

JOHN TURNBULL - PIONEER 1748 - 1834

By Albert Turnbull

There have been many tales and two books written about John Turnbull, who sailed to Australia, with his family in 1801 on the Coromandel.

I was fortunate to come into contact with both authors; "Upon a State Unknown." by Fay Attewell and "In the Footsteps of John Turnbull by Marie Turnbull. I believed that the truth lay somewhere in between the two stories and this was greatly enhanced when Fiona Turnbull, a Clan member, contacted me with the contents of her family bible.

I will try and be impartial and lay out the evidence so that any descendants can make their own decision.

Fay Attewell is a direct descendant of Mary Ann Turnbull, John's eldest daughter born in London in 1796. Mary Ann survived the horrendous 6 month journey in the Coromandel. The main topic of conversation would obviously have been about home, family and friends. Travelling companions were the Mein and Johnstone families, who were alleged to be related to the Turnbull's. This has some significance later.

Mary Ann states that her grandfather was named William born c. 1719 and even gives his death as 23 Oct. 1780. She also states that her great grandfather was Nichol Turnbull born 1685 at Melrose. Nichol is such an unusual Christian name that it only appears 5 times throughout the 300 year history of the Scottish PRO', and even more significant all 5 Nichol's were related. The fact that John descends through Nichol 1685 - William c. 1719 - John 1748 is I believe sacrosanct and all other evidence must comply. Other important evidence that all parties agree on is that John was born c. 1748 and had connections to Kelso and Waterloo, the names of his two Australian homes.

However there was a problem. I have copies of every John baptism in the OPR,s There is no John, son of William born anywhere in the 1740's. John's baptism does not officially exist.

I worked with Marie Turnbull for over ten years. She is a prodigious researcher of Turnbull material, throughout Roxboro. My only job was to apply some reasoning to her findings. Her work convinced me that John did not come from Dumfries and her knowledge of the house name of Kelso plus reference to a Banff Mill was extremely important

Banff Mill is a tiny village on the river Teviot, opposite Kelso/Sprouston but in the parish of Berwickshire, which is renowned for its poor or missing family records. I live about 100 miles to the South and had never heard of Banff mill. The fact that Marie's family knew that it existed I found remarkable and rather like the name Nichol gave an unshakeable clue as to John's early life

This is where Fiona Turnbull from USA came in; She wrote to me regarding her own family as she descends from the Rev, James Turnbull, born in Kelso in 1798, son of Robert born there in 1760. She had in her possession a family bible which contained the actual times and dates of the children of William and Mary Mains/Meins. They were: William 1742, Mary 1746, **John** 1748, James 1749, Francis 1754 Jean 1757 and Robert 1760. The early children were born at Melrose (Nichol Turnbull) Johns date of birth is given as 6th Feb 1748 but the place is not noted.

Francis 1754 was born in Eccles, Berwickshire, close to Banff Mill, which means that this John lived near Banff Mill for the first 4 years of his life. Jean and Robert were born in in Kelso.

In one family we have the missing John 1748 son of William, a Meins family as cousins from the Coromandel, and connections to Banff Mill and Kelso. The bible indicates that John was living there in 1760, but did not marry or have children there like his brothers. In other words John had moved on.

There is a suggestion that John served his Tailoring apprenticeship at Minto, which would have taken until 1769, but, Marie discovered john's business address in London, was at Westminster from at least 1772 and his marriage to Ann Warr was in 1790. Almost a 20 year gap. John had obviously been married earlier with older children

I believe that the following children all belong to John;

(1) John = Ann St. Olave, Southwark	(2) John = Sarah Coulter m. 1775 St. Martins, Westminster	(3) John = Ann Warr m.1790 St. Annes, Soho, Westminster
Jane, 1772	William, 1777	Ralph, 1791
Nichol James, 1774	Mary, 1781	Mary Ann, 1796
	John, 1783	James W., 1798
	Catherine, 1785	Jessica, 1800

The timing of the children is immaculate John was certain to name a son after his grandfather so Nichol James speaks for himself. Southwark seems out of the way until you study a London map. Remember Johns second home, WATERLOO ? John must have had a connection to the area. Waterloo Bridge, not surprisingly, leads to Waterloo Bridge Road, which cuts right through the heart of Southwark. It leads directly to Westminster Bridge Road and John's place of business.

So especially for our cousins from Oz, this is John's pedigree;

James = Malie Ewing, Melrose

William c. 1625 = Jennet Merton m. 24/3/1650 Melrose

Andrew 1655 Melrose = Margaret Jerdon m. 10/6/1677, Melrose/Kelso

Nichol 1685 Melrose = Janet Johnstone m. c. 1710

William 1719 = ~~(1) Margaret Johnstone~~ (2) Mary Meins

John 1748 Eccles/Kelso = (1) Ann (2) Sarah Coulter (3) Ann Warr

If the same John married Sarah Coulter and Ann Warr, John would have been left with 4 young children aged between 5 and 12 years.

They would have been brought up by John and Ann Warr, so why did none of them travel to Australia with the rest of the family ? I researched each of them individually.

John's marriage in 1775, to Sarah Coulter, took place in the Parish of St. Martins, Westminster. Their 4 children, William, Mary, John and Catherine were all baptised in that same parish.

John and Ann Warr married in 1790 at St. Anne's, Soho, Westminster. Their first 6 children were all baptised in the parish of St. Annes. John's last known address before moving to

Australia, was Berners Mews, Soho. We now know exactly where the family were between 1790 and 1802.

If we concentrate on the children of the first marriage;

William 1778 - 1831, married Diana Williams at St. Annes Soho, in 1800. Died in Westminster.

Mary born 1781, married Thomas McHester, 28 June 1801, at St. Annes, Soho.

John (1) born 1785, died in 1789, possibly at the same time as his mother Sarah. Buried at Bunhill Fields, a popular non conformist cemetery, just north of Westminster. This explains why John had two further attempts at naming a son John, after himself. John (2) 1794 - 1796 at Westminster and John (3) born 1804 in Australia.

This still left Catherine who was only aged 16. Did she stay with her sister ? More out of curiosity I looked at the marriages again. Sure enough, Catherine married John Nightingale, 1st Sept 1801, also at St. Annes, Soho. This was some 6 months before the family were due to emigrate.

John had made certain that his daughters were cared for before he left for Australia.