

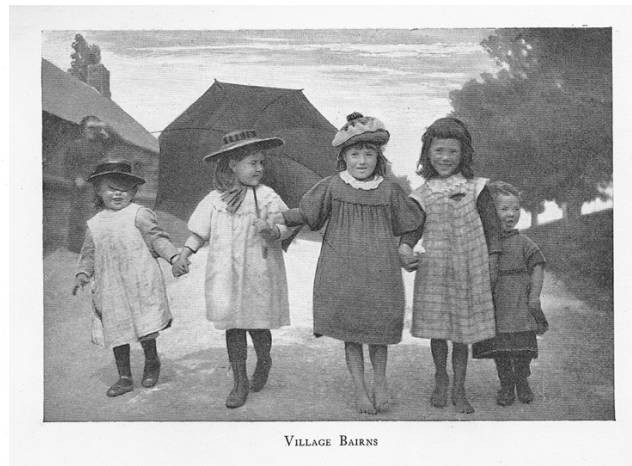
Honeymoon in Harrietfield; a story of books

Clifton Johnson married Anna McQueston on May 25th 1896 in Hockanum, Hadley, Massachusetts. Soon afterwards they sailed for Europe. They arrived in England and set off north to Scotland, and by early June had settled in Harrietfield for several weeks.

They stayed in the shoemaker's house on the front road of the village, which was owned by the estate and had been improved recently. Here they had the use of the parlour and a bedroom. The McAra family used the living room where there was a double bed and a truckle bed for the little girl, Kathie. Her brother, Jamie, slept next door with his grandparents while they had his bedroom.



KATHIE SCRUBS THE FRONT WALK



VILLAGE BAIRNS

From: Clifton Johnson, 'The Land of Heather', 1903

Why did they come here from New England for their honeymoon? Clifton Johnson was an artist, photographer and travel writer, and had been commissioned by the publishing house Dodd Mead, New York, to get illustrations for the American editions of the popular books of stories by Ian Maclaren; 'Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush', first published by Hodder and Stoughton in London in 1894, and 'The Days of Auld Lang Syne', 1895.

Ian Maclaren was the pen name of John Watson who had been the Free Kirk Minister in Logiealmond for less than two years in the 1870s. From here he moved to Glasgow and then Liverpool and

proved to be a popular preacher. A friend persuaded him to write some stories for the *British Weekly*, a religious magazine, and these grew into books. They became immensely popular in Scotland and elsewhere, especially with Scots abroad.



From 'Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush, by Ian Maclaren, 1894

Thomas Wylie, a local man from Shannoch farm, knew him well and wrote in his *Recollections and Traditions of Logiealmond* in the 1930s, that after the Rev. John Watson's experience of the city, 'his mind went back to the simple life and the homely Doric speech of the people where he was ordained.' 'We knew he took notes of quaint sayings and words still surviving in this remote place, though obsolete in many parts of the country. Of course, all this was just the material, which he afterwards shaped into his stories of Drumtochty', which were the first of the 'kailyard' school of literature.

Thomas Wylie considered that though Ian Maclaren 'has not the freshness, the whimsicality, the delightful humour of Barrie, still with us, nor the true power of local colouring of Crockett, he is still a true exponent of the simple life of a worthy generation of men and women passed away.' When first published the books were immensely popular and remained so well into the twentieth century. *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush* sold more than 700,000 copies, and was re-published by Albyn Press in Edinburgh as late as 1977.

Clifton and Anna's honeymoon visit was productive too – another book. This one he wrote himself, as well as providing the photographs and sketches that illustrated it. 'The Land of Heather' had a slow gestation but was published in 1903. He described the place and the people, as well as some of Maclaren's literary fictions; the self-sacrificing doctor of the novels was in reality not safe to consult after midday.

About a third of Clifton Johnson's book is about their time in Logiealmond and the rest about their travels through Scotland. They chose places with historic and literarily associations but he also writes about rural life in the farms and small towns. After Logiealmond they went to Perth and Scone, Edinburgh and Stirling, Kirriemuir (or Thrums for J M Barrie) and Glen Clova, Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond (for Sir Walter Scott), Dalmally and Oban, Mull and Skye, Alloway (for Robert Burns), Dumfries and Stranraer, and then they took a train south to be back in New England for the autumn, and publication of the illustrated American editions of Maclaren's books.

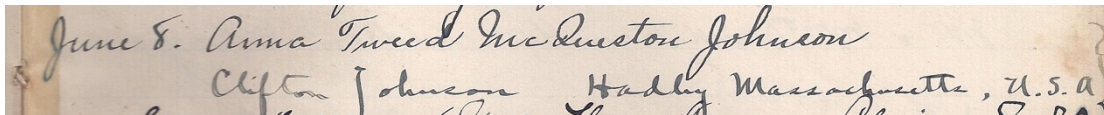
The book never mentions Anna – he writes as if he were travelling alone. But she does appear in some of the illustrations, looking very smart and wearing a striking hat. What was their luggage like for all this travelling, with his camera and tripod, heavy 5x7 glass plates and chemicals, and her hat?

Anna – stepping stone on the muir



Clifton Johnson at work





June 8. Anna Tweed McDuckton Johnson
Clifton Johnson Hadley Massachusetts, U.S.A.

The Johnsons' signatures in the Drumtochty Visitors Book

The couple signed the visitors' book in the tiny vestry of the Free Kirk in Harrietfield with their names bracketed together. It has 'Drumtochty Visitors Book' in gilt letters on the cover. Local people accepted Maclaren's fictional names for local places and adapted to the flow of visitors. In 1896 about 385 people signed the visitors' book - they came from China and India, Australia and New Zealand, British Central Africa and Natal as well as the British Isles. Judging by their names most from overseas were British and many probably in the colonial service or missionaries. They must have come on day trips as the inn was small. The visitors' book became a rather tattered amalgam of three volumes, running from August 1895 well into the twentieth century, as Maclaren's books remained popular. The inn took the name Drumtochty and that is where the visitors' book settled.

Spreading blankets to dry, Clifton Johnson, 'The Land of Heather', 1896
The Free Kirk is on the right with its small vestry, to the left of it Kirkside Cottage and the gable end of the Drumtochty Inn.



In 'The Land of Heather' Clifton Johnson has left us vivid descriptions in writing and pictures of Logiealmond and its people in the 1890s, and some of Harrietfield are appended. His considerable archive was left to Amherst, a university town next to his home town of Hadley where it is now held in the public library.

The Special Collections, Jones Library, Amherst, Massachusetts has digitised Clifton Johnson's photographs and many can be seen at <https://digitalamherst.org/clifton-johnson> if you search on Harrietfield or Logiealmond.

References:

Ian MacLaren, 'Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush', 1894

Ian MacLaren, 'The Days of Auld Lang Syne', 1895

Thomas Wylie, 'Recollections and Traditions of Logiealmond, 1934

Clifton Johnson, 'The Land of Heather', 1903

Rosalind Pearson

This article is an edited and expanded version of one printed in the West Stormont Historical Society's newsletter, 2015

Photographs of Harrietfield 1896 by Clifton Johnson.

Drawing water at the Drumtochty Inn

A stone breaker – Old PO corner



The baker's cart outside the post office (now Eastergate)



Ian McLaren Cottage, beside the United Presbyterian Kirk (kirk 1811-1911)

