**A Historical Perspective**

**The year is 1946. The month is March. The 25th day of the month. At Glasgow Cathedral , Nan Sharpe, only daughter and child of John Campbell Sharpe and Helen McAllister, has just married. Nan is 17 years old. Within weeks she will turn 18. As a new bride, she will remain with her parents for the rest of the year as her husband has to return immediately to his post in the Royal Navy.**

**Nan has grown up just a few steps from the ancient Cathedral, at Glebe Street, as the name suggests, part of Glasgow’s original ecclesiastic centre. Here, too, her mother, Helen McAllister, also grew up, in a family house positioned at what had been an ancient crossroads. Nan’s maternal grandparents, to whom she was close, had lived here. But Nan’s ancestral background had not always been so close at hand. Let us go back 100 years before the day of Nan’s wedding, back to 1846, when eight young people existed – the eight individuals who would become Nan’s great-grandparents (her parents’ grandparents). Of these 8 people, only one was already in Glasgow, having been born there. The rest, gradually, would gravitate to the great industrial city to produce their own stories; their own children, and grandchildren (including Nan’s parents).**

**In summary, the year 1846, the 8 individuals:**

**Jason Sharpe, an 11 year old boy living in rural Co. Fermanagh, in Devenish parish, Ireland, with his parents and older brother and two sisters. He is the youngest of his family. His father is a small farmer and local Constable.**

**MaryJane Campbell, a girl aged about 7, is living somewhere in Ireland, in Ulster, with her parents, three older brothers and a younger brother. Her father is a farmer. Within a year, by 1847, she had come to live in Glasgow with her parents and brothers. In 1858 she married Jason Sharpe in Glasgow. He too had left his home in Co Fermanagh, with his parents and brother and sisters in 1847, arriving in Glasgow.**

**Mary Jane and Jason had 9 children in Glasgow including John Sharpe (b.1870), Nan’s paternal grandfather.**

**Robert Walker McIlroy, is a 14 year old in 1846. He is the youngest child of his parents and has several much older siblings. He lives in Co Antrim, Ireland and had been born at the village of Whitehouse, on the rural verges of Belfast. His father was a Linen Weaver. Robert already has a much older brother, David McIlroy, who married at Whitehouse when Robert was a year old. By 1846 David had emigrated to Scotland and lived in Neilston parish, Renfrewshire.**

**Margaret Johnston, is a child of 4 years of age, in 1846. She lives in the town of Johnstone in Renfrewshire, the youngest of 9 children. Her father, who would die when she was aged 6, was a Manager in a Cotton Spinning Mill in the town. In 1864 she married Robert Walker McIlroy who had come to Johnstone, from Co. Antrim, in the previous few years. They settled in Glasgow around 1870 after a few years living at various locations in Margaret’s native Renfrewshire and Robert’s native Co. Antrim, near Belfast. Margaret and Robert had 10 children, including Elizabeth McIlroy (b.1876), Nan’s paternal grandmother. Elizabeth married John Sharpe (son of Jason Sharpe & Mary Jane Campbell) in 1900 and had 5 children including John Campbell Sharpe (b.1904), Nan’s father.**

**Thomas McAllister, is 17 years old in 1846. He is the youngest of twelve children born to his parents when his father was 56 and his mother 43. His father, a Shoemaker with his own small business, died in 1835 when Thomas was 5. Thomas has learned the trade of Shoemaking too. He was born in Glasgow and his 4 grandparents had also lived in the city. Part of his paternal ancestry goes back at least 200 years ,to c.1650, still within Glasgow. Apart from a period in the early 1840s when, as a boy he lived at Greenock with his mother and much older brothers, he has spent most of his life in Glasgow.**

**Elizabeth Low, is a 13 year old girl, living in Dundee. She is known as Betsey. She is one of the younger children of a family of 14. Her parents, house property and shop owners, with their own business, had lived at Bonnet Hill, also known as Hilltown, in Dundee, their income derived from around 40 tenants’ rents and from shops they owned including a licenced business selling spirits and a butcher’s shop. Her father was a Butcher to trade. However, by 1846, Elizabeth was orphaned, both parents dying in their mid 40s leaving a large family - her father had died in 1843 and her mother in 1845 when she was 12. In the years after 1846 half her siblings would remain in Dundee, half coming to Glasgow. By 1857 she had met Thomas McAllister and was his wife, in Glasgow. They had 6 children, in Glasgow including their youngest David McAllister (b.1870), Nan’s maternal grandfather.**

**James Cassidy, is a 3 year old boy in 1846. He lives in rural southern Donegal, at the townland (collection of farmhouses) of Cormullion, a short distance from the small town of Laghey facing onto Donegal Bay and the Atlantic Ocean beyond. James has an older brother. His parents are still young, in their 20s and will have more children yet. His father is a small farmer.**

**Grace Lawn (or Lahan), is an infant, 2 years old. She lives at the townland of Drumadoney, a mile or two east of Donegal Town, and a couple of miles from Cormullion where James Cassidy lives with his parents. Such is the rural, small farming setting, both families will know each other. Grace has at least two siblings, a brother John and a sister Ann. There is not much between them in ages. Her father is a small farmer, leasing a few acres of land at Drumadoney. In their early 20s, both Grace Lawn and James Cassidy have come to Glasgow where they married in 1869. They had 8 children in Glasgow including Ann Cassidy (b.1871), Nan’s maternal grandmother. Ann married David McAllister (b.1870 Glasgow, son of Thomas McAllister & Betsey Low) in 1897 and had 8 children including Helen McAllister (b.1905), Nan’s mother.**

**The Year then is 1846.**

**Further details of the 8 individuals who would become Nan Sharpe’s great-grandparents:**

**Jason Sharpe, an 11 year old boy, lives in the rural parish of Devenish, a few miles west of Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh in Ireland, in the west of the county and heading up towards the southernmost extremities of neighbouring Co. Donegal. Here Jason’s father, Robert Sharpe and his mother Dorothea (known as Dolly) Ingram, live. They have been married for about 25 years. They have lived mostly at Giltagh townland in the parish of Devensih, but also at neighbouring townland Derryvarry. Here Robert Sharpe has worked as a small farmer and also a local Constable. Jason is the youngest of their children. He has a brother, Edward, 13 years older than him, a sister Margaret, 9 years his senior and a sister Elizabeth, who is 3 years older than him. His parents also had a child named Sarah, born 1829, 6 years before Jason, but who had died as a baby, by 1830 when another daughter whom they named Sarah was born.**

**In 1846, Jason Sharpe, as a boy of 11, was familiar with his rural surroundings, his parents, his older brother and older sisters. Nearby was the small town of Derrygonnelly where his cousins, the Kerrs (or Carrs) lived, children of his mother’s sister, Isabella Ingram, wife of George Kerr (or Carr). A little to the east in the parish, was Devenish Island, an ancient location of religious and educational importance, with its high, round pointed tower. Much of the parish , and of Co. Fermanagh, was populated by descendants from the time of the Plantation of Ulster, around 200 years before,when Scots and English large landowners placed their tenants in Ulster. These were not of the original Irish race, not of the Roman Catholic faith. Thus were Jason’s parents, Robert Sharpe and Dolly Ingram, descendants of such English and Scottish settlers. The surnames, not native Irish, give the clue – Ingram, Kerr, Carr, Graham (Dolly’s mother, Sarah Graham). Robert Sharpe himself, Jason’s father, may have been descended not from Scottish settlers but from English ancestry – this, by word of mouth, down the generation from Nan Sharpe, Jason’s great-granddaughter, who had learned from her father and he from his (Jason’s son) that the Sharpes were so descended and indeed that the name itself was “spelt the English way, with an e added”.**

**As expected, Jason’s baptism was found in the state church registers for the parish – the Church of Ireland.**

**It is 1846. Jason Sharpe is a boy of 11 on the verge of much change in his life. Over this and the next year 1847, a famine with its attendant political and physical aspects, takes hold in Ireland, a staple of diet, the potato crop, fails due to disease. Emigration from Ireland had always existed but the years 186-47 were to see huge numbers leave the rural locations for the cities, in USA and Canada and for ports closer to home, in England and Scotland. In August 1847 alone, 25,000 Irish persons arrived in Glasgow to find work, food and a new life. Ireland was changing, the ‘potato famine’ but an aspect of a wider picture of evictions and a deliberate change in the way the land was used, leased and owned. Every story would be individual but the spirit of emigration from Ireland was at a high, for whatever combination of reasons, in 1846 and 1847 and in the decade that followed.**

**And so, by 1847, Jason Sharpe, aged 12, his parents Robert and Dolly, brother Edward and sisters Margaret and Elizabeth were in Glasgow. Here Robert Sharpe found work labouring at a local ironworks, among other jobs. The family lived at this time on Garngad Road, still a semi-rural location, about a mile north of Glasgow, Cathedral, but a very different situation from their lives in rural Devensih. In 1850 Robert Sharpe died and was buried at Sighthill Cemetery. The following year 1851, Jason’s brother Edward Sharpe, married a local girl and started his own family. In 1855, his sister Margaret, but a short time married, died in her late 20s, in childbirth. In 1856, a day after New Year, Jason’s mother,Dolly Ingram died at Garngad Road. Jason, now 20 years old, was a labourer at a local chemical works. Two years after his mother’s death, on 8 June 1858, he had left Garngad Road and was living at 75 Castle Street,, a short distance from Glasgow Cathedral and backing onto Glebe Street, Townhead. At some point prior to marriage he had met Mary Jane Campbell, a girl of 18 who had also been born in Ireland. Her father William had been a small farmer in Ireland, like Jason’s father. The Campbells lived at the time of Mary Jane’s marriage in 1858 next to Jason’s residence – at 83 Castle Street. Mary Jane’s family had also come to Glasgow around 1847. She had three older brothers, John, Thomas and William and a younger brother Andrew……………..**