

K E R R

Family tree



Robert Kerr

2013

3rd edition

INTRODUCTION

Genealogy, almost by definition, is a combination of fact and speculation. Recent generations are easy to trace and facts can be checked relatively easily. On the other hand, even information about grandparents is subject to multiple revisions in retelling and corroborating evidence is frustratingly thinner on the ground, so all stories must be scrutinised before acceptance. This means that working backwards in time, which is pretty well essential, requires increasing amounts of time, patience and luck if the truth is to be established. Most family trees move from the proven, through the likely to the possible, and the same is true here. Thus, many statements about the Kerr origins are still not definitive. Perhaps, in time and with a great deal more luck, I may make further progress.

The second feature of a family tree is, perhaps, more divisive. Most people accept willingly that people – women – marry into the family and adopt the surname, but this also means that other women, starting with the family name, marry out of the tree, joining another tree elsewhere. That those whose mothers were born Kerrs are part of the family is beyond doubt, but in order to prevent a family tree spreading out into a family hedgerow it is largely necessary to omit the details of such branches from the main record. However, for the sake of completeness I have endeavoured to include as much detail of these “side shoots” as possible here. Thus, for example, the large Kerr family of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century spawned only three children bearing the Kerr surname, but the other branches have been listed here in full – honorary Kerrs, if you will! If anyone would like to add further appendices to this family account giving details of cousins and others who were technically never Kerrs, I would be delighted. Clearly, there is massive scope for error in an undertaking of this kind and magnitude, so if anyone becomes aware of either corrected or additional information I would also be only too pleased to include it in later editions.

Also by definition, a family tree is a dry, perhaps even dull or dead thing for many readers, and indeed it is important that judgement is kept well out of the record. Hence, while facts can be recorded, it is not possible to say if a member of the family was “nice” or “honest”, “lazy” or “evil”, though we could record evidence of a spell in prison, for example. There is no guarantee beginning research on a family tree that

everyone will turn out to be hard working, loveable and upright citizens, and sometimes the circumstances of someone's life may be shocking or even upsetting. Nonetheless, a hard life does not necessarily equate with an unhappy one, and it is almost impossible to establish how long-gone family members felt. In order to give some colour to this record, I have included very brief accounts of those born with the Kerr surname and those who adopted it after marriage. Some, perhaps many, of these records need to be expanded and any and all contributions in this regard will be warmly welcomed.

I started working on this family tree as a child, when I became confused that an old woman (Iris, then in her mid-twenties!) said she was my cousin but looked to me more like an aunt, so my dad tried to explain. A diagram helped, and ever since I have been fascinated on and off by this tree. It includes remarkable patterns, name repetitions, and changes of fortune. From the early days I half-believed (for no good reason) that the Kerrs were descended from great wealth and prestige and that I, as the oldest son of the oldest son of ... would one day inherit my rightful privileges! While the jury is still out on that particular aspect, as this story has unfolded for me I have been delighted, horrified, excited and frustrated. I hope you, too, enjoy it.

Robert Kerr

October 2011

Kerr motto:
Sero, sed serio
(Late, but in earnest)

METHODS

The simplest and best way to start a family tree is with yourself and your own immediate family. Details of parents' siblings and their families, if any, are generally easy to obtain, but already matters can get rocky just two generations back, with grandparents. I never met either of my Kerr grandparents so information had to come second-hand from their children. While dates of birth, marriage and death were easily recalled – certain members of the Kerr family have excellent memories for such facts! – sometimes even the names of siblings in that generation produced quite different information. Hence, virtually everything has to be checked, often more than once. Spellings of both forenames and surnames has become consistent in recent generations, but that was not the case further back where, for instance, the surname was written “Carr” on a marriage certificate by the officiating priest but signed “Kerr” by the groom. This greatly adds to the difficulty of finding the actual record, as a lengthy trawl through possibilities is often required.

I have tried to limit myself to what are called “primary sources of information”, where the identity of a member of the Kerr family is clearly stated. However, on occasion some secondary sources – that reveal circumstantial evidence for a case – have been noted. I give below some of the major sources I have used.

Hard-copy sources:

Kerr family bible (beginning 1895)
St. Nicholas's (Dunlavin) Parish records
St. Catherine's (Dublin) Parish records
St. Nicholas Without (Dublin) Parish records
Thom's Street Directories of Dublin, from 1821 to 1955

Internet sources:

www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk [Charges per view]
www.familysearch.org [Go to “Europe” to “Ireland” to “Civil records”]
www.churchrecords.irishgenealogy.ie
www.origins.net [National wills index]
www.nas.gov.uk

www.rootsireland.ie

[I still have 3 x €5 credit here.]

www.ancestry.co.uk

www.census.nationalarchives.ie

Useful places:

Representative Church Body (RCB), Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14

[Actual records from Dunlavin, St. Catherine's, etc., 1697 – 1950s]

Dublin City Library and Archive, 138-144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2 [Microfilm records, 1830s – 1870s]

National Archives, Bishop Street, Dublin 8

Dunlavin Parish Church and churchyard

General Register Office, 3rd floor, Irish Life building, Abbey Street, Dublin 1

Owing to the expense involved I have not (yet) requested copies of actual death certificates (which may give more information by indicating a reason for the death); nor have I yet consulted the calendars of wills, mainly because it seems they are only available from 1858 to 1877. However, other sources – particularly the old Church of Ireland parish registers – have proved very useful (misspellings aside) and I was lucky enough to obtain permission from the head of the Research Division of the National Archives of Ireland to photograph two very important documents containing the signatures of my great grandparents and my great great grandparents.

With my initial youthful research coming to a grinding halt in the early nineteenth century with Andrew and Elizabeth, it was my main concern to try to establish more information about them and to build some account of their lives. Hence, I have chosen to begin the account of the Kerr family tree with them and then work both backwards and forwards.

ANDREW AND ELIZABETH KERR

I had always heard that Andrew and Elizabeth had come over from Scotland, though details of when, why or how were not known. Unfortunately the name Andrew Kerr is a very common one in Scotland, so this made tracing them rather difficult. It was also known that they had lived in Dunlavin, County Wicklow, and indeed parish records there confirm that they had six children, all baptised in St. Nicholas's Church of Ireland Church in the village. The difficulties in finding more information about this couple were exacerbated by the fact that no death records exist on any of the national databases for either Andrew or Elizabeth in the nineteenth century. They were finally located (through the RCB burial records) as having been buried in St. Nicholas's graveyard in Dunlavin, in the same plot as their second son, Thomas, and their second daughter, Eliza, who had predeceased them. (A plan of the churchyard is attached.) These records show that Andrew was buried on 2nd January 1855 and his age is given as 60, though this may have been an estimate, since he was not born in the area. His exact date of death is not recorded.

This age would place his date of birth as 1794, but no births for an Andrew Kerr are recorded in Scotland of that year. Given that accuracy in both spelling and numbers were not common in the mid-nineteenth century, it may well be that his birth year was within a couple of years on either side of 1794. Indeed, there are three births for Andrew Kerr in Scotland in 1795 or 1796. Also, given the remarkable repetitions of Roberts and Andrews throughout the tree, and especially given the fact that Andrew's first son was named Robert, it seems highly likely that Andrew's father's name was also Robert. Combining these facts in a Scottish search suggest that Andrew was born on 17th April 1796 in the parish of "Paisley Burgh or Low" (There were two parishes – Paisley Burgh and Paisley Low) in Renfrewshire, near Glasgow. If that is correct, his parents were Robert Kerr and Margaret Clerk, for whom a marriage is recorded in Paisley Middle on 30th June 1793. Perhaps surprisingly, it seems that Robert and Margaret had only the one child. Could Margaret have died in childbirth or soon after? No death record has yet been found for either her or Robert, so suggestions as to her fate are highly speculative.

We can try to push this just one more step, again allowing for speculation. It would have been common practice in the late eighteenth century to stay close to the family base after marriage, and so we can guess with reasonable certainty that Robert was also born in Renfrew. Searching for the birth of a Robert Kerr in this county between 1758 and 1777 (allowing him to be between 19 and 38 when his son Andrew was born) yields just five results, as below:

Born 20.05.1764 to Robert Kerr and Janet Denniston

Born 05.12.1765 to Alexander Kerr and unknown

Born 11.05.1766 to Robert Kerr and Margaret Arnot

Born 11.03.1769 to David Kerr and Margaret Rodger

Born 17.08.1775 to Robert Kerr and Elisabeth Arbuckle

Choosing one of these as the most likely contended is dubious. However, patterns in the tree have been noted, including the following:

Robert William Kerr was married in 1895, when he was 26.

Robert Kerr was married in 1851, when he was 26.

Andrew Kerr was married in 1821, when he was 25.

Could Andrew's father Robert also have married when he was 26? Since the marriage was in 1793 it would place his birth as 1767. Given the tendency to repeat family names, therefore, I am guessing that Robert Kerr and his unknown wife are the most senior members of the Kerr Family Tree, at present, and that they gave birth to Robert Kerr, born 11th May 1766, who married Margaret Clerk in 1793 and had just the one child, Andrew, born 1796.

The most likely birth record for my great great great grandmother is 23rd December 1770, when Margaret is listed as having been born to John Clerk and Mary McPherson from Greenock Old or West in Renfrewshire. This is based on the assumption that Margaret also came from Renfrew and that she was just a small number of years younger than her husband, Robert. If this can be supported more strongly, it gives a good base for which to expand the tree backwards into the seventeenth century. However, looking at the lineage of the Marquises of Lothian (who bear the Kerr name, with frequent occurrence of Robert, Andrew and William) there appears to be very little opportunity for one of the lesser branches to have fallen from wealth and status in such a short time as to have necessitated becoming a nail manufacturer, so it seems I may have to forego my dreams of wealth and nobility.

It had, as I have said, always been assumed that both Andrew and Elizabeth came from Scotland, but this is not supported by the evidence. Eventually, after much searching, I found a marriage certificate for Andrew and Elizabeth – not in either Scotland or in Dunlavin, as I had expected, but in St. Catherine’s Church, Donore Avenue, Dublin. On 16th July 1821 Andrew married Elizabeth Crowther, and both signed a marriage register, now held in the RCB. A copy of this is attached, showing clearly the signatures of both Andrew and Elizabeth. Andrew’s writing is somewhat laboured, which may indicate that he was not a well-educated man, but Elizabeth’s is a little more polished. Indeed, a man such as Andrew who worked as a nail maker – or “nailer” – would not be likely to use his handwriting frequently. Both bride and groom are listed as being “of this parish”, though sadly no address is given for either. However, the identity of the two witnesses is both unusual and interesting. Both the witness for the bride and the witness for the groom are named as John Crowther. Since they cannot be the same person, and since their handwritings differ, we can hazard a guess that the bride’s witness is her father, John, while the groom’s witness is the bride’s brother, also John.

This in turn gives us a further clue about what Andrew’s situation may have been like. He may well have come from Paisley to Dublin as a young man in search of work, on his own and possibly with one or both of his parents dead. This fits well with the dates 1815 to 1820, a time of great emigration from Scotland (known as the Highland Clearances) on account of severe poverty and famine:

“In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Highland chiefs found they couldn’t make any money off their lands with the clan system no longer in place (it was a subsistence system anyway). So, they leased their lands to the sheep farmers and the tenants had to go. Some of the people were forced to move to unproductive lands near the sea to participate in the extremely lucrative kelp farming business (a residue was used in military manufactures during the Napoleonic Wars). When the bottom fell out of this market after 1815, more had to go. This process continued for about 25-50 years and is known as the Highland Clearances.” *History of Scotland*, on line.

Questions about the fate of Andrew’s parents are still wide open, as is the reason for Andrew coming to Ireland. The cruel irony of his selecting to live in the countryside in County Wicklow will be seen shortly, but in any case it seems highly likely that Andrew left Scotland to escape famine and an extremely tough existence. Either luck

or a plan brought him to St. Catherine's Church and, most probably, to live with the Crowther family as a paying guest while working as a nailer. Here he fell in love with Elizabeth and became close friends with her brother John, so that when Andrew and Elizabeth decided to marry, John was Andrew's logical choice as witness and best man. He had no siblings and no parents, and clearly the Crowther family had become his surrogate relations.

Elizabeth's burial record show that she died on 27th November 1864 and was buried in Dunlavin graveyard three days later on 30th November. She is listed as a widow, and her age is given very specifically as 67 years and 3 months, which would set her birth in August 1797. Indeed, the records of St. Catherine's Parish show the birth of "Elizabeth, daughter of Anthony [Note: not John] and Dorothea Crowther" on 12th August 1797. Unfortunately, these records do not show any address for the Crowther family. There is a birth of a John Crowther recorded in the Church of St. Nicholas Without on 29th March 1771, and this may be Elizabeth's father.

Following their marriage, perhaps as early as 1821 itself, Andrew and Elizabeth moved to Dunlavin, in West Wicklow, and became members of the Church of Ireland parish there. This may suggest either that Andrew was Episcopalian (rather than Church of Scotland, i.e. Presbyterian) or that they embraced Elizabeth's denomination because there was no Presbyterian church in the vicinity. Their six children were born in Dunlavin and baptised in the local church, spanning the years 1825 to 1842. Two of their children (Thomas and Eliza) died in childhood, and we cannot be certain of details for two others (Anthony and Ellen), but we do know some details about their sixth child (Frances), and more about their first child, a son, Robert, born in 1825 and destined to become my great grandfather.

Let us deal first with the little we know of the five other children of Andrew and Elizabeth. Their second child, a son, Thomas, was born on 6th January 1827, but died on 7th December 1833, aged 6 (nearly 7). He is buried in Dunlavin. Their third child, another son, Anthony, was born on 30th September 1830 but no subsequent record – for marriage, death, census, etc. – has yet been found for him. Anthony, therefore, remains the only untracked potential source of Kerrs for this tree, but as yet there are no leads at all for him. Andrew and Elizabeth's fourth child was a daughter, Ellen,

born on 10th February 1834. Again, to date no firm records have been found regarding her death, though there are some possible burial records for Mount Jerome Cemetery for an Ellen Kerr: one from Stafford St., Dublin, in 1865, reg. no. 777; a second from Dundrum, Co. Dublin in 1868, reg. no. 971; and a third from the National School, Glasnevin, Dublin in 1875, reg. no. 367. The fifth child, also a daughter, Eliza, was born on 21st August 1835, and baptised on 23rd August of that year. She also died as a child of 6 (nearly 7) and was buried in Dunlavin on 20th June 1842. The sixth and final child, another daughter, Frances, was born on 19th May 1842 (just a few weeks before her sister Eliza died), and baptised on 5th June. She married a Joseph Waldron, a plasterer from Dunlavin, on 15th July 1885. The witnesses were Frances's father, Andrew, and a Margaret Kerr, presumably her niece.

The deaths of two children would not have been hugely uncommon in those days, and apart from those tragedies it is likely that Andrew, Elizabeth and their family were happy living in Dunlavin for about 25 years, and their time there was certainly a time of growth and prosperity in the area (*An Irish Village: Dunlavin, County Wicklow* Chris Lawlor, 2011). Then, having fled Scotland because of famine and poverty, Andrew was once again faced with starvation, this time for his whole family. *An Gorta Mór*, as it is called in Irish (strictly, "The Big Hunger"), or the Great Famine struck Ireland most severely in the second half of the 1840s, with almost 2800 deaths in County Wicklow in 1848 alone. Emigration became widespread and many others fled to the cities in the hope of relief. This double tragedy of the deaths of two of his children and having to flee once again in the face of famine cannot have been easy to bear, and Andrew and his family moved to Dublin, close to the Crowther base in St. Catherine's Parish. The fact that both Andrew and Elizabeth were later buried in Dunlavin shows that they retained some sentiment for the place.

Thus, in 1851, we find Andrew working as a nailer and living in 1 Pitt Street, Dublin. This short, curved street (now replaced by Balfe Street) led onto Grafton Street directly across from Anne Street South, and it was from 1 Pitt Street that Andrew and Elizabeth's oldest child, Robert, married a woman of not 150 metres away, Catherine (Kate) Crowther of 26 Anne Street South. The actual houses on these sites have long since been demolished, but the attached photographs show the locations. *Thom's Directory* lists a tailor, Peter Carroll, as being at 1 Pitt Street, so it is most likely the

Kerr family lived in one or two rooms upstairs. Similarly, in 26 Anne Street South we find Beverly Smith, coal factor, forage, and provision dealer, so we can surmise that the Crowther family lived upstairs. However, their new life was not as stable as they had hoped, and several moves around the local area followed, particularly in Lower Clanbrassil Street. Numbers 82, 94 and 101 Lower Clanbrassil Street all feature at some stage in the rest of their lives. These were all listed as “tenements”, so it is possible – perhaps even likely – that Andrew and his family were very poor indeed following the famine years and moved from one cheap dwelling to another within a small neighbourhood.

There is a possibility we can extend another generation backwards. There is a marriage record for Robert Kerr and Margaret Arnot on 30th August 1763 in the parish of Lochwinnoch in Renfrew, which is where Robert was born on 11th May 1766. The Robert who married Margaret is likely to be the one who was born on 13th April 1739 and baptised in the parish of Paisley Burgh or Low in Renfrew, though this is far from certain.

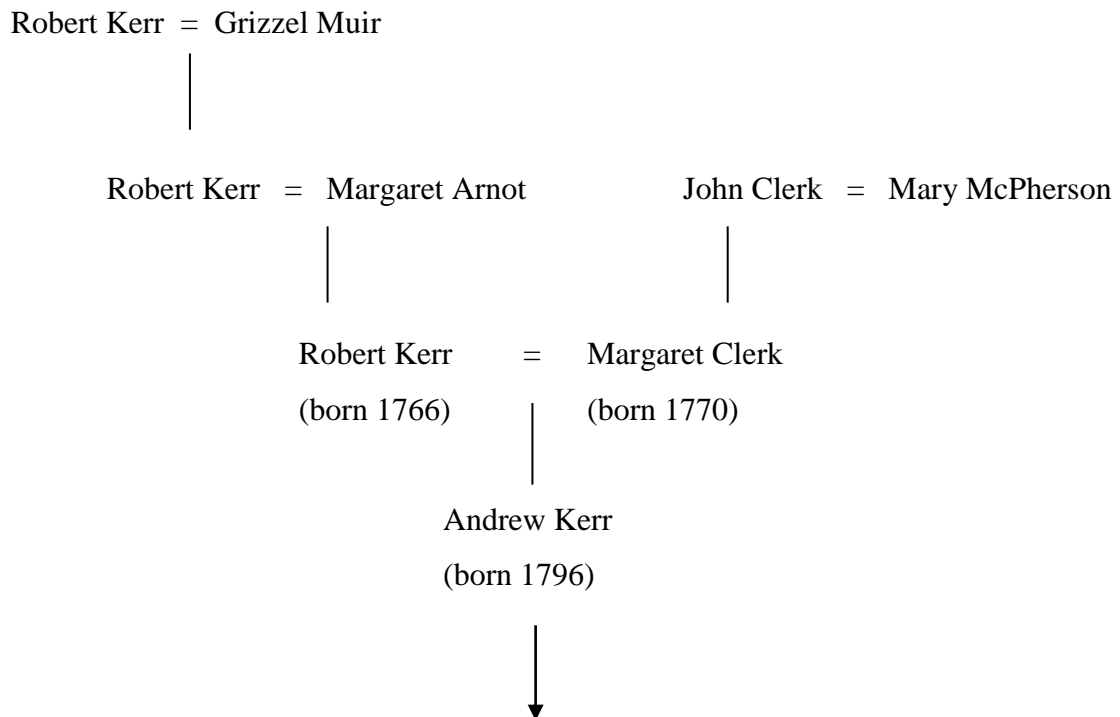
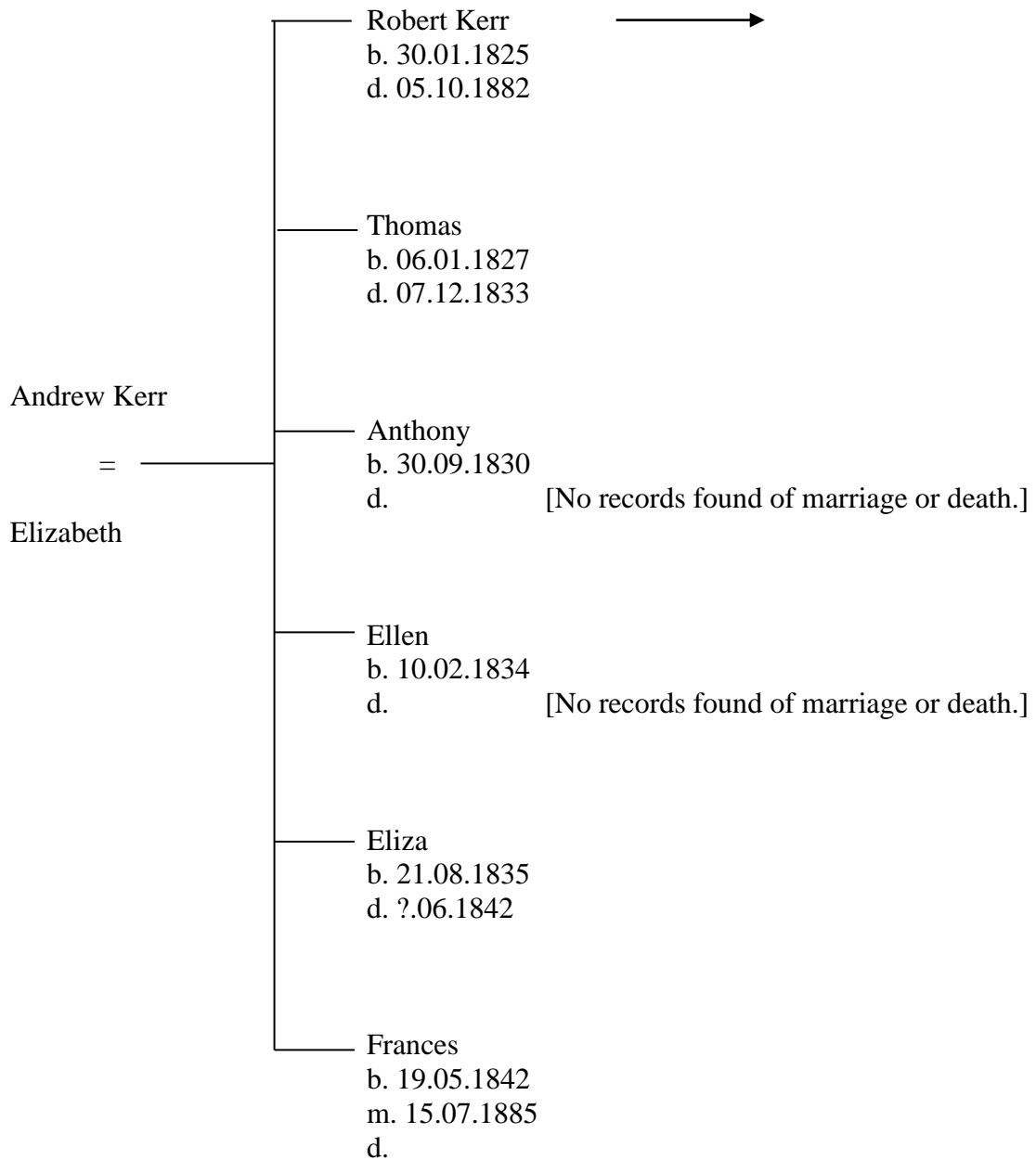
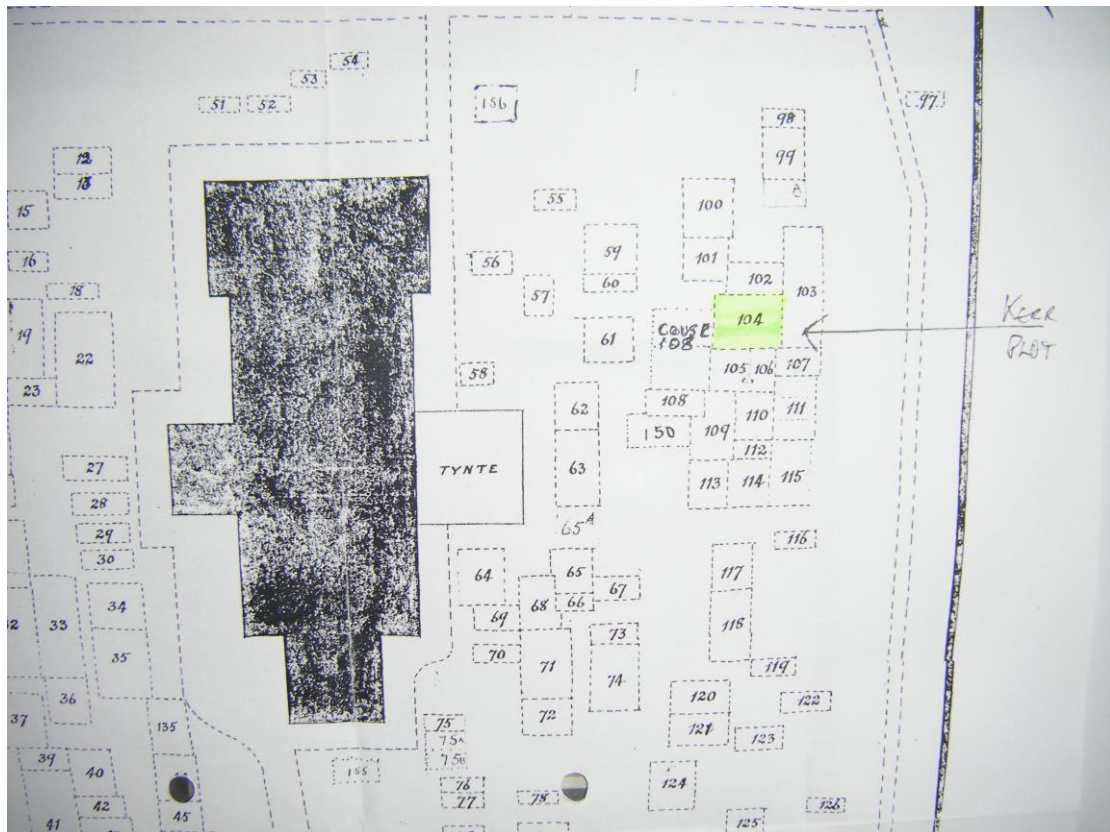


Figure 1: Possible Family Tree for Kerrs in Eighteenth Century in Scotland



**Figure 2: Family Tree for Andrew and Elizabeth
Nineteenth Century, Wicklow**



Part of Dunlavin Graveyard showing the Kerr plot to the west

One further piece of evidence gives us more of a puzzle than a solution. In *Griffith's Valuation for Dunlavin Civil Parish for 1854* we find in entry number 121 that a certain Andrew Kerr has leased a “house and garden” of less than one acre in size and with a rateable valuation of £2.25 from Joseph Tynte, the largest (Protestant) landowner of the time. Did Andrew’s family – minus Robert, by then married to Kate – return to Dunlavin after the famine?

It turns out that the valuations were carried out from the mid-1840s onwards, and finished in co. Wicklow in 1853. Thus it may well be that the record is actually from before Andrew and Elizabeth moved from Dunlavin to Dublin. This seems more likely than a return to the town after such a short period away.



1 Pitt Street (now Harry St)



26 Anne Street South

ROBERT AND KATE KERR

Andrew and Elizabeth's oldest child was a son, Robert, born on 30th January 1825 and baptised in St. Nicholas's Church, Dunlavin. He grew up here in the countryside, learning his trade of nail making from his father. He was probably in his early twenties when he moved with his family to Dublin, living in Pitt Street before marrying a local girl, Catherine (Kate) Crowther on 6th October 1851 (just after the worst of the Famine) in St. Ann's Church of Ireland Church, Dawson Street. It seems that they began married life in 94 Lower Clanbrassil Street, a tenement. Whether Robert's income from nail making was sufficient to provide for his family is not clear, but it seems unlikely. He may have worked very locally for Abraham Ward, a nail maker who lived at 87 Lower Clanbrassil Street. In all likelihood they were extremely poor. Living in Clanbrassil Street they became parishioners in the Parish Church of St. Nicholas Without (inside St. Patrick's Cathedral until its demolition during the cathedral's restoration during the 1860s), where their children were baptised.

Although some detail is known of Kate's background it is not clear whether or not she was in any way related to her mother-in-law, also a Crowther. She was the daughter of John Crowther (born 1783) and Catherine (1795 – 1848) and was the fourth of their six children. The oldest was Mary, born 12.02.1825; second was Anthony, born 03.12.1826; and third was John, born in December 1828 and who possibly died in December 1852. Kate herself was born in 1829 and died in 1910. After Kate came Frances, born 23.05.1833, and finally Elizabeth, born 26.06.1834.

Robert and Kate had five children, three of whom had died before Robert's own death in 1882. The first was Andrew, born 12.05.1860 and baptised on 10.06.1860 in the Church of St. Nicholas Without [book 6, page 31]. Andrew died in late 1878, aged 18 [Index of deaths 2/601/4200221]. The story had been passed down that Andrew, a boy of about 14, had heard the fire brigade go past one night and jumped out of bed and followed them. This resulted in him getting a heavy cold which proved fatal. However, it is now known that he was (in today's terms) an adult and a fully-grown man. Could it be that, having heard the fire brigade, he did indeed follow them but with a view to helping out, rather than mere curiosity? Either way, we know that he

died young. His death is recorded in the Church of St. Nicholas Without, and it seems he may have been buried in the grounds of St. Patrick's Cathedral, though this is not yet certain. However, this connection to the Cathedral may have been important some time later. We do not know where he worked, though the possibility of employment in Guinness's is intriguing.

Robert and Kate's second child was Margaret, born on 26.01.1862. In early 1896 she married Thomas Wilkinson of 101 Lower Clanbrassil Street [2/631/4179390]. This was also one of the addresses where Andrew and Elizabeth had lived, and was the address where Robert and Kate appear to have settled. This close connection between the Kerr family and Thomas Wilkinson are confirmed by the record of Robert and Sarah's wedding in 1895, when Margaret acted as witness for the bride and Thomas acted as witness for the groom. This was less than a year before Margaret and Thomas's own wedding. They had two children, Charlotte (no date of birth or death available) and Thomas Andrew (born 1904), who married Elizabeth Frances Chandler in 1933. They in turn had two children – Bryan (born 1934), who married Dorothy and had two children (Mark and ?), and David, who married June and also had two children (Ian and ?). Margaret died in the third quarter of 1910 [2/471/4201708]. These details are shown in Appendix 1.

Robert and Kate's third child was Charlotte, who was born on 26.12.1863 but who died in 1864 less than one year old [2/654/4200214]. She is buried in Mt Jerome Cemetery [Reg. no. 207]. The fourth child was Rebecca Charlotte, born 05.04.1867, but who also died young, aged 9, in 1876 [17/463/4200220] and is buried along with her sister in Mt Jerome [Reg. no. 1085]. The fifth child and only son surviving into adulthood was Robert William, born 25.07.1869, who married Sarah Emma Little on 13.05.1895, and who became my grandfather. Robert died on 12.11.1952, seven months before I was born. Robert, presumably along with his wife Sarah (known as Sal), is listed in Thom's Directory as "Mr. Robert William Kerr" at 83 Donore Place (variously known as 83 Donore Terrace, Love Lane West and 116 Donore Terrace, Circular Road, South) from 1897 until 1952. Their rector, who married them, Rev. John D. Smylie, Rector of St. Luke's, who died suddenly soon after, is listed at being resident at 9 Eldon Terrace, Circular Road, South.

Robert's death in 1882 is recorded as from 101 Clanbrassil Street [Mt Jerome reg. no. 900], and Kate's death 18 years later in 1910 is recorded as from 11 Washington St. [Mt Jerome, reg. no. 728]. Their son Andrew's death in 1878 is recorded as from 82 Lower Clanbrassil Street [Mt Jerome, 911811, reg. no. 1145], where the family lived from 1870 until 1880. Robert and Kate then lived in 101 Lower Clanbrassil Street from 1881, with "Mrs. Kerr" listed for 1883. Following Robert's death, Kate moved around a number of times, with clear evidence of her living at 7 Washington Street between 1892 and 1895 (*Thom's Directory*). She may also have lived at other addresses in Dufferin Avenue, Raymond Street, Washington Street, and Clanbrassil Street – all within 500m of each other – so it seems she did not move far. Indeed, her son Robert bought his house only a further 150m west, in Donore Terrace!

There is considerable mystery surrounding this Robert (born 1869) and how the son and grandson of a nail maker living in a tenement managed to rise to become a clerk in Guinness's brewery, owning his own house. Did he inherit some wealth from somewhere? Did he get a good education? Or did he get into Guinness's through contacts in the Church of St. Nicholas Without or perhaps through the Masonic Order? Robert was presented with a gold watch which is engraved "Presented to Robert W. Kerr by his friends at St. James's Gate, Dublin, March 1933". Such a gift usually marked the golden, or 50th, anniversary of starting to work there, so the likelihood is that he began in Guinness's in March 1883, then still 13 years old. Starting work at this tender age was not unusual, but admission to the exclusive company in Guinness's certainly was rare.

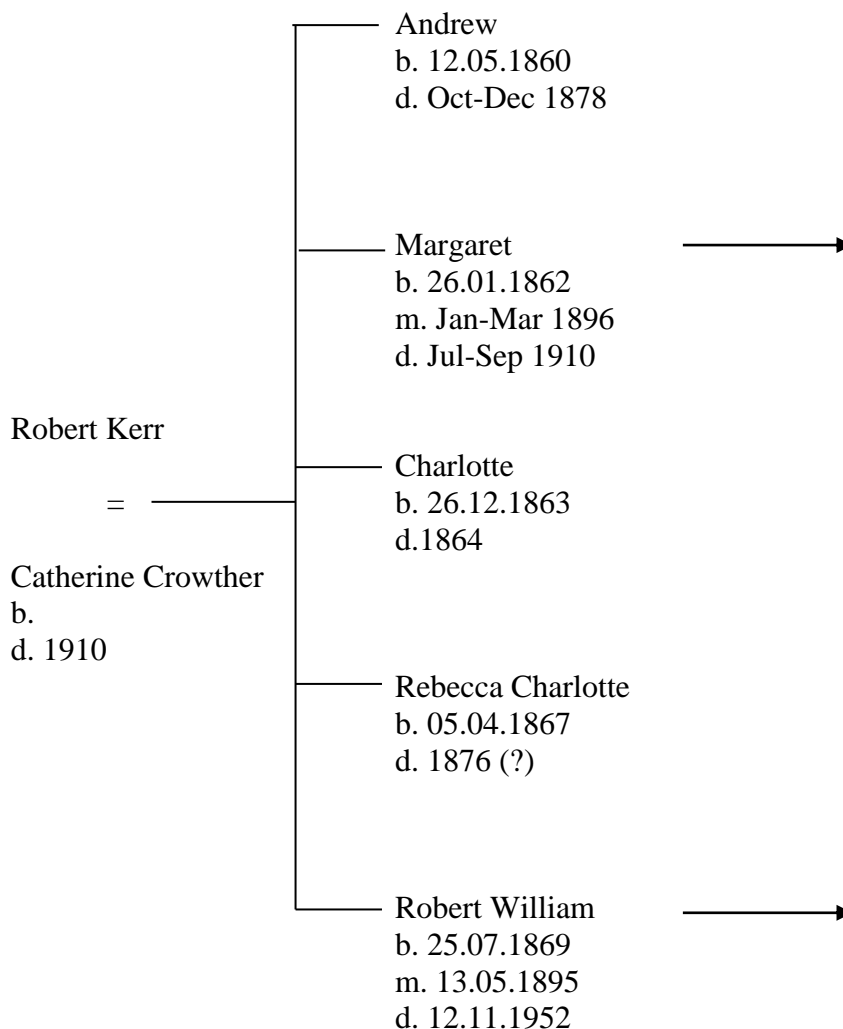
We need to look at a collection of facts in order to get a clue. In 1876 Rebecca, Robert's sister had died, followed two years later by Andrew, his older – and only – brother. When his father, Robert the nail maker, died in 1882 aged 58 this would have left the reduced family (mother Kate, sister Margaret and himself) without an income. There would have been increased pressure on the young 13-year old Robert to find a job and, given their connection to St. Patrick's Cathedral, it seems highly possible that the Dean or one of the Chapter spoke with Arthur Guinness (Lord Ardilaun), the noted philanthropist, who was a member of the Cathedral community, requesting assistance for the distressed family. Whether this vignette is realistic or fanciful has not yet been established, but knowing of the extraordinary generosity of

the Guinness family and their close connection to the Cathedral it does seem possible. What has been possible to establish, however, is some further detail of Robert's time in Guinness's.

Unfortunately the Guinness staff files on Robert William Kerr go back only as far as 1916, by which stage he was already sufficiently established in the Brewery to be given a task of some responsibility – probably protection of records or cash – “during the recent Rebellion in Dublin”, as he wrote in a letter to the Board of Directors on 24th May of that year, thanking them for their letter of thanks (which sadly does not survive) for a job well done. His record shows that he was on the “No. 2 Staff”, which is as high as he could go without being either on the Board or a member of the Guinness family (both the No. 1 Staff). What is most likely, according to the archivists in Guinness's, is that he entered the employ of the brewery as a boy. The standard procedure was that the firm would contact local schools and invite applications from boys aged about 14. Each boy then needed to apply in writing, providing a reference (usually from the school principal or the boy's Rector), then attend for a medical examination (mostly just height and weight), and then sit an examination on standard school subjects, including arithmetic, geography and Latin. This would happen two to three times each year, and each time 100 boys would get to sit the exam, but only 10 places were available. Thus, pressure was high but the reward was a job for life for those who worked hard. The most reasonable guess, therefore, is that Robert entered the firm in this way and on his own merit.

Between the ages of 14 and 18 employees were on a “boys' list”, running errands, carrying messages, lighting fires and ironing the daily newspapers for the senior staff. Each such employee got one and only one chance, at the age of 21, to rise to the salaried staff. This involved further examinations, medicals and references, and it is almost certain that Robert found this path into the office staff. The Census of Ireland in 1901 has Robert listing himself as “clerk in brewery”, so we know he had transferred from the labouring to the clerical staff by then at least. If he made this jump at age 21, as has been suggested, that would have been in 1890. We also know from his employment record that he was promoted to the position of deputy in “the transposing and invoicing offices” in 1921, that he was the “clerk in charge of the post office” from 1928, and that he was in the Secretary's department in 1933, from where

he retired less than a year before Sarah died. A letter from the Managing Director of the brewery in December 1932 informs Robert that he would be “placed on pension” the following year, with four months’ leave on full pay starting 1st April. His annual pension, starting 1st August, was £287, along with a bonus of £5 per quarter. Sadly, he had completed less than seven months of his retirement when his wife, Sarah, died. Robert himself died in 1952, leaving an estate in Guinness’s worth over £2000 – more than enough to buy a suburban semidetached house in those days – including over £1000 in the Brewery Savings Bank. Clearly, he had risen a long way from being the son of a nail maker.



**Figure 3: Family Tree for Robert and Kate
Nineteenth Century, Dublin**

of this Parish

the same were

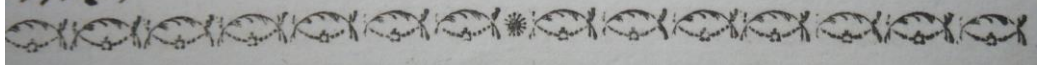
in the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred

me *Mr W. H. Lewis Vicar*

een Us { *Andrew Kerr*
Elizabeth Crowther

others

Other



Signatures on Andrew and Elizabeth's marriage record, 16th July 1821

1. *Catharine Crowther full spinster*

the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremon

ge { *Robert Kerr*
Catherine Crowther } in the Presence

Signatures on Robert and Kate's marriage record, 6th October 1851

ROBERT AND SARAH KERR

Born on 25th July 1869, Robert William was the second son and the fifth and last child of Robert and Kate Kerr. His sister Charlotte had died five years before he was born. When he was seven, his sister Rebecca Charlotte died, to be followed two years later by his brother Andrew. Then his father died when young Robert William was only thirteen and he was compelled to start working in order to help keep the family going. His mother Kate lived another 28 years and both Robert and his sister Margaret married within a year of each other – Robert in 1895 and Margaret in 1896. Little is yet known for certain about Robert's childhood, but it is clear that he began working in Guinness's Brewery in March 1883 as a boy, just five months after the death of his father, and by the time of his marriage he was a "commercial clerk" for the company.

Sarah Emma Little had been born in 1870 (date uncertain) and lived in 102 Cork Street, about 500 metres away from Robert in 101 Lower Clanbrassil Street. Her father was William (Tommy?) Little but her mother's name is not recorded on the marriage certificate for Monday, 13th May 1885. However, we believe that she was Catherine Ann Rock Little (née Heatley) of Roundwood, Co. Wicklow, who had caused some consternation by eloping with the local policeman, who was considered beneath her! Both Robert and Sarah were of "full" age, a bachelor and spinster. Robert's father is still listed as a "nail manufacturer" and Sarah's father is recorded as a "clerk", evidently no longer in the police force. We know also that they were married by the Rector of St. Luke's Church of Ireland Parish Church, the Coombe, Dublin, by Rev. John D. Smylie, who presented the happy couple with a family bible. This bible records the happy events of seven births, seven baptisms, seven confirmations and five marriages, as well as the inevitable nine deaths, and spans almost a century up to May 1992.

In all, Robert and Sarah had seven children and, in a clear change from the pattern of previous generations, all four daughters lived to be at least 82 and two of their sons lived to be at least 77. Just one of their children, their oldest son Robert (Bobby) William, died young, aged 19. This in itself was a remarkable transformation from just one generation earlier and likely reflects the change in the family circumstances,

with a more sound financial footing allowing for improved diet and health. Indeed, Robert himself lived to be 83, though his wife Sarah (whom he called Sal) had died eighteen years earlier, aged 64. Dates, and, in particular, repetitions of dates, have always been important in the Kerr story and Sarah died on the same date as her son Bobby, just nine years after his untimely death. She had, that morning (so the story goes) reminded the rest of her family still living at home that it was the ninth anniversary of their brother's death. By the time they returned from work that evening she too was dying.

Not one of their offspring ended up being called by their strict baptismal name! Margaret was called Pearl; Rebecca was Becky; Sarah was Emily; Robert was Bobby; Mabel was Gerty; Walter was Reg; and Ernest was Ernie. They showed a great consistency in having a hard-working attitude and pleasure in the simple things of life. There was a fatalistic acceptance of whatever life threw at them, and complaints or moaning were unknown. The last time all six living siblings were together was on the occasion of Robert and Peggy's marriage in 1977.

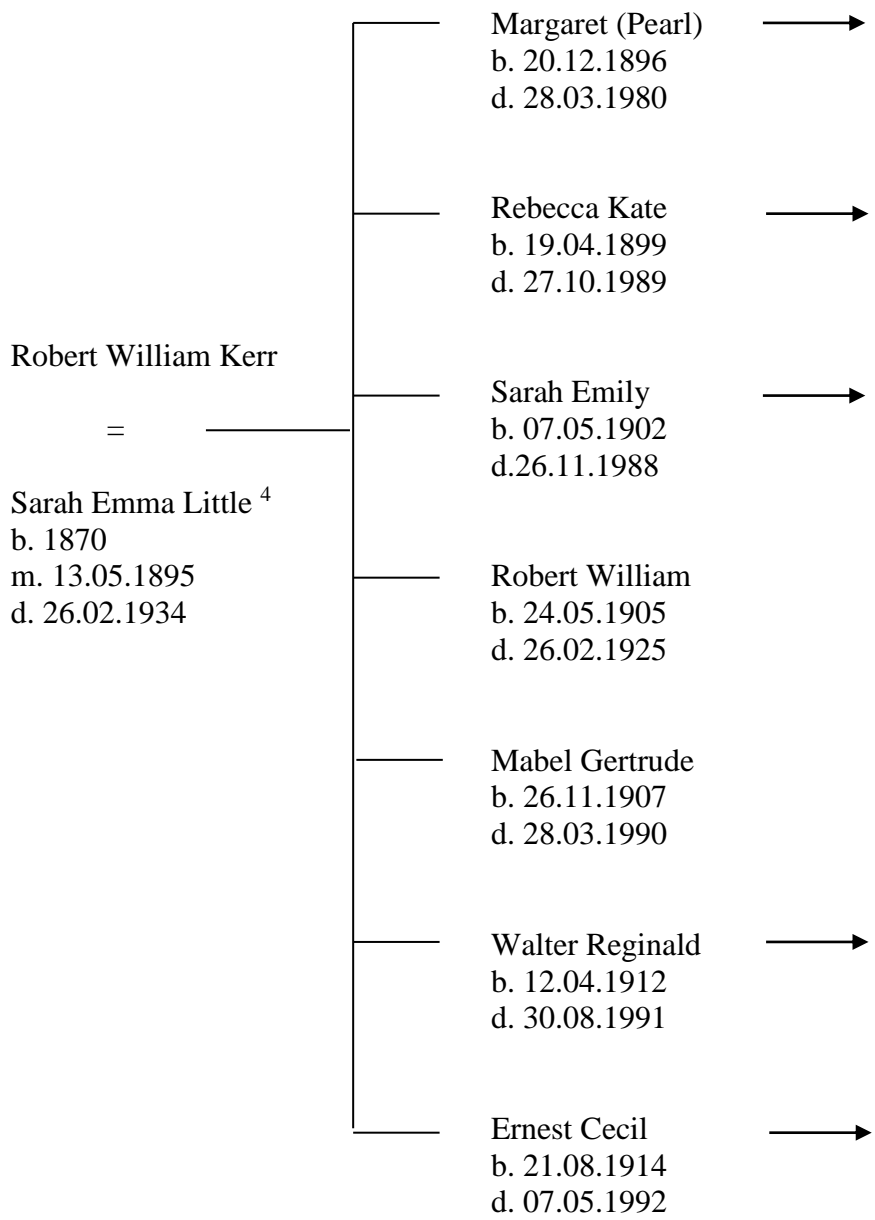
Robert and Sarah's first child was a daughter, Margaret (known as Pearl), born on 20th December 1896. She worked for a time in Guinness's before marrying Garnet Wilby from Bray on 19th November 1924 (just six weeks after her sister Becky). Garnet and Pearl had three children: Eric, born 13th May 1927; Iris, born 30th January 1931; and Joyce, born 15th October 1935. Garnet died in 1947 and Pearl on 28th March 1980; both are buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery. These descendents are shown in Appendix 2. Robert and Sarah's second child was a daughter, Rebecca Kate (Becky), born on 19th April 1899. It is told that Becky was sent to Celbridge College as part of her secondary education, but she hated it and was brought home after less than two weeks. This period was forever afterwards known as Becky's "college career"! She also worked for a time in Guinness's and married Arnold Jones from Manchester (whom she had met on holiday in the Isle of Man) on 6th October 1924. They had three sons: Norman, born 1925, who died as a baby; Raymond, born 1927; and Ernest, born 1930. Arnold died in 1969 and Becky on 27th October 1989; both are buried in Manchester. This family branch is shown in Appendix 3.

Robert and Sarah's third child was another daughter, Sarah Emily (Emily), born on 7th May 1902. She also joined her sisters working in Guinness's for a spell before marrying Albert Henley from Blackpool (whom she had met on the same holiday in the Isle of Man as Becky!) on 2nd August 1926. They also had three children: Roy (born 1931), Aileen (born 1934), and Christine (born 1944). Albert died in 1969 and Emily on 26th November 1988; both are buried near Blackpool. This family group is shown in Appendix 4. Robert and Sarah's fourth child was their first son, Robert William (Bobby), who was born on 24th May 1905. He died on 26th February 1925, aged 19, from a tapeworm in his system. He is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery in Dublin. The next (fifth) child was another daughter, Mabel Gertrude (Gerty), born on 26th November 1907. She never married and spent her working life in the Royal Insurance Company. Gerty was the keeper of the family bible and christening robe (in which all of Robert and Sarah's children were baptised and many of their grandchildren and even great grandchildren) and she held a full list of all the family dates – births, marriages and deaths. Gerty died on 28th March 1990 and is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery.

The final two of Robert and Sarah's children were both boys – Walter Reginald (Reg), born 12th April 1912, and Ernest Cecil (Ernie), born 21st August 1914. Reg worked in Falks Stedleman from the age of 14 before moving to Robert Kemp Ltd, where he became company secretary. He married Doreen Potter in 1951, and produced two children, both boys: Robert Arthur, born 13th June 1953, and David Howard, born 22nd December 1956. Ernie married Elizabeth (Lily) Lattimer in 1936 and worked in the Representative Church Body in Dublin. They had one child, Godfrey Robert, born 10th September 1941; they emigrated to California in 1953, where Ernie worked in a bank. Thus, for the first time (with the possible exception of Anthony, born 1830) there were two branches of the family carrying the Kerr surname!

It is not clear in which year Robert and Sarah took possession of their home, 116 Donore Terrace. Some records show it to be theirs from 1897, while others list a "Mr. T. Gray" in residence there until 1921. Either way, Robert remained living in "116" (as it was known by all the family) until his death in 1952 and with the smaller families of the twentieth century no further large-scale group of Kerr siblings has been seen again. The pattern of large families with significant deaths among the younger

children has been replaced by much smaller family groups where offspring are expected to live into adulthood and old age. This changes the shape of any family tree, and they are further altered by the possibility of multiple marriages or partnerships that do not include marriage. What remains certain, however, is that any title, land, wealth (or debts!) that belonged to Andrew Kerr from Scotland in 1820 now all belong to me!



**Figure 4: Family Tree for Robert and Sarah
Early Twentieth Century, Dublin**

REG AND DOREEN KERR

ERNIE AND LILY KERR

Although younger than his brother Reg, Ernie married Lily Lattimore 15 years before Reg married Doreen and a son, Godfrey Robert was born in 1941. The family lived in Bird Avenue, Dublin, and Godfrey attended The High School, Dublin, until they moved to Southern California, in 1954. They lived in Culver City until 1974, when Ernie and Lily returned to Dublin for a few years. However, the Irish climate was not for them and they retraced their steps, living in Encinitas in Southern California. Ernie died on 7th May 1992 and Lily on 8th January 2000.

Godfrey attended Culver City High School and Los Angeles Metropolitan College of Business before serving in the U.S. Army Reserves between 1961 and 1967. He was a music Disc Jockey briefly, in the 1960s and has worked in the music industry, wholesale and retail, most of his life. He married Karen Jane Hirschler in 1978; she was born in Pasadena, California in 1950 and grew up in Arcadia, California. She earned her BA degree in sociology from the University of Southern California and her MS degree in counselling from California State University, Long Beach. Karen spent twenty years as a manager in the staffing industry and now works in human resources for a university as well as a part-time lecturer teaching courses in HR. Godfrey and Karen live in Cypress, California, where they raised their two children, Sarah and Paul.

Sarah was born in Torrance, California, on 20th December 1978 and grew up in Long Beach and Cypress, California. She graduated from Cypress High School and then earned her BA degree in business with an emphasis in finance from California State University, Fullerton. She joined the accounting department of a mid-sized property management company in Irvine, California in 2001 and is currently the company's general ledger supervisor. She lives in Huntington Beach, California.

Paul was born in Long Beach, California on 5th September 1981 and grew up in Long Beach and Cypress, California. He graduated from Cypress High School and then earned his BA degree in business with an emphasis in finance from California State University, Fullerton. After graduation, he joined the management training

programme of an international plumbing supply company, and is currently living in Cypress and working in Long Beach, California as a branch manager. In 2003 Paul married Raeko Rae Cameron Piercy, who was born in Montebello, California in 1980 and grew up in Cypress. She graduated from Cypress High School and then earned her medical assistant certificate. She currently lives in Stanton, California, and works as a medical assistant for a large medical practice in Long Beach. Paul and Cameron, now separated, have two sons, Colin and David. Colin Christopher was born in Sacramento, California on 7th November 2003. He is attending Arnold Elementary School in Cypress, California. David Cameron was born in Long Beach, California on 10th December 2007. He is attending ABC Preschool in Cypress, California. Colin and David are the latest generation of the Kerr family, since no other member of Paul's generation has (as yet) produced a Kerr child.

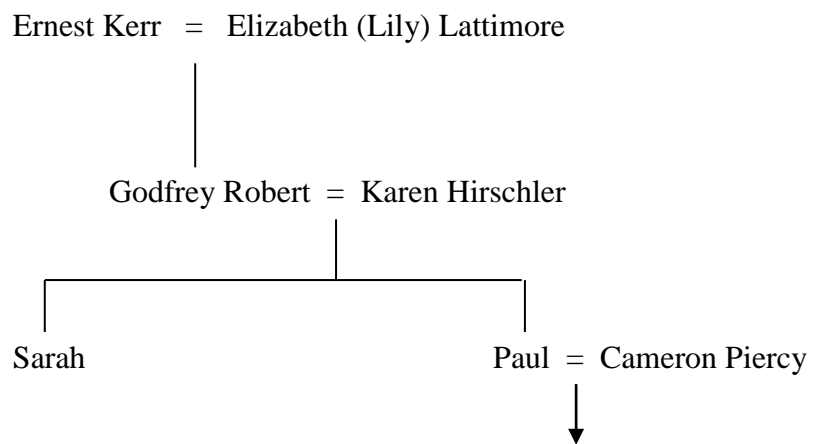


Figure 5: Family Tree for US Kerrs, late Twentieth Century

Reg married Doreen Potter (born 19th April 1923, the eldest of three daughters to James Arthur Potter and Ethel Doris McGowan) on 2nd October 1951. Before their marriage Doreen had worked as a sales assistant in Walpole's in Dublin. They lived all their married lives in Roebuck Park estate and had two sons: Robert Arthur, born 13th June 1953, and David Howard, born 22nd December 1956. Robert went to school in Wesley College and Trinity College Dublin, the Institute of Physics and University College Dublin where he took degrees in theoretical physics, pure physics, applied physics, education, educational management and applied social research. He worked as a teacher in Wesley College and as principal of the East Glendalough School, Wicklow Town. He returned to Trinity College in 1992 to continue his studies and research. On 2nd July 1977 Robert married Peggy Nora Moyse (born 19th July 1954, the second child and only daughter of Arthur James Moyse and Marion Poots), who had been working in Guinness's Brewery. They lived in Ballinteer until 1987, when they moved to Wicklow Town, where they still live.

Robert and Peggy had two children: a son, Andrew Mark Robert, born 31st December 1978 and a daughter, Sonia Marion, born 29th January 1981. Andrew was educated in East Glendalough School, Wicklow Town, and attended University College Dublin without completing his science degree. He has worked as a special needs assistant in primary schools and gives private tuition in mathematics to senior secondary school students. He lived in Dublin for a few years before moving in 2009 to Urlingford, Co. Kilkenny, to live with his girlfriend Maggie. They married on 16th August, 2012. Sonia was also educated in East Glendalough School, Wicklow Town, and in Trinity College Dublin, where she earned a BA degree in science (Geography) in 2002 and a BSc (Nursing) degree in 2007. She worked in Wicklow County Council for the year (2002-3) between degrees. From TCD she also qualified as a midwife (2010) and now works as a practice nurse in Dublin. She lived in a number of apartments in Dublin before marrying Fardod O'Kelly on 21st February 2009. They now live in Ballinteer in Dublin with their one child, a son Arthur Robert, who was born on 8th May 2010.

Reg and Doreen's other son, David, also attended Wesley College, after which he began working for the Department of Posts and Telegraphs (now *eircom*) in 1973. He still works there. In 2000 he gained a BSc degree from Griffith College Dublin,

followed by a qualification in accounting in 2007. On 3rd December 1980 David married Shirley Janet Boles (born 8th August 1960, the eldest of five children of William Boles and Myrtle Turner) who had been working in Irish Lights. At first they lived in Tallaght before moving in 1988 to Rathfarnham, where they still live. They have three children: Stephen David, born 3rd July 1983; Graham Alexander, born 15th March 1986; and Miriam Lesley, born 14th September 1989.

Stephen was educated in The High School, Dublin, in the National College of Ireland, where he obtained a BA in accounting and human resource management in 2005, and in Griffith College, Dublin, where he obtained an MBS in finance in 2006. Since 2007 he has worked as a customer relations manager with Societ  Generale. He has also spent 18 months travelling the world, mainly in the Far East and Australia. Graham also attended The High School, Dublin, and has worked since then as an electrician, setting up his own business, Smart Sparks, in 2012. Miriam was also educated in The High School and in Trinity College Dublin, where she is reading radiation therapy for a BA degree.

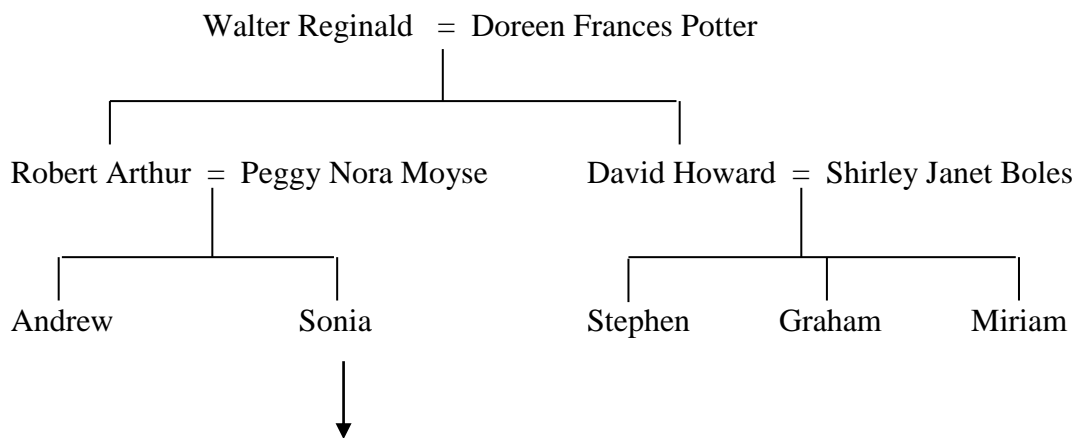
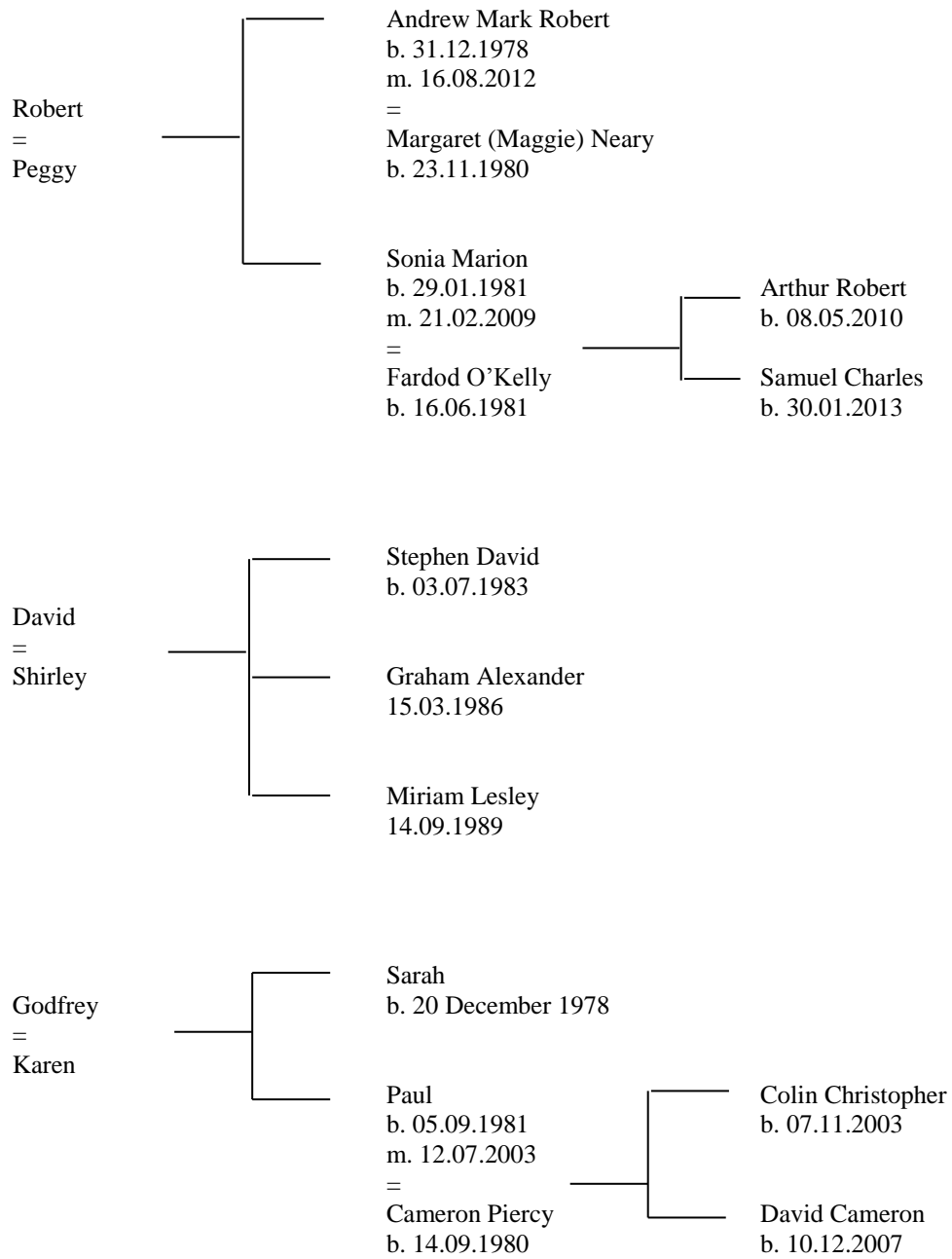


Figure 6: Family Tree for Irish Kerrs, late Twentieth Century

Thus, with four males currently in the youngest adult generation of the Kerr family (Andrew, Paul, Stephen and Graham) there is every likelihood of a significant growth in the width of the family tree, so our claim on the Scottish title will remain strong!



**Figure 7: Kerr family tree
Early Twenty-first century**

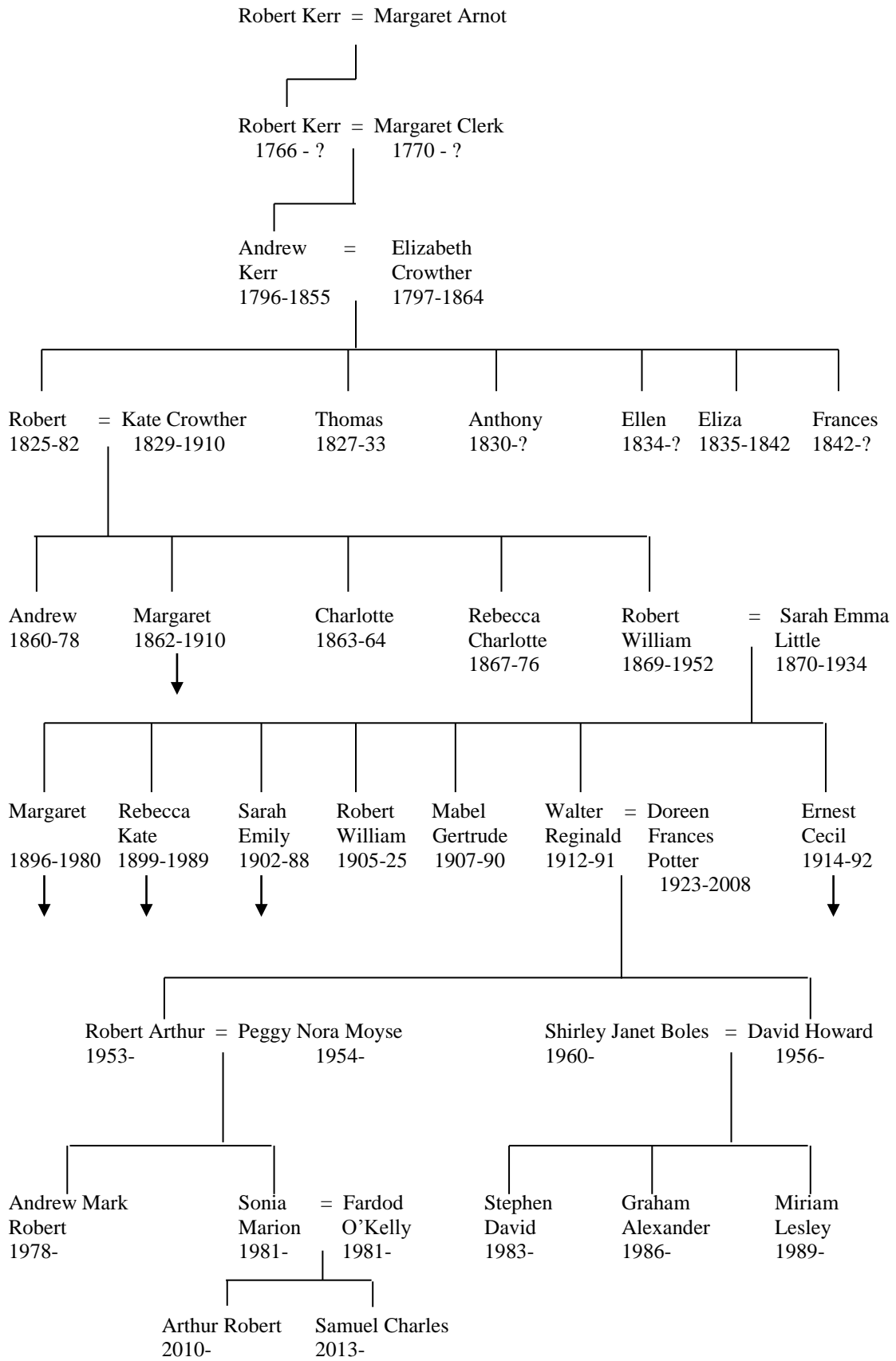
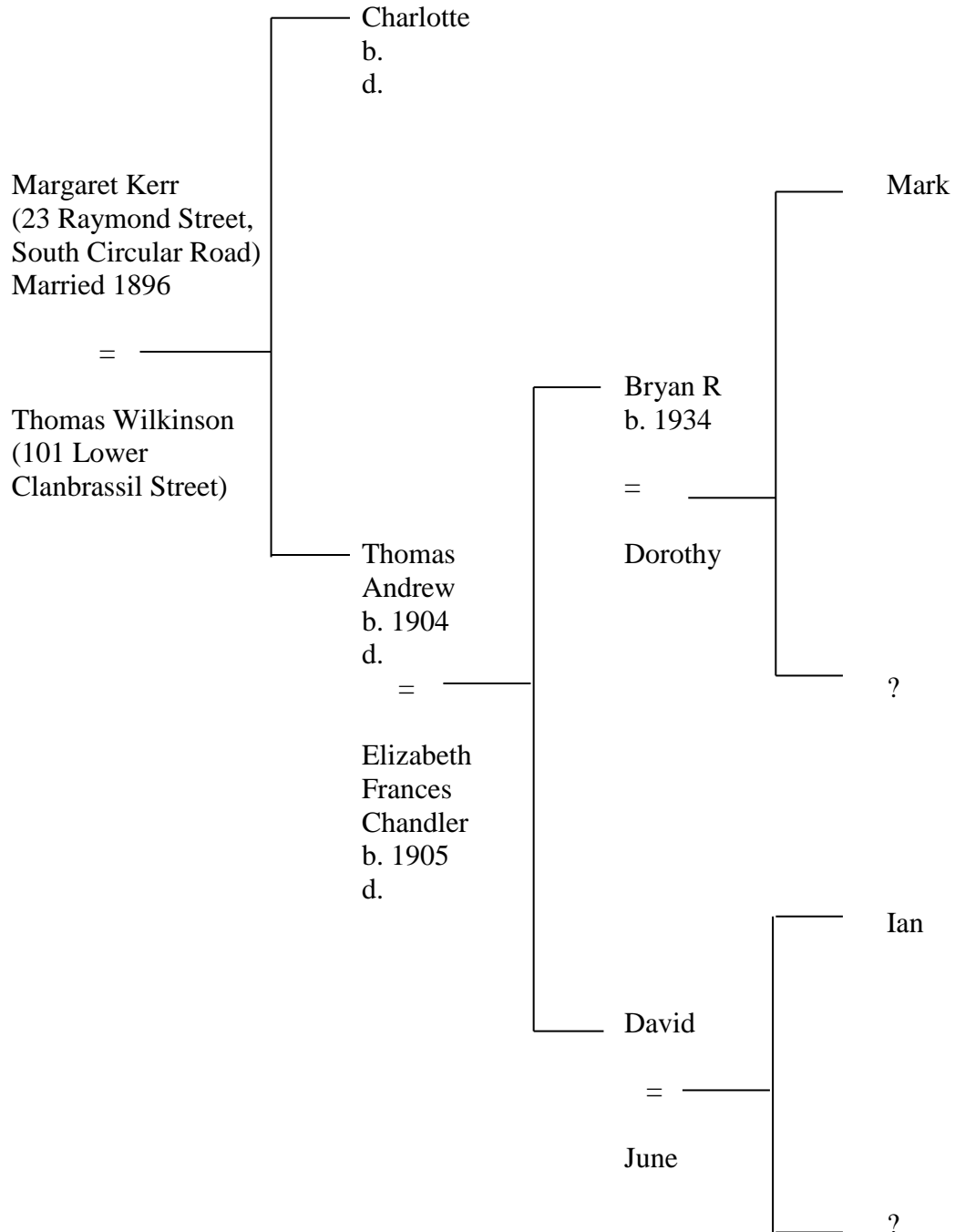
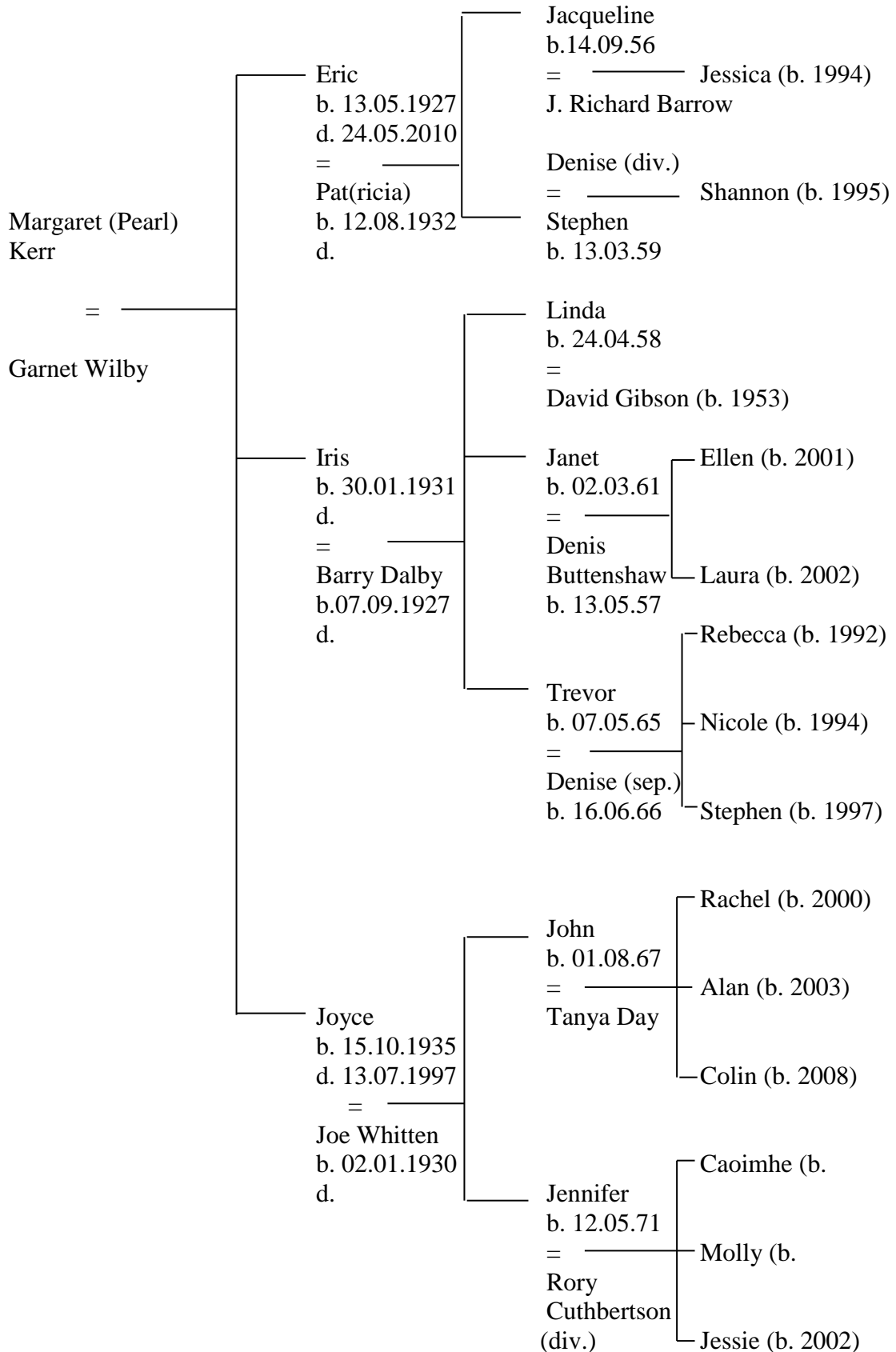


Figure 8: Summary of Kerr Family Tree

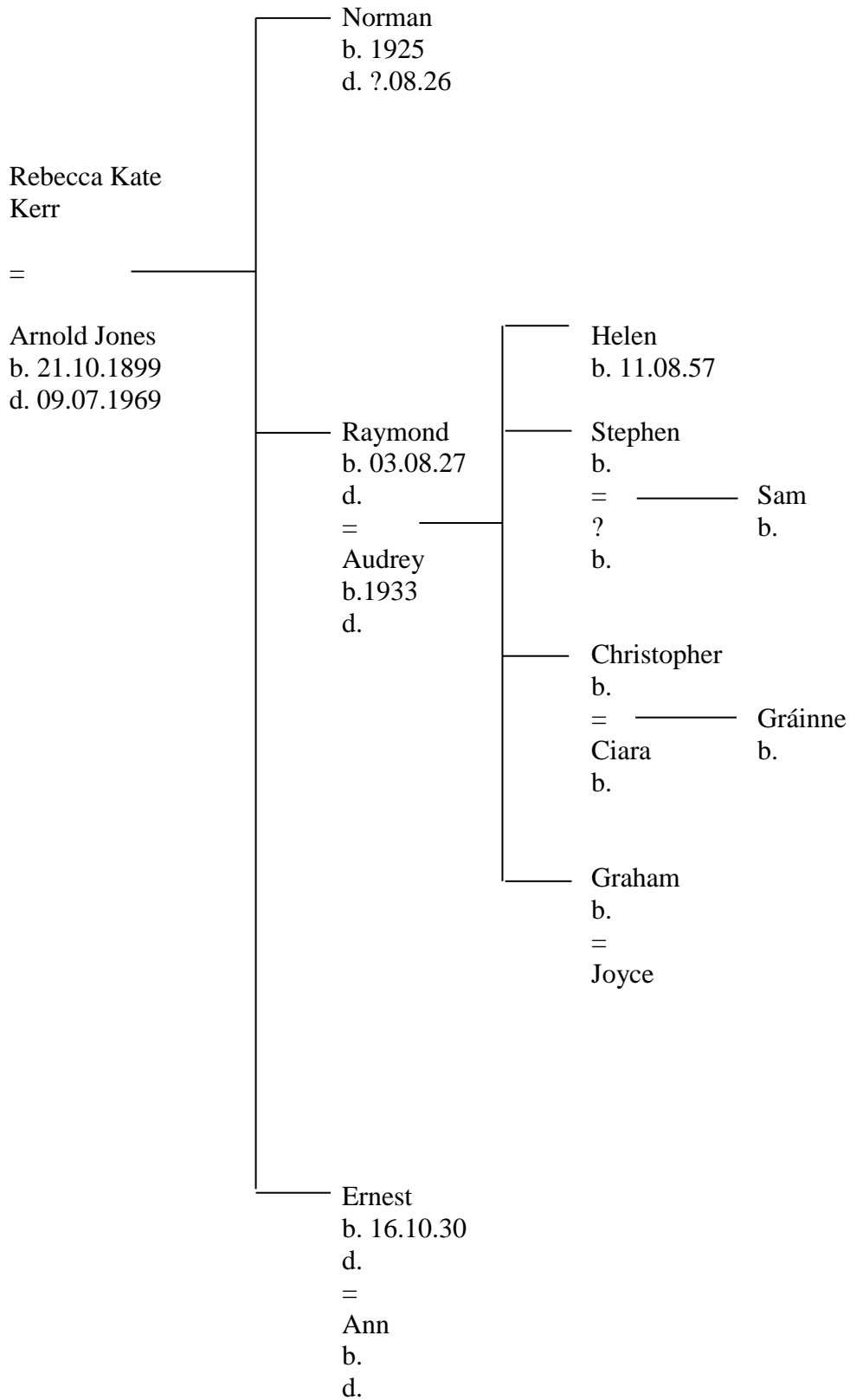
Appendix 1: Family branch of Margaret, daughter of Robert and Kate



Appendix 2: Family branch of Pearl, daughter of Robert and Sarah



**Appendix 3: Family branch of Becky,
daughter of Robert and Sarah**



Appendix 4: Family branch of Emily, daughter of Robert and Sarah

