

An Investigation into the Ancestry of **John Ferguson Hutchison Syme**

Born 11th May 1920 in Glasgow

The information which was supplied showed that John Ferguson Hutchison Syme had been born in Govan on 11th May 1920. The first step taken was to locate this birth in order to glean as much detail as possible from the certificate and the 1920 statutory index of births contained a reference which led to the following entry:

*On 11th May 1920, 5 a.m. at 25 Princes Street, Govan, Glasgow
John Ferguson Hutchison Syme was born: son of Alexander Syme (Steam Craneman) and Alison Ferguson Syme m/s Hutchison
Parents' marriage: 1912 September 27th, Thornton, Fife
Informant: Alexr Syme (Father) Present
(Ref: 1920b/Glasgow Plantation 644/20-465)*

This enabled the relevant marriage to be located, as below:

*On 27th September 1912 at Public Hall, Thornton, Parish of Markinch
After Banns & Publication, According to the Forms of the Established Church of Scotland
Alexander Syme (Crane Man - Bachelor) aged 26, of 810 Govan Road,
Glasgow: son of John Syme (Stonemason) and Jane Syme m/s Jessiman (deceased)
(marriage to)
Alison Ferguson Hutchison (Domestic Servant - Spinster) aged 25, of Orr Bridge Cottage,
Thornton: daughter of John Ferguson Hutchison (Coal Miner) and Ann Hutchison m/s Lawson
Clergyman: D. Macfarlane Wilson, Minister of Thornton
Witnesses: Andrew Paterson Jeanie Ferguson
(Ref: 1912m/Thornton, Co. Fife 457B-15)*

The marriage of the parents was located and noted next:

*On 14th [sic] February 1879 at North Queensferry
After Banns according to the Forms of the Church of Scotland
John Syme (Quarryman - Bachelor) aged 20, of North Queensferry: son of John Syme
(Quarryman) and Margaret Syme m/s Brown
(marriage to)
Jane A. Jessieman (Domestic Servant - Spinster) aged 18, of North Queensferry: daughter of
William Jessieman (Quarry Contractor) and Jane Jessieman m/s Grant
Clergyman: John Robertson, Minister of Inverkeithing
Witnesses: Arch. Savage Elizabeth Thomson
(Ref: 1879m/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432-6)*

At that point it would be helpful to locate this family in a census listing. The census returns are household surveys which have been carried out every ten years from 1841. They provide details such as name, age, occupation and birthplace for each person listed at an address on census night. Those for 1841 give the least

information and the most recent open to public inspection are the 1891 schedules. The 1881 and 1891 editions have now been indexed, thereby enabling a family or individual to be located without knowing the precise address. John and Jane Syme were traced at North Queensferry through the 1881 Fife index:

Common Stair, 1st flat, Battery Road, North Queensferry - 4th April 1881

<i>John Syme</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Stone Dresser</i>	<i>b. Fife North Queensferry</i>
<i>Jane Ann Syme</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>20</i>		<i>b. Moray Elgin</i>
<i>John Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>2</i>		<i>b. Fife North Queensferry</i>
<i>William Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>1 mnth</i>		<i>b. Fife North Queensferry</i>

(Ref: 1881 census/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432/bk 6/p 12)

According to the schedule this house contained one room with one or more windows.

By 1891 the family was living in Govan and listed as follows:

39 John Street, Govan - 6th April 1891

<i>Jno.* Syme</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>Set** maker b</i>	<i>b. Fife North Queensferry</i>
<i>Jane Syme</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>29</i>		<i>b. Moray Elgin</i>
<i>Jno. Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>12</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>b. Fife North Queensferry</i>
<i>Wm. Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>10</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>b. Fife North Queensferry</i>
<i>Jas. Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>7</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>b. Lanark Govan</i>
<i>Alex. Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>5</i>		<i>b. Lanark Govan</i>
<i>Rob. Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>3</i>		<i>b. Lanark Govan</i>
<i>Janet Syme</i>	<i>Daur.</i>		<i>1</i>		<i>b. Lanark Govan</i>
<i>Jas. Howie</i>	<i>Visitor</i>	<i>Unmar.</i>	<i>32</i>		<i>b. Moray Unthank</i>
<i>Jno. Wilson</i>	<i>Lodger</i>	<i>Unmar.</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Carter</i>	<i>b. Argyll Islay</i>

* Jno. - John. ** Set - stone sett (or cobble) for roadmaking.

(Ref: 1891 census/Glasgow Govan 646/2/bk 49/p 28)

This house consisted of two windowed rooms, one occupied by the Syme family and the other by the lodger, who was said to have spoken both Gaelic and English.

Before pursuing the earlier generations, a search was made for the deaths of John Syme and Jane Jessi(e)man. Female deaths can be easier to locate as they should be listed under both maiden and married surnames, thus enabling positive identification at the index stage without having to inspect numerous certificates. That of Jane Jessiman Syme (described as deceased when her son married in 1912) proved to have taken place in 1910:

*On 10th December 1910, 11 a.m. at 810 Govan Road, Govan
Jane Ann Syme (Married to John Syme - Mason) died aged 49: daughter of William Jessieman
(Railway Labourer - deceased) and Jane Jessieman m/s Grant
Cause of death: Bronchitis - 1 month
Certified by: W. Allan, M.B. C.M.
Informant: John Syme (Widower) Present
(Ref: 1910d/Glasgow Govan 646/2-1234)*

No John Syme death was registered in Govan thereafter, so I widened the scope of the search and examined all feasible entries which were registered throughout Glasgow, thereby obtaining the relevant entry:

*On 31st July 1935, 10.45 a.m. at 20 Three Ell Road, Glasgow
 John Syme (Mason [Journeyman - Retired] - widower of Jane Ann Jessiman) died aged 77: son of
 John Syme (Quarryman - deceased) and Margaret Syme m/s Brown (deceased)
 Cause of death: Arterio Sclerosis, Myocarditis
 Certified by: A. Fergus Maguire, M.B. , Ch.B.
 Informant: Alex. Syme (Son) 25 Vicarfield Street, Glasgow (Present)
 (Ref: 1935d/Glasgow Tradeston 644/16-326)*

These early certificates do not show the relevant marriage and, as it was not traced in the statutory index back to 1855, it was necessary to consult the Old Parish Registers (OPRs) at that stage. Before the introduction of compulsory civil registration in Scotland (1855), these were virtually the only source of births, or more commonly baptisms, and marriages. There were almost 1,000 parishes in Scotland, and not all of the old registers have survived. It was not really until the early part of the eighteenth century that the maintenance of OPRs became reasonably widespread. The registers were usually the responsibility of the Session Clerk and some were much more diligent than others. The secession of 1733 had an adverse effect and many of those who seceded refused, on principle, to register baptisms with the Established Church. In 1783 an act was passed imposing a tax of three pence on every entry; this also deterred many from registering.

The marriage in question was located through the Fife OPR index, thus:

*(1852) John Syme and Margt. Brown both of this Parish, were regularly proclaimed 12th December, & married
 (Ref: OPRm/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432/4/p 119)*

One child had been recorded for this couple before the OPRs closed in late 1854:

*(1853) John Syme and Margt. Brown had a daughter born 17th June, and baptized 14th August, named Margaret
 (Ref: OPRb/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432/4/p 66)*

The International Genealogical Index (IGI) was also consulted as this index - compiled by the Mormon Church authorities - contains most marriages and births up to around 1875 and has the advantage over the statutory index in that it gives the names of parents and child, enabling immediate identification of the correct family. References to seven further children of this family were noted:

<i>1856 August 1</i>	<i>Alexander</i>	<i>Inverkeithing</i>
<i>1860 May 16</i>	<i>Robert</i>	<i>Inverkeithing</i>
<i>1862 September 11</i>	<i>William Gelly</i>	<i>Inverkeithing</i>
<i>1864 August 3</i>	<i>David</i>	<i>Inverkeithing</i>
<i>1867 January 14</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Inverkeithing</i>
<i>1869 May 20</i>	<i>Janet Moir</i>	<i>Inverkeithing</i>
<i>1874 June 7</i>	<i>Elizabeth</i>	<i>Inverkeithing</i>

This family was still living in North Queensferry in 1881 and the listing (for a house with four windowed rooms) included one additional child:

Battery Road, North Queensferry - 4th April 1881

<i>John Syme</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>Stone Dresser</i>	<i>b. Fife Inverkeithing</i>
<i>Margaret Syme</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>46</i>		<i>b. Fife Inverkeithing</i>
<i>Robert Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unmar.</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Stone Dresser</i>	<i>b. Fife Inverkeithing</i>
<i>David Syme</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Unmar.</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Stone Dresser</i>	<i>b. Fife Inverkeithing</i>
<i>Janet Syme</i>	<i>Daur.</i>		<i>11</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>b. Fife Inverkeithing</i>
<i>Elizabeth Syme</i>	<i>Daur.</i>		<i>6</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>b. Fife Inverkeithing</i>
<i>Hellen [sic]Syme</i>	<i>Daur.</i>		<i>4</i>		<i>b. Fife Inverkeithing</i>

(Ref: 1881 census/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432/bk 6/p 14)

I searched next for the death of Margaret Brown Syme, and this was found to have been registered in 1902:

*On 13th May 1902, 10 p.m. at North Queensferry, Inverkeithing
Margaret Syme (Widow of John Syme - Stone Dresser) died aged 67:
daughter of Alexander Brown (Labourer - deceased) and Margaret Brown m/s Gilvair (deceased)
Cause of death: Cancer of Stomach & Liver - 8 months
Certified by: W. Philp, M.B. C.M.
Informant: David Syme (Son) 78 Pratt Street, Kirkcaldy
(Ref: 1902d/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432-18)*

Difficulty was then encountered in locating the death of John Syme. It was not traced in Inverkeithing from 1881 to 1902, so I checked the 1891 census index and this appeared to confirm that he was still living in that year (the schedules themselves were not inspected). All feasible John Syme deaths which were registered in Fife 1891-1902 were examined next, but without success. I re-checked Margaret Brown's death certificate and as she was clearly described as a widow the scope of the search was widened to a nationwide basis, but still with a negative result. The only option then was to search from 1902 onwards, in case an error had been made on the 1902 certificate and that John Syme was in fact still living at that date. This ultimately resulted in the desired entry being traced, confirming that his wife had been incorrectly described as a widow when she died:

*On 21st March 1906, 4 p.m. at North Queensferry, Inverkeithing
John Syme (Stonedresser - widower of Margaret Brown) died aged 77:
son of James Syme (Gardener - deceased) and Christina Syme m/s Gella (deceased)
Cause of death: Fatty Degeneration of Heart, Syncope*
Certified by: W. Philp, M.B. C.M.
Informant: David Syme (Son) 70 Clark Street, Kirkcaldy
* collapse
(Ref: 1906d/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432-17)*

John Syme appeared to have been born in Inverkeithing around 1829/30 but, disappointingly, his birth was not traced in the Fife OPR index, although what seems to be an entry for an older brother was noted:

*(1819 Decr.) 2 James Syme & Christian Gellie [sic] had a son born in fornication Baptd. 9th
Jany. 1820 Named John
(Ref: OPRb/Torryburn, Co. Fife 458/4/p 1)*

It was not uncommon to re-use a Christian name if the first child did not survive. No further baptisms had been recorded for this couple, in an era when this was not compulsory. Their marriage was however traced, having been registered twice - once in the home parish of the man and also in that of his wife:

(1838) James Syme residing in this parish and Christian Gelly in the parish of Inverkeithing, gave up their names for proclamation in order to marriage May 26th

(Ref: OPRm/Torryburn, Co. Fife 458/4/p 15)

(1838) James Syme in the Parish of Torryburn and Christian Gelly in this Parish were proclaimed 4th June and Married

(Ref: OPRm/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432/4/p 96)

Although it was not known if they had survived long enough to have had their deaths registered, i.e. after 1855, a search was made for those of James Syme and Christian Gelly/ie. The latter was found to have died in 1858:

*On 21st February 1858, 2 p.m. at North Queensferry in the parish of Inverkeithing
Christian Syme (Wife of a Labourer) died aged 56: daughter of William Gelly (Labourer -
deceased) and Christian Gelly m/s Cunningham (deceased)*

Cause of death: General Debility

No Medical Attendant

*Burial place: Churchyard, Inverkeithing. John Davidson (Undertaker) Informant: John Syme
(Son) Present*

(Ref: 1858d/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432-19)

The widower lived until 1866:

*On 25th September 1866, 11 p.m. at North Queensferry in the district of Inverkeithing
James Syme (Ploughman - Widower of Christian Gelly) died aged 72: son of John Syme (Maltster
- deceased) and Ann Syme m/s Moir (deceased)*

Cause of death: Diseased Heart, Dropsy - Several weeks

Certified by: P. Bartholomew, M.D.

Informant: John Syme (Son) Present

(Ref: 1866d/Inverkeithing, Co. Fife 432-47)

Consideration was given to the Hutchison line at that stage, with the birth of Alison Ferguson Hutchison being located in the first instance:

On 6th April 1886, 3 a.m. at Lochore

*Alison Ferguson Hutchison was born: daughter of John Ferguson Hutchison (Coal Miner) and
Rachel Hutchison m/s Marr*

Parents' marriage: 1883 July 27th, Methil

Informant: John F. Hutchison (Father)

(Ref: 1886b/Ballingry, Co. Fife 408-22)

It was noted that the name of the mother did not correspond with that shown when Alison Hutchison married Alexander Syme in 1912, but it was possible that one was the mother and the other perhaps a stepmother.

The marriage between John Hutchison and Rachel Marr was traced next:

On 27th July 1883 at Methill [sic], Wemyss

After Banns According to the Forms of the Established Church of Scotland

John F. Hutchison (Coal Miner - Bachelor) aged 22, of Ballingry: son of James Hutchison (Coal Miner) and Alison Hutchison m/s Ferguson (marriage to)

Rachel K. Marr (Domestic Servant - Spinster) aged 20, of Methill, Wemyss: daughter of James Marr (General Labourer) and Jane Marr m/s Christie

Clergyman: A. Aytoun Young, Minister of Methil

Witnesses: Alexr. Forsyth Janet Meiklejohn

(Ref: 1883m/Buckhaven, Co. Fife 459/2-13)

The 1891 census listing which was found for this family confirmed that Rachel Marr had died by that date. Curiously, John's middle name has been given as his surname, and the error continued throughout the entry:

Maw, Markinch - 6th April 1891

<i>John F. Ferguson</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Widowed</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Coal Miner</i>	<i>b. Linlithgow Carriden</i>
<i>Ann Lawson</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Unmar.</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Housekeeper</i>	<i>b. Fife Kettle</i>
<i>Jane Ferguson</i>	<i>Daur.</i>		<i>6</i>		<i>b. Fife Ballingry</i>
<i>Alison Ferguson</i>	<i>Daur.</i>		<i>4</i>		<i>b. Fife Ballingry</i>
<i>James Mitchell</i>	<i>Boarder</i>	<i>Unmar.</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Pit Sinker</i>	<i>b. England Yorkshire</i>
<i>Catherine Lawson</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Unmar.</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>b. Fife Auchterderran</i>

(Ref: 1891 census Markinch, Co. Fife 447/bk 16/p 7)

This house was said to have two windowed rooms.

The death of Rachel Marr Hutchison had been registered the previous year, and it too had been entered as Ferguson:

On 13th February 1890, 11 a.m. at Lochore

Rachel Ferguson (Married to John Ferguson - Coal Miner) died aged 25: daughter of James Marr (Carter) and Jane Marr m/s Christie

Cause of death: Phthisis Pulmonalis - 2 months*

Certified by: David Fraser, M.B. C.M., Auchterderran

Informant: John Ferguson (Husband)

** pulmonary tuberculosis*

(Ref: 1890d/Ballingry, Co. Fife 408-10)

This ambiguity concerning the family surname suggests that John Hutchison may have been illegitimate, and on occasions used his mother's name. As thought, he later married Ann Lawson:

On 18th August 1891 at Buckhaven

After Banns According to the Forms of the Free Church of Scotland

John Ferguson Hutchison (Coalminer - Widower) aged 27, of Maw, Markinch: son of James Hutchison (Colliery Engine Keeper - deceased)

and Alison Hutchison m/s Ferguson (deceased)

(marriage to)

Ann Lawson (Domestic Servant - Spinster) aged 20, of Maw, Markinch:

daughter of Robert Lawson (Coalminer) and Elspeth Lawson m/s Russell (deceased)

Clergyman: William McGhie, Minister of the Free Church

Witnesses: David Marr Elspeth Dowie

(Ref: 1891m/Buckhaven, Co. Fife 447-35)

The investigation was terminated at that point, having exhausted the allocated time. Siblings have been included where found, but others may be discovered by more intensive searching.

Suggestions for further research:

1. Search the 1851 Inverkeithing census for James Syme and Christian Gellie at North Queensferry, then search for their births, marriages of parents, siblings and so on.
2. Search for the birth of John Hutchison at Carriden circa 1860/1 and continue with that line.
3. Start searching other lines e.g. Brown, Jessiman, Ferguson, Marr etc.

NB sic = Latin for "so" or "thus"; used in brackets after an erroneous or unusual expression in a quotation or transcription to show that the original has been faithfully reproduced even though incorrect, or apparently so.

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