

THE McGREERS FROM GLENAAN IN COUNTY ANTRIM

By Dan McGreer

McGreer is a relatively uncommon surname and it is quite likely that anyone with this surname is a descendant from the McGreers who have lived in County Antrim on the northeast coast of Ireland, beginning about 400 years ago. It is family tradition that the McGreers are a branch of the Clan MacGregor, who migrated from Scotland in the 1500s or 1600s.¹ Many of these McGreers would later emigrate to North America in the 1800s.² This article gives a short history of the McGreers in Antrim, and in particular Captain Gilbert McGreer, who lived in the townland of Lubitavish, in Glenaan, near Cushendall.

The MacGregors are a noble clan, who claim to be descended from Kenneth MacAlpine, the first king of Scotland. Kenneth led the Scots, who were originally from the Kingdom of Dalriada in Ireland, and who conquered the Picts in 863, thus creating the Kingdom of Scotland.³ The MacGregors settled around Glenstrae, Glenorchy and Glengyle at the north end of Loch Awe in the Highlands. Trouble began for the MacGregor Clan in the 14th century when they came into conflict with the Campbells⁴ over their chief's inheritance of their lands in Glenorchy. The Campbells were a very powerful clan with a strong appetite for acquiring land and the wealth associated with it. The Campbells lived in the regions southwest of the MacGregors, around Loch Awe and Loch Fyne. Over time, through the cunning use of treachery and the legal powers of state, the Campbells were able to take control of most of Argyle and Lorne.

The Campbells derived much of their power from their close relationship with the kings of Scotland starting with their support of Robert the Bruce in the war of independence from England. The Campbells were Lowland Scots whose ancestors were of Norman descent, and this made them natural allies with the rulers of Scotland at that time – the Bruces and Stewards. The MacGregors on the other hand had a distinctly Highland, Celtic background. Throughout history, the MacGregors have had a bad habit of picking the wrong side during a fight and during the war of independence they backed Balliol rather than Bruce. In 1296, the year that Balliol was deposed, John MacGregor of Glenorchy was killed fighting against the English. His only daughter, Mariota, was married to John Campbell, and they had no children and as a result a dispute arose about the inheritance of Glenorchy. This event was the beginning of the downfall of the MacGregors, as the Campbells managed to gain the legal title to Glenorchy.

In the Highlands, the clans followed Celtic traditions with regard to leadership of the clan and land ownership. The chief of the clan was chosen from the senior members of the clan based on ability, and was not strictly chosen based on heredity. This avoided problems of succession, if the chief had no children. The land occupied by the clan belonged to the whole clan rather than just the chief. This was in direct conflict with the Norman feudal concept of personal property, which was being enforced by Robert the Bruce. Bruce required that clan-land be chartered in the name of the principal chiefs

rather than in the name of the clan. This later made it possible for the king to forfeit land-charters, and it also allowed unscrupulous lords to use the complex legal system to acquire the lands of the unsuspecting neighbouring Highlanders through legal means. The Campbells were experts in using the new feudal system to expand their territory, and the MacGregors soon found that they were being evicted from their historical lands.

The MacGregors did not readily accept being evicted, and soon took up arms to defend themselves. This proved difficult, however, as the Campbells had the power of the king and the full weight of the law behind them. The MacGregors retreated further back into the Highlands around Rannoch, Balquhider, and Glengyle, where it was more difficult to earn a living by farming. To supplement their income, the clan resorted to lifting cattle from their oppressors. Two hundred years later Rob Roy MacGregor (1671-1734) would become a Scottish folk hero⁵ for his skill in this regard and his ability to avoid capture, which was undoubtedly because of the clan's long experience. The MacGregors also found that they could make a good living as mercenary soldiers in many other conflicts between other clans during the fifteenth and sixteen centuries. At the same time that the Campbells were pursuing the MacGregors, they were also working to expand their territory westward into the lands held by the MacDonalds, Lords of the Isles.^{6, 7} The MacDonalds were directly related to the McDonnells, who controlled much of County Antrim.⁸

Through the 1400s and 1500s, the MacGregors managed to get themselves in more and more trouble as they struggled for survival. The government of Scotland, which was dominated by Lowland Scots, became determined to bring the Highlands under greater control. The Campbells and other lords were quite crafty in their dealings with the Highlanders. They would surreptitiously instigate feuds between the Highland clans and then would demand more power from the king to suppress the uprisings and enforce the law. These clashes would inevitably result in the acquisition of more land for themselves.

Typical of these tactics were the events that surrounded the battle at Glenfruin, in 1602, which would lead to the proscription of the Clan MacGregor. While travelling home from a market fair in Glasgow, two MacGregors stopped in Luss, which is on the west side of Loch Lomond, and in Colquhoun territory. It is Highland custom for travellers to be provided with food and shelter; however, in this case they were refused. In response, the MacGregors stole a lamb and hid in an empty shepherd hut. When they were discovered, the next day, by the Colquhouns, they were promptly given frontier-style justice and hanged. This infuriated the clan and led to a feud between the MacGregors and the Colquhouns.

Archibald Campbell, the Earl of Argyll, took advantage of the feud and persuaded Alasdair MacGregor, the chief, to lead a raid on the Colquhoun properties in Luss. Argyll promised better relations with the MacGregors in return. The Colquhoun were

neighbours of the Campbells and they had been having a feud with them for many years. On June 4, 1602, twenty MacGregors and a couple Campbells lifted over 120 cattle from Luss and Glenmulchan. This was followed some months later by another raid by Duncan MacEwin MacGregor, which also included Lennox, in which there were lifted 300 cows, 400 sheep and 100 horses. Many of these ended up reset on Campbell lands. Unfortunately, during this raid some fighting broke out and the MacGregors killed and wounded a few Colquhouns.

Alexander Colquhoun, the 17th Lord of Luss, was determined to have revenge. He rode to see King James VI of Scotland at Stirling castle. Knowing that the king was squeamish at the sight of blood, he took along a number of women of the clan whose husbands or sons had been injured and carried shirts red with blood to plead their case. It is alleged that a few of the shirts were dipped in sheep's blood to increase the numbers of injured. The King granted Colquhoun a Commission of Fire and Sword to bring the MacGregors to justice.

The MacGregors got wind of the fact that Colquhoun was gathering a force of 300 horse and 500 foot and was marching up Loch Lomond for a military assault on the MacGregors. In response the MacGregors, under the leadership of Alasdair, their chief, gathered a force of about 400 men and decided to make a pre-emptive strike. The MacGregors were joined by a few other clans, who came in the hope of plunder. Included in this force were some Campbells, Camerons, and a band of MacDonalds of Glencoe. Alasdair led the small force around to Loch Long and Glenfruin to attack Colquhoun from behind. Colquhoun found out about this plan and marched his force back quickly to meet Alasdair in the narrow Auchengarich Burn in Glenfruin. The boggy ground was difficult for the cavalry, and the battle was soon at close quarters. Although outnumbered two-to-one, the battle soon turned into a rout. The Colquhouns lost about 140 men and Alexander Colquhoun just barely escaped with his life. The MacGregors then again raided the Colquhoun's lands, taking 600 cattle, 800 sheep, and 240 horses.

The government of Scotland was now determined to take action. On 3 April 1603, King James VI, issued a proclamation just days before heading to England to claim the throne, 'that the name of MacGregor should be altogether abolished, and that all persons of that clan should renounce their name and take some other name, and that they should not call themselves Gregor or MacGregor thereafter, under pain of death'.⁹ It was also prohibited for anyone from Clan MacGregor to be in a group of more than four, or for them to carry a weapon other than a knife, without a point, for eating. All those involved in the battle of Glenfruin and those that helped them were sentenced to death.

In the past, other clans had often assisted Clan MacGregor in escaping the law; however, this time the Privy Council was determined to root out the clan. After Glenfruin, Alasdair was sheltered by Aulay MacAulay of Ardincaple. The MacAulays are believed to be an offshoot of the MacGregor clan, and had often helped the MacGregors. Only a

few years earlier, in 1591, Aulay MacAulay had signed a Bond of Manrent with Alasdair MacGregor promising his friendship, and recognizing 'that Clan MacAulay was a cadet clan of Clan Gregor'. Aulay was arrested and avoided death only through the influence of the Duke of Lennox, who arranged a pardon from the King and protection at the King's court in London.

The Privy Council then put on sale the warrants to arrest the MacGregors, dead or alive, as if they were vermin. Bounty hunters were given money for each head they delivered, and were even given all the dead man's possessions. If the killer was an outlaw, he would also have the incentive that he would be pardoned as well. The enemies of the MacGregors were soon ardently hunting down the MacGregors. The most notable was Black Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy, who used trained bloodhounds.

The MacGregor Clan hid in the high moors; however, they had little to live on, and with winter coming they were desperate. Alasdair resolved to negotiate a pardon with the King, and the Earl of Argyle promised to assist in arranging it. Argyle guaranteed that he would provide safe conduct to England, so that Alasdair could proceed to London to plead his case to the King. Alasdair and three of his clansmen surrendered to the Earl of Argyle on 4 January 1604. Alasdair was escorted to the border in keeping with the Earl's promise; however, Argyle cunningly arrested Alasdair as soon as they crossed the border, thus technically keeping his promise. Argyle then returned with Alasdair to Edinburgh, where he was tried and executed on 20 January 1604, along with 11 of his clansmen.

In response to their chief's death, Clan MacGregor erupted in fury and raided the Campbell territories in Glenorchy and burned Black Duncan's new castle at Achallader. The clan then fled into the hills to hide out, and they became known as the 'Children of the Mist'. They changed their surnames and often used their oppressors' names, such as Murray, Drummond and the most common, Campbell.

The Government continued their pursuit of the MacGregors with vigour in order to exterminate the clan 'root and branch'; wives of the clan were branded with a key on their face; children of the clan were captured and taken to the Lowlands, where they were to be brought up by foster- parents or transported over to Ireland, if they were over 12 years old. The proscription of the name MacGregor lasted until 1774, when it was finally repealed.

It is believed that sometime between 1604 and 1660 a few MacGregors made their way from Scotland to the Glynnns of Antrim in Ireland. At that time, the Glynnns were very remote, as they were difficult to get to by land. The most convenient mode of transport was by water, and the coast of Kintyre in Scotland was only a short distance away. The area was an ideal location for outlaws from Scotland to escape the law.¹⁰ At that time the Glynnns of Antrim were part of the estates of Sir Randall McDonnell, Earl of Antrim.

Many of the people living in the area had Highland Scottish background, having come with the Scottish McDonnells in the 1400s and 1500s as mercenary soldiers called 'redshanks'. As mentioned, the McDonnells were enemies of the Campbells, and interestingly many of the inhabitants of the Glynns were MacAulays. For these reasons it would have been an ideal location for the MacGregors to move to, to escape persecution.

Some MacGregors may well have come to the Glynns after the English Civil War (1644-1647). During the civil war the Marquis of Montrose led an army of Irish and Highlanders around Scotland, and managed to capture most of the country in support of King Charles I.¹¹ Charles was the son of James I (VI of Scotland) and had become embroiled in a bitter dispute with the parliament of England, which eventual led to a civil war. Randal MacDonnell, the Second Earl and First Marquis of Antrim, was a strong supporter of Charles, and was tasked to assemble an army in Ireland to support an attack on Scotland, as the Covenanters had allied themselves with the Parliamentarians. Randall chose his cousin, Alasdair (MacColla) MacDonnell, from Colonsay, to lead an army of Scots-Irish made up of mainly Antrim's tenants, many of whom were MacDonnells. Alasdair's army joined the army of the Marquis of Montrose in Scotland and went through the Highlands, battling the Covenanter army and gathering the support of the Highland clans. The Covenanters were mainly Lowland Scots of Presbyterian Protestant religion, and one of their principal leaders was Archibald Campbell, the 8th Earl and First Marquis of Argyle. Many of the Highland clans that joined Montrose and Alasdair joined the cause of the King not out of loyalty to the King but as an opportunity to get back at the Campbells. Not surprisingly, this included up to a thousand MacGregors under the leadership of their chief, Patrick Roy MacGregor. Although Charles' father had proscribed the clan, the opportunity to wreak vengeance on the Campbells and regain their ancestral lands was their motivation.

Montrose's army was initially very successful, and won battles throughout the north of Scotland, even when outnumbered, due to the loyalty and ferocity of the Scots-Irish and Highland troops led by Alasdair. The Highlanders employed the famous Highland-charge with great effect in many of the battles. A significant triumph of the war was Montrose's winter assault on the Campbell territories in Argyle and Lorne in the winter 1644-1645. This daring campaign was at first discouraged by Montrose, because it involved marching his army through the Highland mountain passes at a time of year that could have been deadly cold. His Highland army, however, was much more interested in attacking the Campbells than the Lowlands, and they convinced Montrose that their skill in navigating the high country would see them through. The MacGregors, no doubt, exploited some of the skills that they had learned while avoiding capture since 1604. The campaign was very successful, and Montrose's army raided through the Campbell lands in Breadalbane, Glenorchy, around Loch Awe and Inveraray. Alastair was called 'the Devastator' by the Campbells, because his troops plundered the area, burning every building and taking thousands of cattle. The climax of the campaign was the battle at Inverlochry, on 2 February 1645. The Campbells had regrouped and brought in troops from the Lowlands and were in hot pursuit of Montrose's army as it headed north towards Loch Ness. Again, Montrose and the Highlanders exploited their knowledge of the

Highlands and managed to surprise the Campbells by doubling back through the high country around Ben Nevis and attacking them from behind. Although Montrose's army was outnumbered two-to-one, the Earl of Argyle's forces were soundly defeated.

In recognition of the MacGregor clan's support, Montrose made a written promise, on 7 June 1645, to return their lands in Glenorchy, Glenstrae and Glengyle, once the King was restored to power. Unfortunately, a week later Charles lost the battle of Naseby, and in September Montrose was defeated at Philiphaugh. At the time of Montrose's defeat, Alasdair had led a group of about 300 to 500 Highlanders back into the Highlands to gather more recruits and to further plunder the Campbell territories. It is likely that the MacGregors went with him. He had left most of his Irish troops with Montrose, where they ended up being slaughtered at Philiphaugh. Alasdair and the Highlanders fled to the then traditional lands of the McDonalds in the Western Isles and cleared the Campbells out of Islay and Kintyre. There they remained defiant until the spring of 1647 when Argyle assembled the main Scottish army, which had returned from the wars in England. It was led by General David Leslie, and marched to Kintyre to confront the rebels. Alasdair's army was vastly outnumbered and was forced to retreat. Alasdair left 300 of his clan to hold Dunaverty castle, which they were unable to do, and they were brutally massacred. Alasdair, and about 500 of his troops, retreated first to Islay and then back to County Antrim. It is quite possible that a number of MacGregors escaped with him, as there would be no mercy for them if they stayed in Scotland.

It is clear from the headstones in the old Layde Church cemetery that some of Alasdair's troops settled in the Marquis of Antrim's estates in the Glynns.¹² Alasdair would go on to die in battle in Ireland at Dungan Hill; however, his two sons, Colla and Archibald, went on to live in Kilmore and Glassmullin respectively, and are buried in the cemetery along with their descendants. Also buried in the cemetery is Major Alexander Macaulay. His gravestone reads as follows:

'In the Scotch Army of Charles 1st in Ulster was Major Alexander Macaulay from Ardincaple Dumbarton Shire. He married Alice Stewart of Ballintoy...'

Some of the MacGregors who escaped with Alasdair may also have settled in the Glynns. The earliest record of the name McGreer is found in the Hearth Money Rolls for County Antrim in 1666 and 1669.¹³ In 1669, John Oge McGreer lived in the parish of Layde, in the townland of Tirkilly, on the north side of Glanaan. In the Hearth Money Roll for 1666, he is listed as John McGreyr along with John Duffe McGreyr, Dan Bane McGreyer, and Thomas McGryer. It is believed that the MacGregors that settled in the Glynns changed their name to McGreer due to the proscription of the name MacGregor, and to hide from the government. Also, not far away, in the parish of Culfeightrin, lived Archibald McGreer in Ballyreagh townland.

In the Hearth Money Rolls there are also a number of people with the surname Greer. This name is actually much more common than the surname McGreer. The Greers are

also believed to be a sept of the MacGregor clan, however, they may not be that closely related to the McGreers. The Greers are believed to be a branch of the Griersons from Lag in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. The Griersons are also said to be descendant from the MacGregor clan; however, it is likely from an earlier date, as they have a Lowland Scot heritage as demonstrated by the English form of their name and the fact that they supported the Covenanters.

There are many records of McGreer families in the parish registers of Layde (1826-1899), Diocese of Connor. The principal townlands where they lived are Ballybrack, Cashlan, Cloghglass, Knocknacarry, Lubitavish, Lugflugh, Tirkilly, and Waterford (Bellisk). There are not many McGreers still living in the Glynnns, as a majority emigrated to North America between about 1750 and 1850. There are known records of at least four McGreer families who emigrated to the United States, and two families who have emigrated to Canada. There is also one family of McGreers that emigrated back to Scotland and settled in Ayrshire.

This article is primarily concerned with the McGreers that are related to Captain Gilbert McGreer, who emigrated to Canada in 1820 and is the ancestor of the McGreers living in Canada. Gilbert was born in 1763 in the townland of Lubitavish, in Glanaan, which is near to Ossian's Grave. At that time, Lubitavish was also called Lubvane. Gilbert was one of at least five children of Daniel McGreer and his wife, Moria Robinson, who are buried in the old Layde Franciscan Church cemetery near Cushendall. Figure 1 shows Daniel's gravestone inscription:

'Lubvane, 4th May 1819.
Erected by GILBERT MC
GREER in memory of his
Father Daniel McGreer who
departed this life the 4th November
in the Year of our Lord 1805
Aged 86 Years
Also his wife Moria Robinson
who departed this life
8th February 1795 Aged 66 Years
& Also four of his Children
Also four of the above
Gilbert McGreers Children



Figure 1 Daniel McGreer's Gravestone

Unfortunately, little is known of Daniel McGreer and his other children; however, it is quite likely that he was a descendant from the McGreers (McGreys) that lived in Tirkilly in 1669, as Lubitavish is right next to Tirkilly.

Gilbert was a merchant mariner for over 40 years (1780 to 1820), and was a ship's master for at least the last 20 years of his career. A ship's master is now more commonly referred to as a ship's captain. He sailed mostly smaller trading vessels such as brigs and galliots out of the Irish ports of Derry, Coleraine, Larne and Belfast.

Gilbert's obituary from the *Belfast Newsletter*, September 10, 1841 reads:

On the 6th July last, aged 76 years, at Napanee Mills, near Kingston, Upper Canada, Captain Gilbert McGreer. The deceased was a native of the Glens, county Antrim, where he resided for many years at Lubvane Cottage, near Cushendall, a district in which his memory will be long cherished. Captain McGreer was a very successful navigator, a cheerful companion, a good husband, an indulgent parent, and a man of unbending integrity.

Gilbert McGreer was married to Elizabeth Hall (1773-1850), and they had 12 children, who were all born in Ireland. The family lived in Lubvane Cottage in Lubitavish until 1820, when they emigrated to Richmond Township, Lennox County, Upper Canada, which is near the town of Napanee. The 8 surviving children that came to Canada in 1820 were: Archibald, Daniel, Mary Anne, Maria, Charles, Thomas Rice, Elizabeth and Rose. Elizabeth Hall was the child of the first marriage of her mother whose maiden name was Mary Hamilton. Mary married a second time to Duncan McElheran (1747-1810) of Drimnaroagh, and the children of this marriage were Mary's half-brothers and half-sisters. The McElherans were close to the McGreers, and often wrote them letters. A number of their letters have been preserved and they provide an insight into life in the Glynns during the early 1800s. There were eight McElheran children, all born in Ireland except one. Two of them, Archibald and Charles McElheran, owned a tan-yard and house called 'Cloney' near Knocknacarry.¹⁴ The McElherans came to Canada between 1850 and 1860. The last survivor of the family in Canada was Mary McElheran, who had been adopted by Mrs. Dunwoody, who was also a McElheran; other members of the family went to Australia from Canada.

Gilbert started his career when he was a young man, probably by first going to a navigation school for about four years and following that he would likely have been an apprentice to a ship's master. The following story came down through the McGreer family:

When Capt. McGreer passed his exams in navigation and returned home he got a letter from his teacher to come to him as he had omitted to tell him a very important thing about navigation. The teacher lived some distance away and Gilbert would have to walk the distance, so he wrote asking if he could write it for him, but his teacher refused and said he would have to come. Gilbert, therefore, went and was told "above all things in sailing keep a good lookout". This was so impressed on his mind that he never forgot its importance, which is what his teacher had desired.¹⁵

Gilbert followed the sea all through the Napoleonic wars. This was a profitable time for merchant seafaring, as wages rose considerably during wartime. This was due to the higher risks, that the ship could be captured as a prize, or the crew could be pressed for service in the navy. There is no evidence that Gilbert ever served in the Royal Navy, because there is no record or family tradition of this.

Somewhere between 1790 and 1815, Gilbert made a voyage to India, Japan and the Far East. He was absent from Ireland for nearly three years and returned with a profitable cargo of articles made in those countries, especially shawls, two of which are still retained by members of the family. At the time the East India trade was controlled by the East India Company, and it is most likely that Gilbert was one of the crew on a voyage rather than the captain. It is interesting to note that the owner of the town of Cushendall at that time was Mr. Francis Turnley, who made his fortune in the service of the East India Company.

There are numerous shipping records available for the period when Gilbert was a seafarer and they give some indication of the types of voyages he made. The first ship where he was recorded as Master, was the brig, *Two Brothers*, which made a voyage from Derry and Larne to New York in 1801 (departed about 5 June) according to the Belfast News-Letter, 5 May and 26 May, 1801. The vessel carried emigrants from Ireland to America, and likely returned to Ireland with lumber.

In Lloyd's Register of 1810, Gilbert is listed as the Master of the galliot, *Edward*, 70 tons, built in 1798 in Belfast, and owned by Mr. Richards.

Between 1816 and 1818 Gilbert McGreer was master of the brig, *Robert*, 66 tons, a Danish prize vessel purchased in Leith 30 May 1812. The ship was captured by the British 14-gun brig, *Strenuous*, commanded by Lieutenant John Nugent, and was originally named the *No. 53*. Below is the Certificate of Irish Registry from the port of Coleraine, dated 21 May 1816, which reads:

No. 71. In pursuance of this Act... Thomas Rice Junior of Coleraine in the County of Londonderry, Merchant, and Gilbert McGreer of the same ship, Master, having taken and subscribed the Oath required by this Act, and having sworn that they are sole owners of the Ship or Vessel called the 'Robert' of Coleraine, whereof the said ship or vessel was a Prize No. 53, legally condemned, and the prize duties paid at Leith 30th May, 1812, as appears by a former Certificate of Registry, granted at this Port the 24th July, 1812 No. 61 now delivered up and cancelled, this vessel having been altered and increased in her dimensions. The ship or vessel is foreign built, has one deck and two masts; her length from the fore part of the main stem to the after part of the stern-post aloft, is fifty-eight feet four inches, her breadth at the broadest part, whether above or below the main wales sixteen feet. Her depth of hold - eight feet six inches and admeasures sixty six 30/94 tons, that she is a square-sterned brig, has no gallery and no figure head; and the said subscribing owners - having consented and agreed to the above description and admeasurement and having caused sufficient security to be given, as is required by the said act, the said Brig, 'Robert' has been duly registered at the Port of Coleraine.

Twenty-first Day of May 1816. Certificate of Irish Registry for the British Plantation Trade.

The ship was jointly owned by Gilbert McGreer and Thomas Rice Junior. Thomas was the son of Robert Rice, a prosperous merchant in Coleraine.¹⁶ The Rice family was involved in the linen trade and owned a number of ships that traded around Northern Europe acquiring commodities for the manufacture of linen, such as Danzig ashes (for bleaching) and flaxseed. Robert Rice owned two warehouses in Coleraine, and a linen hall. The Rice family was also active in the development of Portrush near the mouth of the river Bann. The port of Coleraine is located up the Bann River, and shoals at the river-mouth limited the draft of vessels entering the port to 8 1/2 feet. Larger vessels had to unload at Portrush. A painting of the port of Coleraine by J.W. Campbell is given in Figure 2.



Figure 2 The Port of Coleraine in 1822 by J.W. Campbell

There survives a passenger list for one of Gilbert's voyages with the *Robert* to Philadelphia. The *Robert* arrived 28 August 1816 and had a crew of 5 (Gilbert McGreer, Master; Thomas Mooney, mate; Daniel McCurdy, seaman; Alexander Saunders, seaman; and William Patterson, boy) and 26 passengers, all from Ulster.

The last ship that Gilbert was master of was the brig, *Mary*, of Coleraine (see Figure 3). The vessel is listed in Lloyd's Register, 1819, (Underwriters), as Vessel No 574, 115 tons,

built 1814 in Sunderland, England. The owner was again Thomas Rice Junior of Coleraine.

Some insight into the shipping trade can be derived from the letter below addressed to Archibald McGreer, Gilbert's eldest son, living in Lubvane, Cushendall, from Thomas Bellas, an associate of Thomas Rice Junior.

Coleraine 12th September 1818

Dear Archbd:

I received yours of the 10th yesterday and fortunately did not answer it by return post, as I am happy to inform you that we received a letter this morning from Mr. Jenkins advising us of the arrival of the *Mary* at Quarantine ground about 4 miles from Liverpool where he expected they would be released on Monday next. He said they were not allowed any communication with the shore; therefore he could not give any particulars but would write every information necessary in a few days. Mr. Rice or I intends going to Liverpool next week which will perhaps be the means of furthering them to Portrush for the purpose of taking in potatoes for some part of America. (This) I merely mention as being Mr. Rice's intention, but he does not know what part he may send her to as yet till he sees your father, as he thinks it will now be too late to send her to New York - for my part, I would rather wait to the Spring, but I cannot now reject if your father is willing to go, but how it may turn out, God only knows. I hope your speculation of the pigs will turn out well. I have scarce been doing anything since I came home from Campbelltown, business of every kind is dull here. Meal is selling today at 2/10 and 3/4, potatoes 1/4 and barley 14d a stone. Mr. McKenzie had a letter on Monday from Johnson, Captain of the *Nicholia*, dated Cape Henry, 2nd August, being then 72 days out from Portrush and still 200 miles farther to go. I believe I never heard of so long a passage. (Stewart has acted a most villainous part with respect to the payment of the balance of the long unsettled acct for the..... he would not pay one farthing of 350 due by him as a balance. I think a more dishonourable action never was transacted by a man who so much dependence was put in. We were confident alone in Stewart but he has proven contrary; you would have actually pitied Jas McKenzie had you heard him when Stewart was brought face to face; all of which I will have an opportunity of explaining to you at some future time. Till then, believe me, Dear Archibald

Your sincere friend

(signed) Thos. Bellas

At the end of the Napoleonic War, the shipping rates dropped dramatically, as well as the demand for the produce of Ireland. The economy of Ireland was in poor shape, and the future looked much brighter in British North America. After spending much of his career transporting Irish to America, Gilbert ended his maritime career in 1820, at the age of 57, and decided to take his family of eight children over to Canada. Thomas Rice, Jr, and his family also joined them, and they settled in Kingston, Ontario.

The brig, *Mary*, is recorded as arriving in Quebec City from Coleraine, 15 Aug 1820, W Inglis master, with 67 settlers, and docked at McRoberts and McClean. Unfortunately, the *Mary* ran aground on her return voyage, at l'Islette in the St. Lawrence, and was badly damaged (about 9 Sept). It had to be returned to Quebec City 26 Sept, where it was probably sold for scrap.

The McGreer family still has a number of heirlooms from Captain Gilbert McGreer, including his chronometer, which was made by L. Samuel, Pool Lane in Liverpool, in 1806, a telescope, a barometer and a porthole, but unfortunately not many written records.

One story that has been passed down through the family relates to the chronometer:

On one occasion, his ship struck rocks, and they all came ashore on a lifeline. After they were ashore, he noticed that he had left his watch, hanging in his cabin. On mentioning the fact, a Norwegian sailor, a member of his crew, offered to go and get it. Capt. McGreer told him not to take the risk, but he was an active man, and brought the watch ashore, which shows the good feeling he had for the Captain.

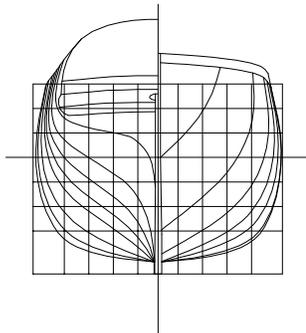
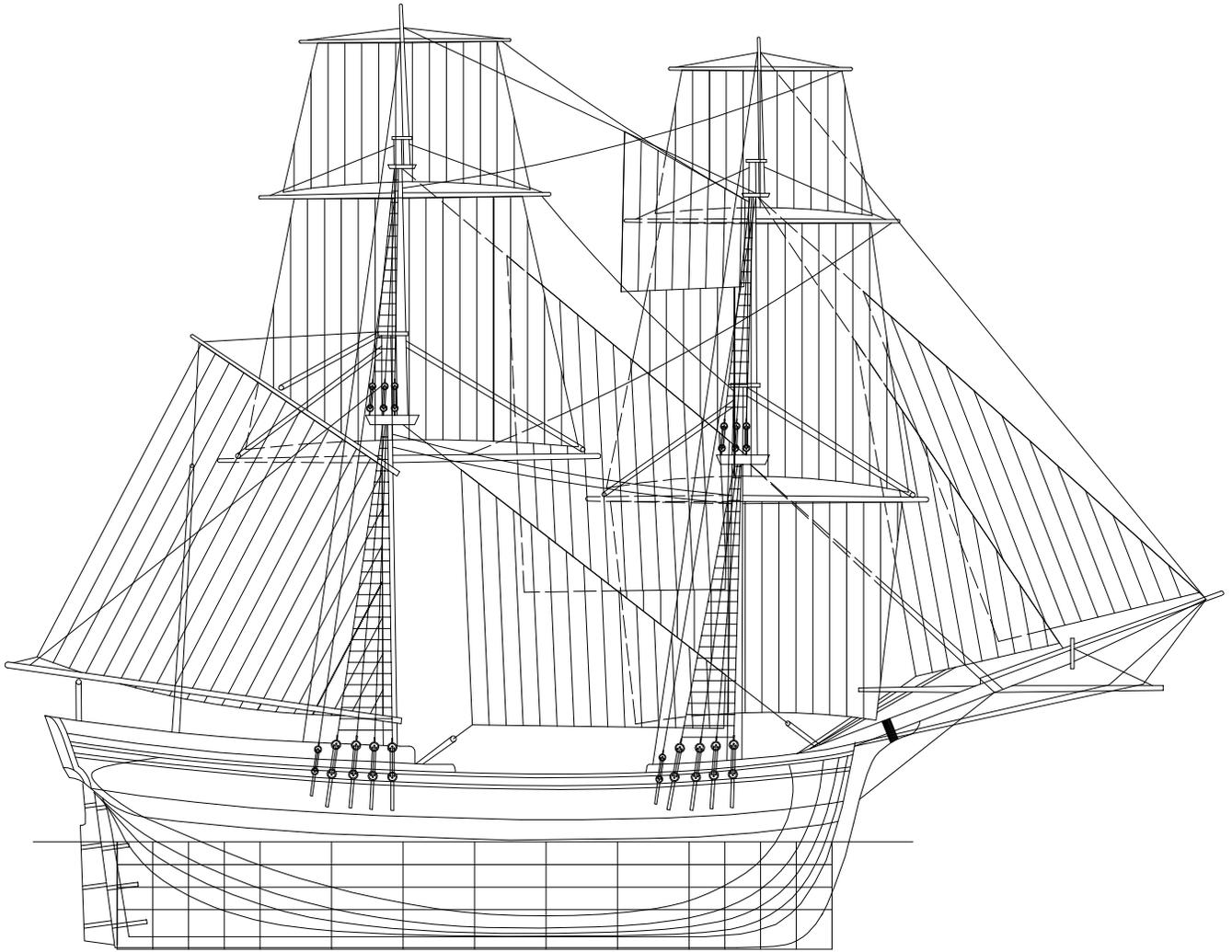
When the McGreers first arrived in Canada, Capt Gilbert McGreer rented a house in Kingston and then they rented farm-land on nearby Amherst Island, which at that time was owned by the Earl of Mount Cashel, Ireland.

In 1826 Gilbert McGreer purchased a farm of about 170 acres on the right bank of the Napanee River, some two miles west of the town of Napanee, on the road to Deseronto. Family tradition had it that the previous owner had been disloyal to the Crown in the war of 1812 with the United States, and that he had to forfeit his land. Of Gilbert's eight children, Archibald (1791-1872) and Charles (1808-1886) both purchased their own farms and married, the latter twice, but had no children. Thomas Rice McGreer (1814-1897) married Caroline Embury and they had two children. By his second wife, Mary Empey, he had seven children. Thomas Rice McGreer was an enterprising man with good business sense. He purchased the family farm from his father and built a fine brick house called 'Riverside'. From his children are descended all the Canadian McGreers. Daniel (1798-1867) remained a bachelor and farmed north of Napanee, near the village of Selby. Maria (1806-1897), Elizabeth (1817-1897) and Rose (1819-1847) were spinsters. After Capt Gilbert McGreer's death in 1841, his widow Elizabeth and Rose left the farm home on the Deseronto Road and went to live in a small house in Napanee. Rose opened a school there. After some five years she contracted measles and died at the age of 28. Maria and Elizabeth then went to live with Daniel on the farm in Selby. Mary Anne (1803-1879) married Lt-Col John Portt and had a daughter, Anne.

The McGreers prospered in their new home in Canada and now are found throughout the country and around the world. The Glens of Antrim played an important part in their history as the place to which they escaped from their troubles in Scotland, and where they lived happily for many years.

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PRINCIPAL PARTICULARS

LENGTH ON DECK	68'9"
TONNAGE LENGTH	65'6"
WATERLINE LENGTH	63'4"
DRAFT	9'6"
BREADTH	20'2"
DEPTH OF HOLD	9'
REGISTERED TONNAGE	115 TONS

Brig Mary

DRAWN BY DAN MCGREER

SCALE



The Antrim Coast and Glens is an area of County Antrim in Northern Ireland, designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1988. The designation takes in the coastline from Ballycastle in the north to Larne in the south of County Antrim, and includes Rathlin Island. The inland area encompasses the Glens of Antrim and the Antrim Plateau which reaches its highest point at Trostan, 550 m above sea level and comprises 706 square kilometres. Armoy, County Antrim.Â Martinstown is a small village in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. Located 8 miles from Ballymena, it is situated in Glenravel, locally known as "The Tenth Glen", alongside the widely known nine Glens of Antrim. It lies within the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area. The Glens of Antrim, known locally as simply The Glens, is a region of County Antrim, Northern Ireland. It comprises nine glens (valleys), that radiate from the Antrim Plateau to the coast. The Glens are an area of outstanding natural beauty and are a major tourist attraction in north Antrim. The main towns and villages in the Glens are Ballycastle, Cushendun, Cushendall, Waterfoot, Carnlough and Glenarm. From the County Antrim town of Larne, rugged cliffs stretch north for 80 miles, broken only by nine deep green glens, each with its own unique character. First stop, Ballygally, where, no surprise in a land steeped in legend, the hotel is reputed to have a (friendly) ghost. Winding on past spectacular scenery, solve the mystery of the beech maze at Carnfunnock Country Park. Splash down at the beaches of Ballygally, Glenarm, Carnlough, Cushendall or Cushendun.