

Stone Walls: A Different Approach

The long-term goal of this series is to create closer ties within the worldwide Agnew family through identification of a general history for Scots and Irish Agnews within which individual branches may discover common origins and traditions. As the generations stretch out, we are ever farther “from home and native heath”. We *need* stronger bonds within the Diaspora to link us all more firmly through our shared heritage and allegiance to our Chief.

EXTRA!

A 17th Century Census Substitute for Agnews in *Galloway*

Introduction: Since 1982 when I joined many Agnews in North America seeking to identify specific lines and local places of origin, I do not recall any newsletter items that provide baseline data that could identify possible progenitors for Agnew families who emigrated directly from Scotland. There are numerous items dealing with our chief’s Lochnaw line but nothing for alternate or derivative descents.

Thus, when I obtained a copy of the 1684 Parish List of Wigtownshire and Minnigaff recently,¹ I recognized it was a uniquely rich data source for the period meriting prompt sharing.

Origin of the Lists:

Background: With the Restoration of Charles II there began in 1661 a ruthless and relentless campaign to restore bishops to the Church of Scotland and place it, like the Church of England, under the direct control of the monarch. Such was an anathema to Presbyterians, especially in Galloway, whose population –never a gentle or temperate people - was subjected to more than 2 decades of persecution , injustice and atrocities., Galloway and other southwest areas maintained an impassioned resistance that was eventually successful. But moderation of the suffering did not even begin until some 2 years after preparation of these parish lists after James II’s Act of Toleration and Indulgence in 1685.

The Lists were commanded near the end of the oppression period in a further attempt to force compliance. Episcopalian curates of Galloway and Dumfriesshire were ordered to furnish –

“Nominal Rolls of *all* persons,
male and female,
over the age of 12 years,
resident within their respective parishes –
grouped according to, residences, farms and households and
specially indication such as were “irregular”, that is non-conforming.”

¹ *Parish Lists of Wigtownshire and Minnigaff, 1684*. Editor William Scott. Scottish Record Society, No.50.

This would allow identification of *every individual* in the shire and tend to reinforce their compliance while pinpointing those who refused to conform - opening them to the full consequences of disobedience. At the time these ranged from death, banishment, confiscation and extortionate fines. Even ordinary folk who missed a single service were subject to confiscation of one quarter of their goods while those who had nothing left to confiscate, even women and children, could have the clothing stripped from their backs. It was an unbelievably brutal time the details of which merit a separate report in the future.

As noted by Sir Andrew Agnew in the Hereditary Sheriffs of Galloway², in light of the widespread resistance, the curates were remarkably generous in listing so many individuals as conforming and so rarely reporting any as “irregular”.

No authority consulted to date has been able to confirm whether or not Roman Catholics were included in the rolls. The general inference appears to be they were exempt.

Content of the Lists:

All the information on Agnews, specified or inferred, has been extracted from the report and consolidated in the appended table.

Some aspects of the original material require explanation for clarity.

Given and surnames are reported with the original spelling appearing on the lists.

Wives are entered by their maiden names in accord with standard Scottish practice.

On some parish lists, Inch in particular, names are specifically marked as husband, wife, mother, son, daughter, widow, servant or servitor (senior household officer). In the majority probable relationships can be inferred by the consistent order of the entries. However, personal servants are sometimes inserted after senior family members and it can be difficult to identify first degree members from more distantly related individuals. Or servants who happen to carry the Agnew surname. Where a relationship is inferred I have appended a “?”. Some such inferences can be confirmed from McKerlie or Sir Andrew’s volumes and more careful review of these sources, and others, may identify or confirm more.

Modern place names have been added to the version employed in the Parish list to aid in locating them on present day maps.

Occasional descriptive or identifying comments of possible interest have been added.

Minnigaff was at that time a part of Wigtownshire but subsequently has usually been appended to Kircudbrightshire.

² See HSW, vol 2, p.139.

The Data:

Because there was no Agnew resident in Minnigaff and the parish was not usually considered a part of Wigtownshire, the population data were subtracted from the male, female and total numbers reported to yield the values from Wigtownshire only.

1684 Population over Age 12

	Wigtownshire	Agnews Only	% of Total
Males	4079	47	1.2 %
Females	4456	46	1.0 %
Total	8535	93	1.1 %

Thus, Agnews over the age of 12 in 1684 represented a remarkably small percentage of the shire's population considering their prominence both earlier and in the next 2 centuries.

In light of their longtime commitment to the Presbyterian Church and its survival in both Scotland and Ulster and the associated losses they suffered in both, it is truly surprising there is not a single Agnew recorded on the list of recusants provided in these rolls.

Concentration of Agnews across the parishes of Wigtownshire varies widely. More than one half have not a single Agnew in residence. The map of Galloway (see attachment) illustrates the strong connection of the Agnew family with the Rinns – which in this period may have been partly defensive. In 1684 70% of them were living on the peninsula with a further 10% immediately adjacent in the parish of Inch. The only other center is a modest cluster in the Whithorne-Sorbie area.

Analyses and Observations

About 31 Agnew males can be identified as married or widowed heads of households or families with reasonable certainty. There may be a handful more but it seems clear that there are significantly fewer than the number of Agnew heads (43) in Antrim on the 1669 Hearth Rolls. Given the extreme difficulties visited on Galloway in the 15 years between 1669 and 1684 there may have been some in hiding when the rolls were drawn and not a few who had moved to Ulster. Certainly Lochnaw Castle had been sacked a few years earlier when the Highlanders were lodged on the populace. At that time the Sheriff sent his family to Antrim for safety and went into hiding himself. Once again Ireland became a refuge and a potential way station on the long road to eventual emigration to North America and, later, the Antipodes.

Given Names The extremely narrow range of given names to which the Scots and Scot Irish are so devoted is amply demonstrated. Five male names alone, John 12, Andrew 10, Alexander 8, Patrick 6, and James 4, account for almost 90% of the men in this group. The situation is much

the same for women, about 70% of whom were called; Jannet, Margret, Agnes, or Elizabeth with Marion, Grizell, Helen accounting for most of the rest. Small wonder it is so difficult to follow descents or establish connections.

Collaterals The provision of **spousal** names provides an unparalleled opportunity to identify the families with whom the Agnews commonly intermarried at that time. It is noteworthy that many of these same family names continue to appear in unions well into the 20th century.

Additional Indices to collaterals will be provided in a later issue along with indices for given names by parish, farms, hamlets and clachans. Also the 1695 Hearth Rolls for Wigtownshire have survived and may be included if received soon.

Bibliography:

1. *Parish Lists of Wigtownshire and Minnigaff, 1684*. Editor William Scott. Scottish Record Society, No.50.

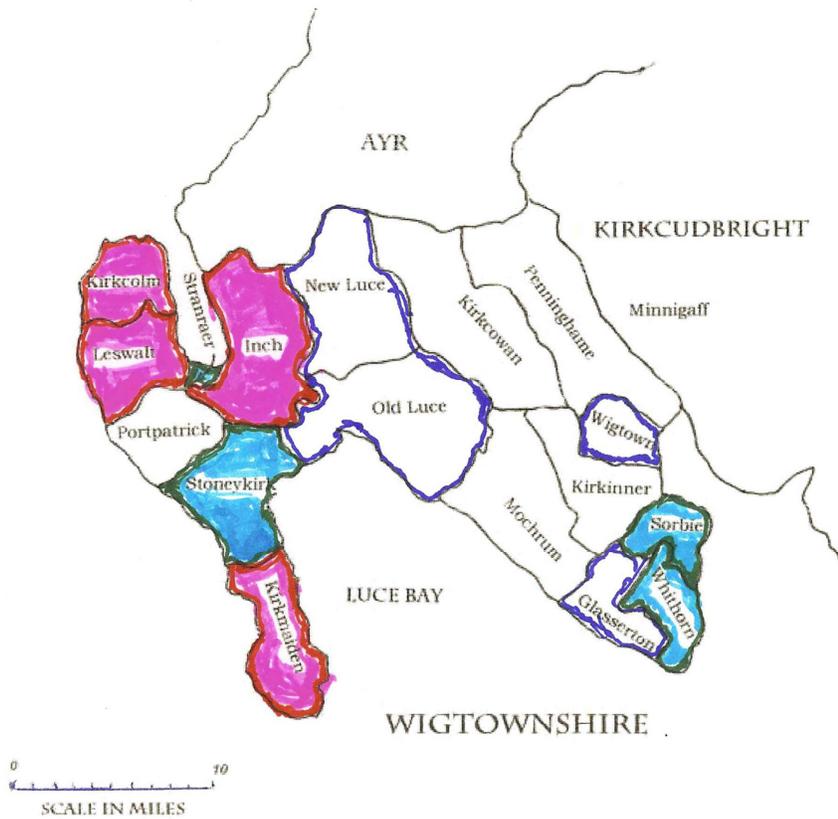
Agnew. Andrew *the hereditary sheriffs of Galloway; their 'forebears' and friends, their courts and customs of their times, with notes of the early history, ecclesiastical legends, the baronage and place-names of the province*, 1893,

Robertson, John F. *The Story of Galloway*, Lang Syne Press, Newtongrange, Midlothian, 1985. Facsimile edition.

Maxwell, Herbert, *A History of Dumfries and Galloway*, 1896,

McKerlie, P. J. *History of the Lands and their Owners in Galloway*, Alexander Gardner, Paisley, 1906.

Parishes



<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~leighann/parishes/gotoparish.html>

AGNEW Distribution from Parish Lists 1684

- Heavy 10 to 24 or more █
- Some 4 - 9 █
- Few 1-3 █