

# *Carswell Connection*

## **The Power of Research**

by Robert Carswell, Toronto Ont

In search of the Reverend James Carswell, MA

My father, who died last month at the age of 88, never knew his Grandfather. Like me, he was five years old when his grandfather died. It seemed to be a family trait for two generations. I did not know my grandfather either. What my father could tell me about his grandfather though, was often said as if my father thought his grandfather was a lazy sod looking for an easy life. He left me with the following facts he had heard about his grandfather:

- 1) He went to the University of Glasgow in Scotland
- 2) He was a minister in Newcastle Upon Tyne, England
- 3) He quit the church claiming ill health
- 4) He said he did not want to prevent another young minister from having an income so he did not take a permanent posting
- 5) He travelled around the Isle of Bute and other areas nearby filling in for other ministers as required.

There was nothing else my father could tell me about his great grandfather James Carswell so I began to research this man none of us had ever seen even a picture of up to this point. I began by contacting the University of Glasgow. From their records I was able to determine that he had been totally educated in Glasgow, his birthplace. However, it told me little else. While researching into William Carswell's (my grandfather) history, I learned from his obituary notice in the Montreal papers that he went to school on the Isle of Bute at Rothesay Academy and later, the University of Edinburgh. For years after that I believe that he was a student who boarded at the school. I did not know anything about Rothesay Academy nor that Rothesay itself was actually a city. The Academy still exists but their records were lost in a major fire years ago. That sort of ended that line of research. However, somewhere along the way I realized that minister's presence in Rothesay meant his son did not board at school. Then I remembered finding the Reverend's grandfather in Rothesay on one of the census records visiting there with family, and one of his grandchildren. Rothesay, as I learned, was a very popular summer resort for the families of the wealthy of Glasgow, yet close enough to Glasgow that the working husband could visit on weekends. I now suspected that the family connection to Rothesay had more to do with it being a resort town than anything else. Still, I had not worked out things in my own mind about the Reverend and what kind of man he was. Thinking it through, I reasoned that if a man of the cloth did the Christian thing, he would not take a church posting if he otherwise had a means of support and if it meant keeping another man from earning a living. To determine what he did in Newcastle, I went to the Internet in the early days and punch in his name. Low and behold, up came the history of the Byker Church and his presence as the first minister. I contacted the church asking them if a photograph of him was available and they sent me one more clue. The photograph copy then sent me was actually from a death card....all it said was Bournemouth and 1925. That in itself answered a few questions....when and where he died. It also made me realize why the

spinster great aunt we all called Aunt Peg lived in Bournemouth for many years and later next door in Poole. Being the only daughter, she had stayed with her parents to look after them in retirement. Later research showed me that they had retired to Bournemouth around 1911 and his wife had died in 1917. That answered a few questions but I still did not answer the claim of his quitting the church in Newcastle due to ill health. I did know that Newcastle in the period was very much a coal town, using a great deal of energy to run industrial operations. That meant a city with lots of smog...a natural cause of bad lungs. By a chance look at a 2% sample of the 1891 census, I found an unusual entry for a family named Cardwell on the Isle of Aldernay in the Channel Islands...then I realized that this chance happening was actually a record for my Carswell family...all of the first names and ages fit. It confirmed that the family had left Newcastle Upon Tyne to go to Aldernay in the Channel Islands in 1890 to get the fresh Mediterranean sea air that everyone believe offered a new lease on life. It confirmed that the family was indeed there to recover their health after Newcastle. I next found a document for the family that placed them in Rothesay by 1895. By the age of sixteen, my grandfather was at the University of Edinburgh. He did not complete his Science degree there rather preferring to leave the school to undertake a job in accounting leading towards his Chartered Accountant designation. Leaving for Canada in 1908, ties with his parents were severed because of the distance.

Reverend James Carswell's father and brother both predeceased him. When his mother followed the family wealth all came to him. Added to that was a healthy inheritance that his wife receive. Money was no longer an issue. He could leave the church because of his bad health and take the time to recover. Then he could find a job within the church circles that would not put so much pressure on him.

By 1911, after some twenty years as a circuit minister around Rothesay, and probably a popular person to invite to the social events, teas and the like of the upper crust of Rothesay, it was time for the Reverend to retire. Once again, he moved south to the warm air of the English Channel. Little did he know that he would witness the naval buildup in the area in support of World War One in Europe. I suspect that once again, the Reverend made his way into the local upper society of Bournemouth as a means of keeping himself busy. His daughter would eventually become a travelling companion for rich ladies wishing to see the world. Little would she know that she would be spending the entire six year war period in Australia, stranded there when Britain declared war on Germany. Someday, I hope to tell her story too....

What this research taught me was that any family story, no matter how badly it was told or understood, it was still the basis of some piece of knowledge that would eventually tell a complete story.

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## A few interesting web sites

[www.refdesk.com/factgene.html](http://www.refdesk.com/factgene.html)

[www.pricegen.com/english\\_genealogy.html](http://www.pricegen.com/english_genealogy.html)

[www.scotsfind.org](http://www.scotsfind.org)

[www.RAOGK.org/](http://www.RAOGK.org/)

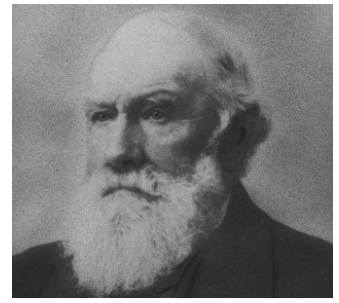
Kintyre Cemetery - [www.ralstongenealogy.com/kintyrecemeteries.htm](http://www.ralstongenealogy.com/kintyrecemeteries.htm)

A little different, but interesting - [www.shoestringgenealogy.com/ssg1.htm](http://www.shoestringgenealogy.com/ssg1.htm)

[www.scotsgenealogy.com/links.htm](http://www.scotsgenealogy.com/links.htm)

With Ancestry.co.uk and Findmypast.com - you now have the ability to search UK telephone directories (1880 to 1984), and passenger lists (1890 to 1939).

# James Carswell's diary, March 1847



Following is the third of monthly entries from the diary of James Carswell, Miller, at Dalbeattie, Kircudbrightshire.

## March, 1847

1 Thursday. Hard frost this morning and some little snow, and a cold wind north east. Leading bones. The vessal got up yesterday. They are a pretty good cargo. Clean and dry as far as we have saw. There is a meeting today at Kirkcudbright of the Commissioners of Supply in regard to putting the new Act of Parliament into force in regard to the cattle disease in the Stewartry as yet. The railway will not carry and livestock at present.

2 Friday. Hard frost this morning and cold. There are some curling going on in some parts of the country, but none here. Up in the high end of the Parish they may be playing. We \_\_\_ got all the bones out again. They are a very good cargo – clean and dry. Somewhere about 45 tons. Mr \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_) was out today setting off more houses. There are 6 more taken off on the Southwick Road.

3 Saturday. Still some little frost but not so hard this morning. Nothing fresh going on about Dalbeattie.

4 Sunday. Still frosty and mild through the day. No place from home.

5 Monday. Hard frost this morning and there will be several playing at ice. I was at Castle Douglas today paying my rent. Very little doing. Almost nothing sold at the marts. Mallet had about 20 sheep and 6 or 7 cattle.

6 Tuesday. The ground white with snow and rather snowy. I went out with the gun and got two hares. Mild through the day and thawing. We had a visit of James Carswell from Sheffield last night. He is now a detective officer and is now on the hunt of a runaway Scotch \_\_\_\_\_. He came in with the late train last night and went off again this morning. The snow going away rapidly.

7 Wednesday. Dry but cold and frosty. Thomas at Dumfries. We commenced to dissolve bones today, but got few done. There were two or three hundred bushels went away today. There were several parties playing at ice up the country, but we have no ice yet to play on and will not have this season.

8 Thursday. Still some little frost. The masons at work again at Elliot's Forge. Still getting on with the dissolving. Getting on better today. Potterland got married again on last Tuesday to a Miss McConchie, \_\_\_\_\_.

9 Friday. Some little frost and mild. This is the day of Miss Louden's funeral, that is, of \_\_\_\_\_.

10 Saturday. Still frosty and rather hard this morning. The masons not at work. Got our bones all dissolved today - until we get more, and we have only 4 \_\_\_\_ (of acid?) left.

11 Sunday. Dry and mild with no frost this morning. I went out to Craignair this afternoon and say the work there. The Newalls are preparing to put up a steam crane at the hill.

12 Monday. Rather wild and fresh looking, and the weather glass falling rapidly. Some showers through the day. There is a market at Castle Douglas – sheep of all descriptions, most uncommon, dear. I should say they never were as dear. Selling somewhere about 1/- per lb.

13 Tuesday. Cold this morning with some little frost. My Father has given up the bone mill \_\_\_\_ (to?) Thomas and me last night. We are to each have the same benefit. Thrashing our ricks of oats today.

14 Wednesday. Hard frost this morning and some slight showers of snow through the day. Thomas at Dumfries. Got our ricks all thrashed yesterday. The Reform Bill of yesterday's papers is, as far as I can judge, in regard to the franchise in county's. It is from £50 to £14 occupation, that is, house and land to the value of £14 gives you a vote. In burghs, it is from £10 to £7, and there is another class of voters and that is any person that has £50 in a savings bank for two years is entitled, and likewise lodgers paying at the rate of 7£ annually is entitled, that is in regard to England & Wales. No word what is to be done in Scotland till (I see) this day's papers.

15 Thursday. Some little frost this morning and looks like a change came on – snow about 10 o'clock and a very dirty looking afternoon. Old Mr Sproat (\_\_\_\_) and Frazier (\_\_\_\_) was here today seeing our \_\_\_\_\_. It has snowed on till near 6 o'clock but melted nearly as it fell in our district, but on the

hills in the distance it is pretty white.

16 Friday. Dry and mild this morning but rather fresh looking and the snow nearly all gone. No thrashing going on today. Has (taken) up the flour stones today. Came on soft at night. The "Heart of Oak" broke from her moorings last night at Gibbs Hole and got on the beach, but got her off today again nothing the worse – she had in \_\_\_\_.

17 Saturday. Wild and rather cold. Wind from the north east. This is the day of old Samuel Copeland's funeral. Too wild for thrashing. The "Express" is still at Palnakie. She is about half load(ed) with wood and is now going to Scaur for some repairs and coming back to the \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ to load oats for Liverpool.

18 Sunday. Mild and dry this morning and continued so all day. Had a walk down as far as Old Lawn quarries in the afternoon, and called at Little \_\_\_\_ on our way home and got tea. Nothing fresh going on.

19 Monday. Dry but rather cold. Has nearly finished thrashing for the season. Only a little to thrash tomorrow for \_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_).

20 Tuesday. Wild snowy morning and the ground white with snow, but cleared up about 9 o'clock and mild in the afternoon, and the snow nearly all gone. I have a pair of horses ploughing this afternoon. We have two women mixing up dissolved bones.

21 Wednesday. Hard frost this morning but mild and warm through the day. Leading down some carboys today to go to Liverpool by the "Heart of Oak." None of us at Dumfries today. I have a funeral letter today of the death of George Andersen (Allesford). Dr McKnight is here just now from Ayr.

22 Thursday. Hard frost this morning but mild through the day. I have Hugh Thomson ploughing today. Robt Elliot came in the afternoon to repair the bone mill – got her all torn asunder.

23 Friday. Ground all white with snow about 2 inches deep. Raining a great part of the day. I was at Dumfries getting some new brasses, which I got. Wet at night. Robt Elliot still working at the bone mill. Hugh Thomson lead(ing) up some dung in the afternoon for my garden.

24 Saturday. Dull and wet and the snow all gone. Getting the bone mill put together again. We got the invoice of another cargo of bones yesterday – the "Rabino" from Webb, Dublin. Got the bone mill all put together again.

25 Sunday. Mild and dry. I went out to Craignair in the afternoon and seen Newall's boiler set for a steam crane.

26 Monday. Dry and mild. Commenced to grind bones today with 8 workers. Thomas at Castle Douglas. I have Hugh Thomson ploughing today. This is Castle Douglas fair day. Throug fair. (meaning?)

27 Tuesday. Dull mild morning, and turned out a fine day. Grinding bones. I have H Thomson ploughing, but will finish today. Elliot getting the gables stuck on, but the masons are very slow. I have Joseph at the garden.

28 Wednesday. Dull but dry in the morning, but came on a very wet day. This is Dumfries fair day, and a very bad day it is for the fair. Thomas at it, My 3 pigs weighed at McLaurin's last night – 37-12 total. I hear at night that pork was a good bit back.

29 Thursday. Dull foggy morning and continued so all day, but not much rain. Samuel McAdam out here today and away at \_\_\_\_ shooting rabbits. This is a kind of fast day on account of the Rindepest amongst the cattle. As great a hoax as ever was \_\_\_\_ on the country, but almost none are keeping it (the fast).

30 Friday. Dry and blowy and the wind from the west. \_\_\_\_ got away some dissolved bones today – the first this season and there were some ground bones went away. The first new-ground ones. Some few farmers has commenced to \_\_\_\_ but very few as yet. The ground is too wet. I hear that Edingham has commenced today.

31 Saturday. Mild and dry in the morning but some slight showers through the day. I sowed some dissolved bones on my plots of grass. Still grinding bones and Joseph at the garden. Thomas going off to Liverpool to buy some guano to load out the "Heart of Oak."