

From: "Linda Thomson" <lhthomson@fsmail.net>

Date: 24 Apr 2014 22:11

Subject: Timothy Chrystal Neil

To: <emailbillinmanchester@gmail.com>

Cc:

Hi Bill

Just saw your comments on the O Neill Clan website and could not believe it when I saw my father's name!

My father was the son of the Timothy Chrystal Neil who died in 1935. My father was also Timothy Chrystal Neil and he sadly died in 1976. My father did not know a

lot about his family as he was the son of his father's second wife Jane Downs. My father was born a few months after his father's death and when he was approx 6 months old he and his siblings (Thomas, Mary, Sadie and Jean) were put into care and my father never saw his mother again. He was placed on some occasions with his brother Thomas (died 1981) but only met his sisters briefly when he grew up.

Dad did mention that there were step children but did not seem to know much about it. I know my cousins from my Uncle Thomas's marriage but that is all the links I have with his side.

Your research on the family was very interesting - do you have any other information you could share with me regards this family? It is so sad that I have so few details to pass onto my own children.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

Kind Regards

Linda Thomson (nee Neil)

the following are my notes on this email

What This Means

Timothy Chrystal Neil married Jane Downs on 16 Feb 1928 at the Unitarian Church 17 Monteith Row, Glasgow.

He died 9th March 1935 at 114 Wellfield Street, Glasgow.

This much I knew

According to Linda Thomson, their son, Timothy Chrystal Neil, was born a few months after his death so he would have been born in 1935. She also said that he died in 1976 (so would have been aged approx 41).

Linda also said that TCN had siblings Thomas, Mary, Sadie and Jean. Obviously TCN was the last child so the other four children must have been born between 1928 - 1934. It seems that when TCN was approx 6 months old (1935/6 ?) all the children were taken into care with TCN sometimes being placed with his brother, Thomas, but he did not meet his three sisters again until he was an adult, and then only "briefly". Linda also says that she knows of her Uncle Thomas's children

My own research had found a Thomas Downs Neil arriving a year after their marriage in 1928 and Jane Downs Neil coming in 1933. I had already concluded that there would probably be at least one other child in between these two births. Linda also says that Thomas died 1981

Dear Linda,

Apologies for taking so long to get back to you but as I mentioned I have been away for a while and have only just got back home.

It was very interesting to hear from you and it was also a bit of a coincidence because, although I have been into family history on and off for a good few years, it is not until recently that I decided to try to find out a bit more about my father's brother and sister, Timothy Chrystal Neil and Mary Ann Chrystal Neil. I had always thought that it was a bit odd that I had not come across more information about these two in the course of my general enquiries and this led me to look at death indexes and it was then that I discovered that they had both died very young. Whilst I was looking at the deaths I also found the death of my father's mother who also died quite young. From here it was logical to wonder if his father (Timothy Chrystal Neil) had remarried and this is when I discovered his marriage to Jane Downs in 1928. I only discovered this marriage about six months ago so to receive your email recently struck me as such a coincidence.

It also struck me just how many parallels there were between our branches of the family - perhaps even our own experiences, although I have to say your information about the events surrounding the children of Timothy Chrystal Neil and Jane Downs are truly sad.

Like you, I knew little or nothing about my father's family. I did not recall ever meeting any grandparents on his side nor did I recall any uncles or aunts on his side. I did not recall ever visiting Glasgow in my childhood either. I suppose it is odd that I did not ask (or if I did, can't remember any answers) about why this was the case but I daresay we all know how parents can end a childish enquiry about an inconvenient or unpleasant event in their past. I do remember him telling some stories of the Gorbals and some war stories but nothing very revealing. He died when I was fourteen I never got a chance to ask him as an adult. I am not too sure now when I came to learn some of the facts but I think I probably put this situation down to his family being Catholic and my mother's family being Protestant which, of course, meant more then. I suppose I thought it was some kind of family animus and since we lived in Musselburgh and not Glasgow I saw my mother's relatives but not my father's. I should probably add that shortly after my father's death my mother remarried and as a result my relationship with my mother was not good - and certainly not conducive to asking her questions about family history. As soon as I could leave home I did and I did not see her again for a quarter of a century.

For these reasons I had always felt a certain lack of context in my life so eventually I set about trying to find out about my father's side of the family. This was long before computer databases were available so it was done the old-fashioned way. I have been interested ever since but due to work, travel and other considerations, it has been a bit on and off over the years. When I do pick it up again, however, I always seem to find a renewed interest and it was during one of these phases that I decided to find out more about my father's brother and sister and this explained at last why I knew so very little about my father's family - it was simply because they were all dead long before I could have met them.

I gather that you have read the rather long message I sent to Matthew Neil on the "Association of O'Neill Clans" web site where I explained this chronology but I will repeat it here for the sake of this explanation. I paraphrase it :

Timothy Chrystal Neil married Margaret McDonald in 1917 and their children were John McDonald Neil b. 15 Jun 1918, Mary Ann Chrystal Neil b. 25 Nov 1919 and Timothy Chrystal Neil b. 9 Nov 1921. They were all born at 1 South Stirling Street, Glasgow. Mary Ann died aged one and a half years. Timothy Chrystal died aged three and a half months. This left my father, John McDonald Neil, as the only surviving child. His mother, Margaret McDonald died in 1925.

Timothy Chrystal Neil died in 1935 aged 42 years. So by the time my father was eighteen he had lost his father, mother and both his siblings !

So this went some way to explaining why I had never met any paternal uncles or aunts and why I had never met paternal grandparents and perhaps also why nothing was mentioned of them when I was a child. Another reason why he may not have wanted to mention his past that much might have been (as I discovered later) that he had been married to another woman before he married my mother. He married Elizabeth Mary Johnston at St. Aloysius's Church in Springburn 19 June 1942. I do not know of any children born from this marriage and I daresay my father would have been called up at the start of the war and this may have been one of those war marriages that foundered as a result of the social disruption that people suffered in the war. It transpired anyway that my father met my mother and they had my brothers Colin (born 1946) and Raymond (born 1947). My father and Elizabeth Mary Johnston were divorced on 11 November 1949 and my father married my mother, Margaret Cunningham Ramsay, on 17 Dec 1949. I was born 17 Jan 1951 in Musselburgh where my mother's side of the family had settled after a migration from Fife which was their "historic home" So it seems as if my father left all behind him and started up again after the war. For my mother's part, she had an illegitimate daughter before she met my father and I was entirely unaware of her existence until much, much later in life.

So quite a lot that people would rather forget and quite a lot than people would rather other people didn't know ! It doesn't seem quite so odd that I knew so little about family business when I was small given these events.

Having said all this, though, this was my understanding before I came across Timothy Chrystal Neil's second marriage of course. This opens up other possibilities. My own very superficial research in this area indicated that Timothy Chrystal Neil married Jane Downs 16 Feb 1928 when my father was nearly ten years old. I gathered that their first child, Thomas Downs Neil, was born in 1929 (or at least registered then). I also came across the registration of Jane Downs Neil in 1933. You say that your father was born in the year of Timothy Chrystal Neil (snr)'s death in 1935 and you have mentioned your father's other siblings. My father would have been seventeen when your father was born. The question arises, did they know each other or had my father gone his own way before Jane Downs and Timothy Chrystal Neil got married ?

Anyway I hope I have not bored you already but I just wanted to highlight some of my background where I thought that there were interesting similarities to yours. Certainly a fair share of sadness in there and a lot of detecting still left to do to try to explain how it all unfolded.

Returning to your request for more information, I have to say that when I read your email I had forgotten that I had posted so much already in my reply to Matthew Neil so I may not have a huge amount more to tell you but I do have a bit more context, more detail and some speculations on the origins of our family and so on. As I said earlier I have picked up and put down my family history so much over the years that I feel that before I start swopping information at a more detailed level, I need to refresh my memory on where I have got up to when I last put the papers away and also to check my sources again. Rather than just tell you something I think to be true I would rather be able to show you any evidence to support it.

I already have a short resume of my researches (if that is not too fanciful a word for them) in MS Word format and I would just like to go through it myself again checking everything is correct and that my sources are good. I also have a good number of certificate copies and other copied sources that I should make sure that I have referenced properly. When I have done this (it might take a few weeks) I would be happy to let you have a copy to see if any of it is of interest to you if you would find that useful. Since we did not contact each other via a strictly genealogical web site I am not sure how into genealogy you are so perhaps you could give me an idea of your

interest level (in case I bore you to tears) and if you are into it, what software do you use to keep your family history records.

I hope that I have not built up your expectations just to tell you that I will take weeks to sort my information out but I wanted to email you so that you did not think I had forgotten your email. I found your information very interesting and your father's story rather sad. Although I am not a parent myself, I am a firm believer that it is the duty of parents (or someone in the wider family) to keep the family history and to make sure that children have a sense of where they are from and don't feel "rootless". This is what drove my first interest in family history and I wholly understand when you say you would like to give your children some of that context.

I should probably end this rambling email by saying that should you care to share any more of your information with me I would be most happy to see it. After all, it's not every day you meet a new relative. I have sent this to you using my "proper" email account as I am not keen on putting personal information into Gmail, and suchlike, mail systems so if you want to contact me please use mail@billneil.co.uk to do so. As a final postscript I should mention (as you probably know from my other email address) I live in Manchester with my wife Anne.

Very best wishes

Bill Neil

Linda Thomson [lhthomson@fsmail.net]

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RE: NEIL Family History

Dear Bill

Sorry I have been away for a few days and had not checked my emails but was delighted when I saw yours! There certainly do seem to be a lot of similarities, and as you say sadness, in our lives. It is amazing how things were just not spoken of and/or hidden from future generations. Another similarity we have is that like you my Dad was a Catholic and my mother was a Protestant. Also as Dad had no family apart from his brother, who he did keep in touch with, most of our life was spent in Aberfoyle (After Dad left the RAF) as that was Mum's home.

Dad was a very clever person but always had a chip on his shoulder regarding his mother putting them all into care - he just could not get over that. I think he had done a little research on his family (hard in the 1960's) as he did seem to know that there were half brothers but he did not ever seem to find his mother (maybe she was already dead by then?) Dad was brought up in a series of care and foster homes and mainly up in Keith and Tomintoul - why that area I do not know as not very close to Glasgow where they all had lived. We used to go up and visit some of the Nuns up there he kept in touch with.

Dad had a birthmark under his left eye which made him stand out, he had black wavy hair and was about 5 feet 9 inches with a trim frame.

He joined the RAF when he was 15 and loved it, he was a Morse Code Operator, and travelled the world with the RAF and met my mother in

1959 in Aberfoyle when he came to visit a friend who was working in a bar there at the time. They married on December 11 1959 and soon after were posted to Singapore - Dad loved it out there and he was posted with his best friend Bill Murray so that made it even more enjoyable. They returned in 1961 not long before I was born and Dad was then posted to RAF Pitreavie. Sadly Dad took very bad stomach ulcers and had to have surgery and was invalided out of the RAF (which he was devastated about) in 1964. We then went to live in Dalmarnock in Glasgow for 2 years whilst Dad worked in a Health Clinic (a VD Clinic actually!) as an administrator. We then moved back to live in Aberfoyle in 1966, where Dad lived until he and Mum split up in 1974 and he went to work in the North Sea Oil industry on various merchant vessels. He was on one of those vessels working for Zapata Marine in Nov 1976 when he fell from the deck of the boat, whilst it was in dry dock in Dundee, and died of his injuries the next day. My mother (who was still listed as his NOK as they had not

divorced) and I were contacted and we were able to get there to be with him before the end although he never regained consciousness. We were absolutely devastated and could not take it in for some time that he was gone.

I just wish my children could have known him as he would have been a wonderful grandfather. My mother is now with very nice man who I am happy to call my step father but I obviously still miss my own Dad.

I was married in 1981 and my husband was a Hotel Manager and we travelled around a bit and so have lived in different parts. Sadly my

marriage failed and not long after we separated my husband died. (somewhat spookily mirroring my mother's experience) I have two

wonderful children Christopher and Kirsten who are my pride and joy. Christopher (32) is Software Engineer in Montreal and Kirsten (29)

is a teacher in Linlithgow. Very happily I met someone else and Cliff and I have been together now for over 20 years and his children

Christopher (yes another one) and Angela are all part of our family. We live in lovely Argyll seaside town called Dunoon with great views of the Firth of Clyde from our home.

Sorry I have rambled on a bit but just wanted to give you a flavour of what Dad's life was like. I forgot to add that another great sadness in Dad's life was when his best friend Bill Murray died of cancer in 1965 - he felt that he had suffered a lot of loss in his young life - just like your own father.

Cliff has done an extensive family tree on his own family on a CAD package. He has always been encouraging me to find out more about my family but not having too much to go on I did not think it was an easy task, but

we are going to try to find out more and I will share anything I find out with you. I am very interested in genealogy, as is Cliff, and find it all fascinating. Cliff has traced part of his family tree back to 1780!

Better stop now but delighted to have made contact with a relative and I am very interested in anything you can tell me.

Kindest Regards

Linda Thomson