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Cree Surname Research

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The Cree Family History Society (now Cree Surname Research) was founded in 1991 to encourage research into the history and world-wide distribution of the surname CREE and of families of that name, and to collect, conserve and make available the results of that research.

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# A Census of Scottish Cree Families 1694-1720

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IT ISN'T UNTIL THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY that we seem to have anything near complete data on Scottish Crie/Cree families. So to give a base of information that might be fairly complete I have tried to list all the families that were producing children in the generation from 1694 to 1720. By this time most of the parish records that we have now were in operation. I have used the new OPRI<sup>1</sup> index which has been compiled by the Mormons in collaboration with the Scottish Record Office. This is much more systematic than the IGI<sup>2</sup>. The 1694 Hearth Tax (from Mitchell and in our *Perth File*) also gives some corroboration.

In general Cree families (I include the earlier spelling Crie in these throughout this article) lived in Perth and the parishes immediately adjacent to it to the south and south-west: Methven, Tibbermore, Aberdalgie and Forteviot. There were also some Crees in Errol a few miles to the east and in Abernethy to the south-east across the River Tay. Abernethy is almost in Fife and in that county there were Cree families in a few parishes, Strathmiglo, Markinch, Kettle and St Andrews. Just a few families had started to move further afield by 1694.

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<sup>1</sup>Old Parochial Registers Index (1992).

<sup>2</sup>The International Genealogical Index, also compiled by the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons).

## Methven and Tibbermore

Cree families lived in a group of fermtouns (farm communities containing several families) in an area that is partly in Methven and partly in Tibbermore parish. I found that in Methven parish alone there were at least seven Cree families, probably eight or nine. The fathers are **Thomas, Alexander, David, David, James, John, William and George**. (Mother's names are not given at this period.) The list of baptisms for each father looks like a single family, except for those with fathers' names Alexander and David. Children of Alexander show a gap of nine years. Marriage records suggest three different mothers but we cannot tell how many fathers were named Alexander; there could be just one who remarried. Children with father David show a gap from 1700 to 1708. We have evidence from a testament that there were in fact two different fathers called David. The baptisms of John's children span a rather large period for one wife, but being end-on may be of the same father (the marriage records again suggesting a different mother).

This rather low level of duplication of fathers' names suggests that they came from a smaller number of Cree families in Methven and Tibbermore in the previous generation. In fact there are three families recorded in the 1660s to 1670s (fathers David, William and Alexander), but we are cut off by the start of Methven parochial registers in 1662. Two glovers from Bachilton (Methven parish) William and Thomas Crie, were admitted as Burgesses of Perth in 1678. A normal age for this was early twenties so they are likely to be brothers; one was stated to be a son of William Crie. The 1694 Hearth Tax shows two men named William Crie, of whom one was at Bachilton (with two hearths) and could well be the father of the two glovers and no longer producing children himself. It also shows James and one David but not Thomas, John, Alexander or George. John is probably the one shown in Tibbermore parish (3 hearths - is this Cultmalindie?) and George may have been too young; his first-born is recorded in 1700.

Tibbermore OPR (Old Parochial Register) only starts in 1694 and here I have found four fathers during my chosen period: **John, Henry, David** and **Alexander**. Henry baptised just a daughter in 1694 and may be the one who turns up to marry in Abernethy in 1699. John and David look like the same as the Methven ones (the families merge nicely) but Alexander must be a different one. The marriages are consistent with this. The Hearth Tax for Tibbermore shows just a John Crie. We should perhaps expect some overlap between the two parishes since, although Perthshire parishes cover large areas, the known Cree locations are quite near the boundary, eg. Tippermalloch in Methven, Cultmalindie in Tibbermore.

## Aberdalgie, Forteviot and Perth

Aberdalgie OPR starts in 1615. There is just one family here, that of **Thomas** Crie. He cannot be the same as the Methven Thomas Crie. There is also a single birth in 1706 of John son of Alexander. The Hearth Tax shows two Thomases, but one may be of an older generation.

Forteviot OPR doesn't start until 1710. There is a William son of **William** baptised in 1712 and an Alexander son of Alexander baptised in 1713 (possibly the same as in Aberdalgie). The Hearth Tax shows yet another Thomas Crie, described as an officer, in 1694; he may be of the older generation. A William Cree starts a large family here in 1721 but that is just outside the period I have defined - we have to draw a line somewhere!

Coming to Perth itself, the only Crie couples to produce children in our period were Provosts of Perth. **James** Crie and Isobell Blair, who completed a family of twelve by about 1697, and their son **Patrick** and his wife Elspeth Young. (Thomas Crie and Elspeth Smith's last Perth baptism was in 1684 with a possible further daughter at St Madoes in 1693.) This is strange considering the large number of males around one or two generations earlier; the four brothers of Thomas Crie, glover burgess, who

died in 1654 (See CREE NEWS 6 page 10) had fifteen sons between them from 1620 to 1655; Alexander the maltman burgess had a son Alexander in 1649 and Henrie Crie (weaver) and his wife Christian had three sons. Some of these sons will not have survived to have families but it still seems odd that there are so few in Perth OPRs. The Hearth Tax too shows only one - John Crie. Perhaps James was exempt as Provost!

### Errol and Abernethy

The Errol Crees seem to virtually die out for a century after 1685 but a **William** Cree, who may be connected, starts a family in 1718 in the nearby parish of Liff, Benvie and Invergowrie in the County of Angus.

At Abernethy we should count five families, those of **Hendrie** Cree and Elizabeth Bayne (m 1699); **John** Crie and Marjorie Lean (m 1704); **John** Cree and Catherine Clerk (m 1711 but children all baptised in Abdie or Newburgh, Fife); **Andrew** Cree and Agnes Walker (m 1718) and **Lau**. Cree who baptised a daughter Helen in 1718. This rivals Methven in number of families although they are more spread through our generation period.

### Cree families in Fife

In Strathmiglo, Fife, **David** Cree and Margaret Williamson (m 1713) had four children from 1719 and at Markinch a **John** Cree baptised a son George in 1698. At Kettle **Thomas** Cree baptised a son Thomas in 1694 and **William** Cree, shoemaker, started a family in about 1716. Over at St Andrews we have the family of **John** Cree, library-keeper, and Jean Watson from 1710. I have not looked at Hearth Tax returns for Fife.

### Further afield

In Glasgow **Patrick** Crie and Marie Watson married in 1694 and had two daughters.

In the Midlothian parish of Cramond we have two couples baptising children, **Thomas** Crie and Elizabeth Raeburn (m 1675) from 1679 to 1701; **William** Crie and Anne Alexander (m 1699) from 1699 to 1706. In 1717 **Thomas** Crie and Ann Bizatt were married at Glencorse and baptised a son Alexander the next year.

There is just one other definite Crie in the Perthshire Hearth Tax lists. This is **Thomas** Crie at St Martins, but the OPR, starting in 1694, has nothing.

### Trends and totals

So my "Census" of Cree families from 1694 to 1720 adds up to about thirty families. In parishes like Methven and Tibbermore I still resist the temptation to identify Crie fathers just after the start of the surviving OPRs with earlier Crie sons baptised in Perth where the OPR started sooner. We know from the Perth Burgh Record of Deeds that there were earlier Cree families in these parishes, and even in Methven it would only have needed one family of healthy boys around 1620 to produce a whole group of families such as were there around 1700.

The Perth evidence does push that way. It starts to look as though there was a fairly wholesale disappearance of Cries from Perth at some time before 1694. The Battle of Tibbermore (1644) in which many of the Glover Calling fought and 2000 men died seems to have been too early. The Cree brothers of Thomas Crie glover (d 1654) were all producing children after this date (except James but he seems to be alive in 1655 according to a deed). The Civil War may have killed more by disease than died fighting however. A plague, possibly typhus, raged for four years

from 1644 throughout Scotland and there was famine in the 1690s with more epidemics, but the drop in Cree population in the Burgh seems to have occurred between these two episodes. Smout writes in *A History of the Scottish People* (Collins/Fontana),

*Though the middens and the polluted water supplies continued to take their toll of human health and life, it showed not in great sweeping intermittent waves of mortality but in a high urban death rate, year in and year out, particularly among children. But people were used to this, accepted it as one of the hazards of town life, and did not attempt to change it until after the towns became much larger, more dangerous and more crowded in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.*

Smout also describes the emigration of sons of merchant families (pp 154-5). It is shortly after this time that we start to see Cree families outside the immediate surroundings of central Perthshire. We have already noted the first Crees in Kettle (Fife) and Glasgow in 1694, in St Andrews in 1707 and in Angus in 1718. The spread is rapid over a generation or so to Ayrshire (1721), Biggar (via Dunbarton in 1731), Saline, Fife (1740) and possibly County Down, Ireland, and Pennsylvania (1740s?).

Only the Glasgow and Saline branches can be (moderately) firmly connected back to Perthshire individuals.

By the 1750s, we have two new Cree merchant families moving into Perth, apparently from the Methven-Tibbermore stock, just when the one family who had survived in the Burgh as Provosts was on the wane. These are, firstly the cordiner, James Cree who became Deacon of Shoemakers and his wife Anne Maxton (m 1730), and then John Cree, merchant, and Agnes Waddle (m c 1751).

The challenge for individual members of Scottish descent in the CREE FHS is to trace their own genealogy back to one of the thirty or so families which lived around 1700. The information must be largely there in Trevor Cree's CREE VOLUME 2 and in the new OPRI microfiches which are now becoming generally available in public libraries.