

Gordon Family History - The Gordon Name and Clan

Gordon is a traditional Scottish clan name. It may derive from the Celtic words "gor" (great) or "gour" (round) and "dun" (hill or fort). Some have derived the Gordon name from *Gordinia*, in Thessaly (Greece); others say they are descendants of the *Gorduni* mentioned by Caesar in his *Commentaries*. The name may be derived from the French town *Gourdon* in Saône-et-Loire, from the Gallo-Roman name *Gordus*.

The Gordons reached Scotland as part of the peaceful Norman settlement from England in the early twelfth century. Although the details are not known, it seems likely that their ancestors left France at the end of the eleventh century, coming to England after the Norman Conquest.

An early Scottish home of the Gordons is believed to be *Gordon* in Berwickshire but they soon acquired land in the southwest and in particular the northeast of Scotland, around Aberdeen. The Gordons were major landowners - rather than a traditional tribal clan - and became known as the "Cock o' the North". The 1st Earl of Huntly – chief of the clan Gordon - is said to have rewarded anyone who adopted the name *Gordon* with a gift of oatmeal!

Clan profile

- Motto: *Bydand* (Steadfast, Abiding)
- Motto: *Animo non Astutia* (By Courage not Craft)
- Lands: Strathbogie, Deeside and Aberdeen
- Slogan: "An Gordanach! An Gordanach!"
- Pipe Music: "The Gordon's March"
- Plant Badge: Rock Ivy
- Tartan: Blue and green with yellow stripe

Our Gordon ancestors are believed to have migrated from Scotland to Ireland in the Plantation era of the 17th Century. Later, they settled in the Tynan Region of County Armagh in the district or townland of *Cooley* (also spelt Coey or Quoy).

Nixon Gordon (1821 - 1902)



Nixon Gordon

Our common ancestor, Nixon Gordon, was born on 9th August 1821 and baptised on the 12th August 1821 in the Tynan Parish Church, County Armagh, Ireland.

Nixon was the son of John and Mary Gordon - their other children that we know of were Ellen (b.1809), Elizabeth (b.1814) and Benjamin.

Nixon married Sarah Lyons of Laggar Hill (a valuable property which was reputedly drunk away by her father!). The wedding took place at the Church of the nearby townland of Lislooney on the 8th August 1855. Sarah was born at Ballyrea, County Armagh, about 1825 and died before 1902.

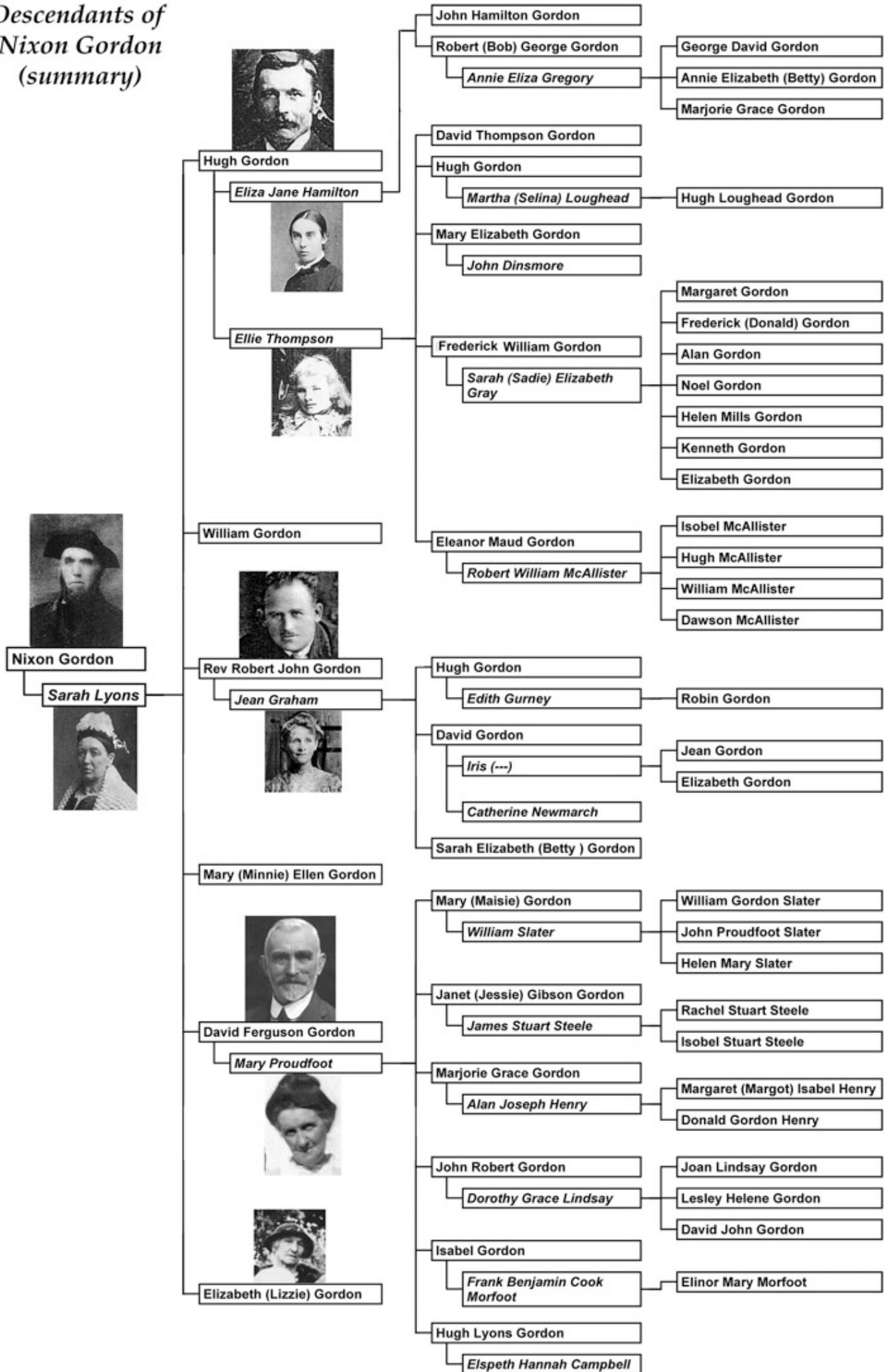


Nixon and Sarah had six children, all born at the family farm at Cooley:

1. Hugh Gordon (1856-1903) helped with the running of the farm – **see page 4.**
2. William Gordon (born 1857) – we have no information about.
3. Rev Dr Robert John Gordon (1859 – 1935) became a medical missionary in China – **see page 7.**
4. Mary (Minnie) Ellen Gordon (born 1861) we believe died young – certainly before 1902.
5. David Ferguson Gordon (1862 – 1965) migrated to Australia – **see page 8.**
6. Elizabeth (Lizzie) Gordon (1866 - 1961) never married; she became a nurse in England before retiring back to Belfast and then living with her nephew Hugh (son of Rev Robert). She has been described as a formidable person, and as “terrifying, with a peculiar way of smiling which became known as the *Aunt Lizzie look!* Like her brother David, she managed to live from the 1860s to the 1960s!

Nixon’s father and his descendants were tenants at Cooley; the property was owned by the family of Sir Norman Strong. Hugh Gordon junior was finally able to buy the farm in 1923, and it was still being run by his son Hugh Loughead Gordon until his death in 2004. Over the years the property of about 40 acres was a mixed farm with crops and livestock such as pigs, cattle, chickens and a number of Clydesdale horses.

Descendants of
Nixon Gordon
(summary)



Hugh Gordon (1856 - 1903)



Hugh Gordon
b. 1856 Cooley, Armagh
d. 1903 Cooley, Armagh

Eliza Jane Hamilton
b. 1860 Crossdall, Ireland
d. 1888 Crossdall, Ireland



John Hamilton Gordon
b. 1887 Cooley, Armagh
d. 1968 Gosford NSW

Robert (Bob) George Gordon
b. 1888 Crossdall, Ireland
d. 1971 Mildura, Victoria

Annie Eliza Gregory
b. 1891 Mildura
d. 1985 Mildura



Ellie Thompson
b. 1868 Hillsborough, Co Down

David Thompson Gordon
b. 1894 Cooley, Armagh

Hugh Gordon
b. 1896 Cooley, Armagh
d. 1976 Cooley, Armagh

Martha (Selina) Loughhead
b. 1897 Knocksginny, Caledon
d. 1961

Mary Elizabeth Gordon
b. 1897 Cooley, Armagh
d. 1957 Armagh

John Dinsmore

Frederick William Gordon
b. 1900 Cooley, Armagh
d. 1966 Belfast

Sarah (Sadie) Elizabeth Gray
b. 1909 Dillay, Tynan
d. 1997 Craigavon

Eleanor Maud Gordon
b. 1900 Cooley, Armagh
d. 1962 Cookstown

Robert William McAllister
b. 1906 Cookstown
d. 1974 Cookstown



Hugh Gordon was born in 1856 and, as the eldest son, would have played a large part in running the family farm at Cooley. He died at the age of 47 in 1903, the year after his father Nixon had died. Hugh's first marriage was to Eliza Jane Hamilton; they had two children:

1. **John**, born in 1887, was raised by his mother's family and then, at the age of 18, migrated to Australia. There he worked for his Uncle, David Ferguson Gordon, in Mildura. David's daughter Jessie later wrote:

We always had an Irish cousin added to our large family. The first to join us was Johnnie – he had fiery red hair and a temper to match. He had a disagreement with my father and packed up his belongings and left. I remember running after him calling “Don't go Johnnie!” We discovered later he had been growing peaches in a new irrigation settlement on the Murrumbidgee. After the war he returned to the fold and remained a firm friend of the family all his life.

In WW1, John served in France with the 2nd Infantry Battalion, where he was wounded three times. After the war he returned to Australia and took up farming again. He died in Gosford in 1968.

2. **Robert (Bob)** was born at his mother's family farm in Crossdall in 1888. Unfortunately, Eliza died giving birth, so Bob was raised by his mother's family, the Hamiltons, assisted by Aunt Lizzie. He attended the small local school, and then at the age of 13 did a five-year apprenticeship as a Grocer and Merchant. In 1908 Bob migrated to Australia and settled in Mildura – he worked on his Uncle David's property and by 1913 had purchased a small farm of his own. With the outbreak of WW1 in 1914, he enlisted in the 3rd Field Ambulance, where he served on ships transporting the wounded from Gallipoli, Egypt and Palestine.

Back in Australia, he acquired a new irrigation farm on the Murray on the outskirts of Mildura. In 1924 he married local girl Annie Gregory and they had three children. In the 1930s he made a number of return trips to Ireland where he found he had a stepfamily; a fact that he kept from his wife and children for many years afterwards! Despite his many years spent in Australia, Bob never lost his broad Irish accent. He died in 1971, aged 83.

After Eliza died giving birth to Robert, Hugh married Ellie Thompson in about 1890. They had five children, who all lived in Northern Ireland:

1. **David** we believe died young.

2. **Hugh Junior** was only seven when his father died, but took over the running of the farm from his mother Ellie when he was old enough. He married Selina Loughhead and they had Hugh Loughhead Gordon, born in 1936, known as Young Hugh, who ran the farm until he died in 2004. He willed it to two children not family; they now live there with their mother, having about 40 acres of land.

3. **Mary** (also known as May) did clerical duties, working in Tullamore, then for Morton's seed merchants where she met John Dinsmore. They married and settled down on his smallholding of about 40 acres in Loughadian Poyntzpass. When John died she bought a motor scooter, but fell off it and had to stay with brother Fred to recuperate, who found her to be a very demanding patient! (She has been described as being a formidable woman, like Aunt Lizzie!) She died in Armagh in 1957.

4. **Frederick** was an electrical engineer. He left school at 14, did an apprenticeship and then started his own company. He was involved in the electrical installations in many large complexes in Northern Ireland including hospitals, schools and factories. He was also a keen inventor and was often asked to design new machinery, big and small. He married Sadie Gray and they had seven children.

5. **Eleanor**, Fred's twin sister, worked on the farm at Cooley. She later married Robert McAllister and they had four children and lived in Cookstown, Northern Ireland.

Rev Dr Robert John Gordon (1859- 1935)



Jean and Robert,
Changchun, China, 1927.

Robert John Gordon was born on January 13th 1859 at Cooley, and baptised on May 1st 1859 in the congregation of Lislooney. Early in life he entered into a career in Newry, before studying at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and then Queen's College. He graduated with honours in Classics in 1883 and then gained an MA. He then studied Theology for two years in Belfast before returning to Queen's to study Medicine.

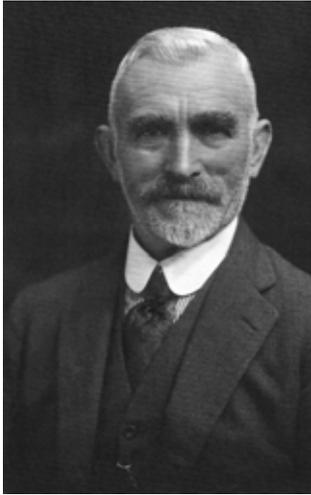
In 1893 Robert accepted a call to go as a medical missionary to Manchuria (now China) where he worked for forty years. He was a skilful doctor, doing "Christ-like work for the sick and suffering, and slaves of the opium habit". He is remembered for having a tremor in his hand, which would always stop just before he operated! He retired from active service in June 1933 and spent the last years of his life in Edinburgh, where he died on December 16th 1935.

Robert married Jean Westwater (nee Graham) in the early 1890s. Jean, a missionary of the Scottish Church, was a widow with two daughters from her first marriage, Anwei and Helen (Nell). Robert and Jean had three children: Hugh, David and Betty, all born in China. Hugh and David both boarded at Campbell College Belfast and then served during WW1, Hugh in the Northumberland Fusiliers and David in the Indian Army. Both then worked in China for a time; Hugh returned to Belfast in the 1930s and worked at Campbell College. David went to Hong Kong and returned to Sussex in the 1950s. Betty studied at Queen's University in Belfast and returned to Edinburgh, where she lived with Anwei and Nell.



This photo, taken in 1911 during his brother David's trip to Scotland, shows, at back, Robert's son Hugh, Jean's daughters from her first marriage Anwei and Nell Westwater, and Betty Gordon. At front: Jessie Gordon (daughter of David), Rev Robert, his wife Jean, D.F. Gordon and Robert's son David.

David Ferguson Gordon (1861? - 1965)



David Ferguson Gordon was born at Cooney on October 16th 1861 – or perhaps 1862! Family stories link the “Ferguson” with the ancestors of developers of the Tractor, but this cannot be verified! Apparently David didn’t get on very well with his father - after one incident where the son had frightened a horse, Nixon threw David over a hedge and into a well – upon which David became determined to leave Ireland! In any case, the future of a third son to possess property was remote, so at the age of 19 (although other accounts have age 25!) he decided to migrate to Australia, undergoing a six month journey by sailing ship.

After he arrived in Melbourne in 1882 he worked as a runner for the brokers McNaughton Love in Flinders Lane, before getting work on a dairy farm on Phillip Island, where he said he spent most of his time killing snakes! When he was working on a wheat farm at Dookie he came upon the famous “Red book” (*The Australian Irrigation Colonies* by the Chaffey Brothers). The Chaffey had set up an irrigation scheme involving the division of 250,000 acres of desert land around the Murray into 10-acre blocks and selling them, along with water rights, to settlers. In 1888 David went to Mildura and worked for the Chaffey in the stables, as well as ploughing furrows and clearing the land of the notorious Mallee roots. Later he was contracted to plant the Sugar Gums in Deakin Avenue.

By 1890 David had earned enough money to purchase his first two 10-acre blocks in the Irymple area, just south of Mildura. His daughter Jessie later wrote:

With the help of a friend he built a house. We said it was constructed of mud; it was probably cob. The block was planted with vines – currants and sultanas and muscatels for raisins, also oranges, peaches and apricots. Around the house he planted luxury fruit trees – there was a mulberry tree, a cherry plum tree, a tangerine, some figs, lemons and Seville oranges for marmalade - some pear and plums and delicious desert grapes. As the family grew, the old house was not large enough, so a larger one was built nearby [around 1906] and the old one demolished.

David married Mary Proudfoot in 1895. Mary, born in 1868 at Peshurst, near Hamilton in western Victoria, attended Methodist Ladies College - her father believed women should be educated, and Mary wanted the same for her own daughters.

Later her family moved to Euston on the Murray, where her father was a storekeeper, and then to Mildura in 1888, where their block was one of the first in the district. It is said that Mary kept company with H.V. Mackay (inventor of the stump jump plough) before meeting David Gordon!

The property produced a variety of dried fruits; David was able to acquire the block next door in 1894, and this was to become the drying area. Peaches and apricots were sliced open and then placed in a sulphur box to be fumigated, and then laid out on the drying ground. Grapes were dipped in a boiling solution of caustic soda in a large cauldron. Further blocks were purchased in 1904, 1912 and 1916, until he eventually had 80 acres. Another 40 acres in 16th Street were given to Mary by her father and used for grapes only. In later years, David and his son John produced currants, sultana grapes (from vines imported from Turkey) and citrus fruits.



David and Mary, c1940

In 1899 David became a Councillor for the shire of Sandalong Riding, serving for 34 years and being Mildura Shire President for six of those years. When he retired in 1933, David and Mary moved to Box Hill in Melbourne. After Mary died in 1950, he would spend time at Maisie’s place at Essendon and later Indooroopilly, at the old property at Irymple now run by John, and (most often) with Isabel’s family in Caloundra. He died there in 1965 at the ripe old age of 103!



David with his great grandchildren:

David and Mary had six children, all born in Irymple, most of them living to see their 90th birthdays:

1. Mary (Maisie) Gordon (1897- 1988)
2. Janet (Jessie) Gibson Gordon (1899 – 1995)
3. Marjorie Grace Gordon (1901 – 1995)
4. John Robert Gordon (1904 – 1992)
5. Isabel Gordon (1907 – 1999)
6. Hugh Lyons Gordon (1909 – 1943)



Irymple, around 1920:
Maisie, Jessie (?), Marjorie, (friend)
John, Hugh, (friend), Isabel.



Box Hill 1935:
Hugh, Isabel, Maisie, Marjorie, Jessie, John.
Mary and David Gordon seated

Mary (Maisie) Gordon (= Slater) (1897- 1988)

Mary (Maisie) Gordon was born in Irymple on 19th June 1897. She attended State School at Irymple and then high school in Mildura, being an excellent student with a special interest in nature and plant life. In her late teens she left home to attend Melbourne University, boarding in Carlton. She was later to graduate with a Master of Science degree and went on to lecture in Botany.

While supervising exams in 1919 she saw that one of the students was William (Bill) Slater, whom she had met before the war in Mildura, where he had worked on a local property growing dried fruits. William was now studying law under a returned soldier rehabilitation scheme. A romance later developed and Bill and Mary married late in 1923. Bill was a member of the Victorian State Parliament for many years and would go on to form the famous Australian Law firm *Slater and Gordon* with Mary's brother Hugh.

Mary and Bill went to live in Hamilton where Bill had established a law practice and where they had their sons William (Bill junior, born in 1926) and John (1928). Around 1930 the family moved to Camberwell and then shortly after to Essendon where daughter Helen was born in 1933. Mary had to tolerate long absences as Bill was continually travelling, including a world trip in 1942 when he was appointed Australia's first ambassador to the Soviet Union. Summer holidays were spent at Point Lonsdale at a holiday cottage called "Idlenook" that they had purchased in 1938.

After Bill senior died in 1960, Mary sold up the house in Essendon and moved to Indooroopilly (Brisbane) to live with son Bill. After Bill married, Mary decided to leave the humid climate, moving back to Victoria in 1967 to live in a new house on her land at Point Lonsdale. She lived there for the remainder of her life enjoying gardening, reading and visiting friends and relatives. She passed away on 25th March 1988.

Janet (Jessie) Gibson Gordon (= Steele) (1899 – 1995)

Janet (known in childhood as Jessie and later as Jay) was born April 8th 1899 in the 'old house' at Irymple and enjoyed her country upbringing. In 1911 her father took her on a visit to the UK to obtain professional advice about a chip of glass that had become embedded in her eye when she was 18 months old. In Scotland she visited her Uncle Robert and his children (see photo page 7). In Ireland she visited relatives and saw the giant ships Titanic and Olympic in the shipyards at Belfast. She stayed in Ireland for nearly a year, amusing her family when she returned home with an Irish accent!

Jessie left Mildura in 1917 to attend Melbourne University, achieving an Arts degree in History and English. In 1919 she met James (Jim) Steele, a young Army officer on leave in Melbourne to visit his half-sister, Meg Stuart. Jim had already been working at Irymple, where David Gordon had been boasting about Jessie as being "as good as two men any day", which her mother thought of as a strange way to recommend one's daughter to a man! Jim, born in 1894 in a farmhouse in Ballycarry, County Antrim, had enlisted in the Royal Irish Rifles in 1914 and served in

WW1 in France and on the North West Frontier in India.

Jim and Jessie corresponded and in 1921 became engaged. With marriage in prospect she did not start a career but helped her father on the smallholding in Irymple. The wedding took place in Cairo in April 1923 and they embarked on an Army life, with Jim serving in India, Egypt, Jamaica and Palestine. They had two daughters - Rachel, born in India in 1929 and Isobel born in England in 1933.

In July 1939 - just before the outbreak of WW2 - the family purchased a cottage in Devon where Jessie created a wonderful garden and kept goats, hens and bees to supplement rations. Jim was away on active service, involved in the evacuation from Dunkirk, then serving in Cairo and finally back home to help with the planning of the second front in France.

After the war, Jessie was able to join Jim for his final postings - in 1946 he was appointed British Commander in Chief and High Commissioner in Austria (when he received his knighthood), followed by membership of the British Army Council. He retired in 1950 but continued with his army connections. In their later years, Jim and Jessie loved gardening and travelling; she made three trips to Australia (1947, 1954 and 1961) to visit relatives. The cottage in Devon was rather isolated, so they moved to live in Taunton and finally to Blandford. In her 90s she wrote an fascinating account of her childhood days in Mildura called "Ramblings of a Nonagenarian"! Jim died in 1975 and Jessie in 1995 at the age of 96.

Marjorie Grace Gordon (= Henry) (1901 – 1996)

Marjorie was born in Irymple on 27th August 1901, the same year Australia was born! She was a pupil at Mildura High School but completed her schooling at Methodist Ladies College in Melbourne, where her mother had been educated in the 1880s. Marjorie was not academically inclined; being a bit of a tomboy, she preferred riding horses and on the back of motor cycles belonging to her brother John's friends.

In her late twenties, she went on a trip to England. On her return voyage she met Alan Henry, who was returning to his job in the Sudan after leave in the UK. A year or so later he came to Australia to see her again and meet her family members. They were married in August 1933 in Chester, England, where sister Jessie and brother-in-law Jim lived. So the shipboard romance had a 55-year life!

After marriage they went back to live in the Sudan. Marjorie would return to Melbourne to stay with her mother when her two children were born in the 1930s. Marjorie loved Africa, particularly the Sudan where Alan had a long career as a government analyst, then as a Professor of Chemistry. They then moved to Libya where Alan helped to establish the Chemistry Department of a new University. Finally, he went to lecture at the University of Sierra Leone, before having to accept that his Chemistry lab days were over.

Later, after prolonged stays with their daughter Margot and family in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and New Zealand, they settled in Caloundra - choosing to live there because of the warmth and the sea and the proximity of her sister Isabel. Alan died in 1988 and Marjorie in 1995.

John Robert Gordon (1904 – 1992)

John Robert Gordon was born on December 10th 1904 in Irymple and was educated at Irymple State School, Mildura High School and Longrenong. He rowed for the Mildura Rowing Club. He studied Agriculture and took over the family property at Irymple when David and Mary Gordon retired to Box Hill in 1934.

He also took his father's place as Mildura Shire Councillor when David retired in 1933 and held the seat for 40 years - not once being opposed. He was Shire-President a number of times; including two occasions when the Queen and Prince Phillip visited the district. Like his father, John was a member of most of the Committees to do with the district. The 75 continuous years of service to the Shire by father and son are believed to be a record for Victorian local government.

John was honoured with an OBE for his various civic duties and for being chairman of the Export Control Board of the Australian Dried Fruits Board (the first grower to hold the position). The OBE was presented by the Queen at Buckingham Palace in 1963.

John married Dorothy Lindsay in 1930 and they had two daughters - Joan and Lesley - and a son, David, who took over the Irymple property, producing dried fruits, wine grapes and citrus. David still lives in the house at Irymple, but has sold off the surrounding land.

The family would often spend part of the summer at the Slaters' holiday house at Point Lonsdale (lots of Mallee and Wimmera families went to the area for their holidays). In the 1960s John and Dorothy built a house at Point Lonsdale and moved there in 1974 after John retired, living just up the road from Mary Slater. He joined the Bowling Club, Golf Club and was active in the Queenscliff Historical Society. He died on March 22nd 1992.

Isabel Gordon (= Morfoot) (1907 – 1999)

Isabel was born on the 12th January 1907, but her birthday was registered as the 20th (apparently many of the children's birth dates were wrong because their father was always late registering them and just made up a date within the legal time frame!). She attended the local primary school at Irymple and then boarded at Methodist Ladies College in Melbourne. She did her nursing training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital where she worked as a midwife and was a theatre sister for Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, who was then a surgeon at the Hospital. In the late 1930s she travelled to London, where she nursed at St Thomas's hospital, and then went to the Sudan to visit her sister Marjorie. Isabel decided to stay on, nursing at the hospital in Khartoum.

In the Sudan she met Frank Morfoot, who was a civil engineer with the Sudanese railways and had been there for about twenty years. After they were married at Port Sudan in 1943, the British Government evacuated their staff from North Africa – a torturous journey taking four months by convoy leaving from Alexandria - passengers had to remain fully clothed all the time! Frank had a severe case of malaria and Isabel had to nurse him; upon landing at Liverpool he weighed just five stone. Isabel suffered a miscarriage during the trip when she was seven months pregnant and had to cope alone without medical help.

On arrival in England the couple settled in Norfolk where Frank took over the family Sand and Gravel business, as his father had just died. Daughter Elinor was born there in 1948. After Isabel's mother Mary died in 1950, the family moved back to Australia so she could look after her father. The family lived at Yallourn in Victoria for a short while, but Frank was unaccustomed to the cold so they headed north to Queensland with Grandad in tow. They settled in Caloundra and ran the General Store and Post Office until Frank's retirement. Frank died in 1969 and Isabel in 1999.

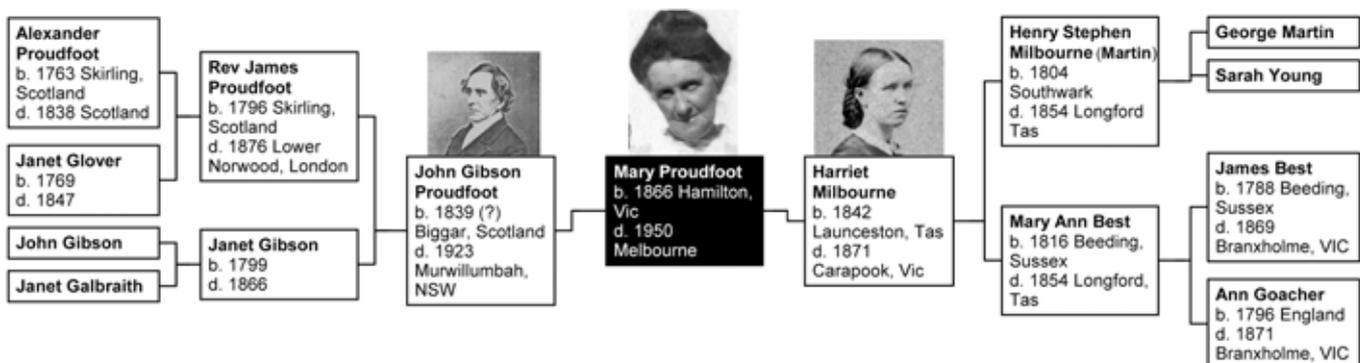
Hugh Lyons Gordon (1909 – 1943)



Hugh was born in Mildura on 5th June 1909. He went to Irymple Primary, then Mildura High and Scotch College, finally obtaining a Law degree at Melbourne University. In March 1935 he went into partnership with his brother-in-law William Slater (his sister Mary's husband), creating the law firm *Slater and Gordon*. He later married Elspeth (Essie) Hannah Campbell, daughter of the manager of Ned's Corner Station, west of Mildura. They did not have children.

During WW2 he joined the RAAF and was a navigator with the *Pathfinders*, a unit that flew aircraft to guide bombers to their targets over Germany. He was killed in action on his thirtieth and final mission when his plane was shot down over Holland on the night of June 14th, 1943. He is buried in the Jonkerbos War Cemetery in Holland.

Ancestors of Mary Proudfoot (= Gordon)



Mary Proudfoot, wife of **David Ferguson Gordon**, had some interesting ancestors, both on her father's Scottish side and her mother's English one.

Her grandfather, the **Reverend James Proudfoot**, was minister of the Established Church of Scotland for 16 years (until the schism of 1843) and then of the Free Church for 33 years. He was born in 1796 at Skirling just south of Edinburgh. He married Janet Gibson and they had nine children; his son Alexander also became a minister. James was so admired that an obelisk was erected in the picturesque churchyard of Culter, bearing the following inscription:

Erected by his attached flock in affectionate remembrance of his great personal worth; of the sacrifices for conscience sake made by him at the disruption of 1843, and of his faithful labours, extending over a period of

nearly 50 years.

His son **John Gibson Proudfoot** was born around 1839 in either Skirling or the nearby town of Biggar in Scotland. In his early 20s he spent three years in Canada and the US, before moving to Australia. He lived in Geelong and then moved to the Western District of Victoria. He married **Harriet Milbourne** and they had Mary and James, but Harriet died after giving birth. John then married Mary Anna Penrose (1840 – 1919) in 1872 and with her had five children; Susannah, Elizabeth (Bessie), Grace, Will and Harriet, all born in Casterton.

In 1881 John's son James accidentally killed Bessie by shooting her with a gun the men had left leaning against a wall. The stepmother never forgave him and made his childhood a misery; the father eventually sent James and Mary off to boarding school to get them away. Their youngest daughter Harriet was nicknamed Bessie in Elizabeth's honour.

The family later moved to Euston on the Murray River, then to Mildura (where Mary met David Gordon), and finally to Murwillumbah on the northern NSW coast where John died in 1923.

Harriet Milbourne, first wife of John, was born in Launceston Tasmania in 1842, one of nine children of **Henry Milbourne** and **Mary Ann Best**. She had relatives living at Branxholme, in western Victoria, south of Hamilton, and that was where she met John and they were married, but Harriet died in nearby Carapook after giving birth to James. She is buried at Branxholme.

Our convict ancestor – Henry Milbourne

Henry Milbourne - father of Harriet - was a convict transported to Australia in 1829. His name was actually Henry Stephen Martin, born in 1804 in Southwark, London. He was first convicted in 1842 for stealing a silk handkerchief, and served time on the prison hulk *Dolphin* before a full pardon in 1828. The next year he was charged with stealing a parcel of legal papers from a coach and sentenced to seven years transportation to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). He sailed on the convict ship *Thames* in June 1829, the voyage taking 142 days.

In Tasmania in December 1832 he was sentenced to a further two months imprisonment with hard labour, for “debauching a young female in the service of his master”. Quite possibly this was **Mary Ann Best**, whom he married at Longford in June 1834 “with the consent of the Government” (he was, after all, still a prisoner). It seems that Henry and Mary were having an affair and Mary had become pregnant! They later claimed that their first two children were twins, but the first child was actually born two months before they were married.

The occurrence of an enforced marriage goes a long way towards explaining the hostility with which Milbourne's father-in-law, **James Best**, evidently regarded his daughter's husband. James wrote: "As for Milbourne, he is worse than ever - the most abandoned wretch that I ever knew cannot equal him."

James Best

James Best, born in 1789 in Beeding, Sussex, was a sailor in the British Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. Family accounts state that during one naval battle he had the misfortune to be knocked overboard and picked up by the French. He consequently spent the next six years in a prisoner-of-war camp at Arras, in France, before escaping eastwards, through Switzerland and Austria, to Trieste where he joined a British warship and was returned to England where, ironically, he was assumed to be a Frenchman! According to a family story, he met his future wife Ann Goacher working in a field and offered to help. They fell in love, her father did not approve and they eloped. Her father sent detectives after them but once he was found the detectives realized the "Orleans shepherd" was not a Frenchman after all!

Around 1828, he was hired by a Colonel Latour of the Van Dieman's Land Establishment to oversee the management of their sheep on a large property in Tasmania. To take up this position, James, his wife and children sailed from London on the 500-ton *Orelia* in December 1828. They arrived in Hobart in June the following year and then took up residence in Cressy, Tasmania.

James spent the next 25 years looking after sheep for the Cressy Estate. In 1854, James and Ann, having raised eleven of their own children, took in the four youngest children of their eldest daughter Mary Best, who had died earlier that year. This new burden no doubt influenced the sixty-four-year-old James to retire and move to Branxholme in Western Victoria, where his eldest son Thomas had been one of the first settlers. James bought a property there and called it *Shepherd's Folly*. He died there from cancer of the eye and nose in 1869 and is buried in Branxholme Cemetery.

From his letters to his children, we know that James was a conservative, pious, fiercely independent, though somewhat fearful, man. During his years in French captivity he spent from early 1809 until the middle of 1810 transcribing the Bible, and his letters to his children display his fondness for quoting from the Old Testament.