

Soldiering On Part 2

Five Years have passed since the 'Soldiering On' story first appeared on the Westmuir Village Website. The story seemed quite complete then.

Over time the article began to appear further afield online and this led to descendants of the Golden Wedding couple contacting the Website team.



**Golden Wedding photo
of James and Margaret**

'The Gillies o' Pitmiddle'

Interesting stories and photographs received from the Gillies family soon became key to considering an extension to 'Soldiering On'.

Great, great Grandfather James 'Gillies o' Pitmiddle' 1832 -1920, as described in the Dundee Journal article in 1903 (Page 3) was clearly quite a charismatic character. When not involved in his Stone Mason trade, he would be busy thatching roofs, growing berries, and tackling a miscellany of odd jobs. *"He was a 'good hand' with the gun and greatly enjoyed a game of curling with a few old cronies and well!!! ... other necessities!"*

James and Margaret married in 1853 and by 1875 they had nine surviving children who were all raised in Pitmiddle. Four sons - James, Hugh, William, and Andrew emigrated to Canada. Four daughters lived nearby and one son, **John Reid Gillies**, became very much a man of the Sidlaws.



Lumley Den House

Thanks to Jan Scott in Australia we now have further insight and appreciation of the life of her great grand-father John Reid Gillies. John was gamekeeper on the Fotheringham estates for 45 years. He worked first in the Carse of Gowrie at Inchmartine and later moved to **Lumley Den House** where he and his wife Isabelle raised their family. They too had nine surviving children.

John Reid Gillies: 1858 -1949

' Veteran Keepers Reminiscences'

To read this fascinating account [click here](#)

The Reminiscences were written in 1936 on the occasion of John's retirement at the age of seventy-eight and provide a perfect 'birds eye' view of Game-keeping and life at Lumley Den at that time.



Gamekeepers at Glamis Castle - Main entrance

This superb photograph with the names of the Gamekeepers was kindly provided by Glamis. A similar photograph had already arrived from Jan in Australia but one last vital piece of information was missing. The names! All well now, **sincere Thanks to Glamis Castle.**

13 Gamekeepers. Left to right: Tom McQueen; Doug Fairweather(son); J Shepherd; J McQueen; Adam Crockett; **“Gramps”**; G Fairweather; Davy Arthur; Joe Young; Bennett; J McPherson,(Trapper); G Fell; T Young. NB. **‘Gramps’** is **John Reid Gillies** of Lumley Den.

Perhaps the scale of this event was such that it brought the Gamekeepers together from Glamis, Fotheringham and other local Estates. One of the men in the Australian photo was believed to be the young brother of Queen Elizabeth the Queen mother. This has been carefully checked by the Glamis Castle archivist and although it isn't David Bowes Lyon in the photograph, it is possible he attended if this was indeed a 'grand event'?

Was this gathering at Glamis held for a special occasion?

If any of our website readers have details about this event, especially the actual year and any particular reason for all the Gamekeepers to gather at Glamis, please do contact our website on Enquiries@westmuir.org.uk

Another Glamis story which Jan heard of from a Canadian Gillies 2nd cousin, involved the young Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon who had lost a puppy in the Castle grounds. The puppy is believed to have been found by a Kirrie girl, a grand-daughter of John Gillies. The young girl received a reward of a sovereign which she kept her whole life.

John and Isabelle moved from Lumley Den when that portion of the Fotheringham Estate was sold. From the late 1920s their cottage at Upper Todhills became home. Their son William had **joined the local Police Force** and Tealing would certainly have been more accessible for him.

The Gillies family have clearly made great efforts to maintain contact with each other and some of the co-incidences with each generation are quite incredible.

Keeping to the generations already mentioned it was impressive and confusing trying to follow the family as they had steadfastly kept to the same Christian names.

1st generation: **Parents:** James Gillies b.1804 Came **from London to Kinnaird** when he was 28 years old. Married Elizabeth 1831, Pitmiddle became home. They had 12 children. **James, Margaret, Elizabeth, William, Anne, Andrew, John, Joseph, Agnes, Mary, Diane, Janet.**

2st generation: **Parents:** James Gillies and Margaret Gillies. married 1853

9 surviving children. 5 sons and 4 daughters. **Anne** died in infancy.

James; Hugh; John; William; Andrew; Magdalene; Elizabeth; Christina; and Margaret.

Four of their offspring emigrated to Canada: James; Hugh; William; Andrew.

3nd generation: **Parents:** John Reid Gillies and Isabelle Gillies.

9 surviving children. 5 sons and 4 daughters. one son died in infancy

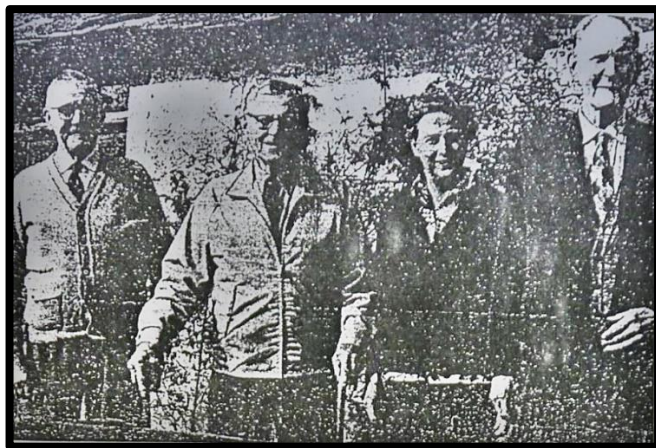
John; Margaret; Anne; Christina; Isabelle; James; Joseph, William; George.

Four of their offspring emigrated: James; John ... to Canada. Anne; Joseph ... to Australia.

John 's sister, Magdalene and husband James, named their children - **James; John; Margaret; Christine; William** – and Susan and Alexander.

Todhills Visit 1974

With stories to share ... **Rabbits at Lumley to Wolves at Winnipeg.** It was certainly hard going down on brother Jim's farm in Canada.



Dundee Journal Photo

George, James,(and wife Margaret), William, sons of John Reid Gillies' at Todhills - 1974

To read an **edited** version of the '**Dundee Journal**' account of the visit, [Click Here](#)

The Gillies 'Lumley Den' - family - late 1918.



A poignant gathering for the family in this momentous year. The end of WW1.

Back row: James, George, Christina and William.

Front row: Isabella; Isabella Gillies (mother); John Reid Gillies (father); Margaret, and two infant grandchildren. Three members of the family missing in the photograph are Anne and Joseph who were in Australia ... and **John**.

John was born in 1882 and emigrated to Canada in 1907 **with his wife Marjory** Adamson Robertson and their 2 year-old daughter Elspeth. The couple had four more children in Canada then WW1 began. John enlisted in the Canadian Forces and was at the Somme when he was granted compassionate leave to return home. Marjory, pregnant with their 6th child, was then hospitalised with TB and the children had to be taken into care. John arrived in Canada a couple of weeks after Marjory died in 1916. The baby died several weeks later. John did get the children back but caught the Spanish Flu and died in November 1918. The children went back into care and were fostered but kept in contact and lived quite close to each other. John's funeral took place in Canada on the 11th Day.

.... **John Gillies was laid to rest at 11.00am. 11th November 1918.**

It's a deeply touching story and heart-warming to know the children stayed near to each other and to realise their grand-children may have been able to contact their Gillies 'family' in Australia and of course, keep in touch with their Canadian family. Canadian descendants have contacted our village website and an important 'find' for them was the story and picture of their great, great Grandparents.

Dorothy and Sue from British Columbia were "Delighted to read 'Soldiering On ... and Magdalene". It gave Dorothy "A glimpse of life and family dynamics in Pitmiddle". "The picture of my great, great grandparents on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary is simply priceless".



1920s to mid 1930s? The Royal couple... Duke and Duchess of York and the young Policeman on the right is William (Wills) Gillies.

Every effort has been made to try to establish where this photograph was taken. No joy as yet but it is hoped that a website reader might recall seeing the photo and be able to provide a clue as to where this was taken and when. Contact: Enquiries@westmuir.org.uk

Finally ... Last Man Standing - at Pitmiddle



James Gillies (Jeems) with his mother Margaret

James Gillies, 1895 – 1970, grandson of the Golden Wedding couple was the last person to live at Pitmiddle. Margaret, 1874 –1952 moved to Bridge of Weir in 1937 to stay with her sister Elizabeth, who had a Drapery shop in Johnstone. This would have been quite a change for Margaret who had been a fruit grower. Jeems stayed on at Pitmiddle for a few years before he too moved to Bridge of Weir. His Grandfather, James Gillies, spoke to a Courier journalist **in 1896** when Pitmiddle was showing serious signs of decline and said ... “The village is about deserted”. James must have wondered what would become of his family and especially his one year-old grandson **Jeems**.

Displenishing Sales - at Pitmiddle

Now for some truly interesting and fascinating details of Displenishing Sales: **1937 (for Miss Gillies) and 1920 (for Mr James Gillies).**

At Pitmiddle By Inchtute **on Saturday First 4th December 1937** at 1.00 o'clock. Displenishing Sale of Implements, Livestock, and surplus household furniture.

FINE HORSE (Garron) 14 – 15 HANDS: 2 STACKS OATS; 1 STACK HAY; THRESHING MILL; 2 FT. CONE DRUM WITH FANNERS ATTACHED, COULD BE DRIVEN BY 2.5 H.P. ENGINE; RANSOM PLOUGH; DRILL HARROW; HARNESS; TOOLS; SCRAP METAL; SHAFTING &c.

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE – Inlaid Mahogany E.D. Clock, by Ramsay, Coupar Angus; Inlaid Mahogany Chest of Drawers; Mahogany Table; Dresser; Kitchen Table and Chairs; Wood and Metal Bedsteads; Set of Arm and 4 Hand Chairs; Plate Rack, Mirrors, Crockery, Cooking Utensils, Lamps, &c (**belonging to Miss Gillies**). On View Previously. Terms – Cash. CHARLES P. BOE. Auctioneer. Central Auction Rooms ... 18 Bank Street, Dundee.

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DISPLENISHING SALE on SATURDAY FIRST (month unknown) **1920** at 3.00 P.M. at PITMIDDLE, Kinnaird, by Inchtute

OF FARM IMPLEMENTS AND HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE.

Consisting of:- 2 Spring Vans; Wood Cart. Corn Body, Coup Cart, Brake Harrows, Drill Plough, 2 swing ploughs, Grubbers, Turnip machine, Wheels, Springs and axles, Turning Lay, Paraffin Tacks, Riddles, Harp, Grindstone, Hoops, Graips, Spades, Rakes, Cart Harness, Lot Joiner's Tools, Vices, Baskets and creels, Mason's Tools, Pruning shears, &c.

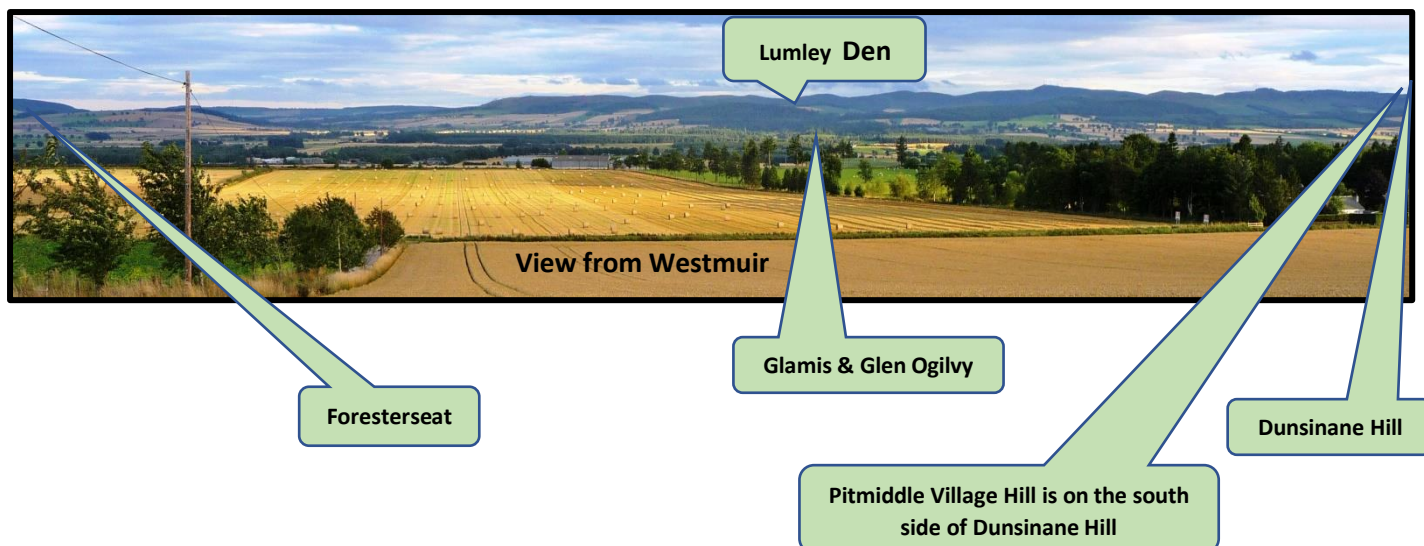
also Mahogany Inlaid Grandfather Clock; Antique Mahogany Table, Garden chair (Brass mounted), 2 sewing machines, Clocks, Mahogany 4 Posted bed; Tables, Presses; Trunks; Cradle; Fiddle; Swords; and Bayonets, Breechloading and Muzzle Guns; 2 Fan Blasts Mahogany desks; Jelly Pan; Fishing Tackle; Camera; Pigeon Traps; Bedroom chest of Drawers; Beds, Fenders, Kitchen Range and Room Grate, 2 Box Beds, Young pig, &c.

Belonging to Mr JAMES GILLIES

Note- Pitmiddle is by Old Kinnaird Castle, MORTON J. A. McLEAN, AUCTIONEER, Central Auction Hall, 31 Overgate, Dundee.

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N.B. ** Camera ** – see above 1920 Displenishment sale of property belonging to the late James Gillies (Gillies o' Pitmiddle). Did James have this Camera in 1903 and was it the camera used for the Golden Wedding photograph? Interesting thought to ponder over.



Getting to know the Sidlaws and Pitmiddle

Pitmiddle was granted to Richard the King's clerk by King William the Lion 1172-1174.

Time now for a mere glimpse of the Sidlaws Area across the centuries. How well James 'Gillies o Pitmiddle' knew the Sidlaws is hard to say but the likelihood is that he would have known it well. He led a full life. A Master of his stone mason trade and a most useful 'Jack' of many others. James could Thatch, do joinery work and probably walked in the Sidlaws when out on a 'shoot'. When his Gamekeeper son lived at Lumley Den House, James would have come to know the eastern Sidlaws too.

The well-known writer, Colin Gibson wrote an excellent article about Pitmiddle in 1955. 'Pitmiddle is high set, looking out upon the Carse of Gowrie from the upper slopes of Pitmiddle Hill which rises to 917 ft. I had a look at several of the 'butts and bens'. The thatched roofs had all gone, bar one, and this house showed signs of recent occupation, with green turf patching the roof. Berry bushes still grew in the gardens. It was strange to think that over 100 people – crofters, craftsmen, and their bairns called this place home at one time". Colin Gibson then followed a path heading north from the village via Whinny Braes to a summit and from there he saw **Dunsinane and Kings Seat** just ahead.

MacBeth's Dunsinane to Lumley Den and Strathmore

From Dunsinane to Lumley Den by way of the Sidlaws is a full 20 miles. To the north of this hill route lies the fertile and scenic Strathmore Valley with the Grampian hills providing a dramatic backdrop.

11th C The High Kings of Scotland were always on the move, described as "Itinerant lifestyle of the Royal Court". This was required for three reasons.

Political: To be seen – Administer Justice – and to make their presence felt. Domestic: to ensure an adequate provision of food for the Royal Court. Hygienic: the limited nature of the sewerage. The Court had to move on more often perhaps trying to be one step ahead of the plague.

The Kings of Scotland had 71 Estates between Moray and Firth of Forth. **Glamis** could provide enough food for one and a half days and **Forfar** Castle (built 11th C) enough food for about 2 days.

The only means of transport at that time and for many Centuries ahead was by horse, either on horseback or by horse-drawn carriage.

Dunsinane, famed Fortress of **MacBeth** (1005-1057). A fine view to Birnam Woods.

Lumley Den, Hill Pass between Strathmore and the south. Situated just above the Royal Hunting Forrest of Pallater (by Glamis) which stretched to Foresterseat where the Kings Head Forrester lived. **King Malcolm II** was mortally wounded on Hunters Hill in 1034.

Strathmore, 14th C **Glamis Castle** had become a **Royal Residence** for Sir John Lyon and Princess Joanne, daughter of King Robert II.

Strathmore, **Glamis Castle** Transformed over the Centuries from 11th C Hunting Lodge to the Castle so beautifully remodelled in 17th C during the lifetime of **Patrick, 3rd Earl.**

Strathmore, **Glen Ogilvy,** Claverhouse Castle, 17th C home of Viscount John Graham and his family. John Graham of Claverhouse (**Bonnie Dundee**) was Godfather to one of the 3rd Earls' sons. Visits between Glamis and Claverhouse would have been a relatively simple short 'canter' across Strathmore. Sadly, the Castle of Claverhouse has long since gone but a wonderful painting by Kneller of **Bonnie Dundee** can be seen in the Castle drawing room, alongside a painting of **3rd Earl Patrick with his sons.**

Strathmore, **Shakespeare, To be or not to be! Did Shakespeare visit Glamis?**

Shakespeare, in his early years, was an actor with the Lord Chamberlains Men, who toured Scotland in the last decade of the 16th C. They appeared in Edinburgh, Stirling, Perth and Aberdeen. The Players would give performances in Theatres and at the court of the King and also in the **Great Halls of noblemen.....such as Glamis?**

In the Royal Court in London, **Shakespeare** would have learned much about Scotland from the **9th Lord Glamis** who was one of **King James V1 & 1 loyal advisers.** Shakespeare was reliant upon the writings of the earlier chroniclers and perhaps Court gossip.

To all website readers- near and far:

Do hope you enjoyed this the **final part** of the Soldiering On story. **Sincere Thanks** to all of the 'great' 'great' great' young members of the Gillies family from Australia, Canada and UK who have contacted the Westmuir Village Website. Hopefully one day you will have an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Maxine and Rachel (Australian/Gillies) who visited this entire area in January 2020.

More information regarding Pitmiddle can be found online e.g Blair Dingwall's 'Soon there will be nothing left' (Courier/ December 2019) and 'The incredible story of the Pitmiddle ring' Courier / April 2020. The details regarding the ring were written by Margaret Dowie-Whybrow another 'great' descendant of 'Gillies O' Pitmiddle'.

Now **full circle** back to 'great' granddaughter **Eila** whose offer of **Magdalene's dress** for the **Kirriemuir Play 'Soldiering On'** led to this story being written. Just last week (June 2020) **Eila** produced one or two more details for inclusion in the story. Amazing! Covid-19 hasn't stopped 95 year-old Eila from seeking more information regarding her ancestors.

We Wish you all well - **Keep Safe.**

All the Best tae you and yours - Fae Westmuir.