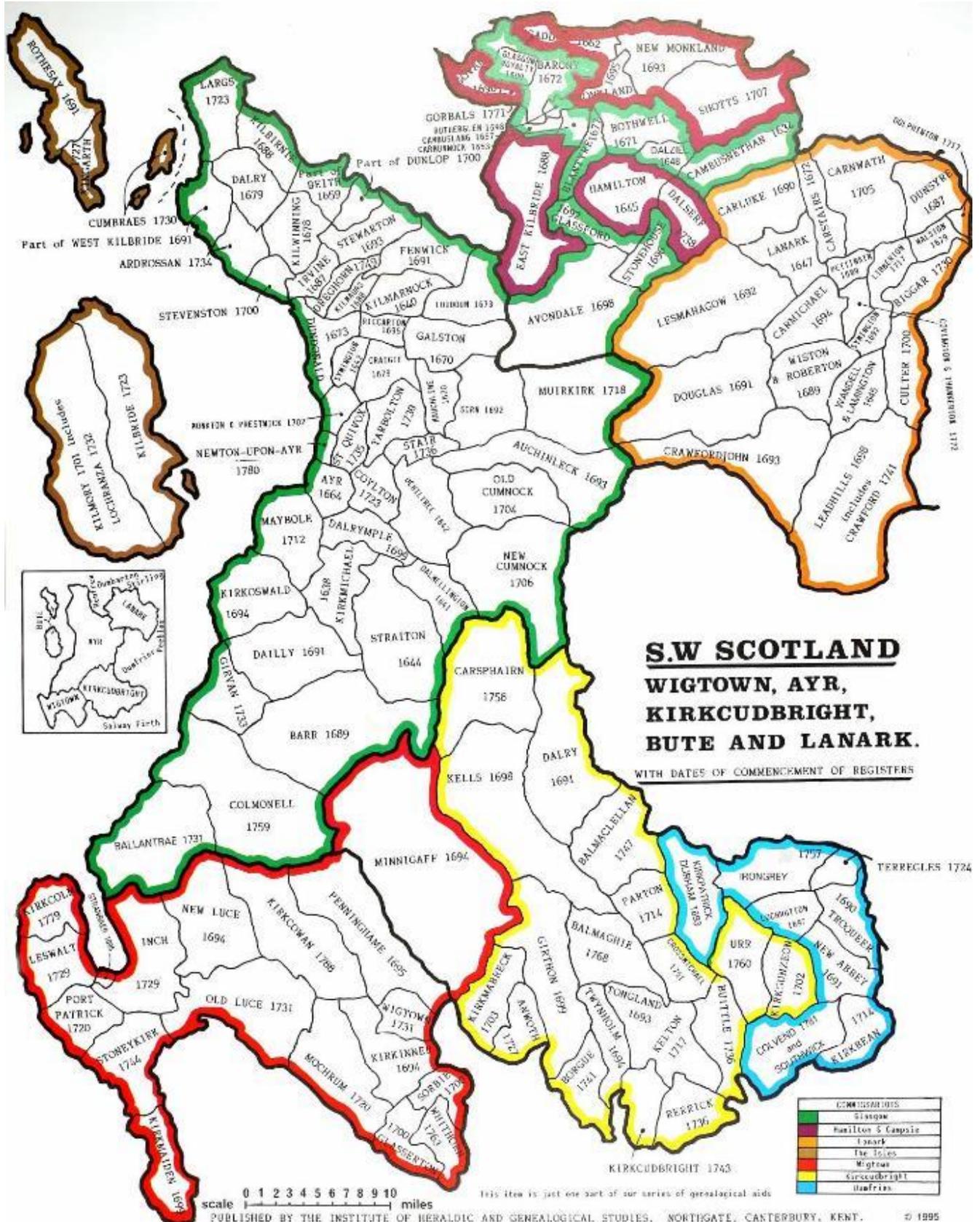


PART 3: JAMES REID EARLY LIFE

CHAPTER 1: WIGTONSHIRE



Wigtonshire

Wigtonshire contained, Portpatrick, Old Luce (Glen Luce), Kirkowan, and TorhouseMuir.



The Reids came to live in a section of Scotland called Wigtonshire. They ended up in the agricultural area known as Torhouse just north of the River Bladnock. Bladnock was 24 miles long and often flooded the land.

Wigtonshire is one of the most important stone age sites in Scotland. In prehistoric times, ancient people built a stone circle of nineteen granite boulders on the land of Torhouse. The stones were laid in an upright position, known as Torhouse Stone Circle. It probably the Neolithic Period (10,000–4,500 BC).



Torhouse

In the 13th century, the land was owned by William Stewart, passing to different owners including the McDowalls and McCullochs. The land was divided into 10 parts and then 6 parts.

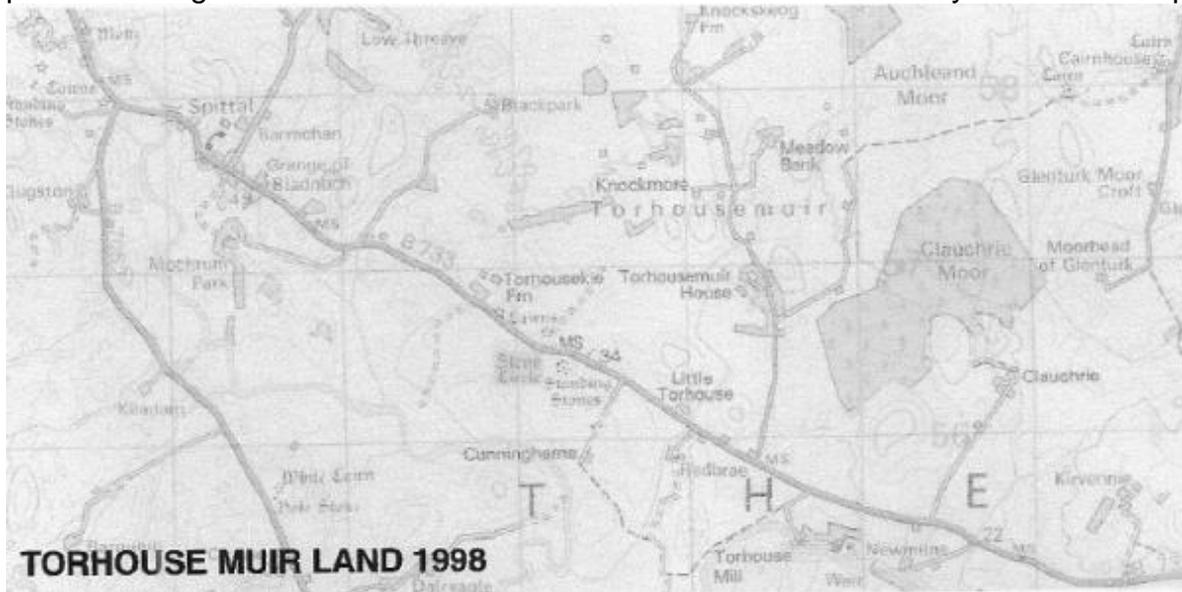


In this old map (circa 1654), a tor (tower) is seen in the upper left corner with trees. In the 1700's Torhouse was built as a Lord's house which incorporated the remains of an earlier tower (seen in the map). Here is a description of the property: "The site is a good one defensively, occupying a low mound amid boggy ground and situated on a promontory surrounded on three sides by a bend in the River Bladnoch. The tower is originally thought to have consisted of two stories plus an attic and would most likely have been rectangular in plan." ¹

There were three main landowners in the 1800's. One was Torhouse Muir (Muir being the name of the owner), another was TorhouseMcKie and another was TorhouseMcCulloch.

TorhouseMuir

In the 13th Century, the Lords of Galloway owned considerable property in Wigtonshire. In 1234, the property passed to the Scottish crown. The crown divided the estate into two components, one being the estate later known as Torhouse. That property contained the land now known as Torhouse, Torhousekie and TorhouseMuir. The family of Mure (Muir) held the land called TorhouseMuir, hence its name, from 1517 until 1637. TorhouseMuir, also referred to as Balmeg, was composed of 643 acres. The land passed through several families. From 1637-1797 the Gordon family held ownership.



In the mid 1700's improvement of the land for agriculture was focused on. In the late 1700's there were many immigrants from Ulster (Northern Ireland) coming across for the seasonal harvest.

By 1790, the migrants had begun to remain permanently. The Irish famine of 1821-1823 brought many migrants to the land and specifically TorhouseMuir. The land then passed to the Thomson family who sold it to the McHaffies in 1827.

By 1832, James McHaffie, retired on half pay, had already begun subdividing his TorhouseMuir property into 38 unequal pieces and 3 additional farms. But the plan to develop the land in this fashion was not successful, probably due to the problems with the land. The farmland was divided between 15 tenants and those tenants employed laborers on a waged basis. By 1841 there were 273 residents in the 3 farms and 49 other households. The estate was a tightly defined unit and was recorded as a separate district in the census records. In 1841, 78% of the heads of the household and 31% of the residents at TorhouseMuir were born in Ireland. This was not representative of the Irish population in the other parts of the county, which would have been considerably lower. The owner, McHaffie, had let out the allotments ranging from £5 to £50 annual rent. It is unknown if the cottages that were built in the subdivisions were done so by McHaffie as part of the rental agreement or were built by the tenants themselves.

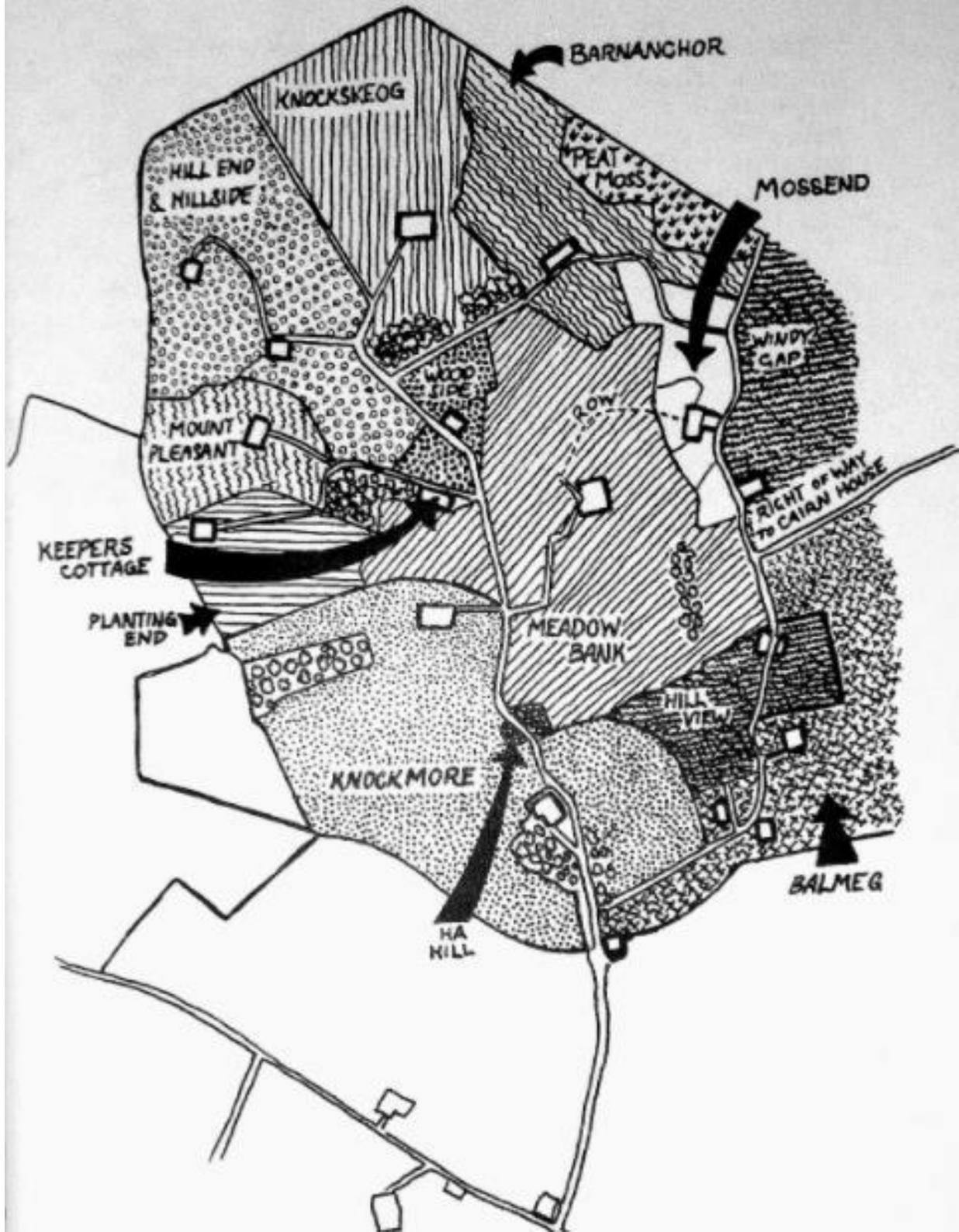
Although the TorhouseMuir estate consisted chiefly of moor and moss land, rather than agriculture land, 88.2% of the households were involved in agriculture. In the 1841 Census, there was no distinction between an owner and a crofter (a person who rented a small piece of land from the landowner, but worked in a craft or trade [e.g., carpenter] other than farming). However, there was a distinction between a farmer and a farm laborer (a person who was hired by the farmer to work the land).

The TorhouseMuir estate was elegant. Pillars guarded the entrance and large trees surrounded the property. Outside the front door of the mansion and within the gated property was a lovely moor. A long, dirt one-lane road accessed the property.

From the Torhouse Standing Stones one can reach TorhouseMuir by walking along the B733 towards Wigtown where after half a mile turn northeast onto the road to TorhouseMuir.



TORHOUSEMUIR



The land and home were described in 1870 as follows:

"The property itself, although small, is compact and well situated. It is bounded on the west side by the meandering River Bladnoch, a south-running river filled with salmon, pike and perch. There is a tolerably good-sized modern house with some old trees round it. It has been occupied by a tenant farmer. The situation is not good, being too low and close to boggy ground while the approach from the high road is very bare and in a neglected state. It is, however, a property which, with judicious planning and other improvements, could be made a very desirable estate. The rest of the TorhouseMuir estate consists of mostly land. Only a few of the original cottages and homes are still standing and are in use today. Sheep are seen on the lands. The old Torhouse Mill is still standing but not used. The air is clean and the small community is quiet and very friendly. The River Bladnoch, filled with salmon and perch, runs south through Cunningham and the Torhouse property on its journey to Wigtown."

TorhouseMuir 1841

In 1841, there were 15 farmers at TorhouseMuir, 14 of them were Irish immigrants. Richard Reid, James' grandfather, was one of these 15 farmers. Richard was 39, Margaret was 35, Agnes was 17, Mary Reid (who was to become James' mother) was 14 and Margaret was 9. At this time, there was an Agnes Reid who was 21 and was a domestic servant of the McHaffie family (the owners of the estate). The rest of the tenants were farm laborers, many being heads of their households. George Reid (who was 11 years older than Richard) was one of these laborers. He and his family lived with Richard and were laborers under Richard.

Lifestyle at TorhouseMuir

The quality of life at TorhouseMuir was better than the average person in the labor class. The homes were clean, and the families were known to be polite. The cottages were one or two rooms but were damp as the incidence of rheumatism was high. The layout of the cottages was as follows: the door would open into the main room, which had the fireplace for heating and cooking. This room was used for eating, keeping warm and sleeping. Sometimes there was one window in the main room. Peat from the moors was used for the fuel. A second room, when it existed, was used for sleeping accommodations and it was separated from the main room by a light partition. The walls were of stone, the floor of clay. Glass for windows was expensive and if they existed, was probably not maintained once damaged. The children, even adult children, shared sleeping quarters with the parents. In the Reid home, this meant that the children probably shared a bed in the same room with their parents. Or it is possible that one group slept in the main room. There was no plumbing in the cottage; a chamber pot was used. Water was available from the streams and ditches, but it is not likely that the family had a water pump. The usual furnishings for the TorhouseMuir cottage consisted of a seat in front of the fireplace, and a cupboard. One set of clothes per person was not unusual and that set was used until it was unwearable.

The TorhouseMuir community-maintained schooling for the children between the ages of 5 and 15. There was one teacher that lived at TorhouseMuir. The preponderance of Irish settlers at TorhouseMuir is probably due to the great influx of Irish settlers in the 1700's settling there and later encouraging their relatives to migrate as well as new Irish Catholic families wishing to better their economic positions.

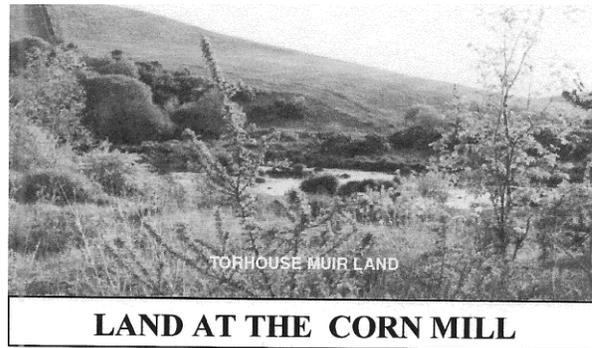
TorhouseMuir 1846

In 1846, the Irish potato famine brought another influx of Irish settlers to Wigtonshire. Some are certain to have settled within TorhouseMuir, but the records do not indicate anything out of the ordinary.

TorhouseMuir 1851

By 1851, there were 15 farmers, 4 crofters and 39 laborers. At this time there was more of a distinction made between a farmer and a crofter. Richard was a crofter of seven acres of land. Richard was 49, Margaret was 45, Mary Reid was 24 and a seamstress. Margaret was 19 and a seamstress.

There was a corn mill on the TorhouseMuir property that was powered by the River Bladnoch.



TorhouseMuir 1861

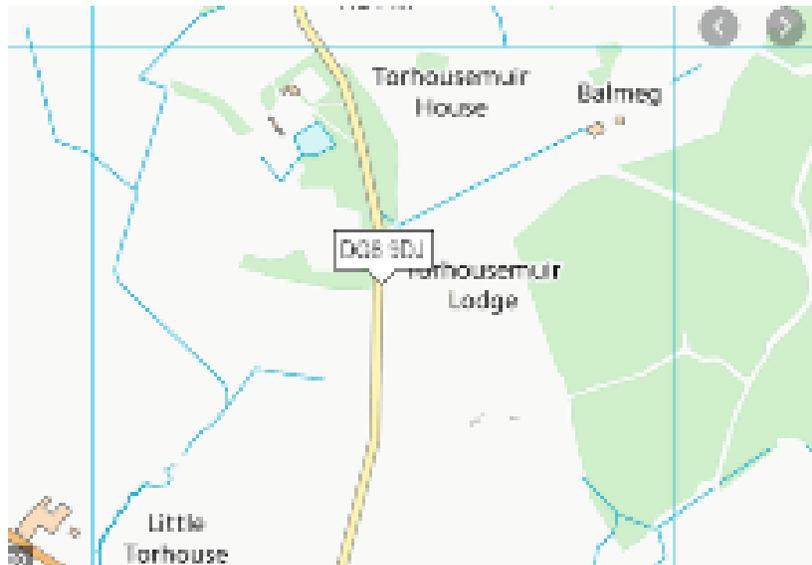
By 1861, there were 27 farmers (crofters were not defined) and 27 laborers. It appears that the tenants were becoming more self-sufficient and were developing their own area rather than working for other farmers.

By 1865 the subdivisions were clearly developed crofts and fields. The master of TorhouseMuir was a figure of some substance, a capitalist as much as an agriculturist. He had servants to do the chores, a mansion to dwell in, and sophisticated servants.

The village folk had tanned skin. They did not grow rich, but perhaps grew in hopes that their children would have easier times. The women usually had waist long hair that they tied up for the daily chores. Their day started about five, when the kitchen fire had to be started to boil water for the breakfast of broth. Her day was an endless routine of washing, cooking, cleaning, and feeding.

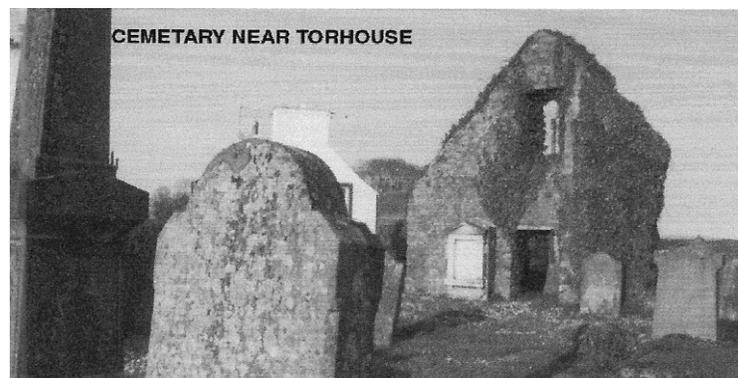
There were "fair days", days that were set-aside for commerce between crofters. The family crafts would be sold, and the workers would find some moments of gaiety.

Torhouse Muir Today



Torhouse Cemetery

It is not known where the Reid family members were buried in Wigtonshire. There is a cemetery near TorhouseMuir, but it is not possible to tell if any members of the Reid family are buried here.



Torhouse Stones

Right in the heart of where the Reid family lived lies the Stones of Torhouse. This is a group of nineteen granite boulders, monoliths, strategically placed around mounds of dirt, possibly a burial ground. It probably served the same purpose as Stonehenge.



Wigtonshire Parish Church⁵



Newtown Stewart

The city of Newton Stewart lies 4 miles north of Torhouse. The Cree Bridge was built in 1813. The River Cree moves slowly to the east CreeBridge House - a hunting lodge built circa 1780.



Kirkcowan

Kircarin (Kirkcowan) was a large parish with vast moorland areas. Kirkcowan lies 5 miles north west of Torhouse. Its Abby is situated on the corner of Main and Church Streets.

Wigtown

Wigtown lies 3 miles east of Torhouse. The cemetery probably contains many of the Reid family members, but few people were buried with markers and where they exist,

the stones are worn down.

Culzean Castle

Not far from TorhouseMuir is the Culzean Castle.

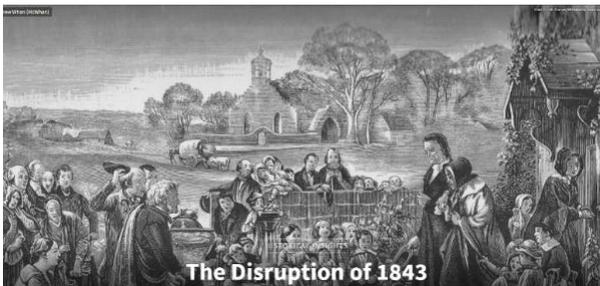


A few years after the Reids left TorhouseMuir in 1863, Mr. McHaffie died, and the estate went to his son. The son was interested in the revenue from the property but moved away. Some of the acreage became sheep farms.

Economy and Politics

In the 1840's the diet for the Scottish and Irish families was mostly potato. The potato crop failed in Ireland and many more people came to Scotland. More than 1.5 million people starved to death. Those that survived were filled with hatred for the British government that had refused to help. The Scottish economy had already begun to industrialize and many were involved in the spinning and weaving of cotton.

In 1843, the law gave wealthy landowners the right to appoint the ministers of the church of Scotland. Many parishioners did not approve, and the church was split during this time. The dispute over the role of government in church affairs led to more than 400 ministers leaving the Church of Scotland splitting the church into three: the original Church of Scotland, the new Free Church of Scotland and the united presbyterian church. This was called the Disruption of 1843. We cannot be sure of which side the Reid's took, but remaining with the old church was the more common and safer alternative to avoid persecution. The Reid family were probably Presbyterians.



A minister and his family leaving their Church of Scotland manse during the Disruption⁸

After the church split in 1843, many different organizations arrived to help counter the problems caused by the chaos. A young minister from Dumfries, the Reverend Edward Irving began to emphasize the return to primitive Christianity. The LDS church went to Scotland in the early 1840's. The people were ready for a change. The LDS church had about 3500 members in Scotland at that time. The spiritual commitment was obvious. The villagers were so eager for a religious change.

In 1861, the American Civil War suddenly cut off the supplies of raw cotton and the industry never recovered. Thanks to its many entrepreneurs and engineers, and its large stock of easily mined coal, Scotland became a world for engineering, shipbuilding, and locomotive construction, with steel replacing iron after 1870. One of the greatest transportation changes of the nineteenth century, the railway, came to the county in 1861. There had been a railway between Glasgow and Dumfries since 1850. Moving into Galloway, the first line that that was opened was the section between Dumfries and Castle Douglas in 1859. It was extended to Portpatrick in 1861. A line to the south from Newton Stewart to Wigtown was opened in 1875 and extended to Whithorn in 1877. Also in 1877, a line was opened from Portpatrick to Girvan, providing onward connection to Glasgow.

Personal Note:

On May 8, 1998, I arrived in Wigtonshire and went toward TorhouseMuir. It had a fully locked fence surrounding it. I turned my car around and headed out. Another car on the road stopped me to see what I was doing in the area. I told him my ancestors worked for the owners of TorhouseMuir in the 1800's. He called the current owner and I was told to return to the house. I was welcomed into the old manor and they brought out scrolls of previous "workers". There were the Reids: Richard, Mary, his children and his grandchild, James.⁹

¹ <http://www.stravaiging.com/history/castle/torhouse>

² <http://www.stravaiging.com/history/castle/torhouse>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/treelap/photos/a.201839039922140.35659.193943477378363/617943618311678/?type=3&theater>

⁴ <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Wigtown+Parish+Church/@54.8697856,-4.4393075,3a,75y,90t/data=!3m8!1e2!3m6!1sAF1QipMk6hCTooJY3VV3BVVGUW0dtV8iS8MJ37LjW9UE!2e10!3e12!6shhttps:%2F%2Fh5.googleusercontent.com%2Fp%2FAF1QipMk6hCTooJY3VV3BVVGUW0dtV8iS8MJ37LjW9UE%3Dw114-h86-k-no!7i4032!8i3024!4m5!3m4!1s0x4862578d4b1aea4f:0xd1839114d4cbf757!8m2!3d54.8697856!4d-4.4393075>

⁵ <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Wigtown+Parish+Church/@54.8709527,-4.4628859,2550m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x4862578d4b1aea4f:0xd1839114d4cbf757!8m2!3d54.8703289!4d-4.4402195>

⁶ <http://www.creebridge.co.uk/>

⁷ <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/culzean>

⁸ Engraving J. M. Corner) based on Quitting the Manse (oil painting G. Harvey) - featuring Tullibody Old Kirk

⁹ Margaret Willis 2000