

JOHN'S ANCESTORS

This note gives only a brief account of John Grigor Taylor's Scottish ancestors. Many of the descriptions of people and events are based on stories that John told Sophia. Other members of the family have prepared more detailed accounts and family trees from which what follows also draws.

The Grigors and the Taylors

The Grigors and the Taylors were two separate families, almost certainly both originally from the Scottish Highlands. In medieval times they may well have been impoverished crofters and shepherds eking out a living, relying on handouts from their laird in time of particular hardship and in exchange giving him military service when he went into battle against other clans or the English. The Grigors were members of the notoriously quarrelsome clan MacGregor – at some point when the clan had been particularly tiresome, it was outlawed and forbidden to use even the name MacGregor, so its members adopted variations such as Grigor. The Taylors, who seem to have been based on the Black Isle (Ross and Cromarty) are believed to be a sept (off-shoot) of the clan Cameron; this is borne out by the record of a marriage of a Taylor on the Black Isle in the early 19th century at which two Camerons of Lochiel were witnesses.

The genealogy is complicated by the fact that there were two successive Grigor/Taylor marriages. In 1802, **William Grigor** (born c.1776 and said to come from Dallas, south-west of Elgin) married **Elspet Taylor** (born c.1781 and said to come from the Black Isle). He was a farmer and miller (milling oatmeal) at New Mill farm in Alves in Morayshire, a small agricultural village not far from Elgin. The couple had ten children who lived to adulthood, many of whom left Scotland and sought their fortune in Australia and North America. There is a detailed account of them, *The Clan of Grigor*, by their grandchild Marian Bisset-Smith.

The youngest of their daughters, **Mary Grigor** (1815-1894) married **George Taylor** (1817-1914). Not much seems to be known of his antecedents beyond the fact that he was born in the village of Longside, Aberdeenshire. It was from this marriage that the custom of adding Grigor as a second first name began. Later on, some members of the family hyphenated the Grigor with the Taylor, making it part of their surnames.

George Taylor (1817-1914): John's great-grandfather.

George's descendant Silas Glossop had a vague memory that George (John's great-grandfather) started life as an apprentice forester on the estate of the Earl of Mar, teaching himself to use a theodolite, play the violin and double entry book-keeping. Be that as it may, in 1845 when his first child was born, he appears to have been working for the Irvine family on their Kincausie estate in the parish of Maryculter in the former county of Kincardineshire. By the time of 1851 census, he was working as a gardener at Fetternear in Aberdeenshire to Colonel Charles Leslie, Laird of Fetternear, Balquhain and Inch, and also of Hassop in Derbyshire. George then moved, probably in the 1860s, to Moneymusk in another part of Aberdeenshire, to work as a forester for the Grants of Moneymusk, another ancient family of Aberdeenshire lairds. The estate at Moneymusk was larger, and had a larger cottage for the couple and their growing family, Paradise Cottage. It still exists, lying in the Glen above Moneymusk under a mountain called Bennachie. George's next move was south to Derbyshire and became the factor (foreman or bailiff, so a distinct step up) at Hassop, a post no doubt obtained through his earlier employment with Colonel Leslie.

George appears to have been a keen and literate horticulturalist, as a medal that he won for an essay on carnations and ranunculi survives.

George and Mary had four sons and two daughters: George (who died young), William (John's grandfather), Marian (who married Dr John Bisset Smith), John and James (both of whom went to Australia) and Robina (who married Charles Henry Glossop and was the mother of Silas Glossop). One of the daughters, Marian Bisset-Smith, in her old age dictated some notes for John about the family, including their happy childhood first at Fetternear and then at Paradise Cottage. She described the many games that George played with his children, and how on summer evenings he would play the fiddle while their mother Mary Grigor taught the children reels.

William Grigor Taylor (1847-1914): John's grandfather

John and Mary's son **William Grigor Taylor** (John's grandfather), went as a young man to London to stay with his naval doctor uncle (Mary Grigor's brother), Dr Robert Grigor. George passed an exam to enter the Civil Service and was posted to Somerset House in London. But he left almost immediately (in 1869) to join the Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company (which subsequently became Cable and Wireless), becoming an expert in the laying of submarine cables. In 1873, he joined the Eastern Telegraph Company, which sent him to Australia, and then in 1883 to Singapore as General Manager, retiring to Britain in 1902. He then went to New York as the representative of the Eastern & Associated Companies, where he remained until shortly before his death in 1914 [obituary, Institution of Electrical Engineers].



William Grigor Taylor

While in Australia William met and married **Margaret (Maggie) McLeod**, the daughter of immigrants from a highland Scottish background very similar to his own. So their children, including John's father, were of pure highland Scots blood.

William Grigor Taylor and Maggie McLeod had four surviving children:

- **George Grigor Taylor (1883-1915)**, 6" 6' tall and a great athlete with a magnificent baritone voice. According to a family story, when Jack and George were small boys with their parents in Singapore, they had a Chinese amah (nanny) who, when asked how they were, replied "Jick's a dirty towser; George a-velly clean". George went to what is now Malaysia, then the British colony of Malaya, and became a rubber planter. He suffered the fate of many such emigrants of being carried off by blackwater fever at the age of 32. He never married, but as he was such a tremendously virile man, John always hopes that he has some half-Malaysian cousins out there somewhere.
- **John (Jack) McLeod Grigor Taylor (1847-1962)**, John's father.
- **Dorothy Grigor Taylor (1886-1945)**, who married Clifford Brooke-Taylor (no relation, despite the name). Her descendants continued to be in close contact with their Grigor Taylor cousins, causing all sorts of confusion to the uninitiated as to who was related to whom.
- **William Roberts (Bobs) Grigor-Taylor (b.1900)**, the father of John's only Grigor-Taylor cousins, Robert and William Grigor-Taylor. Their sister Susan, the brightest of the lot, was tragically killed in a car accident, aged 18, while she was an undergraduate at Girton.

SCHEMATIC GRIGOR TAYLOR FAMILY TREE

