British Connections

Transportation: How its Evolution Changed Our Ancestors' Lives

Welsh research topics

Eilir Ann Daniels
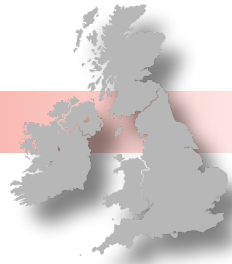
Railways and Reservoirs: How Some Welsh Families Found Themselves on the Wrong Side of the Tracks

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, industrial advances transformed Wales and its people, changing much of its landscape and broadening the horizons of many Welsh men and women. But for some families whose homes literally stood in the way of the march of progress, instead of a golden new age, for them that transformation brought heartbreak and loss.

By the late 1800s, never before had it been easier to travel around Wales thanks to the advances of the industrial age. The arrival of the railways and improvements to the road network allowed large numbers of people to travel far from their birthplaces for the very first time, and to look for work elsewhere—in the Welsh mines and metalworks, seaports, and large towns. The growth in the popularity of train travel also helped to bring prosperity to sea-side communities like Llandudno, Rhyl, Aberystwyth, Mumbles, and Porthcawl—they developed into fully-fledged resorts during the Victorian era as they benefited from the emergence of a new breed of tourist, the train-travelling working- and middle-class holiday maker.

Inside

Aberystwyth, 1905—this Cardiganshire sea-side resort developed into a tourist destination after the railway reached the town in 1864. US Library of Congress / Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:On_the_sands,_Aberystwith,_Wales-LCCN2001703407.jpg.

The rapid march of progress was represented, in part, by large, impressive engineering projects such as Telford's famous Menai Bridge, the world's first iron suspension bridge that, as part of a crucial link with Ireland, for the first time connected the island of Anglesey with the rest of Wales, as well as spectacular railway viaducts such as at Cynghordy in Carmarthenshire, and aqueducts including that seen in Pontcysyllte near Llangollen.

Wales was also the focus of other types of ambitious public infrastructure projects, including the construction of enormous water reservoirs designed to meet the increased demands of a growing urban population that mostly lived in cities many miles beyond the Welsh border in parts of England.

All these projects brought employment for many. Some husbands, fathers, and sons travelled far and wide in order to find work as navvies, labourers, or platelayers, following the winding paths of the country's burgeoning railway network as it spread around Wales, or living for months or even years on end in camps set out near to the construction sites of large dams in the isolated valleys of mid Wales.

While these engineering projects ultimately helped to improve lives, they did not signal bright promises for all. For some who lived in the path of progress, these ventures undermined the lives they and their families had built, often over many years. They helplessly witnessed the demolition of their homes, where some families had lived for generations, as the navvies with their picks and shovels helped pave the

Navvies laying the railway track at Treffgarne Gorge, Pembrokeshire. Western Telegraph / People's Collection Wales / Creative Archive Licence, https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/2062606#?xywh=500%2C49%2C1303%2C928.

way for the relentless march of industry, trade, and commerce.

If you've ever searched without luck for your ancestor's house or farm on a modern map, but can instead see a railway line or a large man-made lake near where you suspect they had lived, consider that their home may have been demolished to make way for that railway, or that its ruined walls may now lie deep below that body of water.

The railway network that the Victorian navvies laid across Wales was once far more extensive than the one we're familiar with today. In addition to the mainline routes that connected the larger towns, the country was also criss-crossed by branch-lines that served small industrial villages, carried coal to the ports, and cut through the mid, west, and north Wales countryside.

The vision to establish that network was an ambitious one. Executed over a period of around 60 to 70 years, it meant that the railway companies had to buy mile upon mile of land, along with any properties along the routes in question. This was achieved through compulsory purchase orders passed by Acts of Parliament, when landowners had little leave for appeal—their tenants, of course, had even less say in the matter.

Information relating to those compulsory purchases was published widely in the newspapers. Take this article, for example, from the *Monmouthshire Merlin* of 30 April 1864, which informed readers of developments to the Neath and Brecon Railway, a network that had begun life in the early nineteenth century as a series of tramroads carrying minerals and coal. In 1863 the government gave the go-ahead for it to be developed into a fully-fledged railway line,

Llantrissant and Taff Vale Junction Railway Bill.	A Bill to enable the *Llantrissant* and *Taff Vale* Junction Railway Company to make a Railway to join the *Taff Vale* Railway, and to extend their *Llantrissant* Common Branch, and for other purposes, was read the first time ; and ordered to be read a second time.
Lugg Valley Railway Bill.	A Bill for making a Railway from *Presteign*, in the County of *Radnor*, to join the Central *Wales* Railway, in the Parish of *Llangunllo*, to be called "The *Lugg Valley* Railway," and for other purposes, was read the first time; and ordered to be read a second time.
Mid-Wales Railway (Eastern Extension) Bill.	A Bill to enable the Mid-*Wales* Railway Company to make a Railway to join the Central *Wales* Railway, and for other purposes, was read the first time ; and ordered to be read a second time.
Mid-Wales Railway (Western Extensions) Bill.	A Bill to enable the Mid-*Wales* Railway Company to make Extensions to the Westward, and to abandon the formation of the *Llangurig* Branch authorized to be made by "The Mid-*Wales* Railway (*Llangurig* Branch, &c.) Act, 1863," and for other purposes, was read the first time ; and ordered to be read a second time.
Mold and Denbigh Junction Railway (Deviations) Bill.	A Bill to enable the *Mold* and *Denbigh* Junction Railway Company to raise further Sums and to divide their Shares, and to make Deviations and Alterations in their authorized Line of Railway, and for other purposes, was read the first time ; and ordered to be read a second time.
Mold and Denbigh Junction Railway (Extensions) Bill.	A Bill to enable the *Mold* and *Denbigh* Junction Railway Company to make certain new Lines of Railway, and to abandon a portion of their authorized Railway, and for other purposes, was read the first time ; and ordered to be read a second time.

Just a snapshot of the many Welsh railway projects that were given the green light by the British parliament in the 19th century. Journals of the House of Commons, February 1865 to July 1865, Vol. 120, Hansard, https://assets.parliament.uk/Journals/HCJ_volume_120.pdf.

extending from Neath in the south to Brecon some 35 miles away to the north. This article reveals that several houses were demolished in the town of Brecon itself in order to achieve this vision—specifically in Mount Street and the Struet. Further houses and cottages were demolished elsewhere along the route.

Less than a decade later, the *Aberystwyth Observer* of 18 November 1871 warned readers there would be a compulsory purchase of land and houses to make way for the western extension of the Mid Wales Railway.

These are just two of many rail projects that were given a parliamentary nod of approval at around this time when the House of Commons passed a flurry of railway-related bills, reflecting the fact that Wales—its towns and countryside alike—was quickly changing.

BRECON.

NEATH AND BRECON RAILWAY.—We are glad to perceive that the works in connection with this undertaking are being pushed farward with vigour. About ten houses in Mount-street and the Struet have been pulled down for the purposes of the railway, and others are in course of demolition. There are 900 navvies at work upon the line, a great number being engaged near the town. And we are informed upon good authority, that the line will be completed to Neath in a little more than twelve months.

Monmouthshire Merlin, Welsh Newspapers Online, National Library of Wales, https://newspapers.library.wales/

Arguably, no engineering project brought greater change, even trauma, to whole communities than the construction of water reservoirs. Wales is blessed with plentiful rain and deep valleys, and a few locations were therefore deemed suitable to be drowned in order to provide an adequate supply of clean drinking water not only to large Welsh towns, but also to cities in England. The Elan Valley chain of dams in the high hills of Radnorshire, constructed in the 1890s to provide water to Birmingham, and Lake Vyrnwy in Montgomeryshire that opened in the 1880s to supply water to Liverpool, are examples of just two such locations.

Lake Vyrnwy provides us with a case study of what happened to some Welsh communities whose fates were sealed by the decisions of distant bureaucrats

MID-WALES RAILWAY.

Revival of Compulsory Powers for purchase of Land required for Western Extension.—Extension of time for Completion of that Railway.—Additional Capital Power to Company and other Companies to guarantee Dividend or Interest on Western Extension Capital.—Power to run over portion of Great Western Railway, and use Barton Station of Great Western Railway Company.—Traffic Arrangements.—Amendment of Acts.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, That application is intended to be made to Parliament in the next session by the Mid-Wales Railway Company (herein called the Company) for an Act for all or some of the following purposes; that is to say,—

To revive and extend the time extended by the Mid-Wales Railway Act, 1869, for the compulsory purchase of lands and houses required for the purposes of the Railways authorised by the Mid-Wales Railway (Western Extension) Act, 1865, which said Railways are herein called the Western Extension.

Aberystwyth Observer, Welsh Newspapers Online, National Library of Wales, https://newspapers.library.wales/

and politicians during the nineteenth century. Today, deep beneath this reservoir's waters, lies the drowned village of Llanwddyn—the remains of 37 houses, 10 farmhouses, three inns, a post office and the parish church. Prior to the 1880s, all those homes and their occupants were listed on the censuses and other records, but little did those villagers know back then that when the sun dawned on the new year of 1881, their world would be up-turned and the quiet life of the valley would never be the same again. For it was then that the first of hundreds of navvies from all over

Llanwddyn c. 1886, before the residents had left the village. Photographer unknown. By permission of Powys County Archives. People's Collection Wales: https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/8431#?xywh=-115%2C-5%2C1166%2C831

Britain and Ireland arrived in the parish, set up camp, and started to work on a brutish build that began even before the villagers had packed their bags and were relocated to new homes a few miles down the road.

During those early years of construction, when the villagers still went about their everyday life and before they bid adieu to their homes, the dam wall grew ever higher above them, casting a dark and painful shadow over their community's future.

Photographs taken at that time record the village before the enforced evacuation of its residents, as well as its demise. Before the floodwater gushed through and engulfed the streets, we see children walking through the centre of the village, and the post office is open for business as is Jane Jones's grocery and draper's shop. Life appears to be normal, yet this is 1886—constant clatter and din had been echoing

through the valley now for five years as the navvies dug, blasted, and built. Not yet complete in 1886, the dam wall was already dominating the village's horizon, its raw grandeur captured in the second in this photographic sequence. This image, taken before the valley was flooded, shows the village to the right behind the dam wall, while the navvies' encampment and depots can be seen to the left beyond.

The people we see in the first photograph were the last of old Llanwddyn's residents. By the time the final photograph in this series was taken, in around 1887,
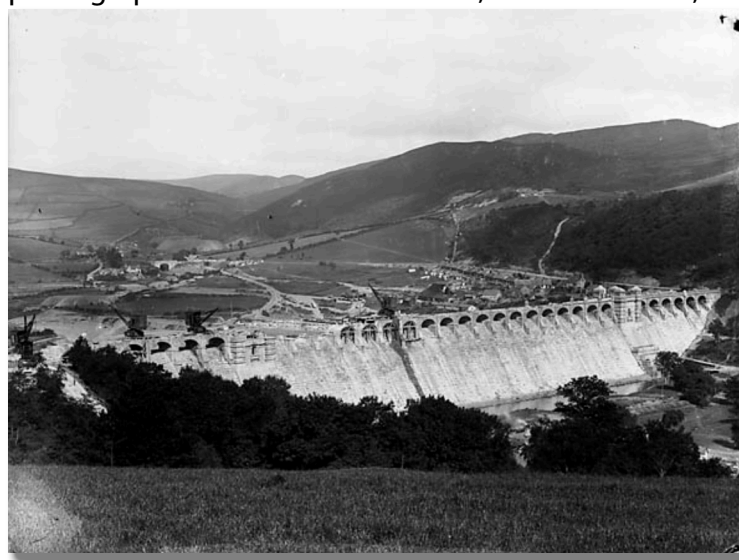
The construction of Lake Vyrnwy reservoir, c. 1885, Photographer: John Thomas. Credit: National Library of Wales photographic collection / Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Building_the_dam,_Llanwddyn_NLW3361924.jpg

they were gone. We see the same street, but the post office and nearby houses now lie in rubble. Is that Jane Jones with her husband surveying the ruins of her home and business? In the distance, where animals once grazed, we now see the gleam of water as it was slowly being released into the valley, before it was eventually allowed to submerge the remains of old Llanwddyn.

You'll still see Llanwddyn marked on a map today, but it is a new village, located a couple of miles south of old Llanwddyn, where the villagers were relocated.

Further reservoirs were built in Wales over the subsequent decades, but as new schemes were discussed during the twentieth century, planners by that time faced vehement opposition. In the early 1960s, the residents of Capel Celyn, a village located

Llanwddyn c. 1887, after the villagers had been evacuated. Photographer unknown. By permission of Powys County Archives. People's Collection Wales: https://www.peoplescollection. wales/items/8438#?xywh=0%2C-8%2C999%2C712

not be able to visit them, but they're certainly not forgotten. Old maps, censuses, and a plethora of other historical documents ensure that their names and their occupants are remembered. Bear these examples in mind if you find yourself searching in vain for your ancestors' homes, for they too may have been marked for demolition by a nineteenth century surveyor's pen.

not far from Bala in Merionethshire (Gwynedd), supported by people from across Wales and a majority of Welsh MPs, famously demonstrated against the drowning of their village, to no avail. Despite widespread protests, including the bombing of an electricity transformer during the reservoir's initial construction phase, the village—complete with its post office, school, chapel, houses and farmland—was submerged in order to provide Liverpool with an additional source of water. No longer will you find Capel Celyn's homes and properties on a map.

At the same time, another community—Llangyndeyrn—was fighting the same battle many miles further south in the Gwendraeth Valley just north of Llanelli in Carmarthenshire. Locals there had also sprung to action when plans were revealed to drown their farming community in order to supply water to nearby Swansea. Their campaign involved barricading roads and stopping officials from entering the valley. The community, however, employed their own surveyors and eventually, after a long fight, persuaded officials to build a dam elsewhere.

This was nevertheless a rare victory. As for the demolished and drowned communities and homes of Wales that lost the fight, they may be gone and you'll

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Eilir is a Full Member of AGRA (the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives), and is a Pharos Tutors instructor, teaching "Researching Your Welsh Ancestors and Tracing Living Relatives" courses. She provides research services for private clients and solicitors and carries out research for the BBC's Who Do You Think You Are? *and for programs on S4C (the national Welsh language TV channel) and BBC Radio Cymru.*

She is a native Welsh speaker, and her academic background, which includes a degree focused on the development of Welsh and UK society after the Industrial Revolution, provides the basis for her genealogical work today.

President's Message

Craig L. Foster, AG

I remember eagerly reading David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. It's hard to believe that it's been almost thirty-five years now. Fischer's fascinating book discussed not only the English, but also the Welsh, Scots, and Irish.

Some of us descendants of Albion or, as Fischer called it, "Albion's seed," probably celebrated Burns Night in January or St. David's Day, and undoubtably, many will be celebrating St. Patrick's Day. Others will celebrate St. George's Day in April and will continue with celebrations and commemorations of our roots throughout the year. In our family, St. Patrick's Day is a big celebration involving family and friends, although admittedly I have more Scottish DNA than Irish. And, while my inner heir of the Celtic Fringe hates to admit it, it appears I actually have more English DNA than Scottish or Irish combined. Throw in a sprinkling of Welsh and my heritage covers the main countries of the British Isles. My wife's Manx connection rounds it out for our family.

My guess is all of us in our society are proudly Albion's seed. Our love of the British Isles, our heritage, and our mutual love of family history is what brings us together. We learn from each other and from special guest speakers and

instructors who teach us how to better understand genealogical research and be better genealogists.

We have had the Winter Webinar series with some excellent presentations and still have a few more. I would encourage all to participate as their schedules allow. I'm particularly excited to have Cyndi Ingle, creator of Cyndi's List, as our special guest for Spring Institute.

Like most, if not all of you, I have spent hours using Cyndi's List. I eagerly anticipate Cyndi's full-day, four-part presentation in which we will learn about smarter online searching, the unexplored potential of e-books, ways to access digital libraries and archives, and digital filing for genealogists. This is an incredible opportunity to learn from one of the pioneers of online genealogical research. And it's definitely not too soon to be thinking about this fall's British Institute and the amazing classes we have lined up.

Ultimately, we of Albion's seed can help feed our hunger for learning about our British ancestors and heritage through these and other offerings from ISBGFH. I hope we can enjoy this journey together.

Background by Toni Cuenca@Pexels

From the Editor's Desk

From Ships to Trains

What were your ancestors driving and riding on a hundred years ago? What have you discovered about how the evolution of transportation impacted their lives?

As I've mentioned before, I'm in the middle of a years-long research project on my Milton-next-Sittingbourne, Kent ancestors, men who were merchant ship masters for at least three generations.

One of their ships was a spiritsail barge, a merchant ship used in the late nineteenth century. Eventually, some of my Kent family members, including the patriarch, Captain James Ost, immigrated to Topeka, Kansas, and worked for the Santa Fe Railroad. One son stayed behind and continued to work as a ship's master, and tragically, he drowned in 1889. Sailing was a dangerous business. A decade later, in Kansas, Captain James Ost was declared "insane" and committed to one of the most notorious asylums in history: the Topeka State Hospital, aka the Topeka Insane Asylum. It is possible that he simply had dementia. I can't read this story without experiencing some real grief.

As we age into our genealogical studies, we usually become more sensitive to the fact that our ancestors were real people with long and complex histories. Like us, they had no choice but to sail their vessels through the storms of life.

Some spiritsail ships have been restored:
https://krakenyachts.com/the-last-sailorman/
https://tillerandwheel.com/news/

Various groups, both private and public, have continued to compile information about merchant barges:
https://www.sailingbargeresearch.org.uk/
https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/93166/South-East-Research-Framework-Resource-Assessment-and-Research-Agenda-for-Maritime.pdf

This issue is packed with fascinating information about the impact of transportation on our ancestors' lives. Enjoy!
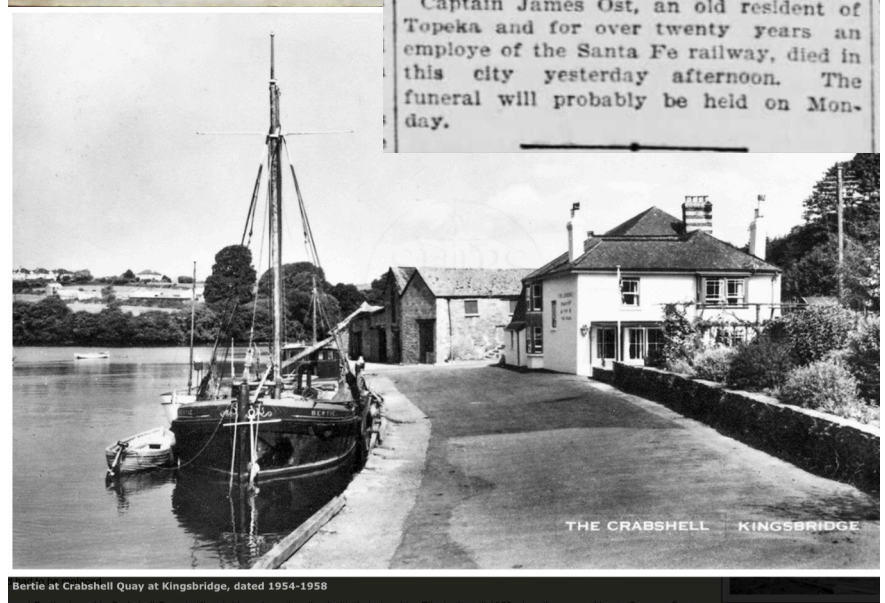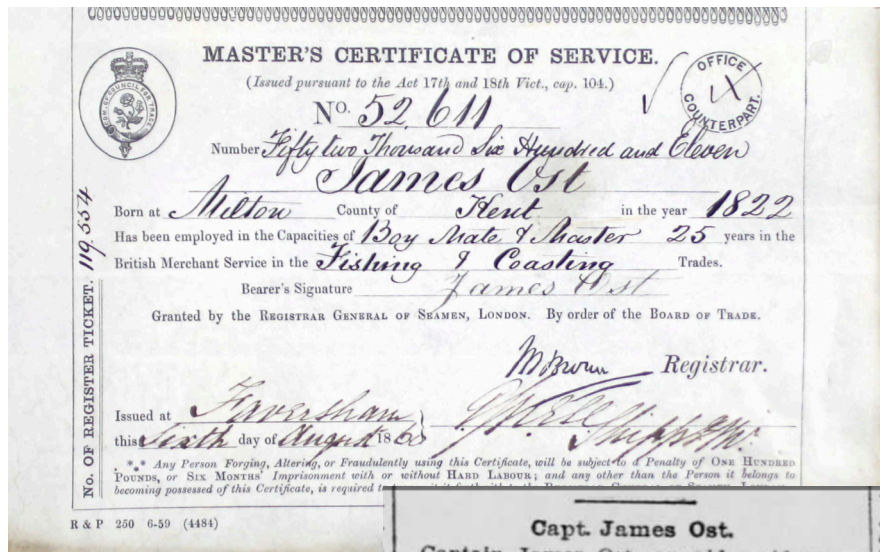
A Thames Spritsail barge, Bertie*, https://shipsproject.org, Creative Commons.*

Postcard from the author's collection.

Recollections of an Ambulance Train Soldier

During the First World War, tens of thousands of sick and wounded men were ferried across France and Belgium in ambulance trains, and in June, 1987 I had the privilege of interviewing an old soldier who had worked on two of these trains. Frank Gearing was then aged 88 years old, but his memory of the First World War was still razor sharp.

Frank was born in Shoreditch, London on the 14th October 1898 and was living with his parents in the Old Kent Road when attested for service the day before his 18th birthday. Surviving papers in WO 363 show that he was transferred to the Army Reserve the following day, and it was not until the 12th April 1917 that he was finally called up. Frank takes up the story:

> I found myself in the Royal Army Medical Corps because I'd been classified as B2 on account of a lazy eye and a half inch shortening in one leg. This, of course, wasn't serious but I suppose it did affect my using a rifle and other means of sights. I was a bit

disappointed but strangely enough I got very well settled in.

We were given sixpence for our day's ration and marched off to a train to Blackpool. We went into billets at Squire's Gate but eventually they took us out and put us under canvas. I was fortunate enough to go under the wing of an old soldier living in London. He'd done his army time when they called him up and he taught me how to carry on, how to stand on parade without fainting, and all that sort of thing. But we had an awful time under canvas. We had bad weather and sand in our blankets, sand in our hair and sand in our food. On top of that, we didn't have very nice non-commissioned officers either; one fella in particular was really nasty.[1] Things got so bad in the food line that we were all having food parcels sent in. That got

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[1] A note in Frank's surviving papers shows that he was confined to barracks for six days in June 1917 for "irregular conduct [and being] insolent to an NCO." Corporal Dewhurst, one of two witnesses to the offence, was presumably the NCO in question.

Image from the author's collection.

so bad—mountains of parcels coming—that the army stopped it because it was beginning to get known all round Blackpool and Lancashire that the troops in Squire's Gate were poorly fed. So they stopped the parcels coming in and there was a different arrangement altogether. Instead of having army cooks, they commandeered three of the biggest restaurants and we used to have to report there for our meals.

On the 4th December 1917, Frank and others embarked for France, his father seeing him off from the port of departure at Shorncliffe.

I still didn't really understand what I was supposed to be doing but I had 'Nursing Orderly' written in my pay book. The training given to the Royal Army Medical Corps, in my experience at least, was disgraceful. All I'd had in the way of any training was one lecture by a doctor telling us the main bones in our body, and we'd all been given a manual which was a good First Aid book. Our training had been drill, drill, drill morning,

noon and night, but medical training? No.

I was drafted to Rouen which was the headquarters of the ambulance train section of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Initially I was assigned to Ambulance Train 1, but I had hardly any medical duties to perform; it was more feeding the troops, keeping an eye on them that there were no secondary haemorrhages and performing rough dressings over and above existing dressings, if necessary.

Men came to us via the Royal Army Medical Corps Field Ambulances which were up there with the troops. Those men had certainly had better training than we had, and they also had surgical teams. From the Field Ambulance the men were taken to a casualty clearing station, and then they came to us. We were taken as far up the line as, in some cases, the railway line existed. In other cases, the railway line was there but it wasn't safe to go any further. Trains were being shelled the same as everything else. Despite having red crosses on the roof and on the sides, you were still liable to be bombed or attacked. But we went up as far as we possibly could and then we returned the men to Rouen, Calais, and Havre.

"It was all according to the state of the battlefield. If there were lots of casualties coming down, my coach would be full of badly wounded men.

All of the ambulance trains were numbered, and funnily enough I was on the first and the last. For some unknown reason, after I returned from leave, I was transferred to number 43 ambulance train which was the very last train.[2] From number one to number 12 were French rolling stock made up of mostly second-class carriages and some first class. The first-class carriages were the most sumptuous, luxurious things I'd seen—other than a Pullman—and one of those was assigned to the officers in each train. I think the one for

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[2] Frank's papers confirm that he served on No 1 Ambulance Train from the 10th December 1917 until the 30th June 1919. On return from leave in July 1914, he was transferred to No 43 Ambulance Train.

Interior of one of the Ward Cars of the Ambulance Train, constructed by the Caledonian Railway Company, on the order of the War Office, for conveyance of Wounded British Soldiers in France from the Front to the Sea-board.

Image from the author's collection.

very serious head injuries had been a postal wagon and it was adapted to have beds arranged in two tiers. That was for the bad brain cases or other serious cases who we had to leave on stretchers. Others we could get off the stretchers and put them on seats which had been converted to beds. Over each seat would be out a stretcher with the handles sawn off so we were able to get four laying down cases in each compartment of the train. Or, if you didn't have many stretcher cases, we would have the stretchers in the top and the sitting men in the bottom. Each of those trains was numbered, and each coach was given a letter: A, B, C, D, and so on.

We were operating all over the Somme. Albert, I remember well; we passed that many times. Mostly in my mind are such places as Rouen, Le Havre, and then a place a few miles outside Rouen where we used to wait in between journeys, a big marshalling yard in the quiet times. If we were lucky, we might have two or three days there and we were able then to come in to ruin for a bit of fun and a drink. As regards further afield, Amiens was one of our favourite spots.

There were a couple of occasions when the Indian cavalry had been in action up at Bapaume and Peronne. That was well up the line, up the front, and of course it was our first attempt at using cavalry. They were massacred, assassinated, cut to pieces. It was no place for cavalry at all, that war. We brought down train loads of those poor devils from the Bengal Lancers, Jacob's Horse; great big fellas, so tall and big that their heads were hanging over one end of the stretcher and their feet the other: fine big chaps. Well, we had to take those down to the base and then some months later when there was a lull in the fighting we were chosen to take the whole trainload of these Indians and Mongolians down to Marseilles for transport home. Well, on the way down we had the devil's own job. Lots of these chaps were put on the train in a more or less comatose condition, still smelling of ether and not long out of the operating theatre. When they became conscious of their surroundings they found there was one or two occupants in a compartment who were not of the same caste or religion and we had to keep stopping the train, taking two out of here and putting

them in there, one from here into there and all the way down this went on but eventually we got to our destination and that was that.

On the way down, like all soldiers did, we did a bit of looting. We stopped for signals and there were fields and fields of lovely grapes and I'm afraid everybody on the train got out and helped themselves to grapes. Well, on the way back we were halted at this place by the police who were demanding money for the grapes for the farmers. Well, we sorted that out and our commanding officer said I'm afraid we're going to have to deduct a few francs from each of you next payday. Meantime we will pay the farmer for what he wants for his grapes. Anyway, that was all sorted out, but they didn't release us right away for some reason or other, and we were still there that evening. The police allowed us all to go into the village in the evening for a drink. They uncovered the piano which had been covered up ever since the beginning of the war, and we had a bit of an impromptu dance and all that. Down there in the First World War in the South of France near Marseilles, they practically didn't know there was a war on. It was a very self-sufficient area as regards agricultural produce and they seem to have pretty well everything except men; the men were all gone—it was only girls or women. There were a few older men but we had a very pleasant evening there I remember.

Ambulance Train 43 was a British-made train. A complete train would come out just as you would see it running in England: postal waggon, guards waggon, passenger carriages, the whole lot would be shifted out as one unit. One coach on the train was equipped for operations. That would be one of these sleeping coaches or very nice coaches that was more comfortable than the rest. On my first train, I could never understand until a long while afterwards why two of the coaches were so comfortable and quiet until I discovered that they had hard rubber tyres on the wheels. I've often wondered whether that is so today on the French trains. You had no clickety-click or anything like that and the movement was so gentle, just like sitting in a limousine car. We were lucky to have such comfortable coaches; I don't think we had them on English trains at that time.

One coach was for head wounds and the one next to it was the operating bay which had just a few instruments and a qualified man. He was a pharmacist, as a matter of fact, but he learned operating theatre techniques: what tools they wanted and all that. But of course, it was very rare and it would be an emergency operation carried out, not a full time job, just to tide the man over, and when we got to the base, he would be the first man rushed off in an ambulance for a hospital to finish the job.

There would be two of us to a coach and if it was going to be a fairly long, slow journey, one of course would have to take some rest while the other one would carry on with the duty. It was all according to the state of the battlefield. If there were lots of casualties coming down, my coach would be full of badly wounded men. Another time when it was quiet, they would just be getting rid of some cases out of the casualty clearing station or the base so as to let them get home to Blighty—not very badly wounded men, chaps that they'd been able to keep there because they weren't expecting any fresh casualties; chaps sitting up, able to look after themselves more or less: leg injuries, hand injuries, fingers shot off, things like that. If it was a self-inflicted wound that would be on their medical cards. I often mentioned to doctors I've worked with since about all those terms we used on those First World War medical cards. You never hear them today: gunshot wound, shrapnel wound, self-inflicted injury. That would be on their records card by the time we got them.

I'm afraid there was quite a bit of self-inflicted injury that went on, and there were a couple in my village until recently and it was the talk of everybody that they were self-inflicted. They had their fingers shot off. It was always the right hand of course if he was a right-handed man or they used to shoot their big toe off. Mind you in this last war they took a vastly different view of shell shock. In the First World War there was many a poor devil shot for cowardice who should never have been shot, never. You imagine a young chap like myself thrown into some of those conditions. It's enough to make a lad turn around and run away or refuse to advance perhaps. Many a man was found in such a state of intense shock and stupor that he was automatically accused of cowardice because he wasn't with his unit. I feel sure there must have been scores of men who was shot for cowardice who should never have been shot. The hostels and places were full of shell-shocked men from the war.

I've never been back to the areas where I served. I never felt the urge to go back to those places. Being a bit morbid I often thought I'd like to go and see some

of those marvellous, marvellously laid out cemeteries. Many men were buried here, there and everywhere; just wrapped in a blanket and buried by the roadside with a wooden stick stuck in to mark their last resting place. That was the job of course for the pioneers to unearth them and take them into a local cemetery. Down at the bases, there would be a little bit of a ceremony. Yes, even further up front, if possible, the chaplain would read some sort of a service over a poor devil before he put him in the hole. But down at the base, there was quite a to-do: a firing party and all that, but even so, you were still wrapped in your blanket and you know you were charged for that blanket. The cost of that blanket was deducted from any pay that had accumulated. That was just army regulations and they said they could do nothing about it, it had always been so, it was just accounting for that blanket, that's all.

It was not until December 1919 that Frank Gearing finally returned home to England, and not until January 1920 that he was discharged from the army. In later life, and when I interviewed him, he lived in the quiet Essex village of Hatfield Broad Oak. He died in 1996, aged 97.

Paul Nixon is a British military historian and author; the proud great-great-grandson of a Crimean War colour-sergeant; and the grateful grandson of a First World War veteran. Paul has a forensic knowledge of British Army regimental numbers and is the driving force behind the British Army Ancestors website at https://britisharmyancestors.co.uk/*.*

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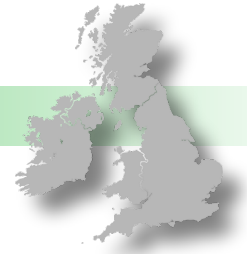
Livery Stables and Posting Establishments

Quite often when we try to flesh out our ancestors' stories in Ireland, we are hamstrung by the lack of records such as censuses, but alternative sources such as post office directories and newspapers can help us fill in the gaps. Thanks to these, I have been able to research the life of my 5th great-grandfather Arthur Taylor in Belfast, a former cab driver and one-time operator of a posting establishment in the city, which may have been part of a much wider family concern. These records have not only provided me with an insight into life over a century ago, but they have also given me a starting point to see how our communications and urban transportation infrastructure have evolved since then, with many of the jobs held then not too dissimilar to occupations that exist to this day.

My 5th great-grandfather Arthur Taylor died in Belfast in 1892 at the age of 95, with the death certificate noting him as a "car driver," essentially a driver of a horse-drawn car, the forerunner of the modern motor vehicle. I have not yet found a confirmed baptismal record for Arthur, who was presumably born in the late 1790s (if his death record is accurate), or been able to confirm his parents' names. There are

A hansom cab, possibly the vehicle driven by Arthur in 1869. By John Thomson (1837–1921)—London CabmenUploaded by Fæ, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15329530.

Arthur Taylor's death record in 1892, showing his occupation as a car driver. IrishGenealogy.ie.

The application for his grandson, which noted Arthur's marriage to Ann in 1819. PRONI, T550/3.

also no surviving records that I have as yet been able to find concerning his business, but from alternative sources I have been able to reconstitute much of his story. The starting point was an early twentieth-century record that provided the earliest known information on Arthur from almost a century earlier.

I was fortunate a few years ago to discover that Arthur's grandson, who shared the same name, made an application in Ireland for an old age pension in 1918. The records from a part of this application process (known as Form 37s) are held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni), and fortuitously provide some earlier nineteenth-century information about his grandfather. Trying to find the applicant, the pension authorities made a series of look-ups in the 1851 census, one of which was for the home of his grandfather, with whom he noted he had stayed for a while as a child. Arthur senior's address was noted to be "McLelland's Lane" or "McLelland's Entry" (later known as Lime Street), which was located just off Peter's Hill at the lower end of the Shankill Road, at the junction with York Street, which to this day remains a main route out of north Belfast. Although the authorities could not find the young applicant, a scribbled note mentioned that Arthur

senior was there with his wife, whom he had married in 1819. This was a remarkable record, offering a key genealogical detail from almost a hundred years earlier, copied from a census record which was subsequently destroyed. Although these full documents are not online, some limited census extractions from successful lookups can be found on Ancestry's "Ireland, 1841/1851 Census Abstracts (Northern Ireland)" collection (but sadly not from entries which were unsuccessful), whilst parallel records for the Republic of Ireland can be found at http://censussearchforms.nationalarchives.ie/search/cs/home.jsp.

From 1856, Arthur appeared in the postal directories for Belfast, which can be found on the PRONI website at www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/street-directories. He was noted as being resident at 61 York Street, where he was offering "cars for hire" (carriages), with additional records indicating that he also ran a "postal establishment," a term used to describe a facility where horses could be hired, with or without carriages. Such establishments evolved from the early postal system in the United Kingdom, where travelling coaches had been introduced alongside mail coaches. Many postmasters were innkeepers tasked with refreshing postal riders and their horses, and who later expanded their services to the wider public to hire horses and vehicles, similar to today's car hire firms. An excellent article at www.thetrafalgarway.org/post-chaise-travel explores the evolution of the system.

A newspaper article in the *Belfast Mercury* on Tuesday, September 9th, 1856, advised the following:

> ARTHUR TAYLOR respectfully informs his numerous Customers, and the Public generally, that he has REMOVED his POSTING ESTABLISHMENT from 61, York Street, to 16, CURTIS STREET, about one minute's walk from his former residence, where all Orders will be punctually attended to, on the shortest notice.

NOTICE OF REMOVAL.

ARTHUR TAYLOR RESPECTFULLY IN-
FORMS his numerous Customers, and the Pub-
lic generally, that he has REMOVED his POSTING
ESTABLISHMENT from 61, York-Street, to 16,
CURTIS-STREET, about one minute's walk from his
former Residence, where all Orders will be punctually at-
tended to, on the shortest notice.   2058

The Belfast Mercury, September 9th 1856. BritishNewspaperArchive. co.uk.

Not long after this, from 1861 until 1870, Arthur appears to have downsized somewhat, being listed only in the Post Office directories as a car owner on Curtis Street. In this period, I have identified at least two stories involving incidents concerning him as he worked in this role as an elderly gentleman. On June 12th, 1868, aged about 71 years old, the *Belfast Morning News* reported that he had been brought before the Belfast Police Court and

> . . . charged by Sub-Constable Pickett with being drunk yesterday in charge of a horse and car in Great Patrick Street.

IMPORTANT AND UNRESERVED SALE OF
Gig, Outside Cars, Chaises, Harness, and Phaetons,
&c., &c.,
BY AUCTION,
At the POSTING ESTABLISHMENT, 67, YORK-STREET,
on WEDNESDAY, the 4th April, at TWELVE o'clock,

COMPRISING Outside Jaunting Cars, Covered Car, Carriage-built Car, Gig, on platform springs; Mourning Coach, in good order; Chaise, well adapted for a re-spectable family; Britska, in excellent order; Hearse, with Plumes and Mourning Covers, &c., the best in Belfast. Five Horses, in good condition, with several sets Single and Double Harness, in excellent repair, with a variety of Stab-ling Utensils and Lumber.
    Also, the Proprietor's Interest in 67, York-street, and 30, Great George's-street.
    For further particulars, apply to
        JOHN TAYLOR, 67, York-street ; or,
        JOSEPH LOWRY & CO., No. 1, Talbot-street.
Belfast, March 30, 1849.   514

The Banner of Ulster, March 30th, 1849. BritishNewspaperArchive.co.uk.

Arthur Taylor was charged by Sub-Constable Pickett with being drunk yesterday in charge of a horse and car in Great Patrick Street. Car Inspec-tor Duff stated that this was the first charge against the prisoner. In reply to Mr. Orme, Taylor stated that he had been driving a car for 40 years. Fined 5s and costs.

The Belfast Newsletter, March 18th, 1869. BritishNewspaperArchive. co.uk.

The article continued to say that

> Car Inspector Duff states that this was the first charge against the prisoner. In reply to Mr. Orme, Taylor stated that he had been driving a car for 40 years.

This implied that Arthur had commenced his work in this role as far back as 1828. He was subsequently fined 5s and ordered to pay court costs.

Less than a year later the *Belfast Newsletter* mentioned Arthur once again in a story on March 18th, 1869, after another brush with the law:

> Arthur Taylor, car-driver, Curtis Street, was summoned, at the instance of the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses, for driving his cab on the wrong side of the street, on the 10th inst., whereby a gentleman's carriage was injured. The defendant made a satisfactory apology for his misconduct, and the charge was withdrawn.

The reference here to a "cab" may refer to a hansom cab, the forerunner of a modern taxi. Whilst there are no further references to Arthur until his death record in 1892, it seems possible that a relative of his was John Taylor, quite possibly his father or a brother, also from the same part of York Street. He was first mentioned in an article from the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* of May 18th, 1823, which noted that his son, also called John Taylor, had sadly passed away, aged just 13. Just four years later in the same newspaper, on April 9th, 1827, a further story noted that a pony had been hired in the previous week from John Taylor's

Livery Stables, York Street. It had not been returned and was now being considered as stolen, with a reward offered for its return.

John was then noted in the 1831 Post Office directory for the city as running stables on York Street, whilst in the same year, on August 9th, the *Belfast Newsletter* recorded that he had set up a new horseshoeing establishment to his "extensive and admirably conducted Establishment in York Street." Another article from the *Northern Whig* of July 24th, 1834, concerning a fire on York Street, noted that had it not been for "Mr. John Taylor, in procuring a supply (of water) by means of his water carts, worse consequences must have endured." By 1835 he was now advertising as "John Taylor, tavern keeper, livery stables and posting establishment, 4 Little Patrick Street, and 69 York Street."

A later directory from 1840 advertised John as continuing his livery and posting establishment and noted that he was resident at 49 York Street. A further advertisement from the *Northern Whig* of January 19th, 1843, shows how diverse his business interests were becoming, with him seeking a veterinary surgeon to help with his veterinary and shoeing practice at Great George Street, with all correspondence from applicants to be sent to his home at 49 York Street. On December 14th, 1846, in the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle,* John's wife, Elizabeth Mary Taylor, was then noted as having passed away, with her remains to be interred at Newtonbreda Cemetery. In the directory of the same year, he was now styled as a hotel keeper at 4 Little Patrick Street, rather than a tavern keeper, and as continuing to have livery stables at 30 Great George's Street.
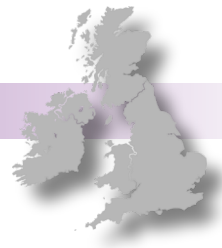
John's career appears to have come to an end in 1849—an advert in the *Banner of Ulster* on March 30th lists for auction his interests at both 67 York Street and 30 Great George Street, as well as his jaunting cars, gigs, hearses, mourning cars, and horses, with the auction taking place at the "Posting Establishment, No. 67, York Street." Within seven years of this, in September 1856, Arthur Taylor advertised that he was moving his own posting establishment from 61 York Street to 16 Curtis Street. The working assumption is that after John Taylor sold up, Arthur took over the posting establishment part of the business, which soon declined, forcing him to work as a car driver instead.

The hunt continues to find proof that they were connected, but the research so far has provided an amazing glimpse into the workings of part of the city's transport network over a century and a half ago.

*Based in the Ayrshire town of Irvine, Northern Irish-born **Chris Paton** runs the Scotland's Greatest Story research service (https:// scotlandsgreateststory. wordpress.com/) and the daily Scottish GENES genealogy news blog (http:/ /scottishgenes.blogspot. com). Amongst his many publications are* Tracing Your Scottish Family History on the Internet, Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry Through Church and State Records, *and* Sharing Your Family History Online *from Pen and Sword, as well as* Down and Out in Scotland: Researching Ancestral Crisis *from Unlock the Past. Chris also tutors short courses through Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd, including* Scottish Research Online *and* Scotland 1750–1850: Beyond the Old Parish Registers.

Chris Paton

Researching Scottish Shipbuilders

This picture shows iron-framed ships under construction in Archibald McMillan (not to be confused with the Archibald Banks of this article) and Son's yard. This firm built some of the largest sailing ships on the Clyde. During 1855 two ships, the "Ardberg," 925 tons, and the "Jane Jack Mitchell," 980 tons, were launched from this yard and may be the ships shown here under construction. Scottish sailing barges, "gabbarts," were also built here. Samuel Bough, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

One of Scotland's greatest historic industries was shipbuilding, with many records generated which can assist in locating ancestors who helped to build some of the mightiest vessels in the world at the height of the British Empire. A good starting point is the census collection on ScotlandsPeople ([www.scotlandspeople.](https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) gov.uk), with which we can identify the specific roles of ancestors who worked in the shipbuilding industries; most notably, the recently released 1921 census will name the actual firm worked for. However, there are also records of many shipbuilding firms that can add further light to their employment, with many

The Scottish Business Archive website hosts many online catalogues, including those for shipping company records.

collections held at the University of Glasgow's Scottish Business Archive (www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/archivespecialcollections/discover/business/).

A good example lies with research I carried out into the story of a shipwright called Archibald Banks at the William Denny and Brothers shipyard, Dumbarton, who was known to have become a foreman at the yard at some stage in the late nineteenth century. The censuses and valuation rolls had shown that Archibald had seemingly worked for the firm from the 1880s until at least 1895, but I was asked to see if there was any more that I could find out about him.

The university's catalogue promised an extraordinary range of resources for the firm, including forgemen's piecework books, wage books, staff salary books, certificates of character, and much more. Most of the surviving records were found on examination at the archive to concern the permanent office staff at the yard, rather than the manual workforce, but I was nevertheless able to find some information on Archibald. My first discovery within the "List of gratuities and related correspondence" collection (UGD 003/28/2) was a series of various payments made to Archibald between 1892 and 1894. The first, showing

him as a carpenter in December 1892, revealed a gratuity paid of 22 shillings, but after this, a series of lists of foremen receiving gratuities showed Archibald receiving a huge increase of £1 17s 8d in both 1894 and 1895, and an even larger sum of £3 13s a year later in 1896. The register unfortunately ended at this stage.

By far the most interesting find, however, was an entry in a book of "notes providing information on the calculation of wages/trends in wages" (UGD 3/12/6). In this I found the following entry, dated November 10th, 1894:

> Archibald Banks appointed Foreman Carpenter in place of Sam McLean (killed by fall of derrick 3/9/94) at the rate of 40s per week.

Not only did this allow me to identify exactly when Archibald had become a foreman, it also allowed me to identity why. With the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) I soon located a newspaper article from the Dundee Evening Telegraph of September 4th 1894, entitled, "Fatal Accident at Dumbarton," which provided a grim explanation of what had happened:

The University of Glasgow archive service holds the Scottish Business Archive (author's image).

> Samuel McLean, sub-foreman carpenter, and Ebenezer Langley, carpenter, had been standing speaking to each other in close proximity to one of the ships in course of construction, when one of the temporary wooden shear legs close by collapsed and fell, on the two men. McLean had his neck dislocated, and was killed on the spot.

There were many other records which in Archibald's case were not able to help, such as rental books for houses leased to workers by the firm (unfortunately, for a different period than that within which Archibald was a tenant), and a wonderful series of books showing rewards paid to staff for any successful ideas or innovations that they may have come up with to improve the workings of the firm.

In some cases, we may find that relevant records are not so easy to access. For example, the records of one of the biggest shipbuilding firms in the UK, Harland and Wolff, which operated on the Clyde, as well as at

Belfast and Liverpool, are unfortunately closed to public access at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. But even when such obstacles get in our way, it can be possible to reconstitute the stories of those who worked for such firms from other sources.

To give another example, I was once asked to research the history of the Shire Line passenger liner firm, the records for which were shown to be held at Glasgow City Archives, and in particular the involvement of the Law family. The on-site catalogue noted the following short summary of the company's history:

> The Glasgow shipowners Thomas Law & Co controlled the Shire Line of passenger cargo ships, sailing principally to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. The company was operated by Thomas Law until 1892 [sic], thereafter by his brother William Law, who was sole partner until his death in 1932. The Shire Line at one point included 35 ships. In addition to the Scottish 'shire' names, the company operated ships with 'law' names ('Duns Law', 'Berwick Law', etc). In 1933 the last two ships were sold, but the company remained in existence until wound up in 1947, on the death of the last surviving partner.

However, having arranged an appointment to view the records, I was to be disappointed upon my arrival for an unexpected reason. An archivist advised me that although they did indeed hold the records, they had been misplaced within the archive's storage facility, and thus could not be found in time for my arrival. This left me with a dilemma— how could I research the history of a firm for which the records have gone missing?

A firm will have documented its own proceedings but will also have been documented within other
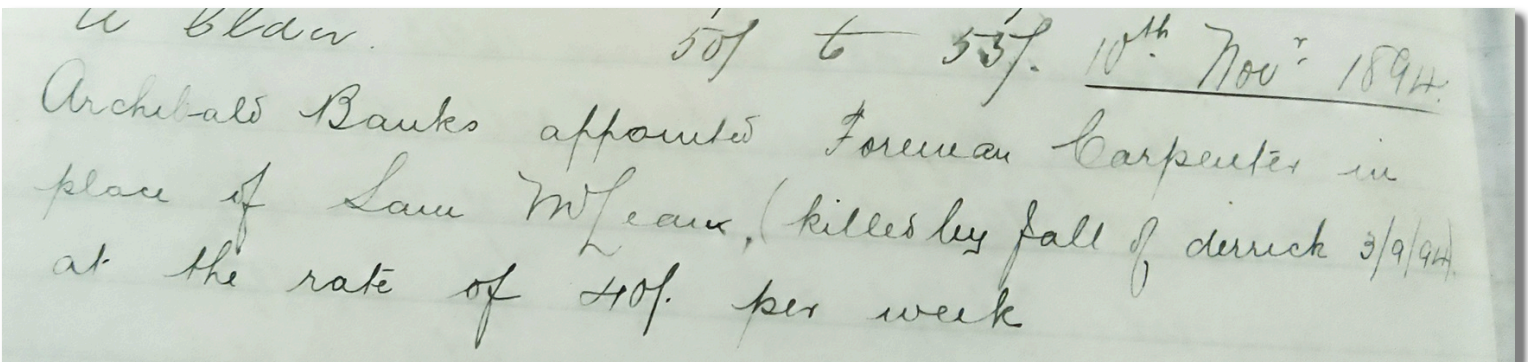
The record identifying Archibald's promotion to foreman (author's image, taken from Scottish Business Archives, UGD 3/12/6).

GLASGOW—DEATH OF MR THOMAS LAW.—The death of Mr Thomas Law, senior and managing partner of Messrs Thomas Law & Co., owners of the "Shire" line of Australian traders, at the early age of 35 years, will be read with regret by a large circle of friends. Mr Law, early in his career, was attached to the office of Messrs Patrick Henderson & Co., Australian and Rangoon shipping and export merchants, but about ten years ago he started the firm of which he was the head. Shortly thereafter he was successful in obtaining the emigration contract with the Colonial Government of Queensland. The firm now owns a fleet of sixteen first-class iron ships, named after shires in Scotland, all of which were built on the Clyde within the last ten years, and under the superintendence of the deceased. Mr Law was married only eight months ago to a daughter of Mr Henderson, Her Majesty's Inspector of Factories. Three months ago he caught a severe cold, which settled down on his lungs, and resulted fatally on Wednesday evening, at his residence, Lochgoilhead.

Thomas Law's obituary in the Scotsman, November 18th, 1881. British Newspaper Archive, www.britishnewspaperarchive, co.uk.

resources. From the Post Office directories for Glasgow, I was able to establish that the Law family had first built its fortunes from property developments in Glasgow, with David Law being half of the Law, Selkirk & Co. partnership of wrights, first advertising in 1839. Newspaper articles in the *Glasgow Herald* in December 1849 and March 1850 described fires at the firm's yards, with the Post Office directory of 1853 revealing that the firm had finally come to an end, with James Selkirk having died on June 23rd, 1851. Following another co-partnery, which ended in September 1857, David continued as a wright and builder in his own name.

In the 1869 Post Office directory, David and his son Thomas were both found listed, with Thomas described as being part of a firm of ship and insurance brokers, Law, Taylor, & Co. In 1870 David was charged with culpable homicide following a serious incident on one of his construction sites, with five workers killed

and three injured. In the trial for this, in which David was eventually found not guilty, his son Thomas testified as follows:

> I am a shipbroker in Glasgow, and son of Mr Law, sen. My father has been a shipowner for about 15 years and has been wholly engaged as such for the last three years. My brothers, D. & R. Law, started business in 1869, but my father has no interest in the business, his whole attention being occupied as manager of five ships and assistant manager for the other two.

Shortly after this, the *Edinburgh Gazette* ([www. thegazette.co.uk](www.thegazette.co.uk)) of May 10th, 1872, noted that Thomas Law had dissolved his brokers firm, setting up his own company, Thomas Law & Co. The newspapers from 1875 onwards noted that ships were now being constructed for the firm for clients across Scotland. On October 10th, 1881, Thomas predeceased his father, with both gentlemen noted in his death certificate as

ship owners. *The Scotsman* of November 18th, 1881, noted his connection to the Shire Line:

> The death of Mr Thomas Law, senior and managing partner of Messrs Thomas Law and Co., owners of the 'Shire' line of Australian traders, at the early age of 35 years, will be read with regret by a large circle of friends.

Having died so young, Thomas was intestate, but an inventory and subsequent eik taken through the courts showed that he owned shares in 18 different vessels. Just three years later, on December 6th, 1884, David Law passed away himself, with the Dundee Courier just two days later noting that he had been a shipowner for 30 years, owning sailing vessels that had traded in all parts of the world.

The firm was taken over by another son, William Law. Using the British Newspaper Archive and the *Edinburgh Gazette*, I was able to establish that in subsequent years, many vessels were built by him, with some lost at sea. William died in 1933, with an article on March 7th in the Scotsman noting that he had been chairman of the Clyde Steamship Insurance Association, a director of the Clyde Steamship Owners' Association, and of the Glasgow Shipowners' Association, and a member of the local committee of Lloyd's Register of Shipping.

Using Post Office directories, the *Edinburgh Gazette*, other contemporary newspapers, and confirmation (probate) records, a detailed picture of the firm established by the Law family, and its eventual winding down, was easily established.

Based in the Ayrshire town of Irvine, Northern Irish-born **Chris Paton** *runs the Scotland's Greatest Story research service (https://scotlandsgreateststory.wordpress.com/) and the daily Scottish GENES genealogy news blog (http://scottishgenes.blogspot.com). Amongst his many publications are* Tracing Your Scottish Family History on the Internet, Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry Through Church and State Records, *and* Sharing Your Family History Online *from Pen and Sword, as well as* Down and Out in Scotland: Researching Ancestral Crisis *from Unlock the Past. Chris also tutors short courses through Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd, including* Scottish Research Online *and* Scotland 1750–1850: Beyond the Old Parish Registers.

In Search of a Motor Racing Gene
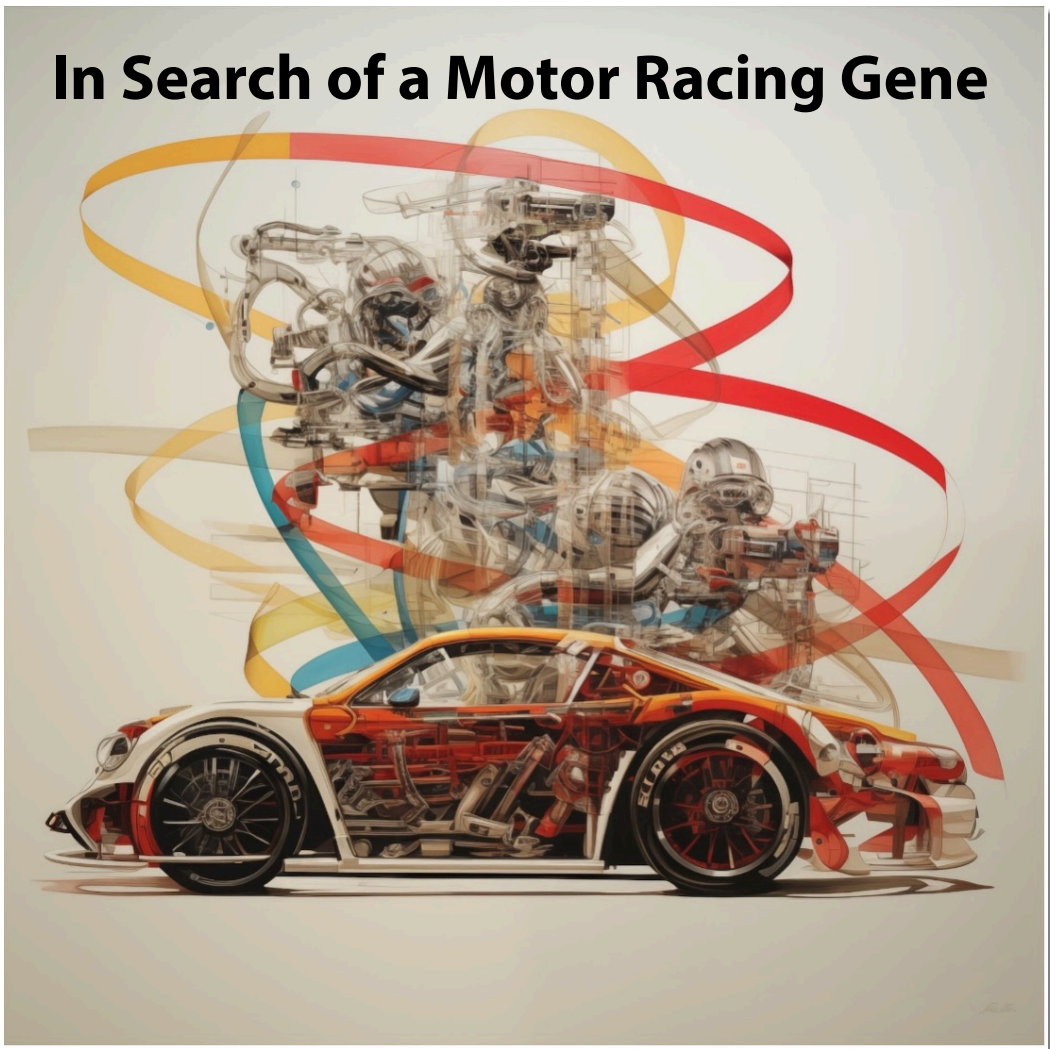
In Search of a Motor Racing Gene (AI generated, Midjourney)

Donna Rutherford

When we do a DNA test for genealogy, one of the add-ons available at some sites is a traits test. This can be a fun add-on as DNA is responsible for determining our traits, though the test results may not always be entirely accurate. The accuracy of these results underscores the ongoing debate surrounding nature versus nurture, a debate that explores the extent to which genetics (nature) and environmental factors (nurture) influence human traits and behaviours, with each side arguing for the predominant role of either genetic inheritance or environmental experiences in shaping individual development. However, contemporary understanding acknowledges that both nature and nurture interact in complex ways to shape human characteristics. In genetics, a trait is a specific characteristic of an individual determined by their genes, which are directly inherited from parents. Traits can be physical (e.g., eye colour, height, hair type, body shape), physiological (e.g., metabolism, hormone levels, blood type, susceptibility to certain diseases), behavioural (e.g., personality traits, cognitive abilities, temperament, and social behaviours), and biochemical (e.g., enzyme levels, neurotransmitter functions).

This article is not intended to provide in-depth scientific analysis or rigorous research findings, but to pique readers' interest in understanding more about traits available when doing DNA testing for genealogy. It is meant to be a fun, informative read with a little of my own family history thrown in.

Trait Tests
Ancestry and 23andMe offer a trait test alongside their regular DNA tests. Your DNA is inherited from both parents—a random 50% of their DNA—but your

Asparagus Odor Detection	Likely can smell >
Bitter Taste	Likely can't taste >
Cilantro Taste Aversion	Slightly higher odds of disliking cilantro >
Ice Cream Flavor Preference	More likely to prefer chocolate over vanilla ice cream >
Sweet vs. Salty	Likely prefers salty >

My 23andMe Sensory Trait results.

parents may not have influenced your traits equally. Certain DNA markers have more influence than others: you can inherit the more influential marker from one parent and a less influential marker from the other. The influential marker will have a greater impact compared to the other, implying that certain traits or characteristics may be inherited more prominently from one parental side. DNA markers are associated with specific traits such as red hair, height, attached earlobes, earwax type, and other such things. It is possible you have markers, for example, for curly hair, but your hair is straight; that means the selected markers are not telling the whole story. Physical traits are determined more by genetic factors (nature) than those that are influenced by environmental elements (nurture). Traits can be influenced by thousands of DNA markers, not all of which are tested by a DNA company. The DNA companies look at the results of markers they have tested, determine what we have inherited from each parent, and then measure the combined impact and predict our trait.

Polygenic Risk Score

Ancestry and 23andMe offer testing for a range of traits and add new ones as their research expands. Results are based on your DNA, but they can be determined in two different ways. One way is based on scientific studies that look at the specific DNA markers; Ancestry calls these "literature-based" traits. The other type is determined based on surveys taken within the user database, and these are called PRS (Polygenic Risk Score) traits. Although the PRS traits are based on user surveys, your result is based on your DNA test result and not on how you answer any survey questions. It's crucial to note that genealogical DNA test results should not be relied upon for self-diagnosis. Individuals seeking information about predispositions to health-related conditions should consult with a medical practitioner.

Inconsistent Test Results

Let's take a closer look at some examples from my DNA test results. Of course, I can just look in the mirror to see my eye colour or hair colour, and I know what I like the tastes of—I don't need a

Sensory

Alcohol flush	**Asparagus odour**	**Bitter sensitivity**
Face unlikely to flush	Might not smell asparagus metabolites	Not able to taste a certain bitter flavor
Caffeine intake	**Fresh coriander aversion**	**Sun sneezing**
Drink an average amount	Like fresh coriander	Sneezer when exposed to bright light
Sweet sensitivity	**Tolerating dairy**	**Umami sensitivity**
Extra sensitive	Likely tolerate dairy	Less umami sensitivity

My AncestryDNA Sensory Trait results.

Your genotype at two tested markers

You have one genetic variant at these markers associated with higher odds of disliking cilantro. Since genetics is only part of the picture, you may still like cilantro. Overall, just 13% of 23andMe research participants think cilantro tastes "soapy."

MARKERS TESTED	YOUR GENOTYPE
rs2741762	AG
Result: Slightly higher odds of disliking cilantro	
rs3930459	TT
Result: Odds of disliking cilantro not increased	

rs2741762 affects cilantro preference

rs3930459 affects cilantro preference

56 olfactory receptor genes
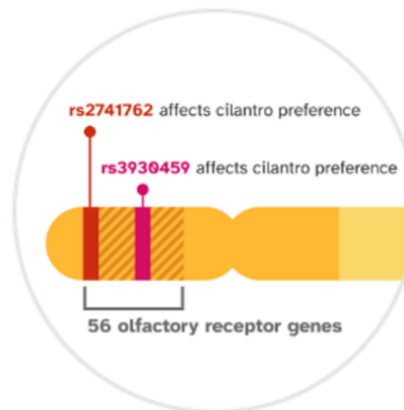
23andMe markers associated with higher odds of disliking coriander (cilantro).

genetic test for that, but it is interesting to know what my genetics tell me about these things.

One of the "sensory" traits that is tested by both Ancestry and 23andMe is whether you like coriander (cilantro for Americans). Ancestry tells me I probably like coriander, and 23andMe suggests I do not. 23andMe uses the American name "cilantro" and shows me the exact markers they look at for this trait. They test two markers (rs2741762 and rs3930459), and it appears that my DNA code shows that one of the variants I have is associated with higher odds of disliking coriander (cilantro); they do go on to mention that genetics is only part of the picture: I may actually like coriander, regardless. These markers are on chromosome 11 and are part of the 56 genes making up the olfactory receptor genes.

Each marker tested shows two letters: one is my maternal allele (genetic code) and the other paternal. Unless I have a parent tested, I cannot tell which is which. In the example shown, I got an A and G on the first marker and a T from both parents on the second marker. A Google search can help find out more about
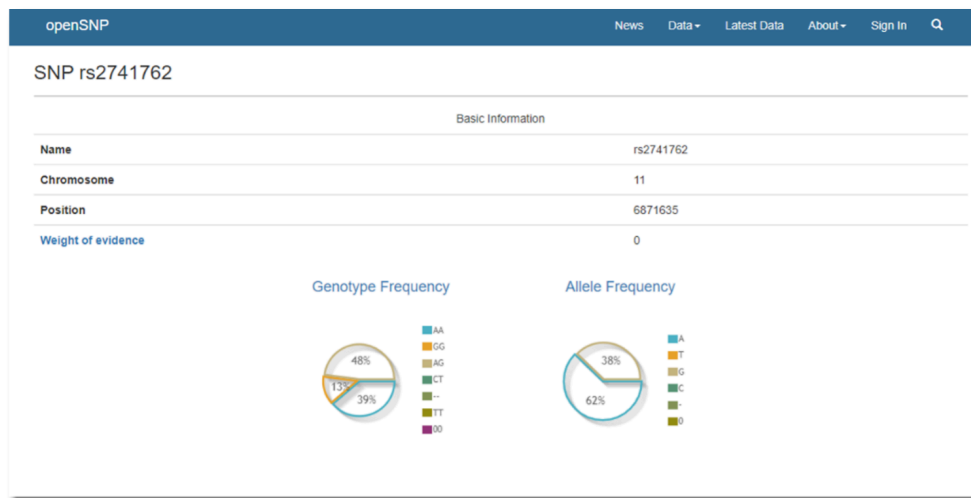
Marker details at openSNP.org

these markers; for example, openSNP.org has details on the frequency of the DNA combinations that are seen in the human population.

I have also tested my mum and my sister at Ancestry, so I can open their raw data files and look at what their results are on these markers. Ancestry only tests rs274172 and not rs3930459. Looking at my mother's file, I see that she has an AG, and looking at my sister's file, I see an AA. This could help me establish their trait result without asking them to do a traits test. You might wonder whether I like coriander (as predicted by 23andMe) or dislike coriander (as predicted by Ancestry); well, I love coriander and find it a delicious

My first ride around a Speedway track, as a baby in the arms of my dad (a publicity photo for the local papers)

and what they did during their lifetime. Just as people like or dislike coriander and have specific genes that predispose them to this, perhaps people who have an interest in automobiles and motorsports also carry a specific gene. DNA is known to impact our sporting ability, but the debate continues about an athletic potential being completely due to a predetermined set of genetics vs. environmental and cultural factors. There is also some evidence that your driving skills are genetic, but, of course, you would also be heavily influenced by your parents' driving, your driving instructor, and the time you spend driving yourself.

addition to many dishes. If you are interested in traits testing, Ancestry is now offering it free if you take a DNAPlus membership, which is part of their new pricing structure. You can also purchase a DNA test at Ancestry or 23andMe with traits or buy it as an add-on.

For fun I've often wondered, could it be that I have a motor racing gene? Could there be a genetic marker or markers that make us more likely to enjoy motorsports, or is it purely our upbringing (nature vs. nurture)? As part of my genealogy research over the years, I have gathered a lot of information about my grandparents

Likely to Love Racing

My family have all loved cars. My paternal grandparents, Jack Rutherford and Dorothy Rutherford (nee Croker), were influential in the early days of our local car club; they are still remembered today on the Taranaki Car Club site. The Rutherfords were considered a family of "petrol heads." Jack had been a life member (and secretary) of the Taranaki Car Club and had been instrumental in setting up road races in the region. His son, my dad, was a speedway champion who raced motorbikes and later midget cars at the local speedway. Dad was also involved in road racing and motocross, later becoming president of the speedway, at which time he even delved into stock car racing. When I was young, Dad also raced speedboats. Dad's younger
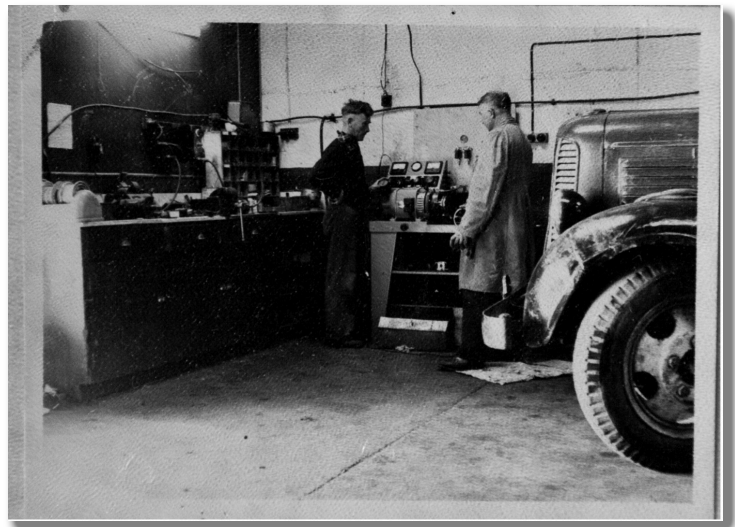

Dad (right) & his brother (centre) were champions in the 1962/63 Speedway year.

Dad on his speedway bike.

Mum in Dad's midget on the day of their engagement.

Stan at work as a motor mechanic circa 1950.

Stan's Fiji driver's licence.

brother also got "the bug" and was involved in speedway himself, later moving on to Formula 1, where he eventually worked with Sir Jackie Stewart during Sir Jackie's 1969 F1 title-winning season. Jack Rutherford is of Scottish and Cornish descent, and Dorothy was born in the East End of London, proud of her cockney associations. However, I have no evidence of any motor-related activity prior to my grandparent's generation, only that they were settler families who no doubt had an adventurous streak.

One of my first and favourite memories was attending the Waiwakaiho Speedway meetings on Saturday nights and watching all the racing. This was a local speedway in my hometown of New Plymouth in the Taranaki province of New Zealand. My mother and her mother, my maternal grandmother, were always in attendance, with me and my younger sister sitting on their knees. My maternal grandmother, then a widow, enjoyed the speedway. Her husband, my maternal grandfather Stanley James Hancock, had been a motor mechanic. Stan, as he was known, sadly passed away 18 September 1955 at the young age of 44, during the last wave of the polio epidemic to hit New Zealand. Stan worked as a mechanic at RJ Burketts in New
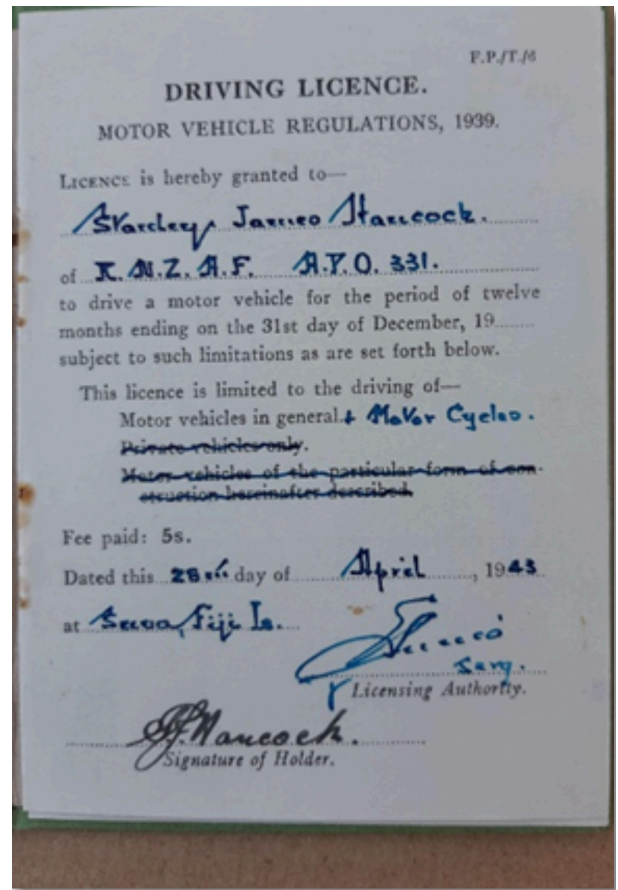
Plymouth, New Zealand, and during the war, he was in the air force working in the propellor division of the RNZAF stationed in Fiji.

Whilst in Fiji, Stan had obtained a Fiji driver's licence so he could drive around on the island. His interest in driving started young, and at one time, he owned a 1929 Austin 7. Along with his brother Les Hancock, they once made a 450-mile journey in the Austin 7

Stan & Les Hancock at Ninety-Mile Beach after driving 450 miles in the Austin 7

from New Plymouth up the North Island to Ninety-Mile Beach. That must have been quite a trip in the day on very rugged roads around New Zealand in that little Austin 7.

Look Into Your DNA Results

Seems I've come from a family with a love of cars and motorsports. I have potentially inherited my love of motorsports from them, maybe because I've been around them, or could the family have a genetic predisposition for this trait? We don't really know if our genes can control our taste and predisposition to things like being able to play a musical instrument; maybe our genes are responsible for enjoying such things as motorsports, or maybe we love these things because they remind us of family and happy days from the past. I know that when Formula 1 starts again this season, I will sit in front of the TV here in my London apartment watching all the practice sessions, qualifying, and most exciting of all, the actual Grand Prix. Of course, there isn't really a specific motor racing gene that directly determines a person's aptitude or inclination for motorsports. However, there may be genetic factors that contribute to this characteristic, such as coordination, reaction time, risk-taking behaviour, and even preferences for certain activities, which could indirectly influence someone's interest or skill in motor racing. Additionally, environmental factors such as exposure to motorsports from a young age, access to genealogical and historical research into family, and cultural influences could play significant

roles in shaping someone's interest and ability in this sport. In 2024, you may decide to look further into your DNA and look at some of the traits you are predisposed to. Remember they can be fun and not necessarily accurate, but they are determined using your DNA results. What traits might you have inherited from your family?

A petrol head from an early age, here I am in a midget car at our

Donna Rutherford is a New Zealand genetic genealogist based in London with English, Scottish, and Irish Ancestry. She specialises in complex DNA cases, such as those involving adoptions, foundlings, and surprise results. In 2019, Donna was one of the co-authors of a paper investigating the effectiveness of using genetic genealogy to identify individuals in the UK, which has been used to inform UK law enforcement on the potential use of Investigative Genetic Genealogy in the future. Donna has been a regular speaker at international genealogy conferences and has a well-known blog at donnarutherford.com. She is the admin of a UK Facebook group, DNA Help for Genealogy (UK), and a co-admin of the RUTHERFORD Y-DNA project at FamilyTreeDNA.

local speedway (colourised at My Heritage)

Paul Milner, FUGA, MDiv
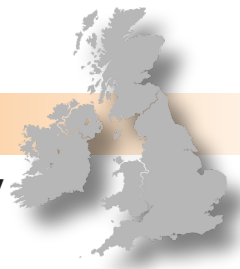
Modern single-track road following Roman Road over Hardknott Pass from Ravenglass to Amblesdie. Remains of Harknott Roman Fort, managed by English Heritage, is square walled compound above Carol's head. The road going down valley is visible in front of Carol's waist and then again on green valley bottom (author's photograph).

Researching Historical Transport Networks, Cumbria Case Study

In December 2023, I returned to my home county of Cumbria, and while there, I bought a copy of the new book *Pedestrian Pleasures: A Short History of Walking in the Lake District*. It got me thinking about how people got around. It is so easy to fall into the trap of looking at modern road and rail systems, which appear old and well-established to us, and decide that is how our ancestors got from point A to point B. But is that really the case? Let us reflect upon this using Cumbria as a case study.

Roads

Growing up in Cumbria, I learned about the Roman roads, generally constructed between AD 43 and about 180, though they were maintained by the Romans until they left around 410. Many, like the one along the southside of Hadrian's Wall is very straight—one of the features for which they were known. They were well constructed, with a good foundation, a cambered finished surface to allow the rain to drain off into the ditches that ran alongside the roads. The roads enabled troops and goods to move quickly anywhere.

When you look at the map of Roman roads in Cumbria, you can see a whole network. Some, like the road from Ravenglass—on the coast, across Hardknott Pass to Ambleside—would have been a feat of engineering. Even driving that route today, a single-lane road, will give you a workout, especially if you are driving a stick shift. The view down onto the Roman fort in the pass is spectacular.

Some of the approximately 2,000 miles of Roman roads in England remained core trunk roads well after

the Romans left. For a complete gazetteer, see *The Roads of Roman Britain* at www.romanroads.org. Known Roman roads and unknown sections are being confirmed or found using modern LiDAR technology.

Some routes are part of the modern national road network. Unfortunately, the ability to build roads of the same quality disappeared, making travel in the medieval and early modern periods problematic. Most roads in England were not suitable for wheeled transportation until the latter half of the eighteenth century. Most goods were transported by packhorse.

Packhorses were used to move goods to market, sometimes across large distances. Packhorses were a flexible and reliable means of transport, but very slow. A journey from Cumbria to London would take over two weeks, averaging 15 miles a day. A packhorse train moving in a single file may consist of up to thirty horses, each carrying up to 350 pounds of goods. Many of the packhorse routes were later turned into surfaced roads, but certainly in Cumbria, their earlier existence shows up in pub names: Pack Horse, String of Horses, Woolpack. One of the other main survivors of this lifestyle are the packhorse bridges; the most photographed in Cumbria is Ashness Bridge in Borrowdale, but there are many more—see a listing at www.lakesguides.co.uk/html/topics/packbrgf.htm.

Across Cumbria and in other parts of the country, you need to learn about the *drove* roads. The cattle fairs were established early, Carlisle in the early 1100s and Brough by 1330. Cattle were brought mainly from Galloway, across the border along drove roads to Carlisle, or across the Solway Firth fords, while some went to the east up the South Tyne Valley, along the Roman Maiden Way, dropping into the Eden Valley at Kirby Thore. The drove roads developed early but their heyday was in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By then, tens of thousands of cattle were being driven further south to the bigger markets annually. Think about the major drove roads, but also the many local ones needed to get to the numerous annual fairs all across the country. Some drove roads in Cumbria are listed and illustrated at www.lakesguides.co.uk/html/topics/drovef.htm, but more are mentioned in references by Hindle and Roebuck.

The major change came with the creation of turnpikes. The first Turnpike Act was in 1663 (Great North Road between Wadesmill in Hertfordshire and Stilton in Huntingdonshire), but the first Act for Cumbria passed in 1739 for a turnpike at Whitehaven. Nationally, major changes occurred with the "Turnpike mania" of 1751–72, when trusts covered more than 11,500 miles of road. Over 942 Turnpike Acts were passed before the last one in 1836, covering 22,000 miles of road, and over 7,000 tollgates—about a fifth of the entire road network. See toll gate and turnpike listing for Cumbria at www.lakesguides.co.uk/html/topics/tolgatef.htm.

The success of the turnpikes challenged the supremacy of the pack horse for moving goods. In 1757, the first carriers' wagons appeared in Cumbria. By 1763, the first stagecoach, the *Flying Machine,* drawn by six horses, began its amazing service from Kendal to Carlisle over the inhospitable Shap Fell at an almost incredible speed of between five and six miles per hour. That route is still inhospitable on the modern motorway, with high winds and ice being common. Soon after, coaches with names such as *The Royal Pilot*, *The True Briton*, and *The Good Intent* entered service, extending the network. By the early nineteenth century even remote valleys such as Borrowdale had a coach service, and Cockermouth was linked to Kendal by a coach that struggled up the steep and stony Whinlatter Pass.

Away from the turnpikes, you need to be aware of the *enclosure* roads. During the mid-1700s, Parliament passed many Acts that enclosed the common land, allocating sections to private land. Enclosure affected about 25% of the land in Cumbria, re-designing much of the landscape. Some of the old roads were straightened, widened, and improved, while others were abandoned or destroyed. This was a period when many of the drystone walls in the Lake District were erected, creating fields out of common land.

Canals and Shipping

Across much of the country, canals and navigable rivers were an important means of getting bulk goods to market. There were numerous Acts and proposals for canals in Cumbria, but few were actually dug. The Lancaster Canal, originating in 1791, connected Kendal through Lancaster to Westhoughton on the Lancashire

coalfield, though the section into Kendal was not opened until 1819, and the section from Preston to Westhoughton was never completed. Some sections of the canal still exist while other sections have been drained. It brought coal north and took limestone and slate south. Informally, it was called the "black and white canal." The short Ulverston Canal, connecting Ulverston with the sea, was opened in 1796. Commercial traffic ended in 1916, with the last ship passing through the lock in 1949, after which the gates were concreted. There is still water in the channel, but it is no longer connected to the sea. The 11.5-mile-long Carlisle Canal connecting Carlisle to Bowness opened in 1823, but by 1853, it had been drained and was used for a railway, which was also unsuccessful. The canals were used to transport goods, but they also had packet boat services for transporting people. For more information on existing and proposed canals see www. lakesguides.co.uk/html/topics/canalf.htm. There are no navigable rivers in the county.

Some of the Lakes, like Windermere, were known to have ferries crossing them. As the tourist trade increased in the nineteenth century, steam-driven

boats were to be found on Windermere, Coniston, and Ullswater, giving scenic rides but also providing a schedule to access landing points around the long lakes for tourists and locals alike. Modern motor launches provide a similar service today.

Along the Cumbrian coast, we see numerous small sleepy harbours. Don't be fooled, as there was lots of maritime trade, passenger traffic, and shipbuilding. In the early to mid-eighteenth century, Whitehaven was the second busiest port in England, behind London but ahead of Liverpool and Bristol. Coal was going to Ireland, while tobacco was coming in from Virginia, with family connections in Whitehaven to George Washington. Whitehaven was one of twelve ports approved to import tobacco, but the quantities imported decreased after the Revolutionary War when the Glasgow merchants rose to prominence. Along the coast, numerous shipyards were to be found in Whitehaven, Harrington, Workington, and Maryport. Daniel Brocklebank's yard in Whitehaven would be the most famous, and workers were building ships there until 1865, when the lease on his yard expired and he moved to building ships on the River Mersey. In 1871, shipbuilding began in the Barrow in Furness area, with what was to become Vickers Armstrong Shipbuilding (operating under various names) building numerous battleships and is now known as BAE Systems Submarine Solutions building nuclear submarines. It is the only operational shipbuilding yard along the Cumbria coast.

Many of the harbours along the coast had regular sail and steamer traffic along the coast. Ships took emigrants further afield to Liverpool, but also made regular trips to the Isle of Man and to ports along the Scottish coast.

Maryport Harbour, with walkway across entrance raised to allow fishing vessels in and out. This is near high tide (author's photograph).

Carol posing in the steam engine for the popular 15-inch narrow gauge heritage Ravenglass & Eskdale Steam Railway (author's photograph).

Railways

Railways in Cumbria, as in many other parts of the country, had their origins in the wagonways for the coal and iron mines. These wagonways began in the 1730s, funded by the major landowners (Lowther and Christian families) to get coal from the mines to the harbours. Evidence of these wagonways can still be seen in the landscape. These wagonways developed into the industrial railways that cover the coastal industrial areas in the county. These could be standard or narrow gauge. More recently they may be converted from industrial to tourist use. The most famous in the county is the 15-inch minimum narrow gauge heritage railway— Ravenglass & Eskdale Steam Railway, which is well worth the ride.

The first passenger railway line in Cumbria, actually the first to cross England from east to west, was the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway, completed in 1838, followed in 1845 by the Maryport and Carlisle Railway, with various companies creating lines along the coastal plain to Barrow and Carnforth. The last major, and one of the most spectacular fetes of railway engineering, was the Settle and Carnforth Railway, completed in 1877. There is a tendency to think of railways in the modern sense as one large, unified network, but that was not the case, as these were all independently owned and constructed lines. The lines may not have even connected. For example, in Whitehaven, the line going north had a station, and the line going south had its own station at the other end of town. They were not connected. You need to explore the history of the railway your ancestor was working for. The Cumbrian Railways Association at https://cumbrianrailways.org.uk/ publishes excellent guides to a variety of the railways within the county, passenger and industrial, plus provides free access to a genealogy database of railway workers. The guides give excellent histories with very detailed maps of the railways and the names of the adjacent mines, quarries, and landscape features. Thus, they are excellent value for local research. The site www.cumbria-railways.co.uk/ has an emphasis on the lost railways of Northern Cumbria, with maps and photographs.

We may also have personal connections with the histories of local railways. I grew up in Harrington. In front of the house, down the embankment, was the rail line for the main passenger rail line from Carlisle to Barrow along the coast. Behind our house, literally at the bottom of the garden, was a railway siding where the once-a-day coal train had to be split into two parts to get each section up the hill, where they were joined again in another siding. The guard van and the back half of the train were taken up the hill first by the engine, leaving the other train section behind for a few minutes, making it easy for the local kids to occasionally climb into the coal wagons to take pieces of coal for personal use.

View down Kirkstone Pass towards Windermere, from Inn at top. Note the warning signs of 20% grade and narrowing to 6'6" in places. Observe the straight drystone walls going up the side of the mountain that enclosed the common land (author's photograph).

Summary

Most of what has been discussed has been the business side of travel, such as getting goods to market, or getting people from point A to B. The early eighteenth century guides to the Lake District were for well-off individuals to get to specific "picturesque" viewpoints, not necessarily to enjoy the journey or the scenery in general. By the mid-nineteenth century, the guides were advocating a greater appreciation of the landscape and society in general. It was the turnpikes and railways that allowed access to the Lake District in Cumbria.

In 1843, 12,000 people would pass through the toll road west of Kendal, one of the main access points into the Lake District. In 1849, the railway opened into Windermere and that number rose to over 100,000 in the first year of operation. In 1855, the Ambleside Turnpike Trust recorded 21,480 carriages crossing and re-crossing Troutbeck Bridge between Ambleside and Windermere, with a further 15,240 paying the toll on the Grasmere to Keswick section of road. Contrast that with 50 years earlier when the passage of a carriage on a given day past Dove Cottage in Grasmere was noteworthy enough for Dorothy Wordsworth to make a note of it in her diary. The railway to Windermere faced opposition and never advanced further north through the Lakes. The town thus expanded and grew, and was often the first and only point of reference for many tourists coming to the area.

Now, with the modern car, millions of people visit the Lake District National Park and the rest of the county every year. Tourism is a major industry, with many of the former industries having been assigned to history.

You cannot look at the current transportation network and assume it has always been like this. I hope that I have given you some thoughts on avenues to explore for your ancestral locality. Enjoy the journey.

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Paul is currently the book review editor for the BIGWILL newsletter and retired review editor of the FGS FORUM. He is currently on the board of the International Society for British Genealogy and Family History (ISBGFH), the past president of the British Interest Group of Wisconsin and Illinois (BIGWILL), and a past board member of the APG, FGS and GSG. Paul focuses on British Isles resources and methodology on his blog at www.milnergenealogy.com.

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