



The Harper family – or families

The Harper family

David Harper (1832-1910), the Shane's Castle Land Steward, married Mary Noble (1835-1915) on 18 December 1855.

Arthur Frederick Monnier Harper (1886-1916) was their grandson.

The *Belfast News-Letter*, Friday 20 September 1867, reported that David Harper was on the jury at Randalstown for the case of 'The recent boiler explosion near Randalstown'. The boiler was at Mr Barnett's scutch-mill, at Magherabeg, and six men died from their injuries. It was also reported in the *Belfast News-Letter*, Friday 06 September 1867.

In the *Belfast News-Letter*, Friday 08 January 1869, David Harper was mentioned as being on the jury at Randalstown for 'The case of alleged homicide at Randalstown'.

Again in the *Belfast News-Letter*, Wednesday 03 March 1869, David Harper gave evidence at the Randalstown Petty Sessions on Tuesday 02 March in a case about a charge of libelling Lord O'Neill. It was also reported in the *Northern Whig*, Wednesday 03 March 1869.

Belfast News-Letter – Tuesdays 13 and 27 March 1877

TIMBER FOR SALE AT SHANE'S CASTLE
TO BE SOLD BY PRIVATE CONTRACT, A
Quantity of STANDING TIMBER, of all
descriptions.
Proposals will be received up to April 1, 1877.
Apply to Mr. DAVID HARPER, Shane's Castle,
Antrim, who will give particulars.

The Ballymena Observer, Saturday 28 April 1883, carried an extensive report on the funeral on Tuesday 24 April 1883 of William, 1st Baron O'Neill (04 March 1813 – 18 April 1883). It concluded with this:

It may be mentioned that the appropriate manner in which the wishes of the family were carried out in regard to the funeral was due to the arrangements made by Mr. John Torrens, whose directions were entrusted to Mr. W. J. Scully and Mr. David Harper.
The coffin was supplied by Mr. John Robson, Chichester Street, Belfast.

David Harper probably retired from Shane's Castle in the 1890s. At the time of the 1901 Census, David and Mary Harper, and their daughter Mary Jane, (all 'Irish Church') lived at number 20, Killybodagh, Poyntzpass, Co Armagh. They had two servants, both described as 'farm labourers'. David's age was recorded as 62, Mary's as 60, Mary Jane's as 38. Mary Jane was a seamstress; David a Land Steward.

At some point they moved to Kilkeel in Co. Down where David died in 1910.

‘Administration of the Estate of David Harper, late of Kilkeel, County Down, Land Steward, who died 08 June 1910 granted at Belfast [on 22 July 1910] to Mary Harper, the Widow. [Effects £422 9s. 10d.]’

When the death at Kilkeel was registered there (Vol. 1, page 495), David Harper’s age was given as 77.

In 1911, Mary was living with the family of her youngest daughter, Mildred Harvey (Mildred’s husband Samuel was a pawnbroker) at 36 High Street, Newtownards, Co Down. Mary was said to be 76 and the eldest daughter Mary Jane was also living there, said to be 52. Mildred and Samuel had a daughter (Sadie Lilian, aged 8) and a son (J Bruce R Harvey, aged 10).

Clearly the recorded ages are flexible to say the least.

Mary Noble was described as being from Co. Kildare in the 1901 census. In 1911, the census stated Co. Wexford!

Note: The registration of Protestant marriages began in 1845, with all marriages being registered by 1864. However, Government registration of births and deaths only began in 1864 – hence the paucity of earlier information in much of what follows.

The list of the Harper family children below has been augmented with assistance from the Holden Family Tree at http://taffyholden.co.uk/wc21/wc21_115.htm

(Contact: Walter V. Holden hogarth195@aol.co.uk)

David and Mary Harper’s children were:

John Bruce Richard Harper (i), (1857-1865). He died aged 8 years old.

Mary Jane Harper (c.1859-?), – unmarried and, in the 1911 Census, she was living with her mother and youngest sister’s family (see Mildred Harper below).

Elizabeth Harper (c.1861/62-1866), – I have taken the evidence for this daughter on trust from the Holden Family website. Therein she’s placed as the first born and, in fairness, the rest of the Harper children all seem to be placed correctly. This Elizabeth would have died before the second Elizabeth was born in 1868. So far I’ve only found a death for an Elizabeth Harper, aged 4 in 1866 (Registration Antrim, Vol.1, page 7).

Andrew Harper (1863-1920), b. 14 August 1863, married Sophie Antoinette Monnier in 1885 (she died in Nice, France, in 1941); Andrew moved to Canada in 1914 and married Jane Coventry in 1920, claiming to be a widower at the time. More detailed information below.

James Harper (1865-?), b. 15 May 1865. James married Annie McGuffin on 23 July 1889.

Belfast News-Letter - Saturday 27 July 1889

HARPER – McGUFFIN – July 23, at the residence of the bride’s mother, by the Rev. James Robertson, Minister Agnes Street Methodist Church, Belfast,

James, second son of Mr. David Harper, Ballely Cottage, Randalstown, to Annie, only daughter of the late Mr. James McGuffin, both of Belfast.

In 1901, James was Clerk of the Belfast District Asylum and living at 222 Springfield Road, Belfast.

Edward Harper, b. 20 July 1867. He died same year. As did his twin JBR Harper.

John Bruce Richard Harper (ii), b. 20 Jul 1867. He also died the same year.

Elizabeth Harper (1868-?), b. 12 August 1868, married William Maxwell in Calcutta on 24 October 1894

Belfast News-Letter - Friday 26 October 1894

MAXWELL – HARPER – October 24, by special license at St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, by the Rev. Ernest F. Palmer, M.A., William Maxwell, Central Civil Service, third son of the late William Maxwell, Ballygraffin, Kirkcubbin, County Down, to Lizzie, second daughter of David Harper, Ballely Cottage, Randalstown, County Antrim. – (By cablegram.)

Annie Harper, b. 28 December 1870. She married Robert McIlroy in the third quarter of 1894 in the district of Antrim (Vol.1, page 3).

Mildred Harper (1873-1956), b. 28 April 1873, married Sam Harvey. See above re her mother and the 1911 Census.

John Bruce Richard Harper (iii) (1875-1937), b. 16 Sept 1875. d. 20 May 1937. In the 1911 Census, he was a bank cashier, living at 5 Dillon Terrace, Ballina, Co. Mayo, with his English-born wife, Marion Beatrice Caroline, aged 30. They'd been married for three years and their five-month-old son was called Bruce David Harper. Their religious affiliation was Church of Ireland. The Will Calendar at PRONI has 'Harper John Bruce Richard of "Castlenegree", Dhu Varren, Portrush, County Antrim, retired bank manager, died 20 May 1937. Probate Belfast 16 July to Bruce David Harper, bank official. Effects £1,676 2s. 9d.'

More details about Andrew Harper (1863-1920)

Andrew's second marriage was a Church of England one in the city of Windsor, Sandwich, County of Essex, Ontario, Canada, on 09 August 1920.

Then living in Sandwich, Ontario, he was described as a widower, aged 54, born in Co Antrim, Ireland, the son of David Harper (who'd been born at Killead, Co Antrim) and Mary Noble.

He married Jane Coventry from Southport, England, where she'd been born.

Jane was described as a spinster, aged 48, daughter of George Coventry (who'd been born in Liverpool, England) and Margery Johnson.

Both gave their year of immigration into Canada as 1914. In the 1911 Census for England, Jane was living at home with her parents at 34 Tulketh Street, Southport, Lancashire. She was single, a dressmaker, cutter and fitter. Her age was then given as 42. In the 1891 Census her age was given as 22 and her occupation was a dressmaker. Her 55-year-old father was a shoemaker, as was her 26-year-old brother Robert. Her mother was 54 years old, and born in North Meols. Her sisters, Ann, aged 29, and Mary A[nne], aged 19, were also dressmakers.

All four children were born in North Meols. The 1911 Census stated that 7 children were born alive, 4 were still living, 3 had died.

Andrew Harper died on 21 March 1922 and was buried in Sandwich, Ontario, two days later. The primary cause of death was given as endocarditis, duration 1 year, with 10 minutes of myocardial failure given as a contributory cause. His wife Jane Harper reported the death.

Their address was 50 Gladstone Avenue and Andrew's father's name was given as David Harper, born in Ireland. His mother's name and birthplace were both recorded as 'not known'.

Andrew's date of birth was given as 14 August 1863; his age as 58 years; his birthplace was Ireland.

His last occupation was Assistant Employment Agent, Ford Motor Co., from May 1919 to 21 March 1922. Previously he'd been a Foreman in ship building in Port Arthur from 13 April 1913 to May 1919.

He'd been at the current address for 1 month, and in Ontario for 8 years and one month.

Another (or the same?) Harper family

There were more Harpers on the Shane's Castle estate. Was there a connection?

Caution: bear in mind that Harper was/is a relatively common name in Co. Antrim.

Andrew Harper, a widower, aged 88 years died on 11 March 1895, Ballygrooby, Drummaul. He had been a gatekeeper. Cause was 'natural debility from age. 7 months certified'. Martha Harper, daughter of deceased was present at death, Ballygrooby. Death registered on 26 March 1895. Registration District: Antrim; Sub-district: Randalstown.

Belfast News-Letter - Wednesday 13 March 1895

HARPER – March 11, at his residence Randalstown Gate, Shane's Castle Park, Andrew Harper, aged 88 years. The remains of our beloved father will be removed from above address, for interment in the family burying-ground, First Presbyterian Churchyard, this (Wednesday) afternoon, at three o'clock. Friends will please accept this intimation.

ANNIE AND MARTHA HARPER

By the 1901 Census, Martha had succeeded to the role of gatekeeper. Both Annie, aged 54, the 'housekeeper' and 'Head of Family', and her sister Martha, the 'gatekeeper', aged 43, were still living at 14 Shane's Castle Park and both were unmarried and born in Co. Antrim.

Interestingly, while David Harper's family were all Church of Ireland, this Andrew Harper's family members were Presbyterian.

In the 1911 Census, the sisters were still there, now renumbered to 13 Shane's Castle Park. Martha, the gatekeeper was 53, single, and now the 'Head' of the family. Her sister Annie, aged 65, was no longer described as 'housekeeper'.

Annie Harper died in the first quarter of 1915 when her age was given as 68.

Martha Harper was probably the Martha Harper who died in the third quarter of 1918 in Belfast (Vol.1, page 261).

The following names and birth dates, apparently from an old family Bible, were provided by 'Hunter', who signed in to RootsChat as 'huntermh' and posted on 12 January 2015 at <http://www.rootschat.com/forum/index.php?topic=709937.0>

Hunter thought the following names were the children of James Harper, b. 12 May 1806 and his wife Jane MacCullough, b. 05 March 1814.

However, Hunter's list includes Annie and Martha (see above) who were actually the daughters of Andrew Harper (c.1807-1895). David Harper listed first, may indeed be the David Harper who married Mary Noble – and his own children's names seem to echo many of those in the following list. Perhaps the list intermingles two Harper families – say James Harper's family up to 1841 and then Andrew Harper's family thereafter?

David Harper, b. 28 September 1834. Is this our Andrew's father?

James E. Harper, b. 14 February 1836, ('in Derry', states Hunter, but this might just be the port of departure) immigrated to the USA in 1857, daughter Marge, a sales-lady, b. February 1870; son William, a reporter, b. May 1876 (both children born in New York). His wife, Eliza J. Harper, born in Ireland, January 1839, immigrated in 1861. They married in 1865. Six children born, three still living. Family home: Mount Vernon Ward 3, Westchester, New York.

Details from 1900 US Federal Census.

Eliza Harper, b. April 1838

Andrew Harper, b. 11 June 1840

Margaret Harper, b. 25 May 1841

Mary Harper, b. 22 October 1844

William & Annie Harper (twins), b. 31 July 1846 [This is Annie Harper of Ballygrooby, Shane's Castle. Might William be the Harper living at 'Chaumont', Marlborough Park, Belfast?].

Jane Harper, b. 19 October 1851

Sarah Harper, b. 01 May 1855

Martha Harper, b. 17 July 1858 [This is Martha Harper, who succeeded her father Andrew as gate-keeper at Shane's Castle.].

Returning to David Harper, father of our Andrew Harper, and the Land Steward at Shane's Castle, Randalstown, Co. Antrim for the O'Neill family: if the marriage certificate for the second marriage of Andrew in Canada is to be believed, David Harper was born in Killead, Co. Antrim.

As stated above, Harper is a widely-encountered surname in Co Antrim, so it's important to be wary about jumping to conclusions! A fragment of the April 1851 Census for Killead survives and lists the following:

10 Aughnamullan Townland

John Harper, head of family, 28, Blacksmith (born in Co. Antrim).
 Margaret Harper, wife, 27, No occupation (born in Co. Antrim).
 Catherine Harper, daughter, 5, At School (born in Co. Antrim).
 William Harper, son, 2 (born in Co. Antrim).
 John Harper, son, 4 months (born in Co. Antrim).

These next 1851 Killead Harpers are listed at
<http://www.irishgenealogy.net/forum/phpbb3/viewtopic.php?f=34&t=638>

23. Grange of Carmavy

James Harper, 30 (head) [unmarried] - farmer (born in Co. Antrim). (r/w)
 Jane Harper, 23 (sister) [unmarried] - spinster (born in Co. Antrim). (r/w)
 Martha Harper, 21 (sister) [unmarried] - spinster (born in Co. Antrim). (r/w)
 Nancy Harper, 19 (sister) [unmarried] - spinster (born in Co. Antrim). (r/w)
 Sarah Black, 28 (sister) [married 1846] - flowerer (born in Co. Antrim). (r/w)
 Jane Black, 4 (niece) [unmarried] - not at school (born in Co. Antrim).
 Thomas Black, 2 (nephew) [unmarried] - (born in Co. Antrim).
 Martha Black, 9 months (niece) [unmarried] - (born in Co. Antrim).

Died since 6th June 1841:

Jane Harper, 51 (mother) - spinster - inflammation - spring 1845

24. Grange of Carmavy

Alexander Harper, 28 (head of family) [married 1846], blacksmith
 (born in Co. Antrim). (read/write)
 Nancy Harper, 26 (wife) [married 1846], sewer (Antrim) (r/w)
 Robert Harper, 6 (son) [unmarried], at Mr. McComb's school (Antrim) (r)

And there were Harpers a-plenty in Killead, as shown in the *Griffith's Valuation of Ireland* listing (1848-1864):

Harper	Alexander	Grange of Carmavy	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Andrew	British	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Andrew	Dungonnell	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Andrew	Seacash	Killead	Antrim
Harper	James	Ballysculty	Killead	Antrim
Harper	James	Grange of Carmavy	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Letitia	Grange of Carmavy	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Robert	British	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Robert	Corbally	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Robert	Dungonnell	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Sarah	Ballysculty	Killead	Antrim
Harper	Sarah	Lisnataylor	Killead	Antrim

Additional items from Linen Hall Library card catalogue from the *Belfast News-Letter*. I've only been able to confirm the death of Margaret Harper whose death in the catalogue had been mistakenly recorded as 19 June 1835.

Jane Harper of Drummaul m. 23.11.1824

William Harper of Drummaul m. 03.05.1839

*Mrs Margaret Harper of Killead, aged 79 years,
relict of the late Mr Andrew Harper, d. 11.06.1835 (in *BNL Deaths*, 19.06.1835)

Thomas Harper of Killead m. 05.10.1810

* This relates to a family tree online at:

<http://www.wikitree.com/genealogy/Harper-Family-Tree-2623#tree>

Interestingly that family tree brings together the names of Arthur and Andrew –

1. Arthur Harper (?-1769) m. ??

2. Andrew Harper (c.1753-22 June 1800) m. Margaret ? (c.1756-11 June 1835)

3. Robert Harper (c.1782-March 1823) m. Jane Campbell (c.1783-?)

4. Andrew Harper (c.1819-09 June 1883)

m. Elizabeth Palmer, at Killead (c.1827-Killead 26 March 1904)

5. John Skeffington Harper (1850-1912)

m. Sarah Jane Howey in Michigan, USA, 14 May 1878

5. Henry Harper (1853-?)