



ROBERT CURRIE born 21st July 1869

Eldest son of Robert and Margaret CURRIE nee CAMPBELL

These notes were compiled mostly from the taped conversations of Robert Currie's three daughters, Margaret (Meg), Ann Eliza (Dolly) and Helene, and notes made available to Ron Currie by his cousin Les Robinson, and personal research carried out by Ron Currie.

ROBERT CURRIE was born at 9.00am on the 21st July, 1869, at 3 Great Western Road, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland. He was the first born child to Robert CURRIE and Margaret CAMPBELL who were married on the 13th November, 1868, at Glasgow, Scotland, when they were both 23 years of age. The year of his birth was marked by the opening of the Suez Canal, on the 17th November.

His father was a fellmonger or "skinner journeyman" by trade, and he followed in his father's footsteps with choice of trade, as did his brothers. Nothing is known of his childhood, or where he was raised. Because of his father's trade, the family were always on the move. A fellmonger was a dealer in hides and skins.

His daughters were able to recount stories heard at their mother's knee. He apparently met their mother Margaret Ellen MACKINTOSH at the Corn Exchange in Stirling, where a dance was held regularly. She was reputed to be a fine dancer and a good singer whereas, she alleged that he couldn't dance at all. He used to wait on her coming out of the dance hall. She had sometimes stated that she didn't know why she married him because he couldn't dance and didn't seem to have a sense of humour like she had. He on the other hand often used to say that he fell in love with her voice first, as she had a lovely singing voice, and that was how it all started.

She was a weaver in the Forth Bank Mill at the time and they had courted for about nine months. She was heard to make the claim, that from the moment they met, he was the most gentlemanly man she had ever met. There was never anything nasty with him (she had claimed this to her dying day despite the failure of their marriage), a most decent man. She had got the most innocent of men to marry and live with.

A week or two before they were married she had come to stay with his parents in Edinburgh. She had to sleep with his sister Annie who would have been about ten years of age at the time. While sleeping with Annie, she had found her praying with her Rosary Beads. This had upset Margaret because she had thought that they were Protestants. Love won through and she had overlooked this difference in their religious backgrounds. Apparently the family had been brought up as Catholics but a dispute over the severe punishing of one of the boys, at the Catholic School which the children attended, had resulted in the children being removed from the school.

At this point it is interesting to note that his parents were married according to the Forms of the Church of Scotland, the Protestant Church. However, just prior to his

death in 1952, he had confided in his daughter Ann Eliza, that he was a Catholic at heart. Yet, he had raised his own children as Protestants.

They were married on the 24th June 1892, at 73 Lower Bridge Street, Stirling, after Banns and according to the Forms of the Church of Scotland. He stated that he was 22 years of age and a Skinner, and bachelor. She was 20 years of age and a domestic servant and spinster. His address was shown as **Bedford Street, Edinburgh**, and hers as **73 Lower Bridge Street, Stirling**. His mother had ran a "chinaware" and general store in this area of **Stockbridge**, where Bedford Street, was located.



Robert CURRIE and his wife in 1892.

They had their first disagreement after about six weeks of marriage, and she had left Robert to return to her mother, who had sent her back to her husband. It was about this time that she had found out that she was pregnant, and as she could not agree with his mother, they had decided to go to Hamilton.

He and his brothers had all worked at a Tannery factory in the area where they lived. He was able to get himself a job in **Hamilton, Lanarkshire**, and he moved there with his wife. They weren't long there when their first baby was born dead. Apparently, earlier that day that the birth occurred, a messenger boy on a bicycle had ran into her, and this had given her a fright. It was alleged that this may have caused the death of the baby.

He and his wife returned to Edinburgh to live. Their next child **Margaret Helen Mackintosh CURRIE**, was born on the 5th November, 1894, at **North Fort Street, Leith**. Their son **Robert (Bert) CURRIE** was born on the 4th September, 1897, at **11 Haugh Street, Stockbridge, Edinburgh**. His occupation was shown as "Coal Merchant" on his son's birth certificate. Their son **Leslie Mackintosh CURRIE** was born on the 20th January, 1899, in Edinburgh, and their daughter **Ann Eliza Mackintosh CURRIE** was born on the 19th October, 1900 at **Clyo Cottage, Dean Street, Stockbridge**. So it would seem that at this time they were living in the Stockbridge area of Edinburgh. There were slaughter houses in the area, so this may

have been an inducement for him to live in the area.

However, sometime soon after, he and his family moved to Derby in England. His son **John (Jack) CURRIE** was born on the 31st July, 1902, at **49 Cobden Street, Derby, Derbyshire, England.**

While there, he had been a member of the **Derby Distance Walking Club**. He was reputed to have worn with pride, a gold medal that he had been awarded for winning a walking competition, while in Derby. He also possessed other medals too, that he had won, as he was always a great runner and walker.

His daughter **Ann Eliza** wrote that he had been a runner at **Powderhall, in Edinburgh.** **Powderhall Stadium** was a venue for professional track runners, as well as greyhound racing. It was quite close to Stockbridge. Because his pursuits were interfering with his domestic life, he found it more expedient to give up his running and walking. His daughter **Ann Eliza** was able to recall that one of her earliest memories was a domestic dispute between her parents, when she was about 3½ years of age. Apparently he had stayed out too long, at the Stadium with his athletic friends. She remembered a plate going up in the air. Her mother had been expecting the birth of Daniel at the time. She had moved back to her mother in Stirling. They had then moved to another nearby house, just through the fence from her mother's home. Sometime later they had moved to a house at **104 Dalry Road, Edinburgh.**

His son **Daniel Bean CURRIE**, was born on the 2 November, 1904, in Stirling. His daughter **Helene May CURRIE** was born on the 13th May, 1907, while the family was apparently living at **150 Dalry Road, Edinburgh.** The sisters recalled that they lived up two flights of stairs here. Both he and wife were by this time operating their businesses in the form of fish shops and general stores. They had a strange relationship and sometimes operated in opposition to each other.

When **Helene** was about four months of age, they had another split up about his going around with his brothers, and his having started to drink with them. She moved back to Stirling back to her mother's home, then she got a house in **Cowan Street, Stirling.** He remained in Edinburgh.

Eventually she had moved back to Leith and got a house in **Giles Street.** She opened another shop and he started back working with **White and Burns, in Beverbank, Leith.** This was where his father worked and his brothers too. Of course this led to him drinking with his brothers, which was a major cause of concern to his wife. Although he wasn't a heavy drinker, on one of those occasions he had came home and was so drunk that he was lying on the floor, and singing. She had advised him that unless he parted from his brothers, she was parting from him. He had claimed that it was difficult to work with his brothers, and not go out for a drink with them after work. His daughters claimed that he wasn't a quarrelsome man. He had decided to go into business for himself again, and opened up a small fish business in Leith again. He wasn't too happy about this and wanted back to work at his own trade. He stayed in business for about one year. His wife was expecting the birth of their son **James** by this

time. He had apparently moved to Dumfries in search of work, having walked all the way.

He was reputed to be a great walker, and his daughters told of the time when they had been living in the bottom entrance of **Bowling Green Street, Leith**, on the top flat. He had spent the day at Peebles with some mates and when they had got back to the 'bus stand or trap stand, found that it had gone without them. Edinburgh was 18 miles away, and he had looked at the time only to find that it was 9.10pm. He had set off on foot to walk to Leith, and arrived at the stair entrance as the clock in **Great Junction Street**, was striking 12 o'clock midnight. He had taken off his boots to walk up the stairway when a night patrol Policeman had grabbed him and shook him. He had got such a shock that he had turned round and struck the Policeman. He had apparently lost his temper at the Policeman shaking him. The Policeman had presumably realised that he had been a bit over zealous, so hadn't laid any charges against him. Although it was always thought that he didn't have a bad temper, he admitted to losing it on this occasion.

The family had moved to **39 Swans Fennel, Dumfries**, and **James CURRIE** was born on the 5th April, 1910. He had been working in Dumfries, and coming back to Edinburgh on the Saturday afternoon, then heading back to Dumfries on the Sunday afternoon. Sometimes if he walked, he had not got back till late Saturday night or early Sunday morning. Dumfries is a very long way from Edinburgh, and the year was 1909. His wife had remarked about the neighbours not seeing him coming or going yet her being pregnant. So they had moved to Dumfries. They had been in Dumfries for the flooding of the River Nith. He was working as a tanning foreman there. They had also lived in a house at **132 St Michael Street, Dumfries**, near to Robbie Burns' old house. When he had been promoted to foreman, they had been allowed to move into **Clarkhill Cottage**. The Industrial School had been just over the wall from the Cottage. They had a huge garden with the cottage.

The family had been living here when his mother-in-law **Margaret MACKINTOSH nee BAIN**, had died in Stirling. She had died on the 15th July, 1912.

His daughters also remember that he had bred whippets while living in Dumfries. He had bred whippets at different times but had went in for them in a bigger way while living there.

While in this job, he was responsible for visiting the various markets and buying up all the hides that were acceptable.

It was believed that they moved to Burnley in England, in 1912, and they were living at **6 Olympia Street, Burnley**, when he enlisted on the 12th September, 1914. He was then 45 years, 1 month and 22 days old, but had lied about his age as he was too old for Army service. He actually gave a false date of birth, which made his age 34 years and 236 days. This was to lead to some confusion for his grandsons **Leslie Robinson** and **Ronald Currie**, when they tried to verify his actual date of birth.

From his AB 64 (Army Record Book issued to all soldiers) in possession of Leslie Robinson, we can see that he enlisted at Calue (looks like this) in the County of Lancaster, in the **7th East Lancs. Regiment for the war period.** His trade or calling was recorded as horse dealer. His description shows that he was five feet seven and a quarter inches in height, with fresh complexion, grey/blue eyes, and dark brown hair. He had a mole on the side of his neck, and a birth mark in the middle of his back on the right side. He had stated that his religion was Presbyterian.

His address was recorded as 6 Olympia Street, Burnley, England. His dependent children were recorded as John, Daniel, Ellen, James and William. A further "latest address" was recorded as 13 St. John's Street, Stirling, Scotland.



2Robert CURRIE in uniform.

His regimental number was 14068, and he held the rank of Lance Corporal, although he held the rank of Transport Sergeant from the 4th February, 1916 till 1st December, 1917. He was on active service in France from the 17th July, 1915 till the 24th August, 1917, being two years, one month and seven days.

His "Certificate of Employment During The War, shows that he had completed three advanced veterinary courses each of 12 days duration, and a Regimental Machine Gun course in 1918. He had also completed a 28 day Transport Course in England in 1914.

His total military service was four years and four months. Not bad for someone who was over the age limit for military service, when he had enlisted. He commenced 28 days furlough when he finished with the Army on the 15th January, 1919.

He was awarded the 1914 Star for service in France, the 1914 - 1920 British War Medal which recognised service in the Battle of the Somme and the Victory Medal.

The 1914/15 Star was awarded for service in France after the 22nd November, 1914, and commemorates battles such as Loos and Hooge, and is therefore never seen with the 1914 Star. Only one Star could be worn. The 1914 - 1920 British War Medal, was

struck from silver. It was left to this medal to reward service at battles like Jutland, Ypres and the Somme, and was later extended to include mine clearance after the war. The recipient's name, rank and regiment appear on the rim. The Victory Medal was the companion medal to the "War Medal" and has the words "The Great War for Civilisation 1914 - 1919" within a wreath on the reverse.

The award of his medals appear on the Medal Rolls at Kew Public Records Office, England. Roll H/1/102B9 Page 2111 for the VICTORY and WAR medals. Roll H/1/6B page 9 for the 1914-15 STAR.

His daughter Meg recalled that he had met his son Robert (Bert) on the battlefield, at the Battle of the Somme in the First World War. The Battle of the Somme as it is now known commenced at 7.30am on the 1st July, 1916 after a seven day bombardment of the German lines in which more than one million shells crashed down on the German positions. In his memorable book *"The First Day on the Somme"* Martin Middlebrook described the first day on the Somme as the blackest day of slaughter in the history of the British Army. By the end of the first day they had suffered 60,000 casualties - one for every eighteen inches of the front. During this battle, tanks were used for the first time. Very slight gains were made at very heavy cost.

Robert Currie's battalion, the 7th East Lancs., together with the 7th King's Own, the 7th Loyal North Lancs., and the 7th South Lancs., the battalions of the 19th (Western) Division had remained in reserve, in the trenches of the Tara-Usna Line, just outside Albert. After it became apparent that the original attack on this sector had failed they had received fresh orders to attack the German front line at 5.00pm after a 30 minute bombardment. Martin Middlebrook reported in his book, "After only half an hour's barrage they were to attack where a complete division had failed after a week long bombardment".

A cancellation of the attack plan resulted in the four Lancashire battalions being ordered to turn back and march to the rear. This was perhaps the major reason for Robert Currie not becoming one of the casualties of the first day on the Somme.

The 19th (Western) Division was commanded by Major-General G.T.M.Bridges, and comprised the 56th Brigade consisting of the four previously mentioned Lancashire battalions, the 57th Brigade, and the 58th Brigade.

The Battle of the Somme raged on till November with a terrible toll. The German offensive around St. Quentin has sometimes been called the 2nd Battle of the Somme. This took place in March-April 1918.

After he was demobbed and returned to Edinburgh, Robert met up with his sons who had been involved in the war too. It was a hectic period for them all, with his sons doing a fair bit of drinking while he himself was reputed to drink very little. Robert started work again with his brothers in Leith. It was sometime after this that he started various fish businesses in Leith together with his wife and at one time in opposition to her. He had operated a business from Fish Quay, Leith and had four shops

operating too, at 22 Admiralty Street, Leith, 14 Couper Street, Leith, and 20, 21, and 22 Burgess Street, Leith. Apparently he didn't get too much help from his sons who had returned from the war. His daughters have stated that he had also opened and operated what was probably one of the first small supermarkets.

His daughters always described him as a very clever man with a great business head. He was also a first grade wool classer. They claimed that by looking and feeling a handful of wool, he could tell the breed of sheep that it came from.

Sometime round about 1920, he split up with his wife and headed off for parts unknown. The real reasons for him leaving his wife have never been discovered. His wife had always hoped that he would return but he never did. She was left with a grocery shop that soon collapsed. They later heard that he was in **Selkirk**.

Under questioning from his daughter Ann Eliza, he was later to say that when he had left his wife and family, he had travelled to **Selkirk**. After a while there, a Policeman with whom he was friendly, tapped him on the shoulder and advised him that there was a warrant out for his arrest, adding that he should get himself over the border. He had got on his pony and trap and headed south, ending up in a place called "Pity Me", in **Durham**. Prior to this he had been sending money to his wife through a solicitor, but then for reasons not explained, he had defaulted on his maintenance payments. She then had to resort to the social service for assistance. They had probably issued the warrant for his arrest for failure to maintain his wife and children.

His daughters claimed that till the day their mother died, she had always spoke of him as a caring and loving man with a good nature, despite him having deserted her.

During the time he was on his own, he struck up an affair with a woman named **Anderson**, and it is believed that they lived together for many years, probably till the time of her death. By this time he was known as **Bob Anderson**, having assumed her surname. It is of interest to note that when he did die, he was buried in the name of **Robert Anderson**, the name that he had been known by for many years.

He had moved around for quite a bit then lived for a while in **Haltwhistle**, in **Northumberland**, where he opened and operated stables. **Haltwhistle** is a pleasant market town that hasn't changed much in decades. It has a long history going back to the thirteenth century. **Ron** and **Min Currie** walked down the courtyard where he had operated his stables from, when they visited **Haltwhistle** in 1991.

His daughter **Ann** and her husband and children moved to **Lambley** which was close to **Haltwhistle**, when her husband became Stationmaster at the local railway station. It is believed that living in this locality prompted her to start trying seriously to trace him. The record of how he was actually located is still rather vague.

After her mother died, **Ann Eliza** had made further enquiries to locate her father. She apparently had a suspected that he would be found in the **Scotswood** area of **Northumberland**. When eventually located, he was living in the **Scotswood** area. He

had been the proprietor of a few shops - one in Ashington - one in Bellingham, but after giving up the shop in Ashington, had worked as a commercial traveller. He had even operated a small egg producing holding about quarter of a mile from Drem Station not too far from Edinburgh. He had been on his own and was running Minorca hens. The porter at Drem Station, East Lothian, had given Ann Eliza quite a bit of information.

She had always had a feeling that they would come across him one day. There had always been tentative efforts to try and ascertain his whereabouts. The family had always had a feeling that he wasn't too far away.



Eventually as he got older he moved in with his daughter Robert in a "sprint pose".

Ann Eliza (Dolly) Robinson and family at Lambley Station house. While living here, they got to know him reasonably well. He took over his grandson Les Robinson's old rabbit shed, and used this to keep a number Minorca hens. He spent much of his time with his hens. They became very tame, so tame that when he approached them and touching them, they would crouch down and he would scratch their backs.

A few days before he died, aged 82 years, he bought a washing machine and shipped it to Newcastle, and made a few pounds profit. He was always had an eye for making a quid. He had been described as the kind of man who could buy a horse at one end of Princes Street, Edinburgh, and make a profit of £20.00 before he reached the other end.

He had returned to Edinburgh in 1950, and met up with the surviving members of his family. He looked extremely well for his age, even though he was over 80 years of age at the time. He was well received by his family! In a keepsake photograph taken in Edinburgh during his visit, he looks well but a bit shy, perhaps even embarrassed?

Ann Eliza was of the opinion that her parents were both wonderful people, but perhaps temperamentally unsuited. She felt that they both were happy, her father on his own, living his life, and her mother with her family till she died in November 1949.

She said that, "He may have done wrong - who are we to judge - and his welcome on his return was a kind and friendly one - the kind I'm sure my mother would have given him, had she been alive. Both had a great sense of fun and loved music and singing. Her favourite song in company was *"MacGregor's Gathering"* and when at home *"Danny Boy"*. My mother was a fine handsome woman dark eyed, good looking woman, and good mother."

"My father was a fine looking, fair haired and blue eyed, good looking man with an exceptionally clever business brain. His favourite song to my mother, which he continually sang even after he returned was, *'When you think of the days gone by Maggie, when you and I were young.'* He was very fond of it."

This song titled *"Maggie"* was, and still is a popular sentimental ballad, which has obviously been around for many, many years. His wife was known as **Maggie**.

His daughter Meg stated that, "When I was younger, they were a very loving couple. Couldn't keep his hands away from my mother - a very loving man - cuddling man. He wasn't a drunken man - they didn't get on - and they loved each other when they were married, for they demonstrated this in front of us many times by their affection for one another - their cuddling and kissing. They loved each other - don't know what happened. He didn't drink, wasn't a wasteful man - a man always making money. If any man could make a shilling he could."

Meg also described how he had used his eighteen pounds gratuity from the Army when he was demobbed, to start another business. He had opened a shop and put new windows in it and had the water laid on then worked eighteen hours a day to make it a success. He had once went down to the docks and bought almost an entire shipload of eggs. Brought them back to the shop using a lorry and a hearse that they had. They had all worked at sorting the eggs into the different sizes. Grading wasn't done in those days. So he had been able to sell them off quickly as the smaller eggs had carried lower prices. She recalled how her father would visit sales and buy sets of harness, then bring them home with a horse that he had bought. He would take it to the stables for a month, feed it and groom it, cuts its hair then sell it for a profit. The harness would all be cleaned up with the metal pieces all shining like new.

Robert Currie died at the "Station House" Lambley, in the sub-district of Haltwhistle, Northumberland West, on the 26th January, 1952, aged 82 years. Doctor G.S.Taylor M.B. certified the cause of death as Broncho Pneumonia with Congestive Cardiac failure. His name was recorded as **Robert ANDERSON**, the assumed named that he had lived under for many years. Death register entry number 7 for 1952, in the Sub-District of Haltwhistle, in the County of Northumberland, refers. He was buried on the 30th January, 1952, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, Northumberland, England.