##### Why did William and Margaret Emigrate from Scotland

**An interesting postscript to the alleged family conflict relating to William‘s marriage occurred late in the 19th century. Our older Tasmanian cousins recalled a story from their grandparents that an attempt was made through the newspapers to contact the descendants of William and Margaret in Tasmania by a firm of solicitors from Carnoustie, Scotland.**

**The notice was read, but it seems the family decided not to answer it. After 80 years it appears the bitterness relating to his departure (and perhaps by then, the ‘deprival’ too?) had been passed on and was still keenly felt - even it seems by his children and grandchildren.**

**In more recent research, we have uncovered evidence that provides a strong basis to the falling out and disinheritance legend.**

**It appears that our Bonnie William, whilst living and working as a mason at the little village of Newbigging, at the age of 37 years, admitted to a liason with a 19-year-old lassie named Mary Archer (sometimes in the records also spelled Archar). She was a ‘servant’ in his Newbigging household, whilst William is described in the same record as her ‘master’.**

**Around August/September 1819 Mary gave birth to William’s child, who was subsequently named John. Interestingly, this naming appears to have followed the Scottish tradition of naming the first male grandchild after the grandfather and is therefore probably the reason William did not (initially) do so later in Van Diemen’s Land.**

**Mary and William were never to marry, nor was Mary to marry another. She and son John lived out their lives in the village of Newbigging. Both she, and later her son, according to Census records were schoolteachers at the Newbigging school, which interestingly came into existence in 1820 in association with the Newbigging Church.**

**This was a follow on from the church schism, with the secessionists desiring to direct their children’s education in the context of their particular beliefs.**

**The fact of Mary having been a schoolteacher, raises the possibility that this is the ‘governess’ connection in the legend from our Tasmanian families. A governess is defined (Oxford) as ‘a woman who directs the education of children in their private home’. Perhaps the story behind the Tasmanian legend should not read that William was offside with his family for marrying a governess, but that he was offside for not marrying a governess!**

**However, one further factor may have played a part in influencing William and Margaret to start a new life in Australia. This relates to the possibility of religious tensions within his family, deriving from the split in the Church in which his father figured, as previously mentioned.**

**This proposition fits with the legend from Tasmania about Margaret possibly being of a non-conformist religion, excepting that if this proposition is correct the positions are perhaps reversed whereby Margaret together with William are in the conformist (official Church of Scotland) roles, and William’s family, non-conforming secessionists.**

**We know that William and Margaret were married at the (conformist) Church of Scotland Kirk in Monikie (not at Margaret’s home parish of Barrie), whereas his father and perhaps others of the family were members of the secessionist group at Newbigging.**

**We rather suspect the secessionist David Wilson, whose name appears on the 1789 Tablet, was kin to John Wilson - possibly a brother or a cousin and a fellow secessionist.**

**Could it be, in the rather difficult climate that hung over this issue over a long period of time, that this led to added family and community strain on top of the Mary Archer & son matter, and was a further element of the falling out and alleged sustained bitterness within the family?**

**Many questions arise - could it have been that Margaret Williamson was an adherent of the Church of Scotland and led William to go against his secessionist family and revert to the national church for marriage? Did this make Margaret non-acceptable to his family?**

**Why did they marry at Monikie rather than in the bride’s parish of Barrie (Barry today) which is just a few kilometers away? Marriage in the bride’s parish would be the normal custom.**

**Perhaps Margaret was in fact from a secessionist family in Barrie, but William had already created division by earlier reversion to the National church, and against his secessionist family at Newbigging? Perhaps she too went against her secessionist family in marrying at Monikie?**

**Certainly the recent (2003) discovery that Margaret Bowman, two of her and John’s children, and two children from John’s subsequent marriage to Margaret Ferrier were all interred at Barry cemetery, rather than the much closer Monikie cemetery suggests that Barry parish was by then secessionist and the logical religious choice for John and his families.**

**Even more recently (2014) we have discovered that John also was buried at the old Barry churchyard cemetery, having died in 1812 much earlier than we had imaged was the case. This discovery seems to make it unlikely that William and his father were estranged with William being disinherited this much earlier than his Mary Archer relationship and marriage to Margaret. Unless of course William had already, to the dismay of his father, broken from the family’s secessionist church in favour of the Monikie Kirk.**

**Whichever of these circumstances applied, did strains resulting from religious divisions within the Wilson family and possibly within their community, convince William and Margaret they should marry and get away forever from what had become an impossible environment for them with the surviving members of his family, in particular perhaps his sister Elizabeth and her family living at Templehall, a few hundred meters from Newbigging village.**

**From Rev. Chisholm’s account in his book it seems the tensions of the secessionist break of 1789 were fully reawakened when ‘secession managers’ including the ‘Wilsons’, in 1820 set up the Newbigging school causing new division between the two church groups.**

**These ‘explanations’ are obviously speculative, but clearly there is a sufficiency of conflict issues here for us to understand why a family breakdown might have occurred per the strong anecdote within the Tasmanian family. These explanations rest on the very strongly held convictions of our cousins living today in Tasmania that William and Margaret left Scotland on a bitter note.**

**This is believed to have been caused by a breakdown in family relationships, brought on by class distinction or a clash of religious beliefs or the Mary Archer relationship: perhaps all three.**

**These convictions are held most strongly by the older members of today’s (2005) Tasmanian clan, people who heard the stories first hand from their parents and grandparents some of whom lived whilst Margaret still lived and who were, in the case of grandparents, the children of William & Margaret.**

**The explanations we have devised link the evidence that has now been established as to relevant events occurring at the time William and Margaret and their parents were living in Scotland, to the word of mouth stories of our Tasmanian cousins of today.**

**The circumstances tally remarkably closely (although with certain elements reversed) with the legendary evidence passed down the generations over a period now of over 180 years.**

##### Who was Margaret (Williamson) Wilson

**Within our Tasmanian arm of family there is the legend of Margaret having been a ‘governess’ prior to marriage to William. It is not clear whether this, if it is true, was her occupation in the Dundee region of Angus (called Forfarshire then), or whether she pursued this profession elsewhere in Scotland or England.**

**It is also said she was most adept with needle and thread, skills that were very common amongst the womenfolk of that era, often regardless of the station in the social strata they occupied. Possibly a governess in that era would have been required to be able to perform multiple tasks if employed within a large family household.**

**If she was a governess, it would not have been within the family of William’s parents, as even the youngest of William’s siblings would have been well beyond needing governess care by the turn of the 18th century.**

**But she could have been engaged within the family households of one of William’s brothers or sisters, or within that of another household in the area.**

**It is further speculated quite strongly, that she may well have had French origins, our Tasmanian cousins believing her name was always pronounced with the French inflection, and noting that a granddaughter and a greatgranddaughter down the Frederick Langloh line were similarly named and pronounced - Margarette (Mar’- gret- ta) in the French way.**

**The teaching of, and conversation in, the French language, was apparently quite common in Britain during the 17th and 18th centuries amongst the nobility and aristocracy, but even within elements of the gentry and upper yeomanry too.**

**The Scots had had very close historical connections with the French over the prior two centuries in their struggle against the British – Bonnie Prince Charlie and all that!**

**It is not difficult to speculate about a distinct circumstantial ‘fit’ between the French connection theory for Margaret, and the governess theory – the latter requiring, amongst other duties perhaps, the ability to teach French - the genteel language of the educated upper and upward reaching classes – to the children of the educated family.**

**Margaret’s surname, Williamson, is a quite common and distinctly Scottish one in the Angus region. It also associates via the common Gunn clan origin linkage with the Wilson name which is also strong in Angus.**

**Bringing all these things together, we might postulate that Margaret’s mother was French, and that she married a Scot named Williamson, and that Margaret was therefore fluent and was able to teach French as part of her Governess duties.**

**Certainly a plausible theory package, based on the Tasmanian family legends, but lacking to this point any solid supporting evidence.**

**More recently a totally different basis of legend emerged from Shirley (Davie) McArthur (of the William Sorell line), who has told us that in her family the story passed down from her grandparents (Jesse Williamson Wilson) was to the effect that Margaret was the daughter of a ‘Kentish’ doctor. A ‘Kentish Man’ by way of explanation originates in English tradition from west of the Medway River versus a ‘Man of Kent’ coming from east of this river.**

**Indeed it is said that Margaret’s was a prominent family from a provincial town in Kent, and Shirley can recall this tale being spoken of periodically with quite some conviction.**

**Both tales of Margaret’s origins will no doubt become the subject of further research in due course, and who knows, it may turn out that there is a linkage between the two – they may not be mutually exclusive. What can be said at this time is that in many other areas where apparently conflicting family legends have started out as a basis of research, the final facts that emerge are often found to contain significant elements of each legend.**