

# RESULTAT D'UNE RECHERCHE GENEALOGIQUE

Effectuée par la famille de Jessie WASS



Although she is not buried there , her grandparents William Vass and Margaret Park are buried there



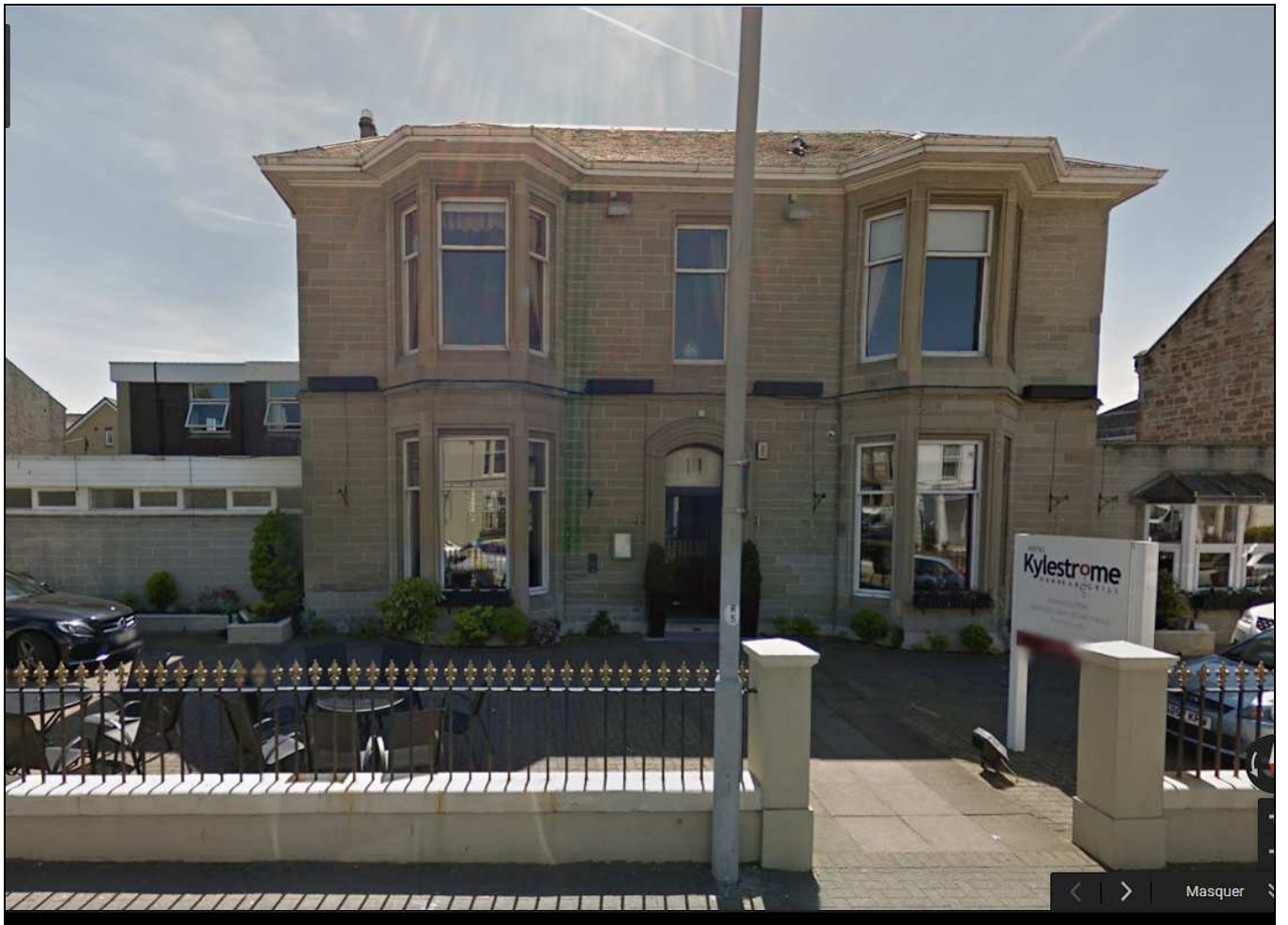


This is the farm of Merkland, New Cumnock next to the River Nith where Jessie' father Andrew was born.



this is Garmoyle house which was later converted to a Carmelite monastery and later sold on.





11 Miller Rd, Ayr



Auld Kirkyard at New Cumnock, the church was built in 1659 and was replaced with a new church in 1833





This an old postcard of Pathhead, New Cumnock where Jessie's father Andrew lived. Sorry I can't identify the exact house.

## THE VASS FAMILY

My research of the Vass family in the parish of new Cumnock begins with Jessie Vass's great grandfather Andrew Vass and his wife Grizel Stodhart.

**A. Andrew Vass (1754-1838) & Grizel Stodhart (1764-1848)**

**Children:** Jennet (b.1788), David (b.1790), Jean (b.1792), **WILLIAM (b.1794)**, Andrew (b.1797), Agnes (b.1801), Flora (b.1803), Andrew (b.1805), Margaret (b.1808)

Andrew Vass worked as an agricultural labourer for the Steele family on the farm of Merkland, New Cumnock overlooking the River Nith. Together, he and his wife Grizel had 9 children including son William and daughter Flora, who would later marry Robert Steele, son of the farmer at Merkland.



Merkland Farm by the River Nith, New Cumnock

Andrew passed away in 1838 and Grizel some ten years later. They rest together in the Auld Kirkyard, New Cumnock close to Auld Kirk ruin. On the headstone Grizel's name is given as Grace Struthers.

**B. William Vass (1794-1863) & Margaret Park (1813-1883)**

**Children:** Jennet (b.1834), Jane (b.1836), **ANDREW (b.1838)**, William (b.1840), Margaret (b.1843), George (b.1845), John (b.1847), David (b.1849), Robert (b.1853), James (b.1856)

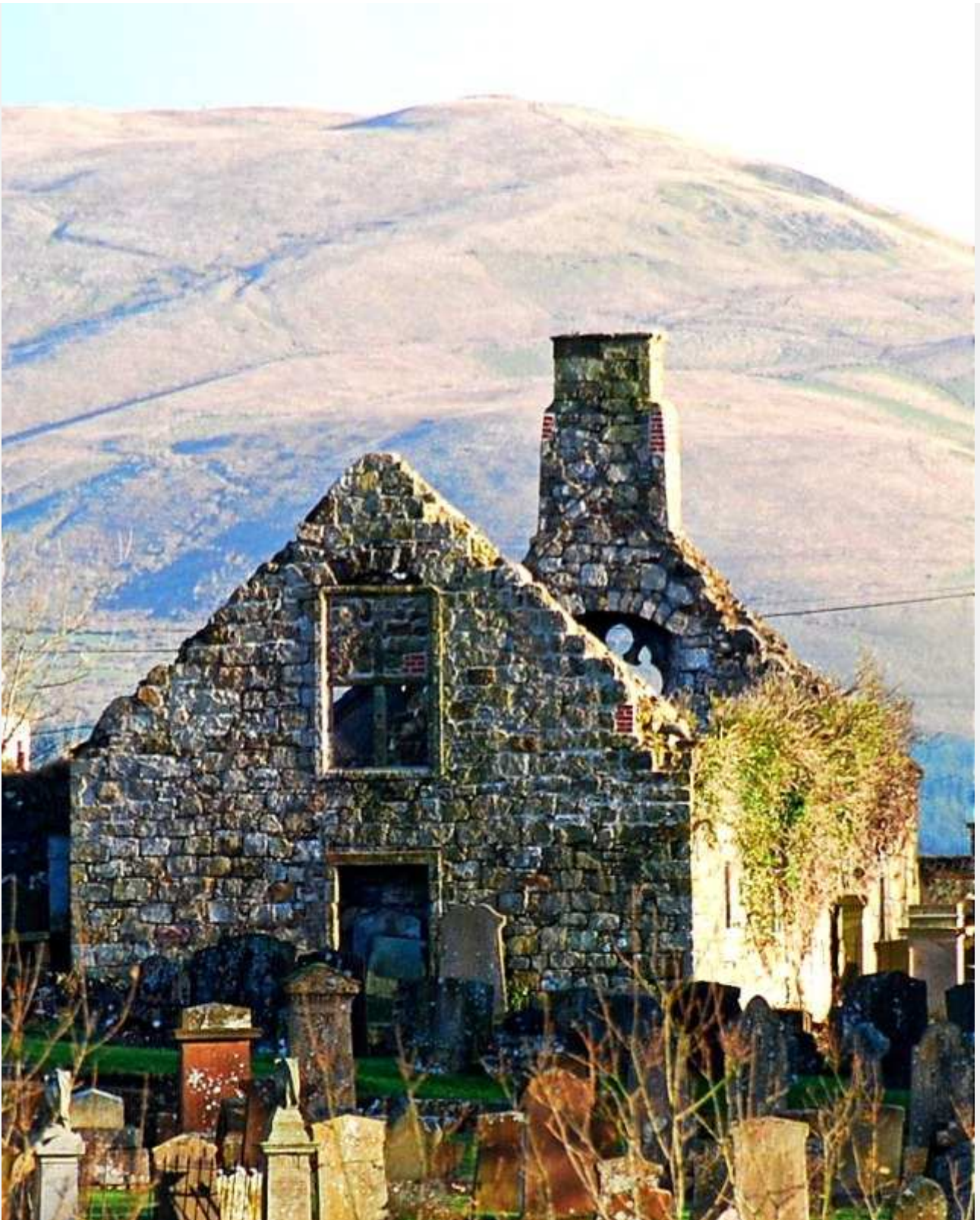
Like his father William Vass worked as an agricultural labour. He married Margaret Park, daughter of George Park (New Cumnock) and Jean Templeton (Old Cumnock). Together they had 10 children including daughter Jennet and son Andrew.



Pathhead, New Cumnock

The family lived at Pathhead, New Cumnock one of the many small communities throughout the parish. William passed away in 1863 and his wife Margaret some 20 years later. They also lie together in the family plot at the Auld Kirkyard along with four of their children – Jean, James, David, Margaret and Jannet.



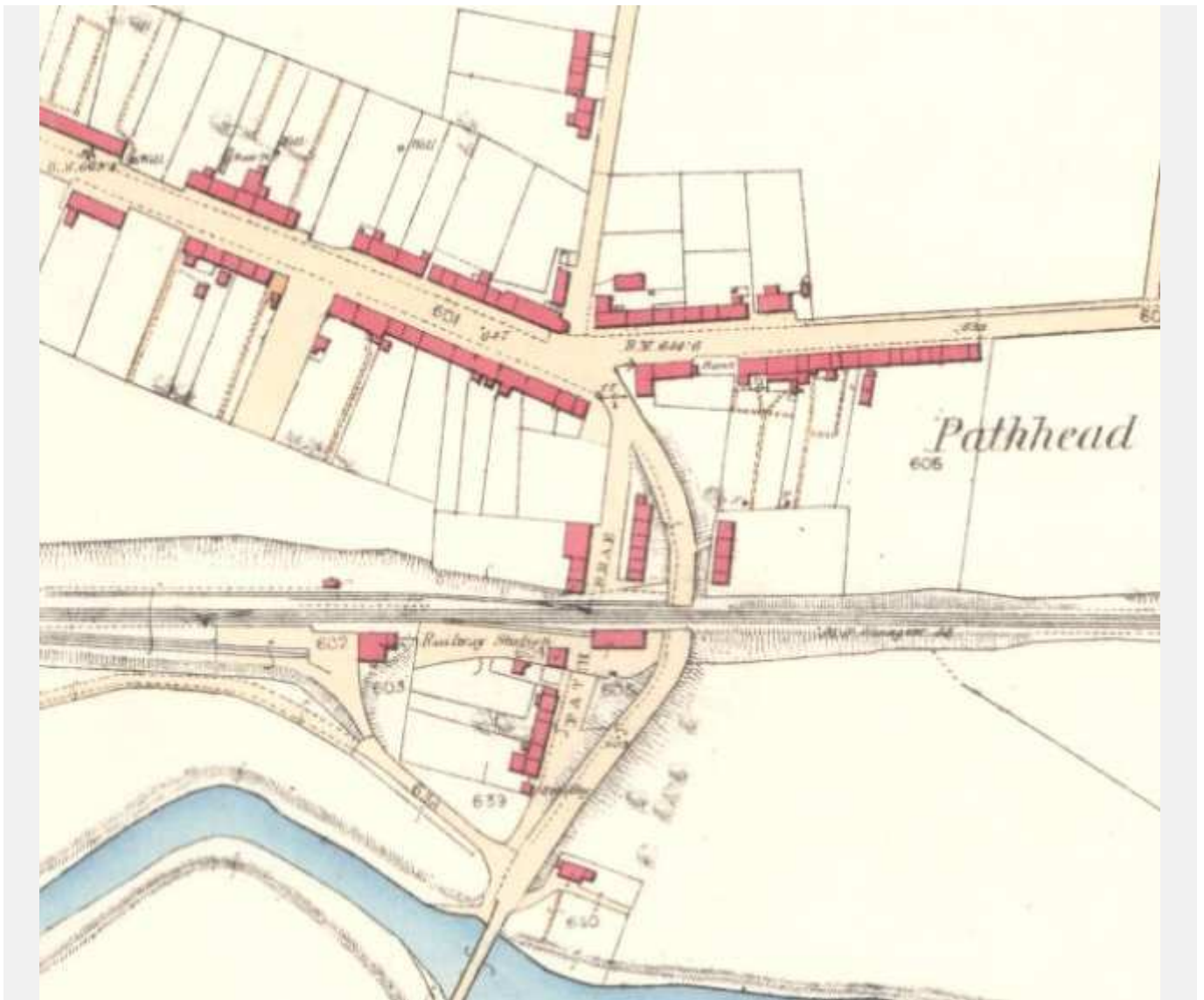


Auld Kirk, New Cumnock with Corsencon hill in the background

**C. Andrew Vass (1838-1881) & Maggie Morrison (1841-1881)**

**Children: JESSIE (b.1870), William (b.1871), Andrew (b.1872), ROBERT (b.1875)**

Andrew lived with his family at Pathhead and after his school years started working as a draper, dealing with cloth and sewing materials. His work took him to Liverpool, England where in the 1861 census we find him with William Pagan, a fellow Scot and draper living as a boarder in the Mount Pleasant district of the city. By 1865 he is living at 9 Seymour Street, Liverpool and has also purchased a house in Pathbrae, New Cumnock to rent out. Although the tenant is not named in the Valuation Roll of that year, it may well be his recently widowed mother.



Pathhead, New Cumnock to the north of the railway station and River Nith

- National Library of Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>  
 On the 8th April 1869, Andrew returned to Scotland to marry Maggie Morrison, at her home of 9 Beresford Terrace, Ayr. The couple was married by Reverend Robert MacInnes after Banns according to the United Presbyterian Church. This branch of the church was formed in Scotland in 1847 following the union of the United Secession Church and Relief Church.

Andrew and Maggie set up home at Seymour Street, Liverpool and in November 1869, his name was in the local paper. Elizabeth McNeil, his domestic servant for some years was charged with stealing '*a quantity of holland flannel and other items*' and she was committed to prison for a month with hard labour.

On the 7th January 1870 their first child Jessie Elisa Bryan Vass was born. She was baptised at Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church which began life as Mount Pleasant Chapel in 1827 as a Scots Secession Church for Scots immigrants that had previously met at the chapel on the site of Lime Street station. (Sadly the church was destroyed by enemy action in 1941 during World War II.)

Andrew's brother George Vass also set up home in Liverpool, working as draper too, having given up his job as a ploughman at Laglaff farm, New Cumnock. It is interesting to note that the name of George Vass appears regularly in the sports pages of Liverpool newspaper as the skip of a curling team, competing no doubt against other fellow Scots settled in Merseyside.



In 1871 (Census) Andrew's mother Margaret Park Vass is living with him and his family at Liverpool. It is unclear how long she remained there and by 1875 her name appears on the Valuation Roll in New Cumnock as a tenant in a house at Pathhead, owned by Andrew.

Meanwhile back at Liverpool, the Vass family expanded with the arrival of three sons William, Andrew George and Robert James Templeton . However, tragedy struck the family twice in 1878 with the deaths of the young brothers William and Andrew who were buried at Toxteth cemetery [Ancestry Family Tree].

By 1881 Andrew, Maggie and their surviving children Jessie and Robert are living at 4 Elizabeth Street in Liverpool, a few doors from his old friend William Pagan and his family. Dramatically, tragedy struck again that year with the death of Maggie (2nd June) and then widower Andrew two months later (12th August). They were buried in the family lair at Toxteth Cemetery, Liverpool leaving Jessie (11) and Robert (5) as orphans.

Two years later grandmother Margaret Park Vass died and was laid to rest in the family lair at the Auld Kirkyard, New Cumnock. By 1895 the Pathhead property was under the ownership of the "Trustees of the late Andrew Vass" and there were now four tenants including coal miner John Vass, (Andrew's brother) and Janet Vass (Andrew's eldest sibling).

### D1. Jessie Elisa Bryan Vass (1870-1905)

Jessie and her young brother Robert were probably taken into the care within the extended Vass family, perhaps by their uncle George Vass and his wife Maria Jones, who by this time had 5 children of their own. Intriguingly though, searches of UK Census records for 1891 (including Liverpool orphanages and ragged schools) have thus far failed to return the names of Jessie and Robert Vass. The names do appear in the records of 1901 with Robert at 29 Gordon Road, Liverpool and '*living under private means*', while Jessie, is in Scotland living and working as governess to the children of Sir John McAusland Denny and his wife Janet Tulloch, at Garmoye House, Kirktonhill, Dumbarton.



Garmoye House, Dumbarton

Sir John was the Conservative Member of Parliament for the Kilmarnock Burghs which included the major settlements of Kilmarnock (Ayrshire), Dumbarton (Dunbartonshire), Rutherglen (Lanarkshire) and Port Glasgow and Renfrew (both in Renfrewshire). He was the third generation of the great Denny dynasty of shipbuilders based at Dumbarton on the River Leven, near to where it joined the River Clyde. The company built a variety of ships including in 1901, when Jenny was at Garmoyle, the excursion steamer TS King Edward, named in honour of the new king and the first commercial vessel to be driven by steam turbines. The Denny yard also gained a reputation for their fine cross-channel steamships and ferries.



D=Dumbarton, G=Glasgow , W=Whiteinch (where St. Hilda was built)

- National Library of Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>  
As a 30 year old spinster and having access to '*private means*' Jessie Vass met some of the typical characteristics of a Victorian / Edwardian governess. The role of governess was primarily to support the lady of the house in caring for her children for which they would be paid a small salary and provided with board and lodging. Indeed when the census of Garmoyle House was recorded in 1901, neither of the Denny parents were present. Jessie was the stand in '*head of the house*' with the other household staff present being a nurse, domestic cook, house maid, table maid, kitchen maid and laundry maid. The three Denny daughters were aged between 7 and 11 years and Jenny would be responsible for teaching them the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. It is also easy to imagine that with Denny-built ships being sold across the world that geography may also have been on the curriculum with the use of globes common-place.





Dumbarton Rock ('Fort of the Britons') on the River Clyde

Meanwhile, by 1905, the ownership of the Vass properties at Pathhead in New Cumnock had been transferred from the "Trustees of the late Andrew Vass" to Jessie Vass with her aunt Janet Vass and uncle John Vass still two of the four tenants.

Jessie was no longer in the employ of the Denny's of Dumbarton when she boarded the SS Hilda at Southampton in mid-November 1905 on that fateful trip across the channel to St. Malo. Although not Denny-built this cross-channel ferry was built only a few miles upstream from Dumbarton on the Clyde at Whiteinch, Glasgow.

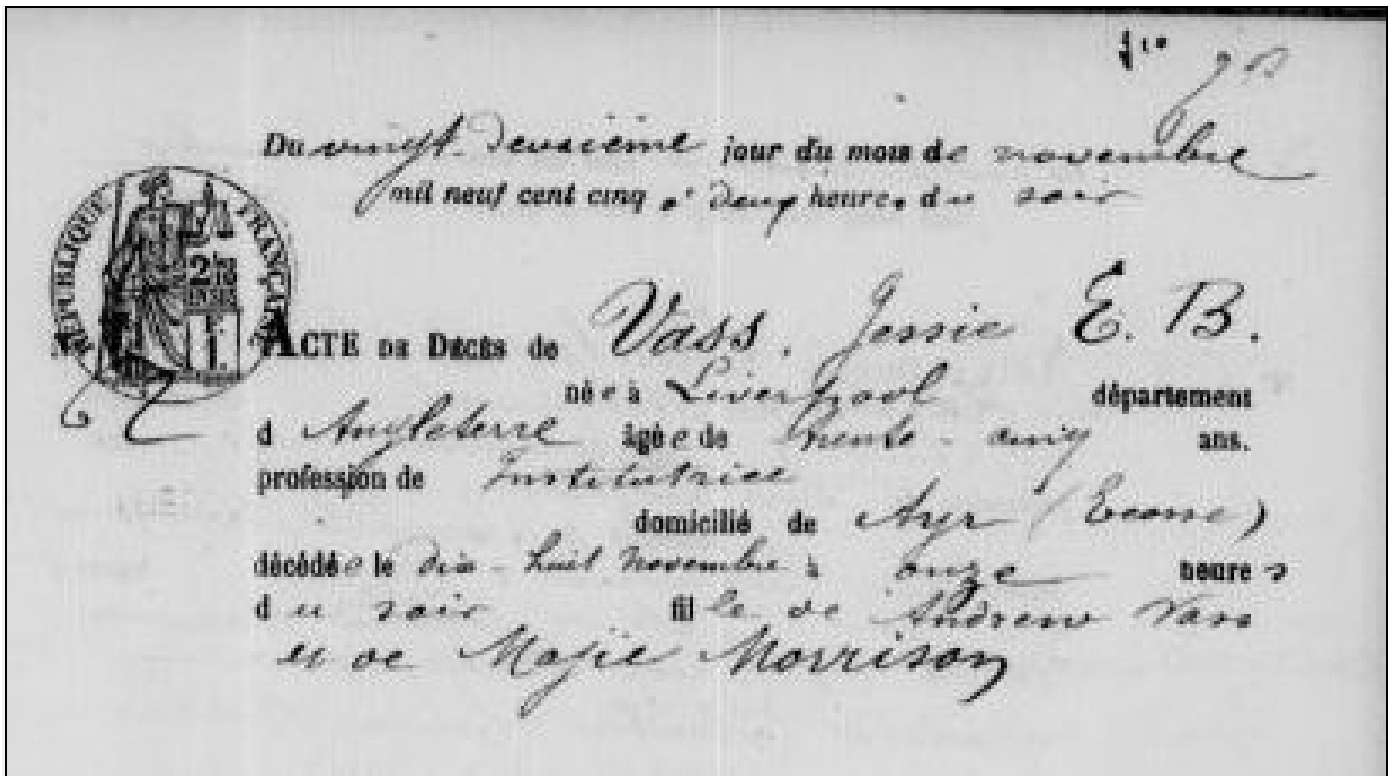
A new chapter of her life was about to begin as she sailed to France to take up a position in the household of Captain Rodolphe Koechlin at Vannes on the Brittany coast. He was a member of the Koechlin family that several generations before had established a cloth printing firm at Mulhouse, Alsace in a first step to become leading industrialist in the textile industry. What would her draper father Andrew Vass have thought?

Rodolphe had been a captain in the French Army and became a Knight in the Legion of Honour. He retired to Brittany where he became known for his great known generosity. Sadly, Jessie's new adventure ended on that fateful night on the SS Hilda.

The sombre task of returning the British bodies to Southampton fell to the light cargo ship SS Ada, built on the Tay at Dundee.

Edinburgh Evening News , 27th Nov 1905

*"The South Western Company's Ada arrived at Southampton from St. Malo at 8:15 this morning after a very rough passage conveying the bodies of Major Bryce, Miss Denham, Miss Jessie Vass and Mr Sykes, solicitor of London, together with Captain Gregory and 20 members of the crew. A large crowd was present to witness the arrival of the steamer, and all the vessels in the docks had their flags at half-mast. The coffins, which were in the front hold, were of plain oak with lead fittings, and each had two or three wreaths upon it. The bodies were placed in a shed on the quay which was draped with Union Jacks and Tricolours entwined."*

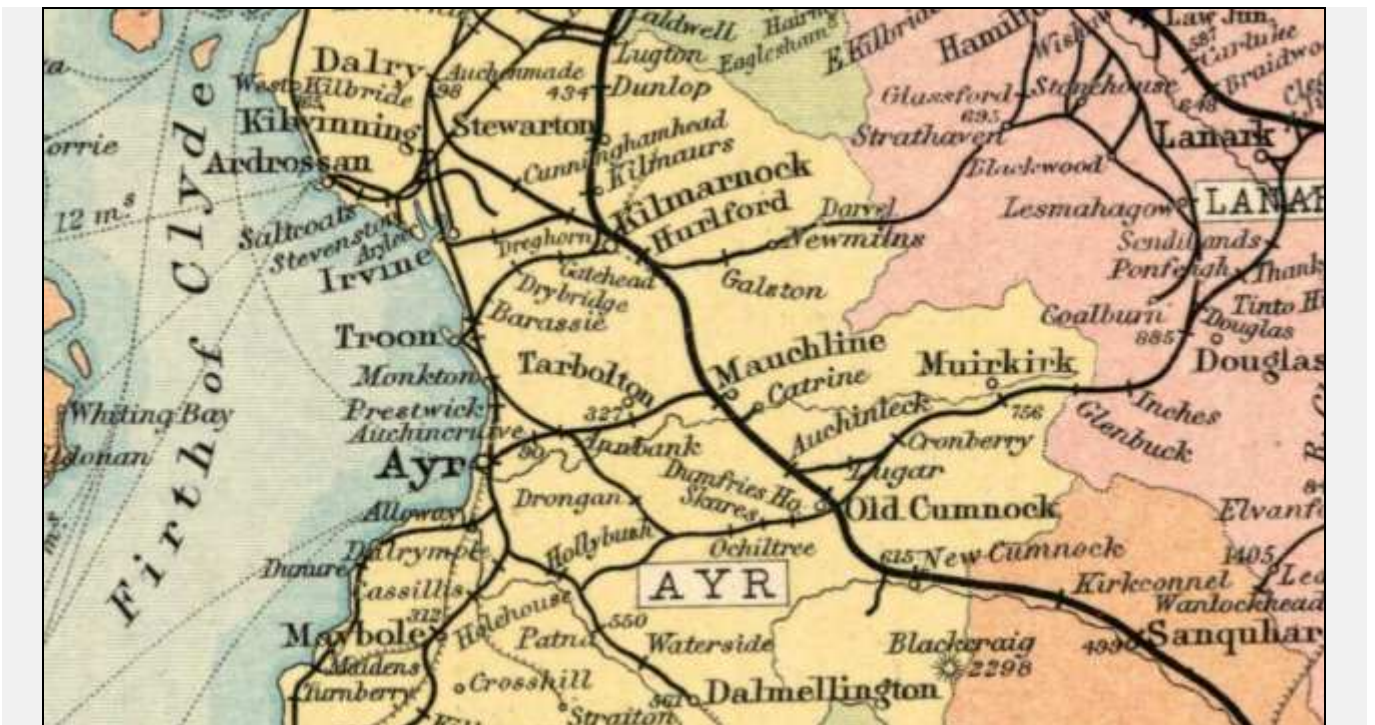


Jessie's Death Certificate (Courtesy of Michele)

As part of the inquiry that followed the bodies were formally identified including that of Jessie Eliza Bryan Vass, thirty-five, Stoneleigh, Ayr, Scotland.

### The Templeton Family

Stoneleigh was home of the Templeton family at 11 Miller Road, Ayr the county town of Ayrshire, on the coast of the Firth of Clyde, some 21 miles to the north-west of New Cumnock.



Ayr and New Cumnock

- National Library of Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>  
 Born in 1813 at Dalrymple, Ayrshire James Templeton followed in his father's footsteps to work in the wool trade and progressed to carpet manufacturing at his factory and mill at the corner of



Charlotte Street and Fort Street, Ayr. He married Elizabeth Dickie and together they had six children and lived at 13 Fort Street. In 1861, by now a widower, James married Jane McKissock, the widow of clothier David Bryan. Jane was the daughter of Hugh McKissock and Margaret Renwick, the widow of James Morrison and mother of Maggie Morrison. The couple was married in Jane's home at 9 Beresford Place, Ayr by the Reverend Robert McInness with Jane's half-sister Maggie Morrison a witness. Some 8 years later Maggie would be married to Andrew Vass in the same house by the same minister.



Templeton Carpet Factory at Charlotte Street & Fort Street

- National Library of Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>  
Together James Templeton and Jane McKissock had four children – David, Jessie, Margaret and Wilhelmina and lived round the corner from Fort Street on Charlotte Street.



Great Fire at Ayr

Tragedy struck in June 1867 when a great fire ripped through Templeton's carpet factory resulting in a devastating loss of life with 28 girls, aged between 13 and 21, and their foreman

perishing in the fire. Some 160 carpet weavers and 230 women and children were thrown idle and two years would be pass before Templeton built a new factory at Mill Street, near to the railway station in the town.

The Templeton family to moved to their house 'Stoneleigh' in Miller Road and it was here that James Templeton passed away in 1884 and his wife Jane some nine years later. In the 1901 census the three spinster Templeton sisters Jessie (36) , Margaret (34) , Wilhelmina (31) are all recorded as 'living on own means' at Stoneleigh family home with a housekeeper, housemaid and cook.



Stoneleigh – now the Kylestrom Hotel

Stoneleigh was also the home address of Jessie Eliza Bryan Vass, cousin of the Templeton sisters (they shared the same maternal grandmother Margaret Renwick) , when in 1905 she lost her life on the SS Hilda as it foundered on the rocks of Pierre des Portes of the port of St. Malo. Jessie was clearly very close to her cousins as witnessed by her will, in which she left a piece of jewellery to each cousin.

*“My plain gold bracelet I wish to be sent to Jessie Templeton, Stoneleigh, Ayr, a large curb bracelet to Margaret Tempelton, Stoneleigh, Ayr and a small curb bracelet to Wilhelmina Templeton, Stoneleigh, Ayr.”*

She also left a pearl gold brooch to Christine Moodie the daughter of Alexander Moodie, Inspector of the Poor, who lived at Arthur's Seat, Pathhead. Her brother James followed in his father's footsteps and was a Deacon in the United Free Church. Christine was a few months younger than Jessie and presumably a close friend of Jessie and her Vass family at Pathhead.

Jessie also left other jewellery to her Aunt Janet Vass, Pathhead including a gold watch which was to pass to her brother Robert on her aunt's death. Perhaps this was a family heirloom and had once belonged to her father Andrew Vass. The Vass property at Pathhead was left to Aunt Janet and her money was equally shared between Janet and Robert, he too residing at Pathhead.

Finally Jessie declared *‘that after my death I wish my remains to be cremated’*.



There was only one crematorium in Scotland at the time, situated in Maryhill, Glasgow within the grounds of the Western Necropolis. I wonder if her ashes were scattered on the Vass family lair at the Auld Kirkyard, New Cumnock?

## D2. Robert James Templeton Vass (1875-1930) & Ada B Cook (1893-1956)

**Children:** George (b.1917), Margaret (b.1919), Jessie Ada (b.1922), Elsie (1923), Robert (1925)

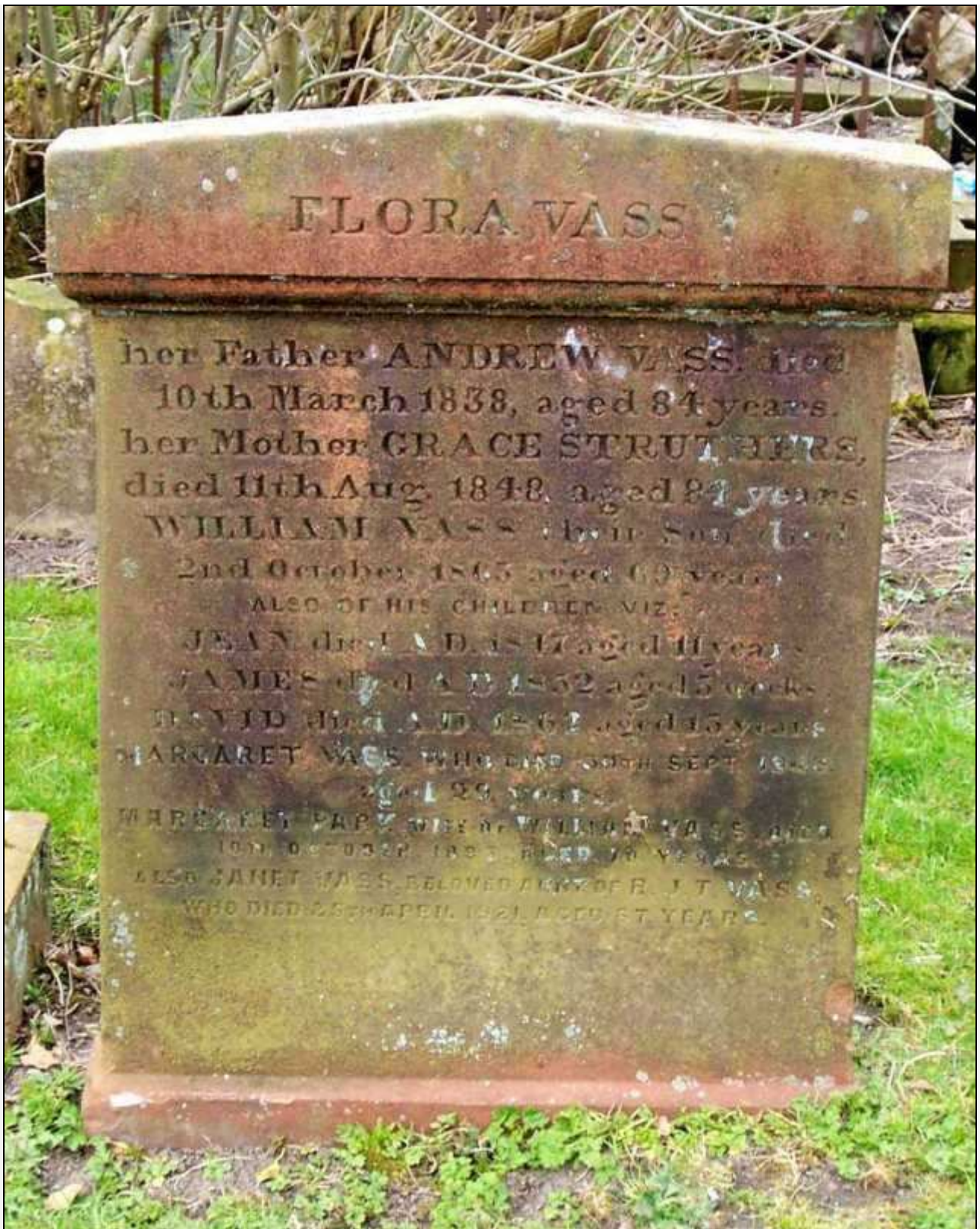
Robert was 30 years old when his sister Jessie died in 1905, single and living at Pathhead in the Vass property with his spinster Aunt Janet and Uncle John and his family as neighbours.

Ten years later, in the 1915 Valuation Rolls of New Cumnock, Robert is still identified as Owner/Tenant in the Pathhead house, however his profession and address is given, Insurance Manager, 36 Baldwin Street, Bristol, England.

In 1917 his Uncle John, now widowed and living with his daughter Elizabeth and son-in-law Andrew Mitchell, farmer at High Auchingibbert Farm, Cumnock passed away. He was laid to rest in the family plot in the Auld Kirkyard, New Cumnock adjacent to his father William Vass.

That same year Robert Vass married Ada Beatrice Cook in Bristol and together they had five children including a daughter Jessie Ada, poignantly bringing together the name of Robert's sister and the ship that brought her body back to Southampton.

In 1921, Robert's Aunt Janet died at Pathhead and she was the last to be buried in the family lair at New Cumnock with the inscription '*Janet Vass beloved Aunt of R.J.T. Vass who died 25th April 1921 aged 87 years*'.



Vass family lair, Auld Kirkyard , New Cumnock

The Pathhead property was still under the ownership of Robert in the 1925 Valuation Rolls and presumably still some five years later when, now an Inspector of Insurance, he died at Uddingston, Lanarkshire, aged 55 years. His widow Ada died at their home in Bristol in 1956, aged 63 years.

This draws the incredible and story of Jessie Elisa Bryan Vass to a close. Born in Liverpool in 1870 the first-born of Andrew Vass from Pathhead, New Cumnock. I hope this story goes some way to preserving the memory of Jessie.



## Appendix: Vass Genealogy

The relationship between the Vass family and Templeton family is shown below with Margaret Renwick the pivotal link through her daughters Maggie Morrison (who married Andrew Vass) and Jane McKissock (who married James Templeton).

However, it is also worth noting the James Templeton's father was William Struthers Templeton where the name Struthers was the alternative surname of Andrew Vass's (b.1754) wife Grizel Stodhart that appears on her headstone. It should also be noted that Margaret Park the wife of William Vass (b.1794) was the daughter of George Park and Jane Templeton.

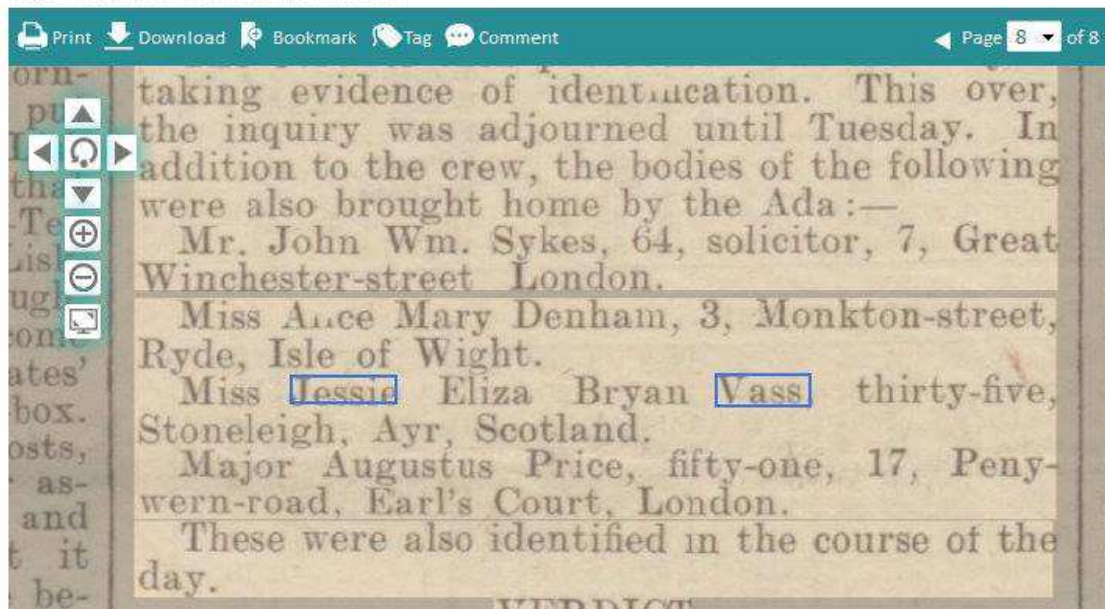
Descendance de VASS William (1794-1863)

**William VASS**  
N : lun 29 sept 1794 - D : ven 2 oct 1863

- ▲ VASS William - (29/9/1794 - New Cumnock / 2/10/1863 - New Cumnock)
  - ▲ (-) PARK Margaret - (1813 - New Cumnock / 10/10/1883 - New Cumnock)
    - ▲ VASS Andrew - (14/3/1838 - New Cumnock / 12/8/1881 - Liverpool)
      - ▲ (-) MORRISON Maggie - (vers 1841 - Scotland / 6/1881 - Liverpool)
        - VASS Jessie Elisa Bryan - (7/1/1870 - Liverpool / 18 novembre 1905 - Saint Cast)
        - VASS William - (25/6/1871 - New Cumnock / 1878 - Liverpool)
        - VASS Andrew George - (9/1872 - New Cumnock / 1878 - Liverpool)
        - ▲ VASS Robert James Templeton - (1875 - Liverpool / 14/11/1930 - Uddingston)
          - ▲ (-) COOK Ada Beatrice - (1893 - / 1956 - )
            - VASS Robert Templation - (16/10/1917 - Bristol / 1917 - Bristol)
            - VASS George Andrew Cook - (16/10/1917 - Bristol / 1/8/1973 - Barnet)
            - VASS Margaret Emily Janet - (5/12/1919 - Bristol / 17/5/2006 - Oxfordshire)
            - VASS Jessie Ada Mary - (25/6/1922 - Bristol / 14/12/2011 - Taunton)
            - VASS Elise Wilhelmina Grace - (21/12/1923 - Bristol / 1/8/1992 - Jersey)

Wells Journal - Thursday 30 November 1905

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This a newspaper report giving Jessie's address in Ayr, the county town of Ayrshire, which is 21 miles from New Cumnock. Stoneleigh was the name of the house which belonged to the Templeton family. James Templeton was a wool manufacturer and he married the half-sister of Margaret Morrison (Jessie's mother). Jessie's half-cousins the Templetons lived here .(Bob Guthrie)

## Acknowledgements

'Association Le Hilda'

- A huge thank you to Michèle Segura-Coz & Yves Dufeil

### Maps

- National Library of Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>  
Census Records, Births, Marriages & Deaths, Valuation Rolls
- Scotland's People at <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>



Vass family plot – John Vass & Margaret Kerr (left) and Andrew Vass & Grace Struthers