

Lost trails

Nothing is more frustrating to a family historian than to lose the trail of someone and this week two of those loose ends were found again.



Lost trail No 1: Mary S. Thompson

The first missing person was the only surviving sister of **William Carey Thompson**, my grandfather's father. Through inscriptions found on a tombstone in Arbroath Abbey I discovered **William Carey Thompson**, had several other siblings who died young leaving only a sister 13 years his junior, **Mary S. Thompson**.

I had traced Mary, in Arbroath - on the east coast of Scotland - in the 1851 Scotland census, and again in 1861 when she, her mother and apprentice-tailor brother lived in Edinburgh. The 1871

Census entry for Mary and her mother has not yet been located (William Carey was working in England) but I did find them again. Thirty-year-old Mary S. Thompson was teaching in Greenock West, west of Glasgow in 1881. Her mother was living with her. The last traceable record was the death of Mary's mother at the same address in Greenock in 1882. And then Mary S Thompson disappeared.

Mary's life could not been easy –teaching never is- and she was caring for her ailing mother. We do not know how long her mother was paralysed before she died, or what caused the paralysis.

Presently, only births registered in the Church of Scotland (Presbyterians) are available on the on-line database at

<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>

Episcopal records may exist and if they do they are in the National Archive of Scotland in Edinburgh.

Then a chance remark by **Ian Thompson** in Edinburgh provided the link. He told me that “Cousin Edith” (**Edith Helen Thompson**) had introduced him to her 2nd cousin, **Ian Melville**, who is now 90 years old, and that Ian Melville had said that he was related to the Thompsons as his mother was a “Scott”.

So I searched through the many Scott lines and found no link.

But when Ian Melville mentioned his mother’s name, I was able to trace the connection. Ian Melville is the grandson of our missing Mary S.Thompson!



Edith Helen Thompson (1910-2005) who passed on a great deal of family history to Ian Thompson, and who corresponded with many of her cousins over her lifetime. Photograph provided by Ian Thompson.

I had been looking at the wrong ‘Scott’s.

William Carey Thompson and **Mary S. Thompson’s** mother was **Elizabeth Scott Taylor**, and, because her mother had been **Mary Scott**, it was this family that I had been tracking, looking for a link.

But this was not the link at all – **Mary S. Thompson** had married a ‘Scott’ – **James Scott** –a teacher in Ayr, the year after her mother died.

Mary S Thompson and James Scott had two children:

- **William Wilson Scott**
and
- **Dorothy May Scott** who was Ian Melville’s mother.

It just goes to show how a chance comment can lead to clearing up loose ends; in this case two questions were answered. What had happened to Mary S. Thompson; and how is Ian Melville related to us?

This research also provided more...

The Sampson connection

I had guessed that **Mary S. Thompson** was probably Mary Scott Thompson.

- After all, her mother's mother had been **Mary Scott**,
- and she had a sister called **Betsy Scott Thompson**.

When I looked at the original records I was in for a surprise, and **an apology to John Weir**.

Mary S Thompson's middle name turned out to be **Mary SAMPSON Thompson**.

She was not named her after mother's mother (Mary Scott) but after her father's mother, Mary SIMPSON/SAMPSON about whom I wrote, in my piece about John Weir last month.

It is still a mystery how Mary's grandmother started life as Mary SIMPSON
and ended it as Mary SAMPSON.

Were the Thompsons Episcopalians?

Here is another interesting possibility that these records have strengthened, too.

No birth records can be found for any of the children of George Thompson and Elizabeth Scott Taylor. If it had not been for the headstone I stumbled upon at Arbroath Abbey, I would not have known about the missing children at all. (They all died before the registration of deaths became mandatory in Scotland in 1855.)

This had lead me to postulate that the family may have belonged to the Episcopalian church (Anglicans); a thought brought on by

- the marriage of John Weir and Mary Thompson (sister to George Thompson) in the Episcopalian church,
- and the attendance of the family in Episcopalian services in Arbroath during Grandpa's visit there in 1888.

Now I found further support to that possibility

*Mary's marriage certificate reads: "**Mary Sampson Thompson** (of*

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For more family information and photographs look at the web page: verian.homelinux.com

I'll gladly supply the login information

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35 East Stewart St, Greenock) married **James Scott** (of 33 Dalblair[unclear] Rd Ayr) in **Christ Church Falkirk** after Banns according to the forms of the **Episcopal Church**,¹

and her daughter **Dorothy May Scott** married Alexander Graham Melville

“at Holy Trinity Church, Ayr, after Banns according to the forms of the **Scottish Episcopal Church**.”²

Here is another little twist. **Why would Mary Sampson Thompson have married James Scott in Falkirk?** Neither of them lived in Falkirk. However, the Weirs did live in Falkirk in 1883. It is highly possible that they attended the wedding, and also possibly they were the reason for the marriage being held there.

I would have liked to illustrate this story with picture of Mary Sampson Thompson but I don't know of one. It is possible that we have a photograph of her among the unlabeled pictures in Grandpa's albums, still unidentified. Now that I know that Mary's surname was Scott the reference in the letter from Jessie Ann Mather Thompson, his sister, to Grandpa (George Batchin Thompson) of 20 May 1909 describing their father's funeral makes sense as she wrote; “*Uncle Scott and Aunt Mary joined them at Alloa station...*” So far this is the only reference I have found to William Carey's sister.

Sources

¹Scotland. Statutory Marriages. 1883, Falkirk. 578/00 0299

²Scotland. Statutory Marriages. 1914 , Ayr. 578/ 01 0063

Lost trail No 2: Two William Thompsons, father & son

Edith also spoke to Ian Thompson about another cousin, “**Bill**” **Thompson**, son of Grandpa's brother William, who had died shortly before Ian went to live in Scotland. If I thought there were a lot of Mary Thompsons I was astounded to find how many William Thompsons there are. So here I had two generations of William Thompsons that proved difficult to trace.

Among the letters that were sent to Grandpa, and that he kept, are several from his oldest brother, Billy, and several pictures of him and his family were among the collection of photographs taken by Edith's father, Grandpa's brother Harry.



Circa 1904 William Alexander Thompson; his sister, Maggie; his mother, Jessie Mather; his wife, Maggie Frew; his father, William Carey Thompson and his son, William Henry Thompson. Photograph by Harry [Henry James] Thompson, provided by Ian Thompson.

(This is my favourite picture of William Carey Thompson as he looks so relaxed with his legs crossed and his hands in his pocket. This is no formal Victorian portrait. It seems to be a far better representation of the man who wrote warm, concerned letters to my grandfather, his son than the formal portraits.)

This time the breakthrough came from a most unexpected source.

Moira Irlam kindly shared with me her mother's [Kathleen Mather Thompson] photograph album and among these there was a photograph of "*Marie...Willie June 16th 1928...Crail*". How Aunt Kathy got this photograph I can't imagine, however it proved to be the breakthrough piece of information I needed - for with that date I could narrow down the William Thompsons and found that this was **William Henry Thompson**. [Oh how useful these middle names can be!] By tracing his birth certificate (now possible as I had his middle name) I found that his father's name was **William Alexander Thompson** and his mother **Maggie Frew**.

Although I am still unable to find the family in the 1891 Scotland Census or the 1901 Scotland Census (they did not add the middle names) we do know that they lived in Glasgow where **William Alexander** was a bank clerk.

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Letters written to Grandpa say that "Bill", **William Henry Thompson**, was sent to the front in the final months of the 1914-1918 War. Bill's first wife, **Mary Stafford** died in 1963 and it seems the same year he married a school friend of Edith's (**Margaret Macgre Deas**) who had been working in the same company as Bill for many years. William and Margaret lived in Largs about 30 miles west of Glasgow, on the coast, so I am told by Ian Thompson. Margaret Deas died there in 2000. Bill's death certificate is not yet confirmed but I think he died in 1973. Recent death records are not visible over the Internet so I do not know of any descendants at this point.



1928 Crail: William Henry Thompson & his first wife, Mary Stafford. Photograph provided by Moira Irlam from her mother's photograph album.



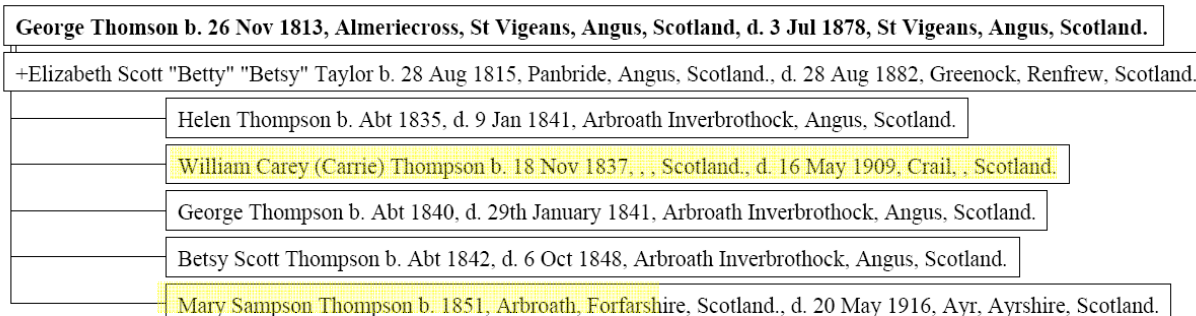
1963, Glasgow: Edith Helen Thompson with her cousin; William Henry Thompson with his second wife, Margaret Deas. The other man may be William's brother, John. Photograph provided by Ian Thompson from those that had belonged to Edith Thompson.

This research has shown me how even the smallest clue can open up a new line of enquiry. You never know what treasures you have in your photo albums, in your attic, or packed away in a box somewhere.

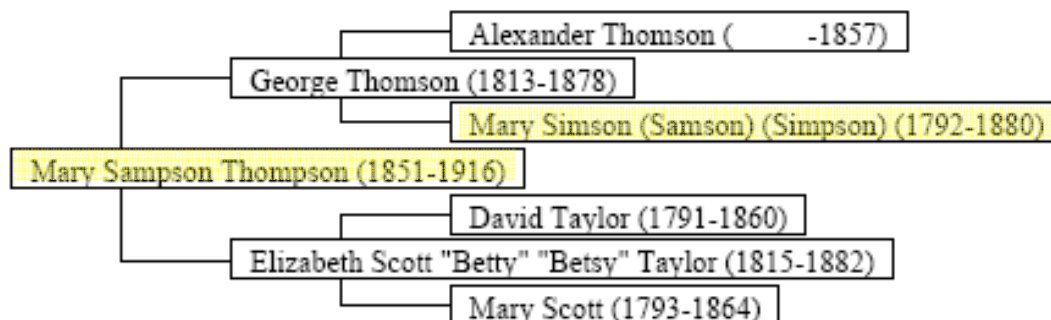
People featured in this report

Descendants of George Thomson

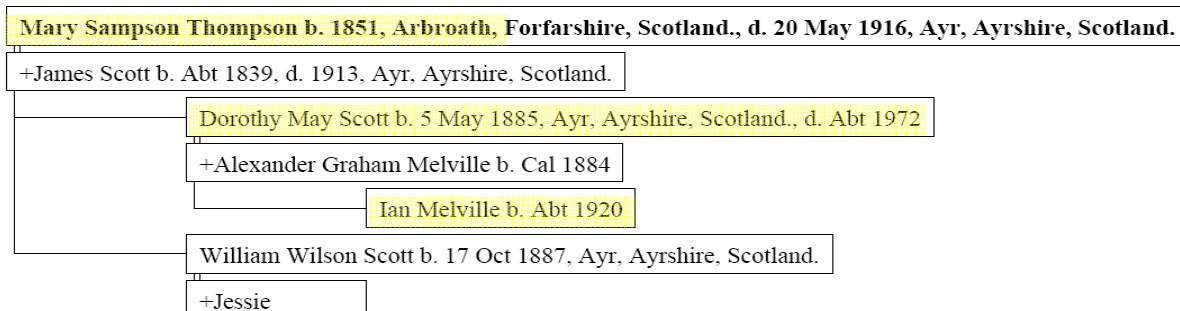
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Ancestry Chart of Mary Sampson Thompson

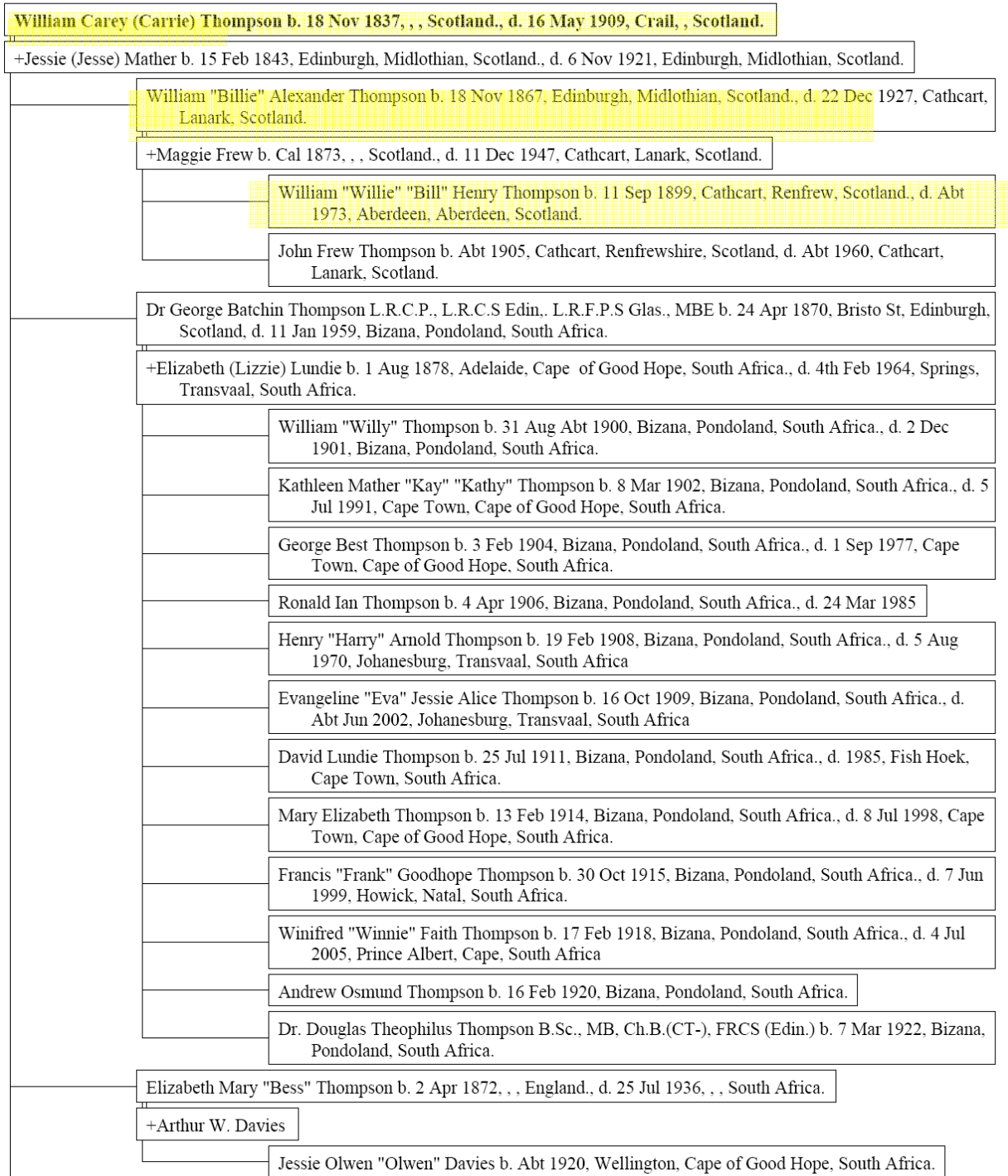


Descendants of Mary Sampson Thompson



Descendants of William Carey (Carrie) Thompson

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Descendants of William Carey (Carrie) Thompson

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