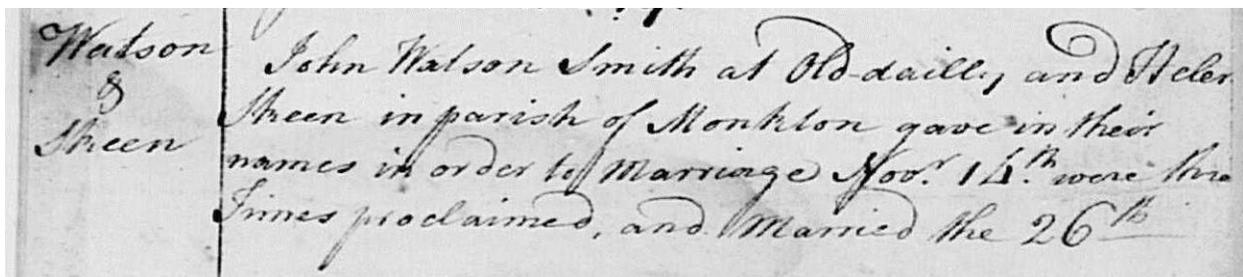


The Skeenes of Dundonald Parish, Ayrshire, Scotland

The records for our Skeene ancestors suggest they were from Dundonald Parish, Ayrshire. But with little in the way of supporting or corroborating evidence, I regard this part of the family history as a working hypothesis at this time.

In 1740, John Watson, a blacksmith in Old Dailly, Dailly Parish, Ayrshire, and his wife Janet Cathcart had a son they named John.

John showed up next in the Dailly Parish Church registry when he married Helen Skeene of Monkton, Ayrshire in 1767.

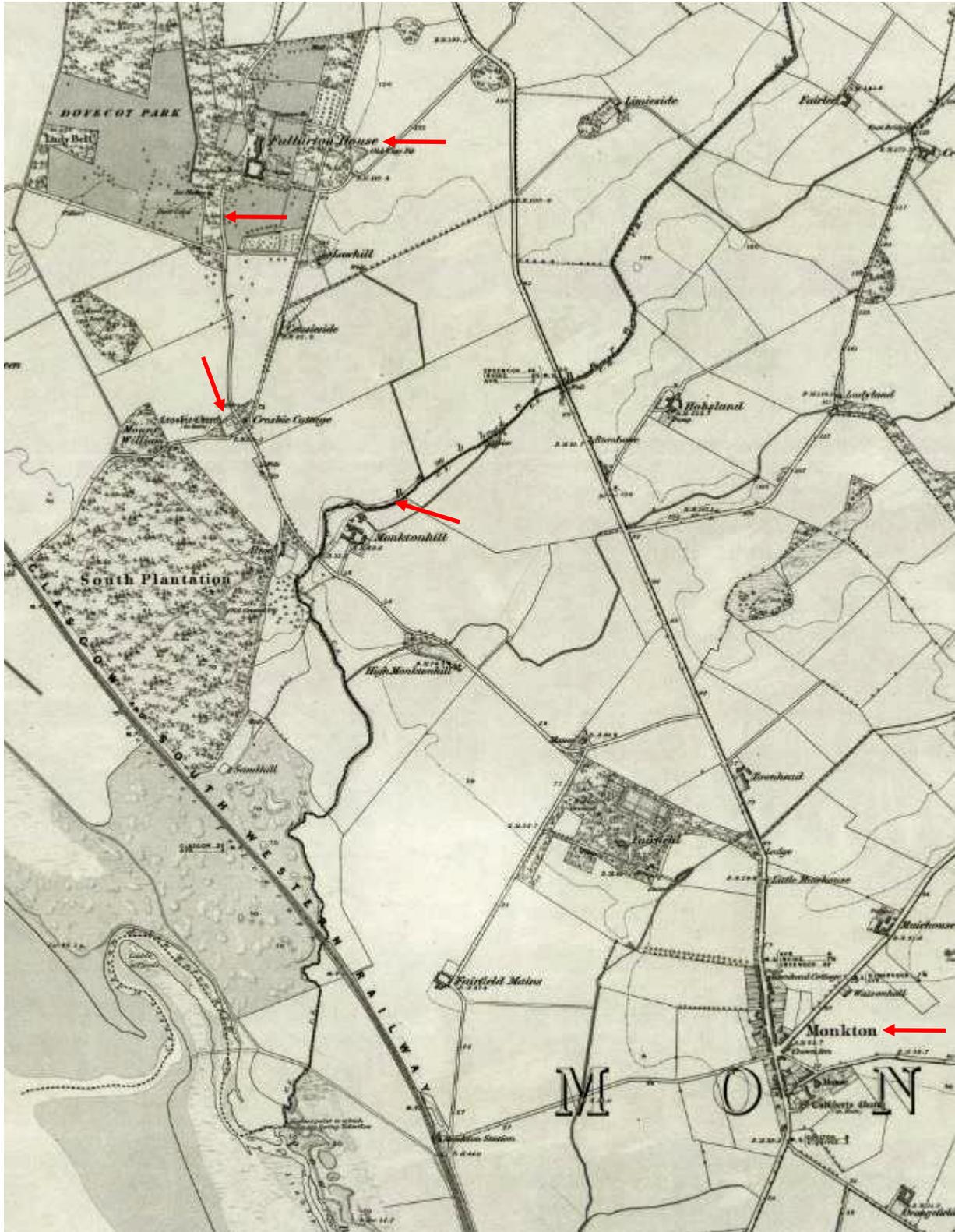


“Watson & Skeen – John Watson Smith at Old Dailly and Helen Skeen in parish of Monkton gave in their names in order to marriage Nov. 14th were three times proclaimed, and married the 26th” [sic]

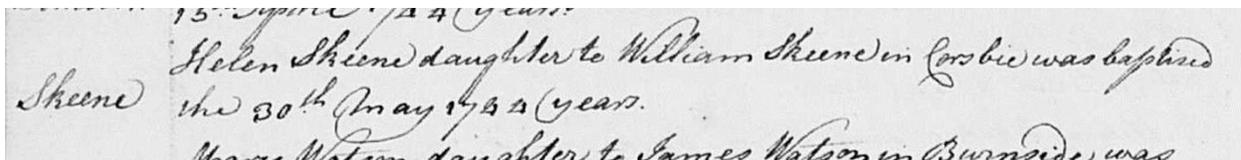
As we are direct descendants of Helen Skeene, I wanted to find information on her ancestry.

Our Skeene Ancestry

I found a handful of birth and baptism records for a Helen Skeen, Skeene, Skene or other last name variants, but only one’s birth year suggested a reasonable age range for a 1767 marriage and subsequent childbirths, and she was born in Corsbie, Dundonald Parish, Ayrshire.



1857 map showing Fullarton House, the site of Crosbie Castle, Crosbie Church, the parish boundary, and the village of Monkton, from top to bottom



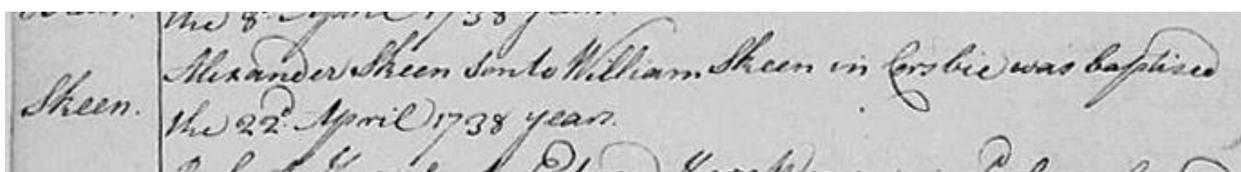
15. April 1744 years
Skeene Helen Skeene daughter to William Skeene in Corsbie was baptised
the 30th May 1744 years.
Marie Watson daughter to James Watson in Burnside was

"Skeene – Helen Skeene daughter to William Skeene in Corsbie was baptised the 30th May 1744 year" [sic]

Dundonald Parish lies just to the north of the village of Monkton, in Monkton and Prestwick Parish, the village or parish named in the marriage record. Crosbie (Corsbie) lies at the southern end of Dundonald Parish, about a quarter mile from the parish boundary.

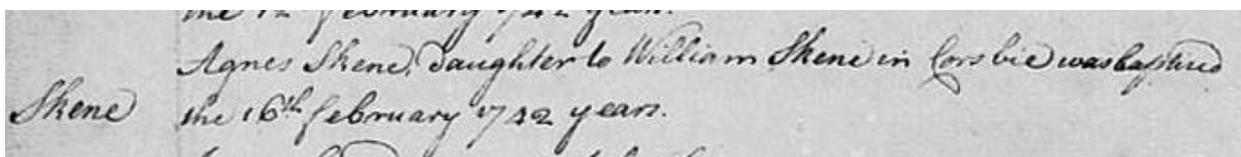
So this is easily the best fitting birth record for a Helen Skeene that matches our ancestor Helen Skeene, but it is always possible that the birth record for our Helen Skeene has been lost to the ages.

A further search of the parish registries turned up two likely siblings for Helen Skeene, an older brother Alexander, born in 1738, and an older sister Agnes, born in 1742.



the 8. April 1738
Skeen. Alexander Skeen son to William Skeen in Corsbie was baptised
the 22nd April 1738 years.

"Skeen. Alexander Skeen son to William Skeen in Corsbie was baptised the 22^d April 1738 year." [sic]



the 16th February 1742 years
Skene Agnes Skene daughter to William Skene in Corsbie was baptised
the 16th february 1742 years.

"Skene – Agnes Skene, daughter to William Skene in Corsbie was baptised the 16th February 1742 year." [sic]

I was unable to find a birth record for father William that I might conclude is a reasonable candidate for our William Skeene based on timeframe and geography. I also did not find any marriage records for a William Skeene that reasonably fit the births of Helen, Alexander and Agnes or any good candidate death records for William.

Helen's mother's name remains unknown, as mothers' names were often left out of parish birth and baptism records at that time, and I did not find any candidate marriage record for Helen's parents.

I also was unable to find any marriage or death record candidates for siblings Alexander and Agnes. Fundamentally, my research into the registry records for the Skeenes has hit a dead end.

With so little to go on, I do have one more reason to believe that this is the right Skeene family.

In the 1700s, Scots often named their children after their grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, and often in a specific order.

John Watson and Helen Skeene had six sons, two of whom had given names that I had not previously seen in the Watson family tree, second son William and fourth son Alexander, who shared their given names with Helen's father and brother. Coincidence or tradition?

- For more about old Scottish practices for naming children, see [Scottish Given Name Conventions for Children](#).

Photos of Crosbie, Dundonald Parish

Crosbie (Corsbie) is located towards the south end of Dundonald Parish, Ayrshire, just to the north of Monkton and Prestwick Parish, Ayrshire, between Troon and the Prestwick Airport.

Crosbie included the old Corsbie Castle and the nearby Corsbie Church.

The lands that made up the old Crosbie estate were granted to the Fullarton family in 1344. They built a castle followed by three replacement castles over the next few centuries.



Site of Corsbie/Crosbie Castle

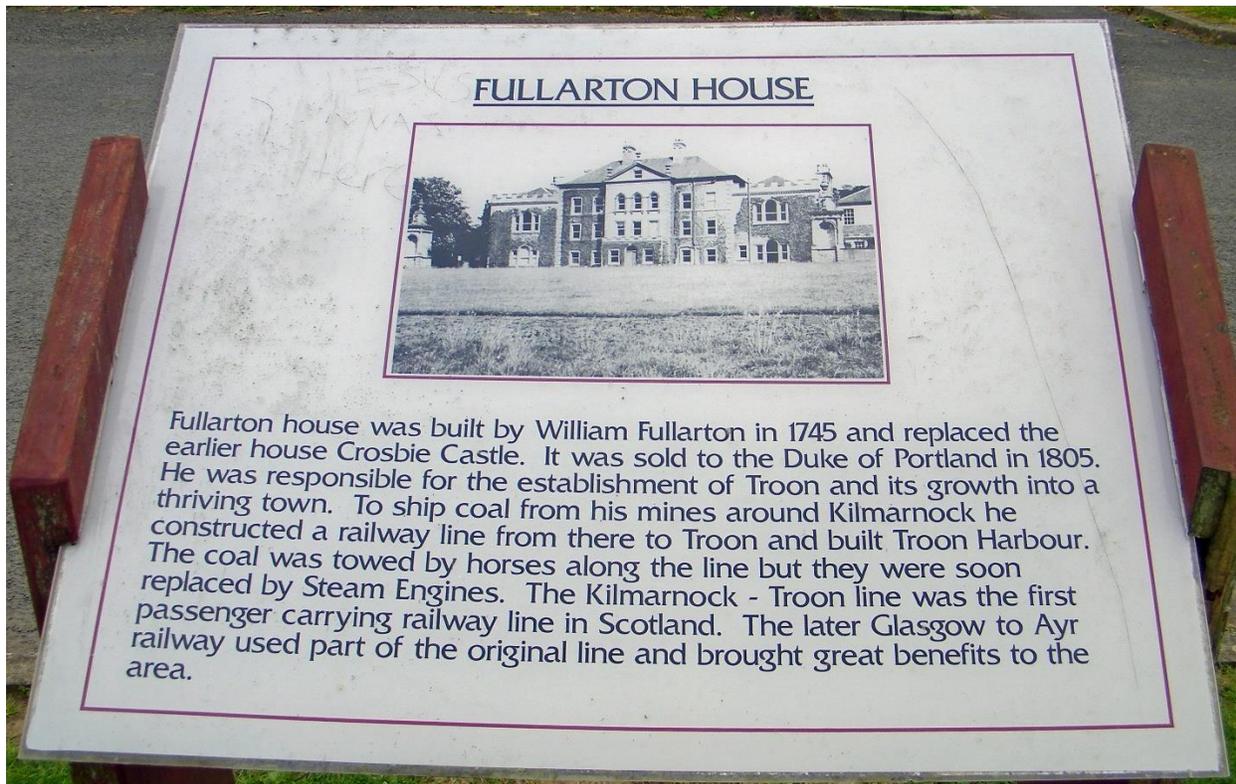


Crosbie Castle ruins



The old Crosbie Castle dungeon was converted into the Fullarton House ice house.

In the 1700s, the Fullartons replaced the castle with a manor house that would become known as Fullarton House, built in 1745. The castle was torn down, and many of its stones were used in the construction of Fullarton House. The castle's dungeon survives, as it was converted to a cold storage cellar or ice house because of the presence of an underground stream.



Fullarton house was built by William Fullarton in 1745 and replaced the earlier house Crosbie Castle. It was sold to the Duke of Portland in 1805. He was responsible for the establishment of Troon and its growth into a thriving town. To ship coal from his mines around Kilmarnock he constructed a railway line from there to Troon and built Troon Harbour. The coal was towed by horses along the line but they were soon replaced by Steam Engines. The Kilmarnock - Troon line was the first passenger carrying railway line in Scotland. The later Glasgow to Ayr railway used part of the original line and brought great benefits to the area.

Historical marker about Fullarton House and the Duke of Portland

The Fullarton family's ties to Crosbie and Fullarton House ended in 1805 when they sold Fullarton House to the Duke of Portland. The house stood until 1966 when it was demolished because the Troon Town Council was unable to maintain it after having purchased it in 1928. The site of the house has been converted to a public park. However, the elaborate stables and servants' quarters that had been added to the estate in 1792 have been preserved. They were converted to flats in 1974.



The old Fullarton House stables and servants' quarters were converted to flats in 1974.

A church at this site dates back at least to 1229. This was not a parish church. Rather, it was built as a chapel-of-ease for the Fullarton family. The name Crosbie comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "Crossbye", indicating the dwelling place of the cross.



This 1654 map shows the location of Corsby (Crosbie) Kirk.

After the Reformation, it was converted to a Protestant church, still under the patronage of the Fullartons. In 1651, it was transferred from Dundonald Parish to Monkton and Prestwick Parish. In 1688, it was transferred back to Dundonald Parish, and a new church was built at the site in 1691.

After a 1759 windstorm blew off the roof and damaged the gables, the church was allowed to fall to ruin, the condition of the church that we see today. So, William Skeene and his children likely worshipped elsewhere in Dundonald Parish, where their births were recorded, or in Monkton and Prestwick Parish.

The churchyard has been used as a cemetery since 1240. Until 1863 this was the only burying ground in this part of the parish. If William, Alexander and Agnes Skeene remained in the area, or if William's ancestors also lived in this area, they were likely buried in the the Crosbie Churchyard.



Crosbie Church ruins and churchyard. Some of our Skeen(e) ancestors may be buried in the Crosbie Churchyard.



The Crosbie Church ruins and churchyard

There had been a small village clustered around the church, but there is little evidence of the village visible today.



The old Crosbie village that surrounded the church is long gone.



Crosbie Cottage. In the distant left through the trees is Monktonhill in the adjacent Monkton and Prestwick Parish, Ayrshire.

Research Notes

Is it Crosbie or Corsbie? Both, actually. “Corse” is a variant of “Cross”. We saw this with John (Jemima)’s brother Hugh, who was born as Hugh Corse Wawsson, according to his parish birth record, but who later was known as Hugh Cross Wasson.

Prepared by Mark David Wasson
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