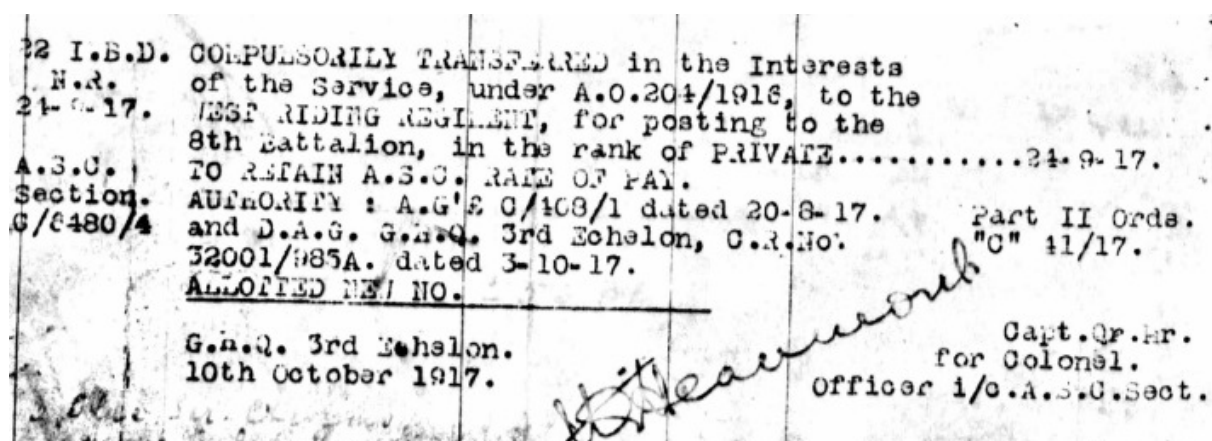
James occasionally contravened strict military discipline:

28 ⁵ / ₁₅	10.6 Res 9k	7 Days b.c. + forfeits 1 Day's pay.
		Absent from No 1 Section Biller from 9 p.m. 28 th / ₁₅ till found in the Biller at Reville 29 th / ₁₅ at 6 am.
2.9.15	"	7 Days b.c. Absent off Roll call at 9 p.m. 26.8.15 till 9.45 p.m. same date (45 min.)

As you can see, in May 1915 he was absent without leave from his billet for the entire night. He was confined to camp ('C.C.') for seven days and fined a day's pay. In September, he was absent for another period, this time only 45 minutes, but a repeat offence, this time for 30 minutes, 14 days later meant his punishment was doubled to 14 days 'CC'. The punishment was repeated in November when James was "absent off stable guard" for 45 minutes.

But thereafter James kept his nose clean. He was granted leave from November 3rd to 10th, 1916 after more than two years' service. Did he return to Scotland? We have no evidence that he did, nor that he saw Ninian, who by then had enlisted in the Royal Navy.

In 1917, a crucial twist of fate awaited James Fraser. At the end of July, he was transferred to the Army Service Corps' base depot "for infantry", and in September he was posted to the infantry.



The influx of recruits for the infantry had slowed by this late stage in the war. Manpower was becoming a factor. And Driver James Fraser was becoming 25531 Private James Fraser of the 8th Battalion of the Yorkshire-based West Riding Regiment, known as the Duke of Wellington's. A battalion was the basic unit of the British Army in World War One, comprising around 1,000 men, divided into a headquarters and four companies; each company was made up of four platoons.

According to the Regimental Archives of the Duke of Wellington's, James was one of many men drafted to the 8th Battalion to bring it up to strength for the Third Battle of Ypres, better known to history as the Battle of Passchendaele.

One of the men of the 8th Battalion, Company Sergeant Major Miles, left a diary of his war and this gives us an idea of James's experiences. We do not know if Miles was in the same company as James Fraser, but the battalion's experiences were common experiences.

The battles for Passchendaele rank alongside the battles of the Somme as bywords for the suffering of soldiers in the First World War – Passchendaele was especially notorious for the appalling swamp-like conditions created by constant shelling over rain-soaked low-lying ground.

8th October 1917

Back into the line again, and this for the last time on this sector, as we are going to make a bold bid for the village of Poelcapelle (just off the Passchendaele ridge) and then get relieved. What a night this is; it is pouring with rain. I am writing this under the shelter of a small dugout with a piece of corrugated iron for a roof, my feet in about two inches of water and rain is dripping everywhere, even onto this book. Rations have not come up yet and we expect to go over at any moment.



Poelcapelle, October 1917 (Imperial War Museum)

11th October 1917

Well, we captured Poelcapelle alright, at least what remained of it (a heap of bricks and innumerable shellholes). There was once a church here but all that remains now is a bit of a cellar, in which we make our battalion headquarters.

What a desolate spot this is, too. I shan't be sorry when we get relieved. Before we went over, our company headquarters was at 'White House', a small blockhouse, smaller than we have been in hitherto, and battalion headquarters was at 'Red House'. About a hundred to two hundred yards in our rear. There are nothing but shell holes, half full of water, and trees blown down by shell fire, making progress very slow and difficult. The weather is still very wet and windy. We have lost plenty of good lads on this last stunt and we have not had any reinforcements since we have been up here. There are not many of us left - 15 of us in my company, including one officer, Captain Durrand.

15th October 1917

We were relieved in the line... and are now in bivouacs at a place called Irish Farm. What a sorry crowd we looked! Everyone had at least a week's growth of beard and were plastered from head to foot with mud. A large number had lost their caps (steel helmets) and puttees, while quite a number had their jackets and trousers torn considerably by barbed wire. General Maxse, the Corps Commander, inspected us and thanked us...

Diary of CSM Miles, Regimental Archives, Duke of Wellington's Museum

After Passchendaele, James's 8th Battalion saw action at Loos and at Hill 70 on the Ypres front in November and December of 1917. Miles left us a description of Christmas at the front:

25th December 1917 Christmas Day

We have just finished the decorations in our billets and are now preparing for Christmas dinner. We are in the village of Contraine, which is two kilos from Villiers [on the Marne, nowadays swallowed by the eastern suburbs of Paris]. I am lucky to get a bed in a small cottage, but the men are in barns. It is typical Christmas weather. There are about four inches of snow on the ground. We have just finished waiting on the men... I managed to borrow sufficient plates and tables from the farms around and the men had their dinner almost like being at home. The Divisional and Brigadier Generals have been round just to

wish us all a happy Christmas. They seem as if they had been toasting each other's 'bon santi' a few times too!

James's Christmas was followed by another week's leave in January 1918, and shortly after his return, the 8th Battalion was disbanded (part of another army reorganisation). James Fraser was posted to the 2nd Battalion on February 8th 1918.

In March, the German Army launched 'Operation Michael', or the Kaiserschlacht (the Kaiser's Battle): reinforced by divisions from the now-collapsed Russian Front following the Russian Revolution, this was the last throw of the dice by the Germans and it was to push the Allies back to the brink of defeat. As part of the 4th Division, the 2nd Battalion and James Fraser were involved in fighting around Arras.

But the defence held and through the summer of 1918 the boot moved to the other foot, in what became known as the Allies' 100 Days Offensive. This was to prove the deciding action of the war, pushing the Germans to final, exhausted defeat. In the late summer of 1918, James Fraser and the 2nd Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment formed part of the first army's fourth division in what became known as the Battle of the Scarpe, in the area of Arras and Cambrai. Canadian forces made the crucial breakthrough, but then:

Continuing poor weather and resolute German resistance slowed progress on the 27 and 28 August... Severe fighting resulted in high casualties and the exhausted 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions were relieved during the night of 28/29 August by the 1st Canadian and 4th British Divisions who attempted to revive the faltering forward progress. Following vicious actions on 30 August, German defences were in part breached east of Boiry-Notre Dame and the general advance halted prior to finalising arrangements for the assault on the Drocourt-Quéant Line. The Scarpe offensive destroyed crucial German defence systems and paved the way for continued Allied progress.

Source: Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Western Front 1918

(www.cwgc.org)

All Battalions kept a war diary logging their actions. Ordinary soldiers were almost never named in these, though officers were dutifully recorded. The diary of James's Battalion gives

us a detailed picture of his movements. For example, it tells us that on August 10th 1918, the men lined a road near the Chateau du Quesnoy at Moulin Rouge while King George V passed.

On August 26th, 1918, James and his comrades spent the day practising their forthcoming attack by platoons, then by companies, and then as a whole battalion. From Neuville au Cornet, at 6.50pm the battalion marched to Villers-au-Bois, arriving there at 3.15 on the following morning – an eight-hour march.

After ‘cleaning up and changing underclothing’, the soldiers were transported in buses (probably horse-drawn) to St Catherine, near Arras, and moved into the front line just in front of Vis-en-Artois along the near banks of the Sensee River.

August 29th 1918

Our patrols pushed forward in the early morning and captured Haucourt and occupied a line immediately in front of it. 3 OR (other ranks, i.e. private soldiers) killed, 7 OR wounded.

August 30th 1918 Haucourt

At 4pm the Bn attacked. The men went forward magnificently and attained the final objective as per schedule, but owing to our flanks being in the air they fell back to the first objective, there throwing out protective flank. 43 prisoners including 1 officer were taken. 2Lts (Second Lieutenants) Tunsall, Hebblethwaite, Morris, Bankham MC & Johnson were wounded. 36 OR killed, 162 OR wounded, 7 OR missing and 16 OR admitted to hospital.

August 31st

A small attack without barrage to capture the copse... was unsuccessful during the afternoon. (The attack was successful, but owing to our depleted numbers, a heavy counter attack preceded by a violent bombardment drove our men out of the copse, and our patrols withdrew fighting.) But at dusk the men, in splendid form, carried everything before them and captured the copse (Stipe Copse), St Servin's Farm and the final objective of the 30th. 45 prisoners including 2 officers were taken... 2Lt Watmough and 2Lt Anson were killed. 2Lt Johnson died of wounds. 2Lt Blackburn was gassed. Lt Skelton MC was admitted to hospital. 14 OR killed, 17 missing, 21 OR to

hospital. In this operation the Btn also took 9 enemy machine guns and one enemy field gun.

September 1st Haucourt

At 4.15pm the Btn, in conjunction with the 1st Btn Royal Warwickshire Regt, attacked and captured Pear Trench... The Btn was relieved by the 47 Canadians.

War Diary, 2nd Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment
held in Regimental Archives.

But as the Duke of Wellington's moved away from the line during the night of September 1st and 2nd, James Fraser was not with them.

James Fraser had survived the Western Front for four years and 19 days. He had survived Passchendaele, served in dangerous theatres such as Loos, Hill 70 and Arras and fought through the Battle of the Scarpe as dozens of his comrades fell. But, on or close to September 1st 1918, it ended. James Fraser's short life began in poverty in Dundee and moved to the countryside of Fife. It ended in the fields of France. Here is the conclusion of his service history:

Report	Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from B. 213, Army or other documents
From whom received				
	Embarked ...			
	Disembarked...			
O. C. Unit	Killed in action	Field	1.9.18	Recd.

The war diary records no deaths on September 1st, in the attack on Pear Trench, and my instinct is that dates of death given may have been more approximate than we might care to think, reflecting, perhaps, the date on which a commanding officer became aware of a soldier's death. I say this because it seems clear that James's fate was linked to that of his comrade Private John Railton, whose date of death is given as August 30th. They share the same grave, and the regimental archivists are clear as to the reason for this:

The only conclusion we have come to is the remains of the two soldiers were so mixed up that the burial party was unsure which was which.

Correspondence with C Ford, Archivist, Duke of Wellington's Regiment

August 2014

The two men could have died together, or they could have died in the same area days apart and been affected by subsequent shellfire. We will never know – though we can theorise that James was one of the ‘other ranks’ reported missing on the day Railton died, August 30th, and that his officer became aware of James’s whereabouts shortly afterwards, perhaps being informed by one of the soldiers who’d seen Railton’s death as they held roll-calls. This is pure supposition, based only on the absence of deaths reported in the war diary on September 1st and the fact of the shared grave.

The bureaucratic machinery of a nation at war swung into action. The Army wrote to Ninian:

No. *WTC/R 8184*
(If replying, please quote above No.)

ARMY FORM B 104-87

2nd Infantry Record Office,
York

17-9-1918

Sir

It is my painful duty to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office notifying the death of:—

(No.) *25531* (Rank) *Private*

(Name) *James Fraser*

(Regiment) *WEST RIDING REGT.*

which occurred *in France*

Sir, on the *1 September 1918*

The report is to the effect that he *was*

killed in action

instant, By His Majesty's command I am to forward the enclosed message of sympathy from Their Gracious Majesties the King and Queen. I am at the same time to express the regret of the Army Council at the soldier's death in his Country's service.

I am to add that any information that may be received as to the soldier's burial will be communicated to you in due course. A separate leaflet dealing more fully with this subject is enclosed.

I am,

Sir

Your obedient Servant,

W. A. ... Colonel,
Officer in charge of Records.

James Fraser
St Andrews

The condolences of the king and queen were enclosed:

The King commands me to assure you
of the true sympathy of His Majesty and
The Queen in your sorrow.

He whose loss you mourn died in the
noblest of causes. His Country will
ever grateful to him for the sacrifice he has
made for Freedom and Justice.

We can only conclude that Ninian received the letter, or news of it, for this evidence allied to the memories of his sons Jim and Graham shows he certainly knew of his brother's fate. It may, however, have been the last he knew, for there is no evidence that any knowledge of James's burial, or of the disposal of his effects, was passed on in the family.

In fact, most of the correspondence concerning James's death was dealt with by the woman with whom Ninian was lodging in the 1911 census, as we shall later discover. And the correspondence gives us vital clues about the central mystery of this story, the boyhoods of Ninian and James Fraser. So we shall return to this evidence when we finally try to put the family back together in our final chapter.

Private James Fraser shares a grave with Private John Railton in France. John Railton was a farmer's son from Anlaby, near Hull, in Yorkshire, and his mother asked that the inscription 'at rest' be added to his headstone. Records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission show that no request was made for any inscription to be added to James's tombstone. We have no evidence that he has ever been visited.

His grave is at the CWGC's Vis-en-Artois Cemetery near Haucourt, on the road from Arras to Cambrai, in northern France.



As a footnote to this chapter, I would like to remember another James Fraser, because for several years we thought it possible he was our relative. Through that time and because of the research I undertook, I established a sort of relationship with this long-dead soldier, and I don't want to discard him now even though it turns out that he has no link to our family. In a way, he *does* have a link: we got to know him a little and should not abandon him now.

Just *one* James Fraser killed in World War One had his birthplace recorded as Dundee: Private 266910 James Fraser of the 6th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders. James Fraser was one of more than 250 Gordons killed and, in his case, wounded on the first day of the Battle of Arras, April 9th, 1917, possibly when a huge ammunition dump blew up (*War Diary, Gordon Highlanders*). He died a day later of his wounds at a casualty clearing station.

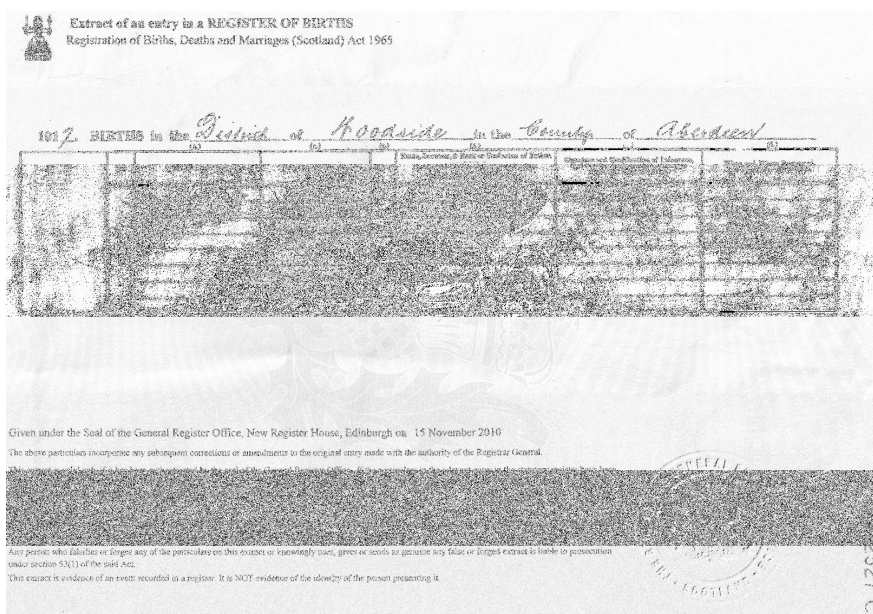
On James Fraser's body was his paybook and in it he left a brief soldier's will, leaving everything to his 'sweetheart' Barbara Sanderson (*sic*), of 265 Great Northern Road, Aberdeen, also recorded as his next of kin (*The National Archives, Scotland*). I have a copy of the will. His service record was destroyed in the blitz on London in World War Two.

I wrote an article for the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* to try to trace any descendants of the Barbara Sanderson mentioned in James Fraser's will. It was a long shot, but one Wednesday evening our phone rang. On the line was Audrey McGregor, from Aberdeen, the granddaughter of Barbara Sanderson – *and James Fraser*.

James died on April 10th, 1917, leaving everything to his unmarried sweetheart Barbara Sanderson – we now know her surname was actually ‘Sandison’, and looking closely once more at James’s will we can see efforts to correct the spelling of the name. Searching further reveals that Barbara placed an advertisement in the *Aberdeen Journal* of July 9th, 1917, when she heard of her James’s loss:



In September 1917, Barbara gave birth to her illegitimate daughter. She named the little girl *Jamesina Fraser Sandison*. Here is the birth certificate, with the father’s details poignantly absent:



Given the extraordinary name for a girl, and the fact that the addresses on this certificate, in the newspaper announcement and in James Fraser’s will are identical, there seems to be no doubt whatsoever that Jamesina was James Fraser’s daughter. Whether he knew his ‘sweetheart’ was pregnant, as he lay at the casualty clearing station dying of his wounds, we

shall never know. Nor can we know poor Barbara's thoughts when she received news of James's death, but we can imagine them from the faithfulness with which she recorded his death, and named their daughter.

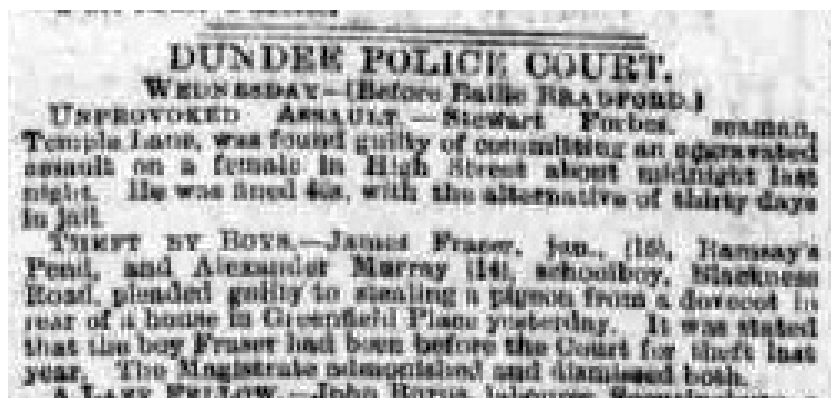
Their daughter became Jamesina Petrie, mother of Audrey McGregor, her sister Pat and her three brothers Bill, Richard and David. Audrey and her family have no information on the grandfather they never knew, mainly, they believe, because of the stigma of illegitimacy. Barbara emigrated to America in 1929, leaving Jamesina, 11, behind. Barbara was joining her uncle, James Thow, in Barre, Vermont. Barbara and her daughter kept in touch until Jamesina died in 1963, aged just 46. Barbara's Scottish grandchildren then lost touch with her after 1966. Barbara married Cornelius Collins Robb (1892-1945), a stone cutter from Kent, in Barre, Vermont, in 1936 and they had two daughters, Jean and Roberta. Records show they lived in the same house in Perrin Street from 1935 until Barbara Sandison died on February 2nd 1970. She is buried in Hope Cemetery, Barre, an ocean away from the grave of her once lover, James Fraser, at Roclincourt Cemetery, near Arras, in France.

6: Ninian's father, James Fraser

So what happened to James Fraser after 1899 and the death of his mother, wife and mother-in-law in the space of 10 months, leaving him with a babe in arms and two small children?

We cannot find the young brothers anywhere in the 1901 census for Scotland - the only hint is a James Fraser of the right age, 6, recorded as a boarder with a Robert and Jessie Fraser in Dundee, but Robert and Jessie do not appear to be family members. Of Ninian there is no glimpse at all. James himself may be lodging with a Betsy Spence; there is a James Fraser registered there as a calendar worker (another mill job), of roughly the right age. I cannot find a Margaret.

We can guess that James Fraser had a tough upbringing. The *Evening Telegraph* of August 26th, 1886:



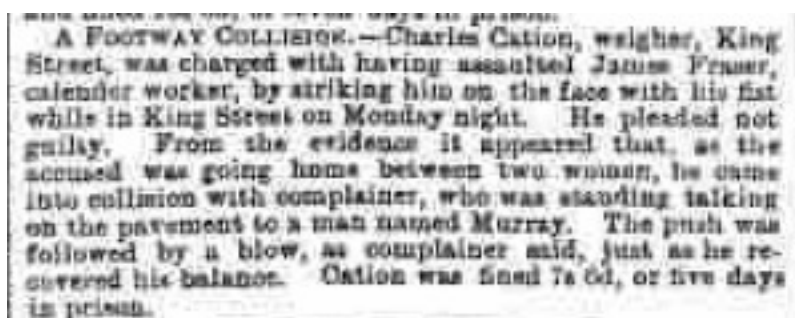
Is this our James Fraser? Note that the age is correct (15), that he is James Fraser junior, therefore his father was James too, and note that the Ramsay's Pond address matches that in the trial of Ninian Fraser three years later. If the clues in the 1886 report lead us to our man, then Alexander Murray provides a vital evidential link for it seems James's relationship with Alexander was a long one. The pair were in trouble again in 1888, when, on February 28th, the *Evening Telegraph* reported:

Alex Murray (16), millworker, Blackness Square, and James Fraser (14), millworker, Scouringburn, pleaded guilty to stealing a cotton sheet from a clothes line in rear of a house in Ure Street. It was mentioned that in August

1886 the prisoners were before the Court and admonished for stealing pigeons. They were sent to jail for three days each.

The case was covered in the *Courier* too. Note that ‘a pigeon’ from 1886 had become ‘pigeons’ by 1888 – James’s defence team can’t have been very good! James’s age, 14 and therefore incorrect, is interesting – it’s definitely the same pair as the 1886 report because of the reference to the pigeon theft. Was it a reporter’s mistake or did James give a false age. Could he, then, pass for 14?

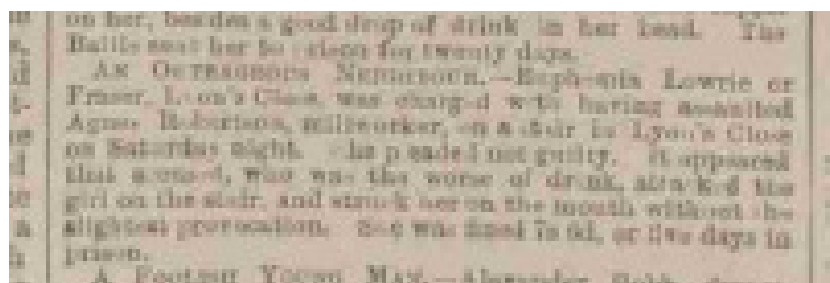
There is a hint of their friendship in another court case – this time our man is the victim, not the perpetrator, but it gives an indication of the world he moved in – reported in the *Dundee Courier* on March 2nd 1892:



A FOOTWAY COLLISION.—Charles Cation, weigher, King Street, was charged with having assaulted James Fraser, calender worker, by striking him on the face with his fist while in King Street on Monday night. He pleaded not guilty. From the evidence it appeared that, as the accused was going home between two women, he came into collision with complainer, who was standing talking on the pavement to a man named Murray. The push was followed by a blow, as complainer said, just as he recovered his balance. Cation was fined 7s 6d, or five days in prison.

Calender worker was another jute mill job, and we know our James worked in the industry.

The world the Frasers moved in... Here, from the *Dundee Courier* of November 14th 1893, is evidence that Ninian’s and James’s mother Euphemia was not a stranger to the law, either:



...on her, besides a good drop of drink in her head. The Bailie sent her to prison for twenty days.
AN OUTRAGEOUS NEIGHBOUR.—Euphemia Lowrie or Fraser, Lyon's Close, was charged with having assaulted Agnes Robertson, millworker, on a chair in Lyon's Close on Saturday night. She pleaded not guilty. It appeared that a woman, who was the worse of drink, attacked the girl on the chair, and struck her on the mouth without the slightest provocation. She was fined 10s, or five days in prison.
A FOULISH YOUNG MAN.—Alexander Ball, ...

Then, the *Dundee Evening Post* of 11th August 1900 reported:

Sherriff Sym at Perth today fined three Dundee poachers – James Fraser, labourer, Scouringburn; Andrew Grainger, labourer, Overgate; and Alexander Murray, labourer, Dens Road - £3, or, failing payment, sentenced them to 21 days imprisonment.

We must note that we know our James Fraser lived at 17 Scouringburn in 1904. It seems probable that Ninian’s father James had a stormy relationship with the law stretching from 1886 to 1900...

But what happened after that 1900 glimpse of the poacher James Fraser?

Dad remembered that Ninian used to refer with dislike to a woman named ‘Annie Crow’. Could this mean anything? I searched Scotland’s People for a marriage between James Fraser and an ‘Annie’.

And this led to the discovery that James Fraser married again, in Dundee, in 1904 (when he had the Scouringburn address). His bride was Annie Coutts. The parents are James’s parents; he is a widower; this is without question our man. (Note that Annie’s mother was Annie Culbert).

1904 FRASER, JAMES - COUTTS, ANNIE (Statutory Marriages 282/02 0099)

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(Page 50.)

1904. MARRIAGES in the District of St. Mary in the Burgh of Dundee

No.	When, Where, and How Married.	Signatures of Parties. Rank or Profession, Whether Single or Widowed, and Relationship (if any).	Age.	Usual Residence.	Name, Surname, and Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	If a regular Marriage, Signatures of officiating Minister and Witnesses. If Irregular, Date of Contract, Name of Celebrant, or Sheriff's Warrant.	When & Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
99	1904 on the eighth day of April at 17 Scouringburn Dundee.	Signed/ James Fraser John Keppner Widower	38	Scouringburn Dundee.	James Fraser Margie Alice Jones Catherine Fraser M. S. Leungie Deceased	Signed/ Walter H. Legard Charles W. S. Church	1904 April 13 th At Dundee
	after Publication according to the Terms of the United Free Church.	Signed/ James Coutts John Keppner Spinster	21	Scouringburn Dundee.	William Coutts John Mill Wilson Annie Coutts M. S. Culbert	Signed/ Alexander James Mitchell Walter Annie Mitchell Widower	At Dundee M. S. Meek Registrar.
100	1904 on the eighth day of April at 23 Albany Terrace Dundee.	Signed/ Andrew Fitzgald John Butler's Labourer Spinster	20	19 Glamis Street Dundee.	Thomas Fitzgald Commercial Traveller Deceased James Fitzgald M. S. Buchanan	Signed/ W. S. Murray of St. David's Parish.	1904 April 13 th At Dundee
	after Banns according to the Terms of the Established Church of Scotland.	Signed/ James Machar John Keppner Spinster	19	16 Calton Street Dundee.	William Machar John Machar Elizabeth Machar Elizabeth Machar M. S. McDonald	Signed/ George Machar Walter Margaret Ann Christie Widower	At Dundee M. S. Meek Registrar.

M. S. Meek Registrar.

We now also know that James and Annie had a son, Robert, born a year later:

1905 FRASER, ROBERT KNIGHT (Statutory Births 282/02 0410)

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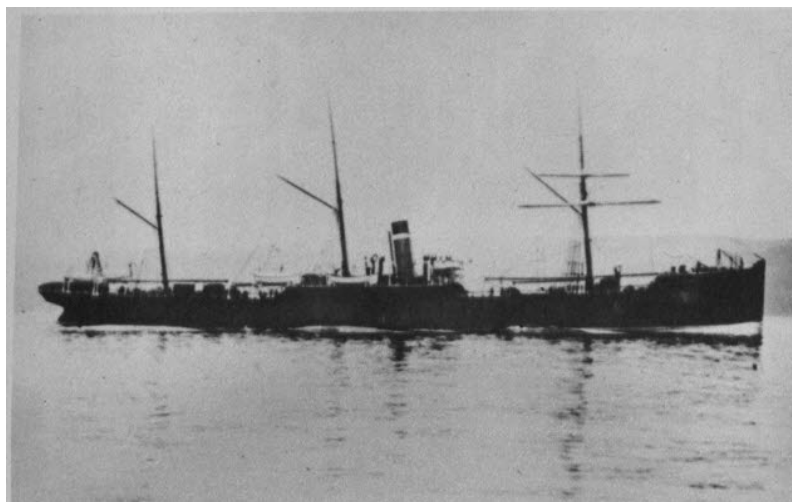
Page 137.

1905. BIRTHS in the District of St. Mary in the Burgh of Dundee

No.	Name and Surname.	When and Where Born.	Sex.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother. Date and Place of Marriage.	Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
409	David Morrison Murray	1905. May 7 Leaforth 3 rd 30 th a.m. 26 Gardner Street Dundee	M	William Murray Clerkie Gas. Works Jane Murray M. J. Stewart 1892, April 7 th , Dundee	William Murray Father (Present)	1905. May 22 nd At Dundee M. J. Meek Registrar
410	Robert Knight Fraser	1905. May 7 Leaforth 9 th 10 th a.m. 17 Leaningbush Dundee	M	James Fraser Assistant Gate Mill Operative Annie Fraser M. J. Coultie 1904, April 8 th , Dundee	Annie Fraser Mother	1905. May 22 nd At Dundee M. J. Meek Registrar
411	William Bennett Kelly	1905. May 11 Dunfermline 11 th 30 th p.m. Maternity Hospital Dundee	M	James Kelly Wharf Yard Labourer Demigil: 12 Radfield Walk, Dundee Annie Kelly M. J. Coultie 1900, December 31 st , Dundee	Annie Kelly Mother	1905. May 22 nd At Dundee M. J. Meek Registrar

M. J. Meek Registrar

What happened then? In 1906, James and Annie Fraser (*sic*), from Dundee, travelling with an infant called Robert, their son, and a seven-year-old girl called Maggie, who we now know to have been James's daughter from his marriage to Margaret Burns, sailed from Glasgow to Boston, Massachusetts, USA, on board the SS *Corean*.



The SS Corean

On the ship's manifest, James is described as a mill worker. Annie is listed as having been in America before - "seven years, Brooklyn". James is described as cross-eyed, a hereditary condition. My Dad has it; I have it. They were among 213 passengers. James had \$4 in his pocket.

They are headed for Andover, Massachusetts and "father-in-law James Ross", who has paid for their passage.

BALCONY, CABIN, AND STEERAGE ALIENS MUST BE COMPLETELY MANIFESTED.
THIS SHEET IS FOR STEERAGE PASSENGERS.

List 2

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE U. S. IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL.

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved March 3, 1903, to be delivered to the U. S. Immigration Officer by the Commanding Officer of any vessel having such passengers on board upon arrival at a port in the United States.

S. S. *Urean* sailing from *Glasgow* *21 April 1906* Arriving at Port of *Boston* *11 May 1906* 157

No.	NAME IN FULL	Age	Sex	Married	Calling	Place of Birth	Nationality	Last Residence	Final Destination	Whether having a ticket for such final destination	By whom passage paid?	Whether ever before in the United States and if so, when and where?	Whether going to join a relative or friend and if so, what relative or friend, and his name and complete address.	Has any other person been admitted to the vessel in violation of the laws of the United States?	Whether a Pauper or Alien	Condition of Health	Defect of Speech, Mute, Deaf, Blind, etc.
1	John Boyle	30	M		Labourer	Ireland	Irish	Johnstown	Worcester	yes	Antonia	no	Andover in law - Thomas Boyle			No	No
2	Bernard J. Quinn	40	M		Labourer	Ireland	Irish	Wexford	Worcester	yes	Antonia	no	Andover in law - Thomas Boyle			No	No
3	Margaret Graham	38	F		Wife	Scotland	Scottish	Glasgow	Boston	yes	Theresa	no	Andover in law - Thomas Boyle			No	No
4	Maria	18	F		Family											No	No
5	Annie	18	F		Family											No	No
6	Margaret	16	F		Family											No	No
7	James	17	M		Family											No	No
8	John	10	M		Family											No	No
9	David	10	M		Family											No	No
10	James Hager	29	M		Labourer	Ireland	Irish	Dundee	Andover	yes	James Ross	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
11	Annie	29	F		Wife											No	No
12	Maggie	7	F		Family											No	No
13	Robert	3 1/2	M		Family											No	No
14	Hennigan Edward	31	M		Labourer	Ireland	Irish	Glasgow	Boston	yes	Thomas	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
15	Michael	26	M		Family											No	No
16	Alexander McLean	24	M		Labourer	Scotland	Scottish	Glasgow	Boston	yes	self	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
17	George McLean	21	M		Labourer	Scotland	Scottish	Glasgow	Boston	yes	self	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
18	John McLean	18	M		Family											No	No
19	Robert McLean	16	M		Family											No	No
20	James Sage	20	M		Labourer	Scotland	Scottish	Birmingham	Boston	yes	self	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
21	William McDonnell	21	M		Labourer	Scotland	Scottish	Birmingham	Boston	yes	self	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
22	Henry Scott	21	M		Labourer	Scotland	Scottish	Birmingham	Boston	yes	self	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
23	Andrew Adamhead	20	M		Labourer	Scotland	Scottish	Glasgow	Boston	yes	self	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
24	Alexander King	20	M		Labourer	Scotland	Scottish	Glasgow	Boston	yes	self	no	Andover in law - James Ross			No	No
25	Robert McLean	19	M		Family											No	No
26	Margaret McLean	18	F		Family											No	No
27	Robert McLean	17	M		Family											No	No
28	John McLean	16	M		Family											No	No
29	John McLean	15	M		Family											No	No
30	John McLean	14	M		Family											No	No

J.M. CAN. I.T. ALIENS TOTAL
26 28

Andover is a town in Essex County, Massachusetts, where textile mills prospered from the late 1780s to the middle of this century.

For some of the following information, I am grateful to Robert Gaudette, who lives in New Hampshire, USA. Bob kindly got in touch when I contacted him through Ancestry.com; he is the stepson of Margaret Fraser's grandson, and it is Bob who filled in some vital gaps in my knowledge of what happened to the family in America. He put me in touch with Margaret's son Mr William Wood, now 92, who has graciously provided us with much more information about the Frasers in America.

Presumably James and Annie moved there hoping for better times; if so, better times certainly did not arrive at first. Little Robert died before his first birthday.

A clue to what the boy meant to Annie Fraser is in his name: Robert Knight. Remember the discrepancy over her father's name – William Coutts on her marriage certificate, James Ross on the *Corean's* manifest? Actually, on her birth in 1883 in Arbroath, she was illegitimate – no father is recorded by her mum Annie Craig Culbert, who later, presumably, married William Coutts. In 1891 the younger Annie was living in Arbroath with her mother's sister Isabella and her husband Robert Knight – she must have thought a lot of the man who took her in to name her son after him.

But little Robert's fate was terribly cruel, perhaps the most upsetting of all the little tragedies that make up this history. He was taken across the Atlantic in search of a new life and better times, but within days, on May 30th 1906, he died of infantile marasmus, another way of saying – malnutrition. His new start in America lasted only from May 11th, when the *Corean* arrived in Boston.

In 1910, Annie and her stepdaughter Margaret, with Annie's son Alfred (whose fate is so far unknown to us) were living in Higgins Court, Andover, though there is no sign of James. They have a lodger, James Smith.

So... did James Fraser simply abandon his sons in Scotland, or did he make some sort of provision for their care? If he did, that provision did not, seemingly, come from his direct family, for none of his brothers and sisters have James or Ninian with them in the 1901 or 1911 census returns. We have no record of any contact between James Fraser and his sons, but thanks to that lodger, James Smith, we do now know for *certain* that he *did* maintain contact with at least one member of his wider family back in Scotland.

James Smith is the husband of James Fraser's sister Catherine; he sailed to the States in July 1909 aboard the SS *Laurentian*, and the ship's manifest notes he is on his way to join James Fraser in Andover, at 16 Higgins Court. This is *definitive* evidence of family contact, and may suggest there was some sort of contact between James and his boys.

America didn't work out for James Smith – by the 1911 census the glazier was back at home in Dundee with Catherine and their children.

But James Fraser stayed. Maybe he was away looking for work in 1910, because by the 1920 US Census, the family is living in another, nearby, mill town, Passaic, New Jersey. James is a mill hand. His ill-fated daughter Adeline, b c1915, is with them and offers a clue that the family moved back to Andover shortly after the 1920 Census was taken: she died aged six, and was buried in Andover. Their other children, William (b c1911), Alexander (b c1912), John (b c1918), and Peter (b c1919) offer a further clue that their time in Passaic was brief – only Peter is recorded as born in New Jersey, so they may have been there just from 1918 to 1920.

In the 1930 US census, James Frazier and Annie C Frazier (*sic*) are living at 13 Post Office Avenue in Andover with their children William C (b1911), Alexander (1912), John C R (1918), Peter C (1919), Celia M (1921) and Richard B (1924). The property was rented for \$22 a month, and the family had a radio set.

James, apparently, could not read or write – though the *Corean's* manifest said he could, and we think he signed the birth and death registrations of Margaret and Ninian 31 years earlier. John, Peter, Celia and Richard had attended school in the last year.

James was 34 when the couple married, Annie 21. They are now 58 and 47. Their year of immigration is given as 1906. It is unclear whether they are naturalised Americans.

Neither James nor Annie have an occupation. William is a pin setter in a bowling alley, Alexander a helper machinist in a rubber goods factory. Only the two boys are working. William was at work the day before, Alexander was not, and has line number 28 on unemployment schedule.

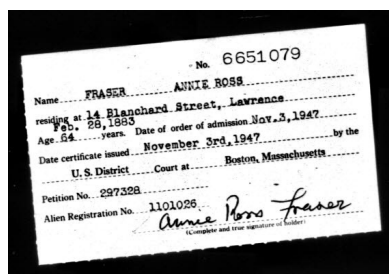
Peter C Fraser, born New Jersey 1918, living in Essex County, Ma, enlisted in the US Army on Feb 25 1943, 31299693. He'd been educated to grammar school level, and was employed in the semi-skilled warehousing sector. He was white, single and without dependents.

A John C Fraser, born 1917 in Massachusetts, living in Essex County, Mass, enlisted in the army on April 30 1946 (20104527) for the Hawaiian department at Fort Devens, Mass. He was white, educated to grammar school level, and without dependents. He'd enlisted on Jan 16 1941 in the National Guard infantry at Lawrence, Mass. He was occupied in unskilled occupations in the manufacture of boots and shoes. A John C Fraser is buried in the veterans' section of the cemetery in Andover, Massachusetts.

What of James Fraser?

He died in Massachusetts in 1940, aged 67, and was buried in Andover's Spring Grove Cemetery. His life had taken him from Perth to tragedy in the streets of Dundee and on to America and a large family. Did his son in Scotland ever know what had become of his father? Did James ever know what had become of his son Ninian? Did he know of his namesake son? We have no evidence at all of contact between them, and it is unlikely that we'll ever know.

We have an indexed record from 1947 suggesting that Annie, no longer Annie C but now Annie Ross Fraser, applied to become a naturalised American:



At what point and how she resolved the issue of her parentage we may never know, but it seems clear that there must have been some sort of reconciliation or acknowledgement before she arrived in the States in 1906, for James Ross paid for her passage. Maybe she had visited

him earlier, between 1891, when we know she was in Arbroath, and 1906, when the *Corean's* manifest noted she had spent seven years in Brooklyn. Given that she was variously known as Annie Culbert, Annie Ross and Annie Coutts, I've had great difficulty tracing her travel between Scotland and the States, but I would like to resolve a bit more of her tangled family background. An Annie Ross, aged 20, arrived in Glasgow from New York in 1900. She was a servant.

The other question about Annie's parentage, to me, is this: did James Ross go to America because he had fathered an illegitimate child?

Annie Ross Fraser died in Broadway Nursing Home, Methuen, Ma, on December 3rd 1957, aged 74. She is identified as the widow of James Fraser, and was born in 1883. Most crucially, it names her mother as Annie Culbert, but her father as James Ross – again and *conclusively* linking that name to our search. Her death was registered by her son, William C Fraser, of 7 Durham St, Lawrence – also given as Annie's address.

We have now 'met' more of James Fraser's family in America, thanks to his grand-daughter Christina Fraser. She wrote from her home in Pennsylvania, and thanks to her we have an image of Annie and some more pictures of the extended family.

I am Christina Fraser, the daughter of Peter Fraser (son of Ninian Fraser's father James and his second wife Annie) and currently live in Lancaster, PA.

I am so incredibly happy to find the information you have compiled on the Frasers in Scotland. I actually do not even know where to begin...

I am Peter's youngest daughter and was told very little about his side of the family during my childhood. When I was twelve, I began to ask questions and urge him to find his family. Seems he had broken off contact with his brothers shortly before I was born, in 1960. It was through finding Margaret (Ninian Fraser's sister, born to James Fraser and Maggie Burns in Dundee in 1897, taken to America by James and Annie) that he located and reconnected with Bill and Richard. I remember meeting Margaret when I was around 15.

My father died in 2010 and only left a few stories and photos. I am so glad that I have those and even more grateful for what you have compiled.



This is Annie Coutts, James Fraser's second wife, with whom he emigrated to America and had a second family.

Sadly I do not have a photo of James.



From left, the Fraser brothers Peter, Richard, Alec, Bill and John.

I am still putting together details of your research with the loose ends of stories shared by my dad. My father rarely spoke of his family and only when asked specific questions. I will never be sure what he knew and what he chose not to acknowledge. He loved Margaret, that I know, and I am fairly certain that he knew nothing of the other half siblings left behind in Scotland (Ninian Fraser and his brother James).

My father was gentle, kind and very funny in an understated way. He also carried with him a deep grief that never expressed itself. Much of it may have been carried over from a familial sadness and the rest from his own personal losses. Despite all of that, he rarely complained or had a bad word to say about anybody.

What he told me of his siblings...

His sisters, Adeline and Celia Mae were taken early, as you know. Adeline died from an illness and Celia Mae drowned saving the life of a friend that had fallen through the ice of a frozen pond.

Neither Bill, John nor Alec ever married. Bill lived with and cared for Annie until her death. John, Alec and my dad enlisted, presumably to help support

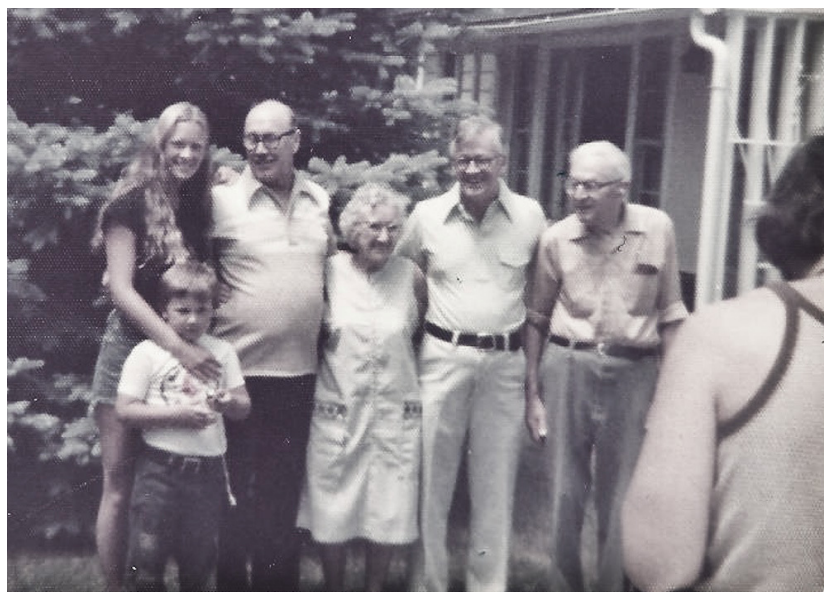
the family. It is not clear how much work James found in the US, but sometime during my dad's adolescence he was too sick to work.

According to my dad, John and Alec fell victim to alcohol and he attributed that to their early deaths.

My dad and Richard were the only children of James and Annie to have children of their own. Both married twice. In an ironic twist, both first marriages ended with their wives leaving, with their children, for other men. Richard had three children and my father, four. It devastated my Dad and I know it changed him. Richard remarried and had 5 more children. My dad remarried, adopted mother's daughter, and then had me. While I don't have many memories of Uncle Richard, he too was gentle, warm and funny.



*Richard Fraser, Margaret Fraser Wood, Peter Fraser, Lymert Wood and
Richard's daughter Cindy, 1975.*



Christina, Richard, Margaret, Peter and Lymert, 1975.

This discovery has been such a gift. Even though we can only speculate about the why of certain decisions, it is grounding to have some sense of the lives of those that came before us.

And finally, from Andoverma.gov, the website of the town of Andover, Massachusetts, a search of Spring Grove Cemetery's records reveals:

Lot Detail Section W Lot 495 B.

Last Name	First Name	Initial	Age	Sex	Interment Date	Section	Lot
FRASER	ADELINE	R	6	F	09/24/1920	W	495 B
FRASER	ANNIE	R	74	F	12/10/1957	W	495 B
FRASER	CELIA	M	10	F	04/10/1931	W	495 B
FRASER	JAMES		67	M	04/20/1940	W	495 B
ROSS	JAMES		32	M	06/06/1949	W	495 B
ROSS	MARY ANN		75	F	12/13/1961	W	495 B
ROSS	WILLIAM	C	48	M	09/01/1935	W	495 B

TERWILLIGER	CAROLYN		1	F	04/17/1946	W	495 B
-------------	---------	--	---	---	------------	---	-------

James and Annie were buried with their two little daughters, and close to members of the Ross family. The following other James Rosses are buried:

ROSS	JAMES		37	M	09/07/1900	W	217	Link
ROSS	JAMES		32	M	06/06/1949	W	495 B	Link
ROSS	JAMES		57	M	11/20/1949	A	502	Link
ROSS	JAMES		60	M	08/15/1924	A	502	Link

And the following Coutts burials are listed. Annie Fraser's father was a William Coutts on her marriage certificate, and seemingly married her mother Annie Culbert.

Last Name	First Name	Initial	Age	Sex	Interment Date	Section	Lot	Link
COUTTS	DAVID	L	71	M	04/27/1953	W	199	Link
COUTTS	ISABELLLA	M	45	F	09/29/1899	W	199	Link
COUTTS	JEAN	G	87	F	09/09/1969	W	199	Link
COUTTS	WILLIAM	C	91	M	04/15/1941	W	199	Link

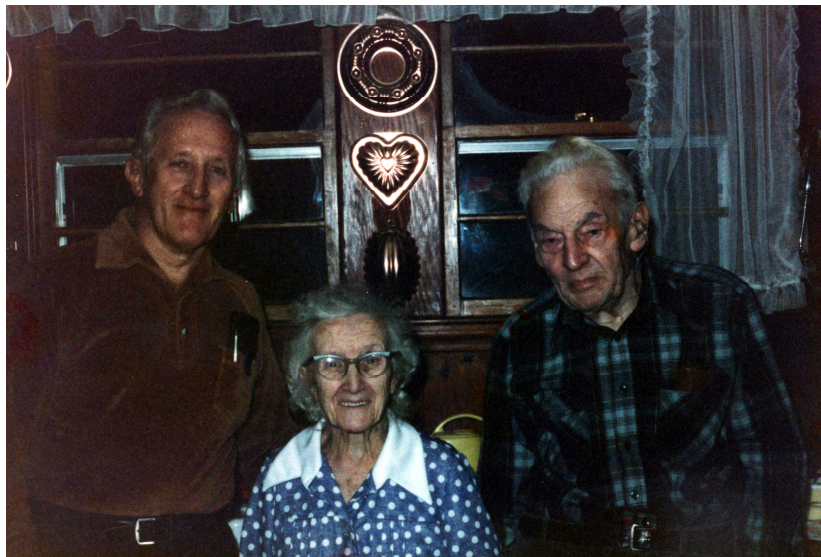
It's interesting that Ross and Coutts figure in the same cemetery, the last resting place of Ninian Fraser's father James.



Spring Grove Cemetery, Andover.

8: Ninian's sister, Margaret

Margaret Fraser's family provide us with some fascinating evidence of the Fraser family in America. None of Ninian Fraser's family even knew she existed until this research began, but now, thanks to Bob Gaudette and William Wood, we can see her face for the first time:



Top, Margaret is pictured in 1983 with her son William on the left and her husband Lymert Wood on the right. Above, Margaret at Christmas 1982.

Margaret was born in Dundee's Blackness Road in 1897:

Page 171.

1897. BIRTHS in the District of St Kater in the Burgh of Dundee

No.	Name and Surname.	When and Where Born.	Sex.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father, Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother. Date and Place of Marriage.	Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
511	Margaret	1897.	St	James Fraser	Maggie Fraser	1897.
	Fraser	July		Sabina (nee Mack)	Muller	July 13 th
		2 nd 30 th St.		Maggie Fraser		At Dundee.
		14		Mrs. Cairns		J. G. Muller
		Blantyre Road Dundee.		1894 January 1 st Dundee		Registrar.
				(James W. Cairns)	1897.	

The signature of Maggie Fraser is just about all that's left of Margaret's (and Ninian's and James's) poor mum, who died two years later in 1899 aged 26.

We know that Margaret was in Andover in 1910 and 1920 from census returns (by 1920, she had moved out of the family home and seems to have been renting an apartment by herself). In the 1920s, she married her husband Lymert Wood, and by the 1930 census the Woods and their children are a growing family.

Margaret's son William Wood, first cousin to the Frasers of Plymouth, now in his 90s, has kindly written this summary of the life of the American branch of the family from his perspective:

Bob Gaudette has passed on the remarkable work you have done in researching your family's history. I will try to add to your work.

Your great aunt Margaret was my mother. Mom and Dad were married in Andover December 25, 1919. Dad was 17, Mom was 22. Their first child was brother John Warren Wood on March 10, 1921. I arrived next on March 25, 1922 followed by brother Philip Lymert Wood on February 26, 1928. Dad's name was Lymert Everett Wood, and except for Mom, we all were born in Andover.

We brothers entered the world into relative comfort and security due to our grandfather, John Thomas Wood, being superintendant of a textile mill in a section of Andover called Ballardvale. The textile company provided a mansion for him and his family next to the mill. My grandfather, grandmother,

Dad's sister Aileen, and two large Angora cats lived there. We lived in a nice rental house a short walk away.

When the depression struck the U.S. in 1929 Mom, Dad, and we three brothers moved to Lawrence Massachusetts where Dad went to work as an automobile mechanic. Now that we lived in a nice single home Mom showed us what she was capable of: keeping the house sparkling clean, comfortable, and full of love. She was an innovative cook with the scarcity of food in those times. We boys were educated in Lawrence schools through high school.

I enlisted in the Marine Corps in August 1940 for 4 years. Warren tried to enlist at the same time but didn't pass the medical exam. However, when the war came to the U.S. the army air force took him.

During the war Warren was stationed at an airfield in England with our Eightieth Air Force. After the war Warren married a fine lady who had a boy and girl from a previous marriage. In 1950 they all moved to Fort Worth, Texas where the family remains today in 2013. Warren served in the Strategic Air Command (SAC) for several years and then went to work at Bell Helicopter Company. Following his retirement he and his wife moved to an assisted living home. Warren passed away in February 2006, a month short of reaching 85. I attended his funeral and gave his eulogy with much emotion. He was a wonderful brother, a true blessing from the Lord.

Brother Philip was 12 when I left home in 1940. In 1938 he suffered a fractured skull from a fall on the ice during an ice hockey game. He was taken to the hospital in Lawrence where he was on the critical list for over a week. Mom was devastated but was there for Philip all through the ordeal. He resumed a normal life and eventually got married to a lady who already had several children. Philip had one son, Brett, from that marriage.

Philip and his wife separated and Philip returned to live with Mom and Dad in Andover. He was then, and for some time, a driver of "semi" trucks (tractor trailers). In 1964, one night, around 2:00am, Mom and Dad were awakened

by a noise from the adjacent bedroom where they found Philip thrashing around under his bed where he died. Cause of death was diagnosed an aneurism in his head.

I was in Bowie, Maryland (where I remain today) when Dad called on the telephone. I could only imagine the shock and grief that Mom and Dad experienced. Philip was 36. He was interred in the Wood family plot in Spring Grove Cemetery in Andover. I've often wondered if his skull fracture was a factor in Philip's demise. I doubt if Mom ever fully recovered from losing Philip.

Over the years Mom and Dad had many friends in Lawrence and Andover. Mom was a member of the Free Christian Church in Andover where many of her friends worshipped. Dad would drive Mom to church on Sunday but he seldom attended to my knowledge. Mom was also a member of the Margaret Slattery class which we assume was a Bible study group.

In 1986, while on a visit home to Andover, I first became aware that Mom was occasionally repeating comments. Dad was retired and becoming aware of Mom's condition. He devoted his time to helping Mom cope with something she was not capable of understanding. Dad reluctantly accepted the fact that he could not take care of her and she was placed in a convalescent home in Lawrence. Mom eventually lost her memory and forgot who we were. It was a heart wrenching time. Mom passed away in 1991. She is interred in the Wood family plot in Spring Grove Cemetery.

On January 1, 1992 my wife, Peggy, entered the hospital for an operation to remove a quarter of her lung where cancer had been found. She never recovered from the operation and spent weeks under intensive care. I lost my lovely wife of 47 years on February 12, 1992.

Peggy and I were married on July 9, 1945. I had been discharged from the Marine Corps in February 1945. Our first and only child, son George Addison Wood, was born in Lawrence on March 5, 1946. He was named after Peggy's

father who had died in 1943. Mom was delighted with her first grandchild and she and George remained bonded throughout their normal time together. Mom had two other grandsons, John, Warren's son, and Brett, Philip's son.

When Warren and I were going to grammar school (Grades 4-8) in Lawrence, we became aware of Mom's step brothers. I believe that's how Mom referred to them. Mom never mentioned that she had two brothers that I can recall.

Warren and I knew where the Frasers lived in the 30s but we never developed a close relationship because of the age difference. I don't remember any of the Frasers visiting our home at 10 Amher Street in Lawrence.

In 1959 I obtained a job with the Federal Government in Washington. Peggy and I bought a new home in Bowie, Maryland-- which is about 25 miles east of Washington D.C. At some point Peter Fraser got in touch with me, I don't recall when. However, I obtained his address in Alexandria Virginia, a suburb of Washington DC. I remember occasional visits back and forth but nothing stands out.

Peter came alone to Mom's funeral in 1991. I believe Peter stayed overnight at Mom and Dad's home.

After the funeral Peter and I were talking about Mom and he said that Margaret was older than his brothers and that "she took care of us." I replied she had a different mother and so "you were her stepbrothers." Peter seemed stunned. I was sorry I had brought it up.

1991 was a bad year, not only for Mom's funeral, but because my wife Peggy was having trouble with her ability to breathe. She died in 1992. The following year, 1993, Dad died of pneumonia. Three tough years. I have not been in contact with Peter since 1992.

During those years, 1982 to 1990, one other incident comes to mind. I can't pinpoint the year but I remember Dad telling me by telephone that John

Fraser had been living in Lawrence but had died. I seem to remember that Alec (Alexander) had let Mom and Dad know. I believe that is how it happened because Dad had been given a Smith and Wesson revolver that John had owned. Dad gave the gun to me and I called Peter to ask him if he wanted it. He did, so I took it to him.

One other thing that has puzzled me since receiving your material concerns William. Your report from Spring Grove Cemetery shows that William was 59 when he was interred there. I now remember on different occasions asking Peter where Bill and Richard were and how they were doing. Peter would tell me that Bill was in California and Richard was out that way also. This apparent conflict with information leads me to believe that Peter may have lost contact with his brothers.

One last thing, Bob Gaudette's stepfather, my son, George, looked at the photo of Ninian holding you when you were a baby and said to me that if he had not known who Ninian was he would have believed it was me (at least in profile). It's an evidence of my Fraser gene.

9: The Fraser brothers in Scotland

So what did happen to Ninian and James Fraser between 1899 and 1911?

So far, we have no idea why James Fraser chose his daughter to accompany his new family to America and left his sons James and Ninian behind in Scotland. Did he just abandon them, or did he make provision for them? Did they wave him off from the Glasgow quayside? Did they exchange letters? What financial arrangements were made? Clearly James and Annie Fraser were by no means wealthy, and none of the other Frasers seems to have had money.

Until now, we knew nothing of Ninian's fate between his mother's death in 1899 and his enlistment in the Royal Navy in 1915, when his address was given as 1 Gateside Cottages, Denhead, St Andrew's, Fife. He was a cattleman.

This research has shown that in the months following poor Maggie's death, it is likely that Ninian's grandmother Mary Ann Slater cared for him, James and Margaret: when she died in December, her address was 26 Horsewater Wynd. She was buried in a plot, or lair, owned by her daughter Grace Carroll, and in Dundee City Council's record of burials in Balgay Cemetery, we find that Grace gave her address as 26 Horsewater Wynd too. So we can surmise that maybe Grace helped look after the children, too.

From the 1911 census, we now know that Ninian, aged 11, was a boarder in the home of 65-year-old widow Agnes Robertson, down the road from Denhead in the hamlet of Crossgates, on the way to Peat Inn (a location my father Graham remembers his dad Ninian talking about).

02/04/1911 FRASER, NENIAN (Census 1911 412/00 001/00 009)

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House No.	ROAD, STREET, etc. OR NO. or NAME of HOUSE.	Rooms with one of more Windows.	NAME and SURNAME of each Person.	RELATION to Head of Family.	Age in Years.	Gender.	Particulars as to Marriages.
1	Cameron	4	James Cameron	Head	60	M	
			Agnes Robertson	Wife	68	F	
			John Cameron	Son	39	M	
			James Cameron	Son	35	M	
2	Denhead	4	John Robertson	Head	66	M	
			Betty Robertson	Wife	69	F	
			Thomas Robertson	Son	28	M	
			James Robertson	Son	27	M	
			William Robertson	Son	2	M	
			Betty Robertson	Daughter	10	F	
3	Cameron	5	James Cameron	Head	69	M	
			Agnes Robertson	Wife	65	F	
			James Cameron	Son	20	M	
			Agnes Robertson	Daughter	18	F	
			Edith Robertson	Daughter	16	F	
4			James Cameron	Head	48	M	
5			Agnes Robertson	Head	65	F	
			William King	Son	9	M	
			John King	Son	13	M	
			William King	Son	11	M	
6			John Robertson	Head	50	M	
			Isabella Pratt	Wife	36	F	
7			James Cameron	Head	60	M	
8	Cameron	11	John Robertson	Head	45	M	
			Agnes Robertson	Wife	42	F	
			John Robertson	Son	20	M	
			Barbara Robertson	Daughter	17	F	
			James Robertson	Son	15	M	

Ninian is at school, and shares his lodgings with two other boys, William and John Haig. This area, Denhead and Peat Inn, were the only places he spoke about to my father; he spoke of playing in the road, and of being ticked off by a local clockmaker. Dad encountered this man in Scotland in the 1960s, and he remembered, with a tut, “those Frasers”.

Why Agnes Robertson? How did Ninian come to be there?

Agnes Robertson was born in 1846, the daughter of William Watson and Ann McCowan, in Cameron parish, Fife. Crossgates and Denhead are both in the parish. Cameron is a small rural parish, largely a farming community, near the golfing and university town of St Andrews, where Agnes died on March 13th 1928. She married John Robertson in 1876, but although they were married for 35 years, they had no children. John died in March 1911 (the couple are buried together in the Cathedral Cemetery at St Andrews, section E, row 4, lair 2). In the announcement of her death in the *People's Journal*, Agnes's last address is at Priormuir, an area of St Andrews. She is described as the widow of John Robertson, ‘formerly Cutty-hillock’ – Cutty-hillock is a now abandoned farm in Cameron parish. John Robertson was the farmer at Cutty Hillock Farm in the 1891 census, living with Agnes and

his father Lawrence, 86, and her mother Ann Watson, 73. Ann Watson was born in Comrie, Perth, c1818. They cannot have lived there long, even though it was clearly the most important of Agnes's addresses (to have featured in her death announcement), because in 1881 they were living at Claremont Lodge in St Andrews parish, and by 1901 they had moved to the Cameron hamlet of Peat Inn.

The crucial question, to me, is whether there was any sort of familial link between Frasers and Robertsons – if I can show that, it would be strong evidence that James had actively made provision for his sons rather than left them to their fates. Perhaps the strongest clue to a link is that Agnes's death was registered by a nephew whose name seems to be (it is difficult to read) G Carroll – a relative of Thomas and Grace Carroll, implying a link between Agnes Robertson and the Carroll uncles and aunts of Ninian and James Fraser?

There are other possibilities. For example, Ninian's aunt Euphemia, his dad James's oldest sister, married Alfred Bell Watson, who was born in 1864, the son of Richard Watson and Jean Henderson. Is there a link between Ninian's uncle-by-marriage Alfred Watson and his childless landlady Agnes Robertson, whose maiden name was Watson?

For another example, the witnesses to James and Annie Fraser's wedding in 1904 were Alexander Kenny Mitchell and his wife Ann; I can see Mitchells in the Watson line, and maybe it was the Frasers' friends who recommended Agnes as a surrogate mother...

Finally, we have already encountered a link between the Frasers and an Agnes Robertson in the court case involving Euphemia Fraser in Dundee in 1893. Was Agnes Robertson a former neighbour and therefore known to James Fraser in that way?

Was Ninian living with Agnes Robertson in 1901? No. In the 1901 census Agnes lived with her husband and her 84-year-old mother in a property called Summer Craig in Peat Inn. Was he living with Grace Carroll in 1901? No. She, her husband Thomas and their son Edward were living at 29 Blackness Road in 1901's census, with nobody else living there.

And what of Ninian's brother James? In the 1911 census for Cameron parish, we find a James Fraser of the right age (remembering that James was born in 1895) living nearby in Radernie:

Here's the evidence showing the extent of James's family:

Widow of the Soldier	'None'		
Children of the Soldier and dates of their births... ..	'None'		
Father of the Soldier	'None'		
Mother of the Soldier	'None'		
Brothers of the Soldier	Full Blood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ninian Fraser	Age 19
			Priormuir Stravithie St Andrews

It seems clear that at this stage, four years after he enlisted in the Navy, Agnes is still in contact with Ninian, for she gives his address as her own – Priormuir, Stravithie, St Andrews.

And here is the statement of Agnes's status in relation to James – note that it is countersigned and witnessed by a local magistrate, underlining its significance:

DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that the above is a true and complete Statement of all the Relatives of the late Soldier now living in the degrees enquired for.

Relationship to the Soldier Mrs. Agnes Robertson Signature of the Declarant.

Address in full Guardian, Priormuir, Stravithie, St Andrews

I hereby certify that the above Statement and Declaration made by Mrs. Agnes Robertson signed in my presence is complete and correct, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated at St Andrews this 23rd day of June 1914.

Signature of Minister or Magistrate John Reid Qualification Magistrate

Address 4th South St St Andrews

P. W. W. 888 (GP 1814). 1,000,000(5). 2.19. S.O.F.Bd.

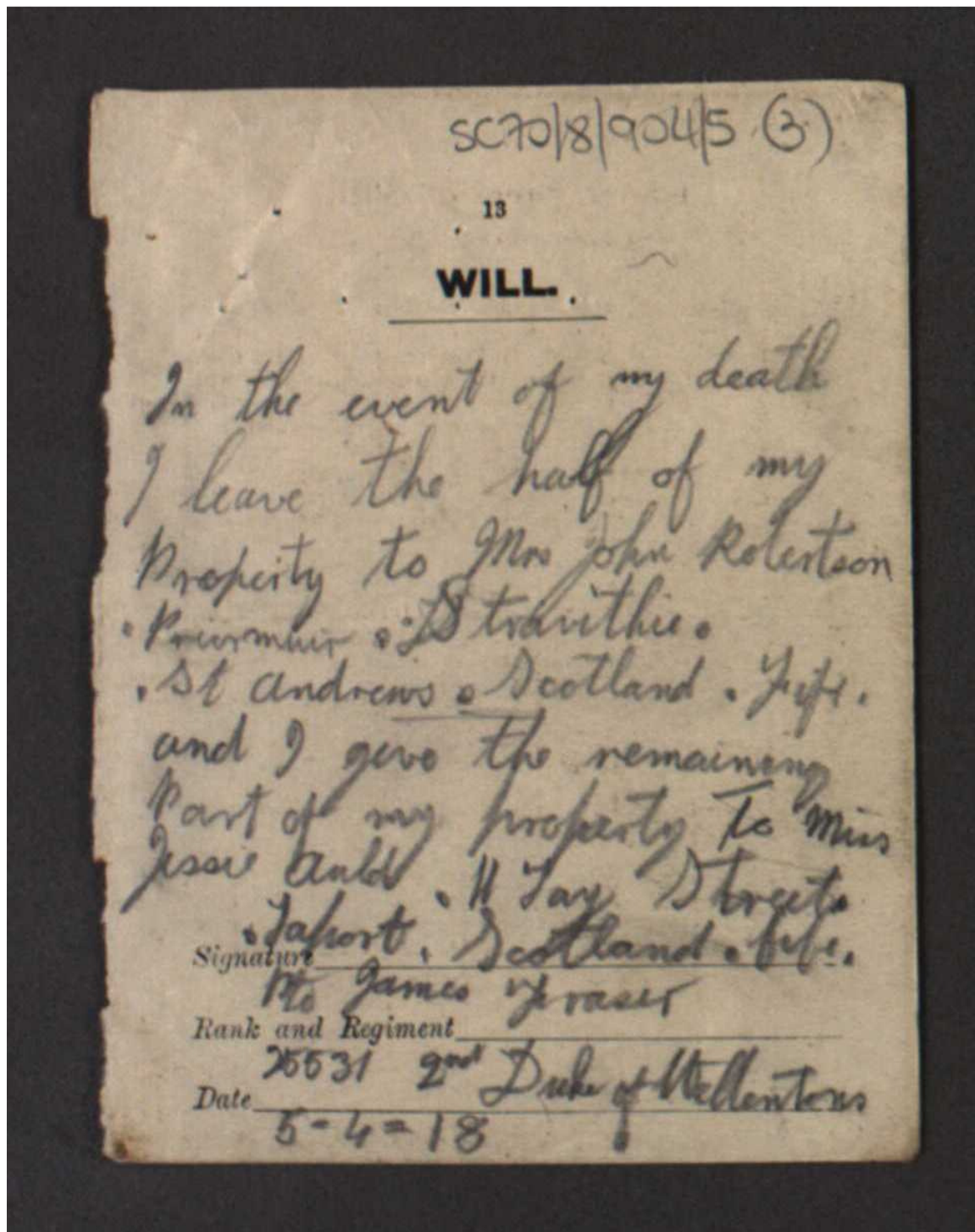
The correspondence makes it clear that it is Agnes who is dealt with on subjects including a memorial scroll and plaque and James's entitlement to the 1914-15 Star (owing to his service in France in 1914-15) as well as the War and Victory Medals. (However, James's medal card makes it clear these were 'returned' rather than issued, so Agnes never asked for them).

Curiously, there are two documents in James's service record that show an effort was made to write to a James Fraser to inform him of the death. A letter was addressed to James Fraser in St Andrews but was returned with the pencilled note added 'try Bradford', which is where the Duke of Wellington's Regiment was based. But the Chief Constable's office in Bradford, unsurprisingly, could not help. But somehow, somebody in the regiment must have known that James had a father, or at least a relative, sharing his name – or why would the envelope have been addressed?

Another document links James to John and Agnes Robertson – his will, written on April 5th 1918:

01/09/1918 FRASER, JAMES (Regiment: DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT))

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This is James Fraser's rough and ready handwriting, James's poignant mis-spelling ('Wellentons'), and a ghost of his voice.

As ever, answers provoke more questions – who was Jessie Auld?

Here lies another story, for if she was a sweetheart – it seems a logical theory – then by the time of James's death she was no longer his sweetheart.

A lengthy chain of evidence makes it certain to me that James's Jessie was short for Jessina, and on September 1st, 1917, she married William Rankine in Ferryport-on-Craig, the original name for Tayport. She was 22, the same age as James, and worked in the jute mills. Curiously, William was, like James, a driver in the Army Service Corps. He later emigrated to Canada (in March 1924) with some of Jessie's brothers, from 13 Tay Street. We know they are her brothers from checking the names of her parents, George and Bridget, with census returns from 1891 and 1901. William was on his way to his brother-in-law Robert Auld. Jessie, her address given as 19 Tay Street, joined him a few months later, crossing the Atlantic with their young children Jessie and William, who was to die in 1945, on active service in Holland in World War Two. They had a third child, Helen. Jessie is said to have died in Niagara Falls, Ontario, in 1945; William died in Niagara Falls, New York, in 1978.

Did James know of Jessie's marriage? He had just one leave after Jessie and William's marriage, in January 1918, but we do not know whether he went back to Scotland. It may, of course, be that James and Jessie were simply friends; James, after all, had few to whom he could leave anything and very little to leave anyway. However, the evidence strongly suggests to me that this is the girl with whom my lost great uncle once had some sort of relationship:



Jessie Auld Rankine (posted on Ancestry by Mike Holt)

Poignantly, effects were forwarded to Agnes by the Army, to be divided between herself and Miss Auld. The effects consisted of just ‘photos’. We cannot but wonder about them, James Fraser’s only physical legacy. Agnes had no close relatives. Jessie had three children. Do these photos survive somewhere? It seems impossible.

Note James’s knowledge that Agnes was Mrs John Robertson – he knew of her husband. This, and more importantly Agnes’s declared status as James’s guardian, suggests to me his relationship with her pre-dated 1911 (John died in 1911), and therefore Ninian’s too.

Money was also paid to Agnes Robertson and Jessie Auld: a register of soldiers’ effects at Ancestry.co.uk, held by the National Army Museum, shows £10 8s was paid to Agnes Robertson and £10 7s 11d to Miss Jessie Auld on January 7th, 1919, and a further £9 5s to each of them on March 3rd, 1920. Though converting currency into modern values is notoriously unreliable, £10 from is roughly equivalent to £200 in modern values, according to the National Archives Currency Converter.

What of James's brother?

We know that Ninian and James Fraser had food, shelter and education by 1911 – Ninian's home with Agnes Robertson was in a small house, but nevertheless it had three rooms with windows. Ninian was at school, and his brother James lived nearby.

My grandfather was incorrectly registered as 'Nenin' on his birth, a mistake repeated in his Royal Navy enlistment papers in 1915 when his address was given as 1 Gateside Cottage, Denhead; his occupation was 'cattleman'; his next of kin was pencilled in much later as his wife, Kathleen. Perhaps it is instructive that no earlier next of kin details were provided.

We know that James Fraser enlisted in August 1914 and was posted to Woolwich four days later. From there, he was sent to France and there is no note of any leave on his record until November of 1916, by which time his brother Ninian was in the Royal Navy, on board HMS *Prince Rupert* off the coast of Belgium.

It seems certain to me, therefore, that the brothers James and Ninian Fraser would have seen each other for the last time in Scotland in August 1914.

Ninian Fraser served throughout World War One, and afterwards, as a stoker in the Royal Navy. From May 1916 to April 1919 he was on board HMS *Prince Rupert*, a 'monitor' built in Glasgow in 1915. Ninian would have been feeding the *Prince Rupert's* two huge steam boilers as the vessel fulfilled its main role during the war, bombarding German artillery positions on shore in occupied Belgium. Ninian blamed his later deafness on the colossal noise of working in confined spaces. (His grand-daughter Teresa Jessop remembers that he shared a sympathetic bond with her mother, wife to Ninian's son Jim, because of their shared hearing difficulties). His Navy service is the reason why he ended up in the English naval city of Plymouth after World War One.

Ninian married Kathleen Louisa Davey in Plymouth in 1922. Together they had ten children: Harry (Henry J, b 1924), James (also Henry J, b1925), Margaret Audrey, known as Audrey, (b 1926), Graham Ninian (my father, b 1928), Phyllis Edna (b 1930), Donald G (b 1931),

Gloria (b 1932), Brian F J (b 1935), Jean (b 1940) and John A (b 1942). Kathleen already had a daughter, Joan (1922-2009), before their marriage.

Life was not easy for this large family, and money was always short. They grew up in the crowded, narrow streets of Depression-era Plymouth, living in rented homes around Stonehouse and Devonport. Ninian worked as a painter and in the Royal Navy dockyard. He was a Naval reservist until 1928. In 1928, Ninian was convicted and imprisoned for a financial crime (Graham surmises it was for not paying the rent), and served 28 days in the old Plymouth Prison, now long closed.



Plymouth Prison

Ninian and his wife's relationship was a stormy one. In a report in the *Western Morning News* of November 2nd 1937, we find evidence:



During the Plymouth Blitz of World War Two, the centre of the city was largely destroyed by repeated German bombing raids. Many of the Fraser children were evacuated from the stricken city, including my father, who was billeted with a family in West Cornwall. After the war, Plymouth City Council pursued Ninian for payment of the children's weekly fees during their time as evacuees; the bills had not been paid in full. During this period, Ninian and Kathleen were living apart.

Over the years, some members of the family have lost contact. Joan passed away in 2009, and today Harry, Jim, Graham, Phyllis, Gloria and Brian remain in touch.

Ninian died in Plymouth in 1980; his wife Kathleen four years later. Their children have gathered rarely since Kathleen's funeral; on the last occasion, in 2009, Graham and Gloria danced together at the funeral of their sister Joan, who, with her late husband Cliff, had a family still based in South Devon and South East Cornwall. Their daughter Lorraine cared lovingly for Ninian and Kathleen in their last years.

The fate of some of the children is unknown. To try to understand the fracturing of the family, we must remember that their upbringing was scarred by extreme poverty.

Margaret Audrey, known as Audrey, is said to have been given up for adoption to childless cousins of Kathleen Davey Fraser, the Finnemores, at the urging of her family, and is believed to have moved to Australia with them. There is a story that Kathleen was later traced by Audrey's daughter, but refused to meet her.

Donald worked in the hotel industry. He was encountered by his brother Jim during a trade union conference in Torquay in the 1970s, but did not acknowledge him. When living, later, at Yelverton in Devon, with his wife and two children, he was a passenger on a bus driven by my father Graham, but did not acknowledge my father as his brother, either.

My father remembers 'something murky', but unspecified, as the reason for losing contact with John, who was last heard of in the early 1970s by his sister Gloria as a patient in Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Harry (Henry James, b 1923) served in the East during World War Two and suffered greatly as a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese. He now lives with his family in West Africa and has marched on Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph in London. Harry and his known brothers and sisters have only recently re-established contact after many years, because of this research.

Graham, a retired bus driver, lives in South Devon. He and his late wife Mary have two children, myself and my sister Alison, and two grandchildren, my sons Jamie Ross Ninian and Thomas Patrick Doran. Jim, a retired senior railway trade union official, lives on the Isle of Wight, home to his daughter Teresa and her late husband, the artist Trevor Jessop. Phyllis, like her never-known grandfather, is in America (in San Francisco), where she went to live with her American husband, the late Chester Kadlubowski. They met when Chester was in the US Army during World War Two, and had three daughters. Brian, a retired officer in the Royal Air Force and subsequently a businessman, now lives in France with his wife Elizabeth. Jean, as far as we know, lives in Plymouth near her daughters Jackie and Dawn. She and her late husband Eddie Roberts were prominent publicans in the city. Gloria, a retired nurse specialising in mental health, lives with her partner of more than 50 years, Geraldine, in Whigtownshire, Scotland. Gloria is the only Fraser to have returned to Scotland.

10: Afterword

This, then, is what made Ninian Fraser, and this is the story of his family. From this have come Frasers across the world, in circumstances Ninian and his parents could scarcely have imagined.

It seems clear to me now that Ninian and James Fraser were cared for by Agnes Robertson as some form of poor law arrangement drawn up by the authorities in Dundee, though no record has so far been found of this. Whether their father James meant to abandon them we will never now know; but that certainly *became* the case and by 1914, James's guardian was Agnes Robertson and according to his enlistment papers he had no father. Did the story of the death in a quarry accident originate in a kindness told by Agnes Robertson to two effectively orphaned boys?

I would still like to trace the ancestry further back and find out more about Ninian's wider ancestry. For example, recent correspondence with N Murray Tosh has revealed the Leeses to have been a family of miners in Lanarkshire who, similarly, have spread their wings all over the world.

Most of all, I would still very much like to look at a picture of my great grandfather James Fraser, and know more about him. This, too, is my father's great wish, though time is running out now.

Clearly, if there's ever the free time and money, I would love to visit Dundee, St Andrews, Cameron parish and the United States to see what information I can gather from archives that aren't so far digitised and available on the internet. For example, there are school details from Denhead in the Fife Local History Archive.

And one day I may publish this story – a story of ordinary people in the 19th and 20th centuries, surrounded by extraordinary drama, great sadness, extraordinary courage and, ultimately, a story of remarkable survival.

But if anybody has any helpful suggestions, documents, memories or pictures to offer, I would be absolutely delighted.

In the meantime, this is my best effort at the story of the Frasers... so far.

Stuart Fraser

Cornwall, June 2016.