

Lenham the “Melting Pot”? Scottish Immigrants to the Lenham Area

by Annette Tomarken

We are used to hearing the USA called a “melting pot” to which immigrants from many different races and backgrounds came in search of a new life. The same has long been said of London, whose 250 different languages led “Project Britain” to call it the most linguistically diverse city in the world. Surprisingly, although on a much smaller scale, the term can also be applied to the area around our village. Among the newcomers to South East England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a number of Scots, some of whom settled in and around Lenham. Many were farmers in search of more affordable land: how times have changed in that regard.

Many families in this part of Kent have Scottish ancestors. In addition, several of these families’ histories have become intertwined by way of marriage. You will soon notice that they were very fond of keeping the same Christian name through the generations. I am therefore particularly grateful to their descendants for answering my questions so patiently. Without their input, what follows would have been just a list of names and dates: the vivid personal details make all the difference.

Discussed below are the Barrs, the Boyds, the Nelsons, and the Todds, who came in the late nineteenth century, and the Aikmans, the Alexanders, and the Pullars, who arrived some

decades later. The Mitchells, about whom you can learn more in our street history of Mitchell Close (see here: <https://www.heritagelenham.co.uk/test>), also had Scottish links. Anne Edgar, who helped draft the Swadlands and Mitchell Close part of the website, told me the Mitchells were reported to have come from Aberdeen back in the 1700s, but that this is not substantiated.

Another Scottish connection involving a well-known Lenham name relates to the first Viscount Chilston, Aretas Akers-Douglas (1859-1926). He inherited a large Scottish estate, consisting of thousands of acres in Dumfries, Midlothian and Lanark as well as Chilston Park, from a relative, James Douglas of Baads. It was at this point that he assumed the additional surname of Douglas.

By now you will realise how important to the history of our area these “newcomers” have been. Their present-day descendants have made significant contributions to the life of their new home down south.

In my initial inquiry, I asked when and (if this was known) why these intrepid ancestor(s) had moved south, who they came here with, and what, if any, memories or family stories had been handed down.

If you have further information or anecdotes you are willing to share, please send them in so that they can be added. The same applies, of course, to corrections.

Annette Tomarken

1. The **Barr** family (Information from Andrew Barr and his sister Enid Frow about their grandfather, also Andrew Barr): The first Andrew came down south in 1897 from East Kilbride, Ayrshire (now Strathclyde) to live at Greenhill Farm, Egerton. He moved to East Lenham farm in 1906 and

bought it in 1920. The present Andrew's son Andrew and grandson Ewan Andrew (great-grandson and great-great-grandson to the first Andrew) still farm there.

Interestingly Lord Chilston's Estate Letter Book (covering 1898-1900) contains several references to negotiations for Scottish farmers to come down to run farms on the estate. There is even an offer to advertise in the Scottish newspapers for such would-be immigrants. East Lenham Farm is one of the farms mentioned. (The letter book is available at the Kent Archives. (Thank you, Henny Shotter, for this reference).



Photo: courtesy of Andrew Barr

Title: The first Andrew Barr in later life (with hat on), in front of East Lenham Farm, which he later altered considerably.

Andrew's brother Hugh and sister Susan also came south with him. Hugh rented Chapel Farm in Lenham. The same Andrew helped his cousin Tom Barr rent Payden Street Farm in Wichling, where he farmed with the help of another sister, Margaret. After Margaret died Tom married Daisy, sold the farm and moved to Charing – he had no children. John Boyd, father of John Arthur, bought Payden Street, where William Boyd now lives.

In all, four brothers and four sisters came south with their parents.



Photo: Courtesy of Andrew Barr.

Title: the Barr family in Scotland, circa 1880 on their rented dairy farm. Mungo Barr is in the centre with Mary Anderson

Barr, his wife. “Young” Andrew Barr, standing on extreme right, was the first Andrew Barr to rent East Lenham Farm.

Andrew remembers that his grandfather would never say “Goodbye”, but “So long”. His grandfather’s obituary notes that he was a good friend of Lenham whose “practical experience and knowledge were [so] sought after” that “he was a Justice of the Peace and acted as judge on many occasions and in many spheres during his long career”.

Andrew Barr and Alastair Boyd have the same great-grandmother, Mary Anderson (see below).

2. The **Boyd**s in fact have two sets of Scottish ancestors, the Boyds and the Nelsons. (Information from Andrew Barr, Alastair Boyd, and Robert Boyd-Howell)

The first to come south was Robert Boyd, born in 1870 and recorded as being **in Kent** by 1902. He came from Beith, Renfrewshire. In 1899 he married Margaret Walker, with whom he had six children. Tom, Mary, James, Peggy, John & Robert.

Tom Boyd married and went to farm at St Mary’s in the Marsh in Romney Marsh. Mary married Arthur Goddard and they farmed at another Court Lodge, in Great Chart. Peggy married Gerry Saunders and lived part of her life in Bearsted. For a time, John and Robert formed a partnership but later there was a parting of the ways and Robert Jnr added the name Howell to his surname in honour of a cousin, another Robert, who farmed in Romney Marsh. He still farms at the farm he bought in Wichling in 1981. He added that the Scottish Boyds still farm in Beith.

Court Lodge Farm, home of John Arthur Boyd, was bought by John Arthur's father John from Lord Chilston (see above) in 1958.



Photo (courtesy of John Arthur Boyd): the Boyd family
L to r, back row: James, Tom
L. to r. middle row: Margaret, Robert (John Arthur's
grandparents)
L. to R. front row: Mary, Robert, John (John Arthur's father),
Peggy

3. The **Nelsons** came from Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire (near the Beith area, in fact). William Nelson, born in 1867, married

Marion Brownie Barr on February 25, 1897, and had one child, William Barr Nelson. When Marion died giving birth to William, the baby was taken down to Lenham by her brother Andrew Barr (Andrew's grandfather) and sister Susan as a baby-in-arms until his father William Nelson bought Hook Farm, Charing. After a change in the law permitted marriage between a man and his sister-in-law, the first William married Marion's sister Mary Anderson Barr, with whom he had another child, Mary Anderson Nelson (Mamie). Sadly, William did not long survive the deaths of his wife Mary and his son William Barr Nelson (the latter in WW I, in April 1918). He sold the farm, built a house called Strathcairn in Charing, retired there, and died in 1925. Susan Barr did not marry but looked after Mary [Mamie] until Mary's marriage, after which Susan lived in a cottage next door to Leacon Farm until her death.

Mamie married James Walker Boyd, who was farming at Palace Farm, Charing: after their marriage James rented Leacon Farm, Westwell Leacon, Charing.

Alastair remembers that the original Robert Boyd came to Kent with his wife and children and, after a time farming at St. Clares at Wrotham and then in Rolvenden, bought New Shelve Manor in Lenham. His grandmother Margaret Boyd was a formidable lady who got on well with his mother, Mary Anderson Boyd (nee Nelson).

One of Alastair's most vivid memories concerns a desperate summons from his Aunt Peggy Sanders [nee Boyd] who was living in Court Lodge House on the night the Lenham tithe barn caught fire in 1962. He and his Brothers Nelson & Douglas, drove over from Charing and helped move bales of hay away from the end of the barn. Sadly, the smaller barn was destroyed, but the remaining large barn is still a much-loved centre for village activities.

4. The **Todd** family (information from Amy Myers), came south in the late nineteenth century, at about the same time as the Boyds and the Barrs, and for the same economic reasons. As Amy reports in her book *Lenham and the Great War* (2014), Thomas Renwick Todd and his wife Frances had three sons, Francis (Frank), John and Herbert, who all served in the war. Frank was in the Navy in the Auxiliary Patrol and Minesweeping force, Herbert in the cavalry, and John in the Royal Ordnance Corps. Amy relates a story of Sam Clark (son of Samuel Clark, the well-known Lenham builder who was an ancestor of Janet Humphrey) catching sight of Frank in Bombay Harbour in 1917:

“I was on fatigue work this morning when to my surprise I saw Frank Todd. I suppose he must have a commission. I didn’t ask him, but he was in pyjamas and in officers’ quarters. He told me that things were all right at home when he left.”

5. With the **Aikmans**, the **Alexanders**, and the **Pullars**, the story of Scottish immigrants to the Lenham area moves to a more recent date. (Information from Pamela Aikman Howard, Anne Alexander Price, and Ann Scotland)

Charlie and Margaret **Aikman**, Pamela’s parents, and her brother Jim arrived in Kent via Northampton from the family farm in Dunblane (on the hill above the famous Dunblane Hydro Hotel) in 1949. After managing farms in Waltham, then Wye and Kenardington, Pamela’s father bought Dynes Farm in Bethersden. The spartan accommodation at some of the early farms apparently came as a shock to Margaret, a “sheltered only child”, as Pamela explains. A once-a-week bath in a tin tub in front of the fire (with her father then

bathing in the same water) proved to be quite an adjustment. Understandably, her mother was very homesick for quite some time.

One charming memory Pamela shared concerned a box of Kentish Cox's apples being put on the train at Ashford to be collected at Stirling, while a box of King Edward potatoes would later arrive back down south. No packaging needed - just a label. Later on, her parents met friends from Wye, Jack and Dae Paterson, who took them to the Thanet Caledonian Society dinner/dances, where they recruited enough fellow Scots to start an Ashford Caledonian Society, which was very successful for many years.

6. The **Alexander** family (Information from Anne Price, nee Alexander)

Anne's beloved grandmother Wilhelmina (known as Diane or to her Scottish family as Willa) Alexander (nee Ritchie), moved to Kent in 1939 when she married Anne's grandfather, James Alexander. She was born in Kirkwall, Orkney, but had already come South for further nursing training in London. One of Willa's sisters, Agnes, moved south at the same time. The Alexander family began as tenant farmers on the Chilston estate. Anne grew up spending a great deal of time with her grandparents. Willa Alexander was a very private woman who told few stories of her Orkadian heritage (and, even further back, the links to the Fair Isles). Since her death the Alexanders have been able to get back in touch with their Orkney roots. Anne herself and her husband Charlie returned recently to Lenham after some years in New Zealand. Anne is now Assisting Priest at St Mary's Church in the village. Her parents, Kenneth and Sally Alexander, live and the family continues to farm the land in Boughton Malherbe and Sandway.

7. The **Pullars** (information from Ann Scotland)

Ann Scotland's late husband William Scotland was a nephew of Robert and Cecelia (Annie) Pullar, who, together with their five sons and three daughters, had come to Court Lodge in 1939. William's parents had died, and he was brought up as one of the family by his uncle and aunt. One daughter went away to agricultural college, Ann remembers. After John Arthur Boyd's father bought Court Lodge the Pullars all stayed and worked the farm until 1960. They originally came from a farm in Crieff, Perthshire.



Insert photo: Photo courtesy of Ann Scotland

Title: The Pullar Clan

L. to r. back row: Alexander, John, Violet, David, James

Front row: Robert, Euphemia, Robert (father), Cecelia (mother), Hannah, William Scotland (nephew)

