



The
Fatally Flawed Family
of
Fildraw

<http://www.mylrea.com.au>

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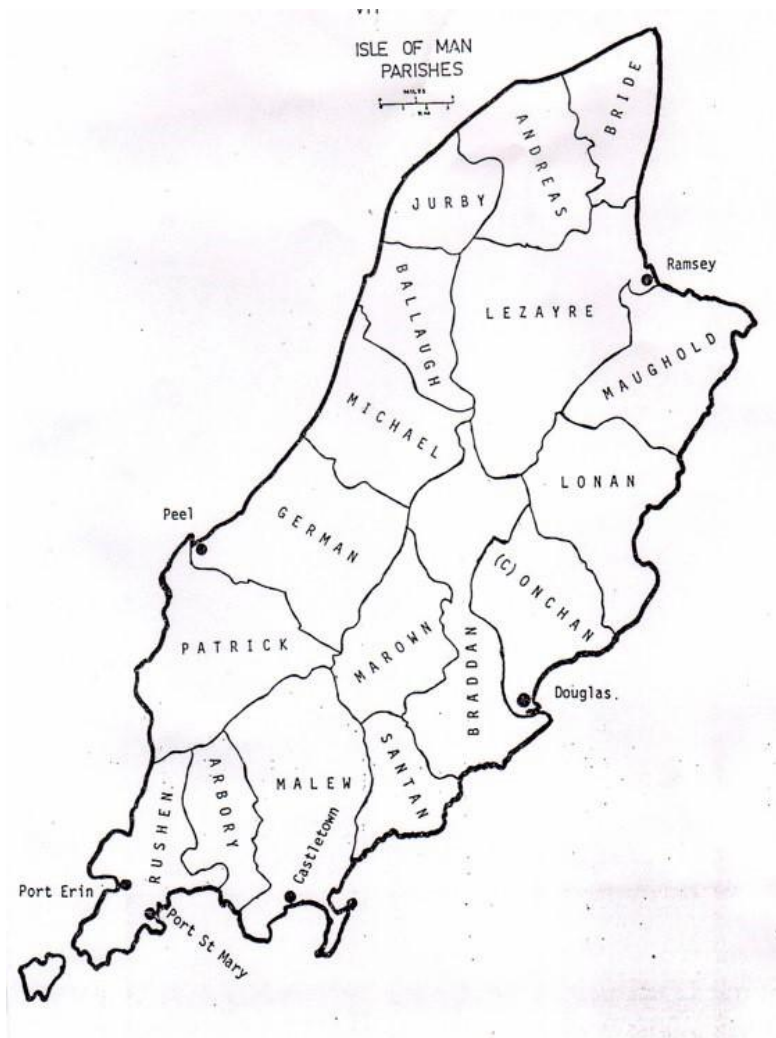
A BOUT THE AUTHOR: Diana Banks is a Mylrea through her mother's family. Several years ago, she began writing the biography of her great great grandfather, John Mylrea, who was born on the Isle of Man in 1823.

In the course of researching John's story, she became an accidental authority on a variety of Mylrea strands and prepared a series of short histories in an attempt to find the web that links them together. To date, she has produced narratives about:

- William McYlrea (Ballagh) 1627-1692
- Nicholas Mylrea (Ballagh) 1747-1823
- Three Daniels & a Thomas 1761-1934
- Thomas Mylrea, Tailor (Lonan) 1774-1853
- Thomas Mylrea, Farmer (Braddan) 1788-1860
- Basil Mylrea, Publican (Peel) 1791-1865
- Philip Mylrea, Stone Mason (Douglas) 1793-1861
- Frederick Thomas Mylrea, Military Man (London) 1803-1862
- The Brushmen of Bethnal Green
- Mylreas in 19th Century Lancashire

This story, *The Fatally Flawed Family of Fildraw*, owes a debt of gratitude to Frances Coakley, creator of the online repository known as A Manx Notebook. Frances braved the unseasonal 2013 snow on the Isle of Man to delve into the Manx National Archives to find and summarise wills and other documents that would help fill the gaps in a story being written on the other side of the world.

Diana began her professional life as a teacher in central Queensland, went on to become a scholar at several Australian universities, and later a senior bureaucrat in Federal government circles. She has postgraduate qualifications from both Melbourne University in Australia and Harvard in the United States and is an experienced writer, although the Mylrea narratives are her first foray into biography.



Source: <http://woodsatlas1867.webs.com>

NOTE: The spelling of the name MYLREA is a major stumbling block in all Mylrea family research. So far, I've come across more than 40 variations. Unique to Malew were the following – McYllriah, Macillrea, Mcylleria – which probably came about because of the long tenure of the local vicar - Thomas Parr who was the Malew vicar 1641-1695. These and other regional variations persisted until the constructions tended to converge into McYlrea then Mylrea throughout the island.

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17th Century Malew

The Manx Manorial Rolls of 1511/1515 for Malew make no mention of the name Mylrea (or its many variations). On the other hand, the rolls for other parts of the Isle of Man show that the Mylreas were already established in the northern parishes of Michael (William McGilrea, Ffinlo, Donald jnr, Richard) and Ballaugh (John Gilrea). So these must have been the first setting-down places on the island for the Mylrea clans.

The 1610 Composition Book for the Isle of Man still shows no individual named Mylrea (or its many variations) in Malew, although the 1607 Rent Book for that parish has one Mylrea – Thomas. Other property records soon reveal the ongoing presence of the Mylreas – Thomas & John (perhaps descendants of the first Thomas) - in the parish in the 17th century and, moreover, that they were tenant farmers:

Lib Assedationis¹ 1639²

Intack ³	Jo ylrea 8d
Intack	Jo ylrea id
Intack	Xpher Bell 5d, Thomas ylrea 4d

Lib Vastarum⁴ 1663⁵

4s 3d?	Hen Wanwright	Jo Mcylrea ½d	the sd prtys is entered by bill of sayle from ye sd Wanwright, one of ye quest, who hath acknowledged in court to have sold to ye same & confirmed by ye officers
		Xpher Harrisson with Jo Quacken	

¹ Rate payers list

² Lib Assedationis Malew 1639, A Manx Notebook

³ Intacks were enclosures of what was once common land, and the rent was set depending on its fertility. It was perhaps less desirable land, but small enough and more affordable for individuals starting out as tenant farmers.

⁴ Tenants list

⁵ Lib Vast Malew 1656-1702, A Manx Notebook

Lib Vastarum 1684⁶

6d	Nich Quayle	Jo Quayle 3d Jo Mcylrea 3d	the quest avouch yt they are in possession & payes [] hence> they are entered for ye same
2d	Fin Bell	Thomas Mcylrea & Jo Bell	Entered as ye sd Cayne is
3d	Fin Bell	Tho Mcylrea & Jo Bell	Entered as before

Malew's parish registers show Mylreas being born, dying and getting married there in the first half of the 17th century. And several wills also bear witness to their early presence. The owners of these wills were grandmothers, mothers, and fathers, a sign that at least one, and possibly several, families were established in the parish. The wills belonged to:

		<i>Family members mentioned</i>
1603	Annas McIlrea als Quain	son Thomas & daughter-in-law Alice Bell
1633	Clement Quiggin als McYlrea	husband Henry Quiggin; sister Alice (no children?)
1643	Margaret (Marriot) Bell als Marillrea	aunt Isabel Marillrea
1643	Ellin McYllriah als Stoell	children Kath & Jane McYlrea
1646	Ales (Alice?) Milera als Bell	children Thomas, Finlo, Issabel, John, Hugh (husband Thomas) (another daughter Margaret Bell als Marillrea?)
1648	Hugh McYlleriah	wife Margaret Stoell? Siblings John, Thomas & Issabel (no children?)
1648	Issabel McYlleriah als ??	husband Thomas; children Thomas, John, Martin, Issabel
1649	Gilbert Mcilrea	Daughter (wife Christian Bell?) ⁷
1650	Ffinloe McYellriah	Daughters Kathrin & Jane (brother John)
1651	Issable Caveene als Millrea	children John & Catherine + others unnamed and underage
1654	John McYlleriah	child Thomas (wife later identified another child Cathrin), wife Ellinor Bell; Cathrin & Ellin Illrea supervisors (daughters or wife & daughter?)
1657	William McYlrea	brother John
1658	Jane Marillrea (Power of Attorney)	parents Ffinloe (d 1650) & Ellin (d 1643); uncle John Mylrea (d 1654)

⁶ Lib Vast Malew 1656-1702, A Manx Notebook

⁷ Gilbert McYlrea & Christian Bell – Presentment 1637

Some of these Mylreas could have arrived in Malew towards the end of the 16th century, leaving the clans that had earlier settled in Michael and Ballaugh - or they might have come directly from Ireland. For example, an entry in the Malew Baptism Register for 1651

Willm Illeriah son to Wm. (Irish) bapt; October 13th

A Dynasty

The table of wills, and the family members it identifies, hint at a Mylrea clan with a tradition of naming a Thomas in each generation. Thomas and Ales (als Bell) with their five known children Thomas, Finlo, Issabel, John & Hugh could have been the antecedents of Thomas & Issabel (her family name unrecorded) with their four known children Thomas, John, Martin and Issabel. The children in the former group were probably born in the 1695-1610 window and the latter 1625-1635. The name, Martin is unique in Mylrea genealogy and provides a useful anchor, as does the will of his nephew, William (son of Martin's older brother John), from which to make connections amongst several individuals.

In some cases, the descendants of these two early generations of Malew Mylreas were few:

<p>Generation 1 <i>sons of Thomas & Ales</i></p>	<p>🍏 Finlo & Hugh seemed to have (Fin) daughters who disappeared into the history of their husband's families, or died young; (Hugh) no children</p> <p>🍏 John Mylrea married Ellin Bell and died in 1654. They had a son named Thomas, and since supervisors were mentioned in John's will, Thomas was not at legal age at the time of his father's death so born after 1640. When Ellin died in 1682, she identified two children (Thomas & Cathrin) who would have both been well over the age of 30 when their mother died. Nothing further is known about the fate of either of these children although son Thomas had become father to a son also named Thomas, information gleaned from Ellin's 1682 will.</p>
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The remaining son of Thomas & Ales, Thomas, must have married Issabel (family name unknown). He was likely to have been the oldest of the brothers.

<p>Generation 2 sons of Thomas & Issabel</p>	<p>🍏 John Mylrea married widow Cathrin Norris als Caveene in about 1650 and had a son William in 1653 who married Cathrin Bridson in 1680. Their two children died in the small pox epidemic of 1685. John died in 1680 several weeks after his son's marriage, and his wife Cathrin and daughter-in-law Cathrin died nine months apart in 1688. William remained in Malew, and died in 1718, naming cousins John & Thomas in his will (sons of his uncle Thomas of <i>Fildraw</i>). John's branch of Malew Mylreas had died out.</p> <p>🍏 Martin Mylrea married Elizabeth Christian in 1654 and had one surviving child, a son named John, who was baptised in 1664. Martin and his son died in 1698 and 1699 respectively, and John's only son, also named John born in 1682, went to live in Ireland, returning only to sell the family estate in 1735. After just three generations, Martin's Mylrea branch had disappeared from the Isle of Man⁸.</p>
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The remaining son of Thomas & Isabel, Thomas, was probably the individual who married Elizabeth Gelling in 1654. He was also likely to have been their oldest son.

Illiam Dhone

A John McYlrea enjoyed a brief moment in the drama that was *Illiam Dhone* (William Christian)⁹. In 1659, this John Mylrea skippered a boat that transported Christian to a vessel standing off Santan, ready to (illegally) carry Christian to England. Christian's home was at Ronaldsway in Malew so there is every possibility that the John McYlrea involved in this historical event was

⁸ Not strictly true since John Mylrea jnr had a sister Ellinor who married John Callister in 1722 and remained on the island. She had children Edward, John, William & Isabel

⁹ Drascau, Jennifer Kewley (2012) *Illiam Dhone: Patriot or Traitor?* Profile Books Ltd, London

the son of Thomas and Issabel (since the other John, son of Thomas and Ales, was already dead)

Loose Ends

As ever in these genealogical excursions, not every individual 'fits' neatly into some overall scheme. In this particular story about the Malew Mylreas, Clement and Gilbert do not rate a mention anywhere except in their own wills (died 1633 & 1649 respectively). Issabel Caveene als Millrea died in 1651 but was not the daughter of Thomas Mylrea & Ales Bell because their daughter named Issabel married a Harrison, according to her mother's will. William (died 1656), while he identified a brother named John, is also an outlier and was probably the fellow from Ireland recorded in the Malew Baptism Register in 1651 as the father of William.

"Loose ends" later in the 17th century include:

- 🍏 Jony Inyreaah als Cotten and her daughter Alice who married Christopher Bridson in 1675
Alice died when she was a young wife and mother, in 1679 and born about 1650, leaving her 4 year old child Matthias in her mother's care. Unfortunately, her mother died in 1683.
- 🍏 Kathrin Cain als McYlrea died 1696
She might have been the daughter of John McYlrea & Ellin Bell, who had children Thomas & Catherine

Further research and serendipitous discoveries might establish these women within the broader Malew Mylrea framework or they might remain forever unattached to the main dynasty, whose origins are likely to have been in the Annas McIllrea who died in 1603.

Two other Mylreas with no apparent links to the Mylrea dynasty, both dying in Rushen in the early 18th century but possibly from Malew:

- 🍏 Jony Waterson als Mylrea
Died in 1703, husband Henry, and probably still a young woman when she died as

she bequeathed items to her brother James and other individuals, not mentioning children at all. Born 1775-80? Not the daughter of Thomas Mylrea & Margaret Gellin as their Jony was alive in 1711 but perhaps the daughter of Thomas, son of John who died in 1654

🍏 Thomas Mylrea

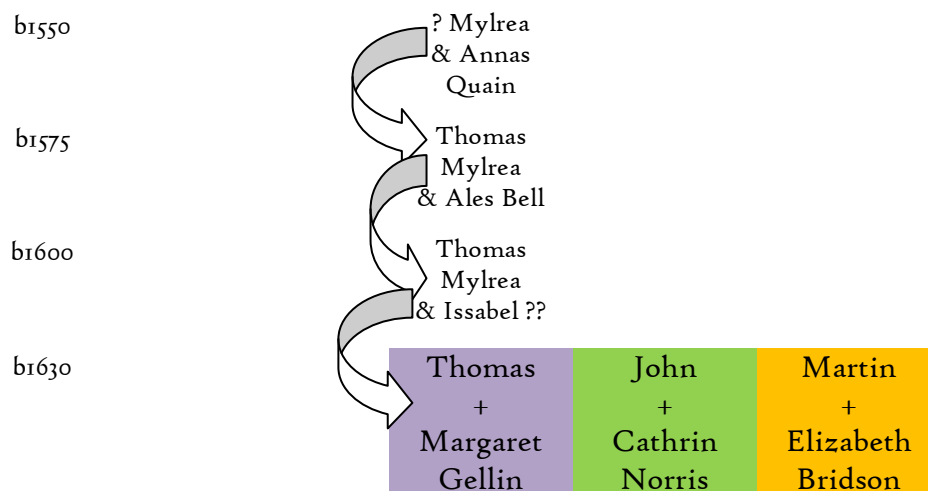
Died 1723, married Margaret Waterson in Malew in 1702, and had daughters Margery & Jony. Born c 1675-80? Not the son of Thomas Mylrea & Margaret Gellin as this individual married Cath Bell but perhaps the son of Thomas, son of John who died in 1654

Fildraw

Fildraw was a collection of fields in the central area of Malew, east of Castletown, and categorised as an Abbey farm; that is, paying rent to the Abbot of Rushen Abbey for the privilege of using the land.

In 1666, the *Fildraw* estate was established when Thomas Mylrea compounded the lands¹⁰. It might have been in the family's hands well before that time but the process of compounding gave "ownership" a refreshed legal standing and was actually an artful way of taxing Manx farmers. By then, a dynasty had already begun to take shape for Thomas married Margaret Gellin in 1654, and eventually produced at least 10 children.

Thomas's predecessors were most likely the **Thomas Mylrea** recorded in the 1607 Malew Rent Roll, who was almost certainly the son of **Annas McIlrea** als **Quain** who died in 1603. If this assumption is correct, then Thomas Mylrea the 1607 renter was born in about 1575 and married **Ales Bell** c1600. The couple had several sons, including a Thomas, who was probably the **Thomas Mylrea** who married **Issabel** (family name unknown) and had sons **Thomas**, John and Martin, born around the 1630s.



¹⁰ 1704 Composition Book, A Manx Notebook

The ten children of Thomas Mylrea and Margaret Gellin were: John (1658), John (1659), Thomas (1662), Nicho (1665-1699), Robert (1668-1669), Robert (1670), Jony (1672), Elizabeth (1776), Margaret (16??), Catherine (16??). When Thomas's wife, Margaret Gellin, died in 1702, six children were still alive: John, Robert, Thomas, Jony, Elizabeth and Catherine.

Apart from the fates of John and Thomas, the two oldest sons in the family, little is known of Thomas's other children. Jony went to Ireland; Nicho married in 1692 and died in 1699, leaving a son named John; Elizabeth married Thomas Norris; and Catherine remained unmarried. Robert disappeared without a trace.

Manx Property Laws

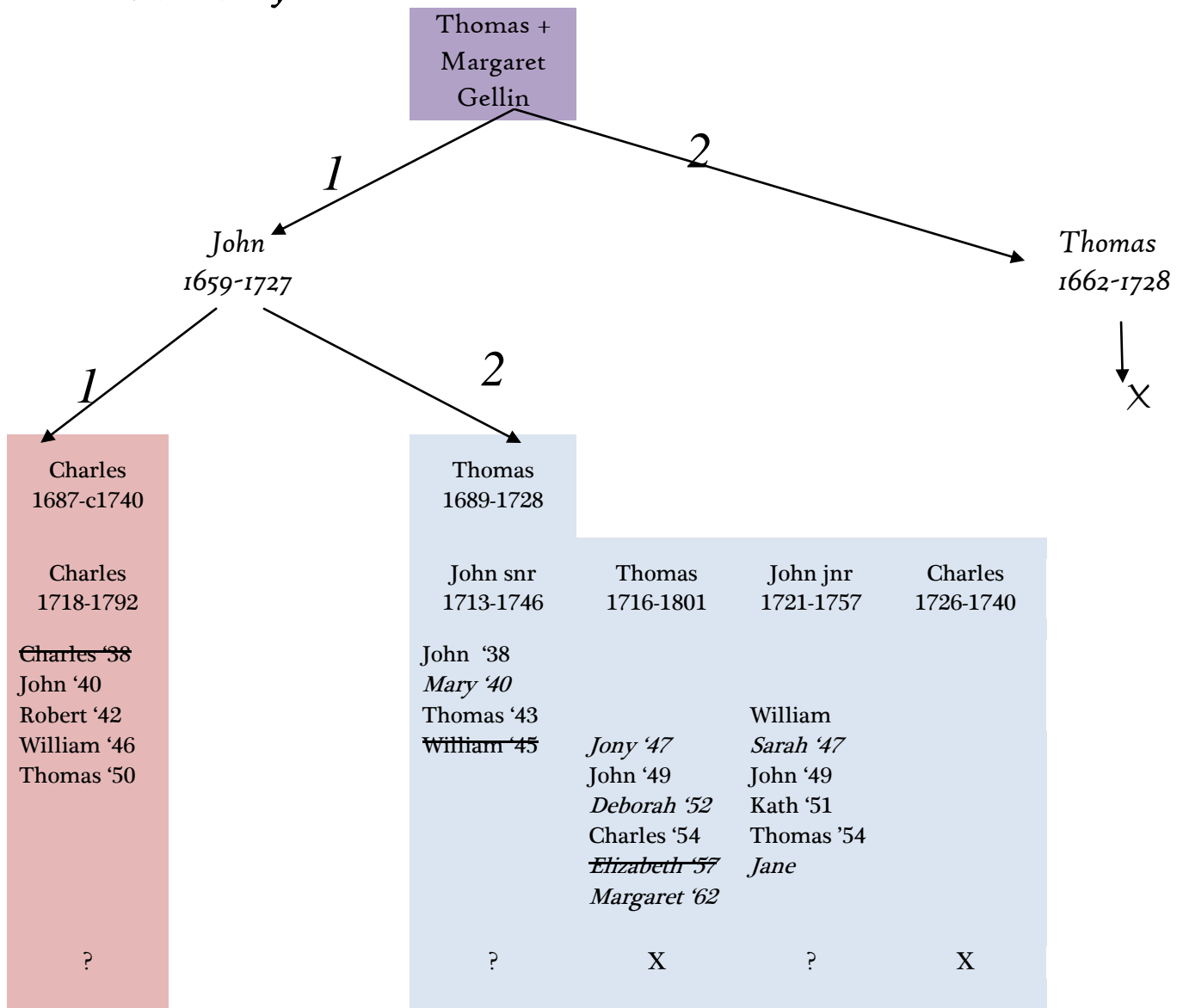
On the Isle of Man, property laws of the day dictated that land passed from father to oldest son - it was a right and an obligation regardless of the abilities and attitudes of that son. If there were other sons, they grew up with no expectation of inheritance. Thomas and Margaret had three sons besides John and each had to make his own way in the world:

- **Thomas**, married Catherine Bell and they had a profoundly disabled daughter Joney who inherited her mother's right to land in Ballaquaile (Malew) when Catherine died in 1698. Thomas remained at Ballaquaile until his death, by which time his disabled daughter had died, and thus the land reverted to Cath Bell's family. The story of this little family is another example of a short-lived twig on the Malew Mylrea family tree and Coakley's piece, [Mylreas in Ballaquaile and Fildraw](#)¹¹, details the transactions associated with Cath's death and her daughter's care.
- **Nicho** remained in Malew, married Christian Gawn, but died at the age of 34, leaving a son named John aged 7.
- **Robert** was unlikely to have remained on the Isle of Man since he neither occupied land nor married nor died nor left a will on the island. He probably went to Ireland or further afield, to America for example.

¹¹ http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/gazateer/ablands/mw_myls.htm

The story of the *Fildraw* estate is the story of the family of John, the oldest son of Thomas Mylrea and Margaret Gellin, and his descendants. It was a troubled legacy and by the latter stages of the 18th century, the estate had been completely sold out of the family – crippled with debt? lack of interest? lack of ability? The answer is far from clear. The *Fildraw* descendants disbursed, perhaps to Ireland or perhaps further afield. Their eventual pathways are yet to be uncovered but none remained in Malew at the end of the 1700s.

The Fildraw Family



? = fate unknown
X = males died without issue

John Mylrea

(1659-1727)

The name John Mylrea is one of the most common in Mylrea genealogy. This particular John Mylrea was the oldest son of Thomas Mylrea & Margaret Gellin. He was baptised in Malew in November 1659 and the rightful heir to the estate known as *Fildraw*. In 1686, John married Elizabeth Shimmin and they had six children who, miraculous for the time, all survived to adulthood. There were two sons (Charles & Thomas) and four daughters (Elizabeth, Ann, Catherine & Isabel).

The *Fildraw* legacy turned out to be a troubled one. In 1711, John ascended to the stewardship of the *Fildraw* estate following the death of his father and so began a period of turbulence – blighted by debt, double dealing, and perhaps illness – which stretched across several generations. Understanding what might have happened in this family to cause the disharmony that characterised subsequent generations is more a matter of interpretation than specific proof.

Events seem to point to their second son, Thomas, being favoured by his father over first son, Charles although there is no direct evidence to support the claim. Thomas's 1712 Marriage Contract was a generous one, offering "half of their lands" (ie. *Fildraw*) and proposing that Thomas and his bride live with his parents, an entitlement usually reserved for the oldest son. In a legal sense, there was no way in which Thomas could have expected to inherit *Fildraw* while his older brother Charles was alive. Charles was apparently a mariner (*at this time he going to sea*)¹² so it is only speculation that perhaps Charles had left his homeland under clouded circumstances? Whatever had gone before, Charles was on the Isle of Man by 1718 when his first son was born and his *Fildraw* inheritance was of course a foregone conclusion.

¹² 1725 Sale – John & Charles Mylrea to Ann Mylrea

In another curious event involving patriarch John, his will of 1727 specifically disinherited all of his children and making a bequest only to Thomas's second son, also named Thomas:

..... He left and bequeathed to his grandson Thomas McYlrea all his clothes shaped for his body and half a heifer which was betwixt himself and his son Thomas McYlrea. He cut off all his children with sixpence apiece legacy.....

It was not especially unusual for fathers to name only sons in their wills but the specific wording in John's will - publically cutting off all his children, including his four daughters - bespeaks acrimony in the family.

Erosion begins

In the year 1712 following his father's death, John mortgaged half a field known as *the Cronk* and half the adjacent *Garey*¹³ to Thomas Kinley. The mortgage was arranged a month before Thomas Mylrea married Jony, the daughter of Thomas Kinley were married and the Kinleys gave this mortgage as part of Jony's Marriage Contract. Two years later, John mortgaged *Close bane*¹⁴ (1714) to Ewan Looney.

A decade on, John Mylrea was obliged to sell parts of *Fildraw* in three separate events, the reasons for which

“not only to relieve our pressing necessities in our feeble declining years but also to support and relieve the necessities of our eldest son Charles McYlrea” (1722)

“not only to relieve our urgent necessities but to redeem the lands hereafter mentioned and demised” (1724)

“upon our urgent necessities to supply our wants” (1725)

In two of the three sales, his children were the purchasers – on one occasion his son, Thomas - so the motivation might have been to ensure that Thomas got his own estate after all. Later references to *Fildraw mooar* (big *Fildraw*) and *Fildraw beg* (little *Fildraw*) in Mylrea family documents lend a little support to that suggestion. Alternatively John might not have been able to meet his earlier

¹³ Cronk = “hill” in Manx; Garey = “enclosure”

¹⁴ Close bane = “white enclosure”

mortgage commitments, selling off parts of *Fildraw* the only viable recourse, and his children, Thomas and Ann, were conveniently at hand to provide assistance.

In all, John undertook five land transactions whilst the steward of *Fildraw*:

			Value	Other party
1712	Mortgage	half field known as <i>the Cronk</i> and half the adjoining <i>Garey</i>	£9	Thomas Kinley - given to Thomas & Jony
1714	Mortgage	field known as <i>Close bane</i>	£5/16/4	Ewan Looney - 1724 cancelled
1722	Sale	became known as <i>Fildraw beg?</i>	£7	Siblings Thomas & Ann McYlrea bought half each. Thomas took immediate possession; Ann to take her half when parents died. This sale subsequently became subject to legal machinations in 1739, with the appearance that the original sale was never finalized
1724	Sale	field known as <i>Close bane</i>	£14	Sold to pay off mortgage held by Looney (1714)
1725	Sale	field known as <i>Coole ne goar</i>	40/-	Ann McYlrea bought the field, half now and half on parent's death. She had married Thomas Cain who was probably the next door neighbour mentioned in sale documents - he might have been expanding his holdings while his neighbour's decreased

What was it that triggered John's need to mortgage and later sell off parts of the family estate? His father had survived for 40 years without resorting to external sources for financial support yet almost as soon as Thomas had died, John took his first mortgage and before long, a second one. Was his oldest son

Charles the source of these financial pressures or was *Fildraw* simply uneconomical?

While there is no definitive answer to these questions, future events might hold the clues. Mortgages and sales of parts of *Fildraw* continued under the stewardship of Charles and became more frequent when Charles's son, Charles jnr, took the helm. Were these Mylreas poor managers or profligate individuals, or was keeping *Fildraw* an obligation that became an anchor around the necks of these men? Could Charles snr have created circumstances which, long after his death, continued to undermine the family's economic viability.

After 16 years as custodian of *Fildraw*, John Mylrea died in 1727 and responsibility for a slightly diminished estate passed to his son, Charles. It might not have been John's preference but that was the law of the day. There is no evidence of any outstanding financial matters so seemingly a smaller but unencumbered *Fildraw* was the legacy he left.

John bequeathed his wife Elizabeth Shimmin "the rest of his goods moveable and immoveable". When she died two years later, Elizabeth, through a Deed of Gift, gave whatever she had to her youngest daughter, Isabel, quite possibly because Isabel had provided a home for Elizabeth in the last years of her life.

Charles Mylrea snr

(1687-c1740)

Parish records relating to Charles Mylrea snr are scant. His baptism was on the 29th September 1687, but he has no marriage date nor one for his burial on the Isle of Man. He married a woman named Margaret whose family name was (unusually) never specified in any of his Deeds of Mortgage or of Sale, or legal Agreements with their son, Charles jnr. The best guess is that the wife of Charles snr was Margaret Kewley, based on the fact that Margaret was a widow in Castletown (Malew) in 1757 and a Margaret Mylrea als Kewley was buried there in 1766.

Four children can be attributed to Charles Mylrea snr and Margaret, all born in Malew: Charles jnr (1718), Elizabeth/Isabel (1721), John (1726), and William (1728). Elizabeth died in 1725 and John too must have died because in 1748 when William died in Plymouth, England, the Courts specified “*his only brother, Charles*”. Thus Charles jnr became the only one of the four children of Charles snr to survive to adulthood.

Erosion continues

Charles snr undertook three property transactions during his 13 years as steward of *Fildraw*, a sale followed by two mortgages held concurrently for several years:

			<i>Value</i>	<i>Other party</i>
1728	Sale	<i>Cronk Fildraw</i>	£40	Thomas Bell
1729	Mortgage	<i>Lough Volley</i>	£10	Catherine McYlrea - 1734 cancelled
1730	Mortgage	<i>Lower Garey</i>	£10	John Bell snr & John Bell jnr - 1739 cancelled

Charles’s sale of *Cronk Fildraw* in 1728 was reminiscent of his father’s first sale of *Fildraw* land which took place in 1712, the year following his father’s death

(except for the fact that the later sale was over four times the value of the 1712 one, suggesting that a great deal more land was involved second time around). Over the next decade, Charles snr mortgaged parts of *Fildraw* on two occasions, and was never able to free himself from these financial obligations.

Legal machinations

In 1733, Charles snr made the first of three legal Agreements with his son, Charles jnr (who had attained the age of 14 years and was thus of legal age). In this Agreement, Charles snr, made a commitment not to sell or mortgage any part of *Fildraw*. He also vowed to leaving the estate unencumbered when he died. It was a very peculiar thing to do since both commitments were, and would prove to be, patently untrue.

Four years later, in 1737, Charles snr and Margaret made a second Agreement with Charles jnr, a *post hoc* Marriage Contract, in which they promised to Charles jnr and his new wife half of *Fildraw* immediately and the other half when the longer living parent died. In exchange, the young couple contributed half of the **Creggans**, land which Charles jnr had inherited when he was five years old and which had presumably been under the stewardship of his father for well over a decade. Charles jnr also paid his father £4/15/- for some unspecified reason and forgave him all debts and demands “*which his father owed him*”

In 1740, Charles snr undertook a third legal Agreement, a Quit Claim, with his son. In it, he surrendered the parent’s right of half of the **Creggans** to Charles jnr but required 40/- in return, along with an undertaking that Charles jnr would redeem the *Fildraw* mortgages and share ownership of the redeemed fields with his parents. In other words, Charles jnr was handed financial responsibility for *Fildraw* (mortgages and all)! And this Quit Claim might have been the *coup de grace* for *Fildraw* (and for Charles jnr) for reasons that will soon become apparent.

Legacy of Charles Mylrea snr

Charles snr sold off a large piece of *Fildraw* when his father died even though the estate had no outstanding debts; he made legal Agreements with his young son he could not and did not keep; and he plunged his son at the age of 22 into debt from which he never recovered. It is hard to understand the motivation behind the actions of the father. On the other hand, it might have been an ongoing pattern of behaviours for Charles snr that had their first expression in the 1722 sale document in which John, father of Charles snr observed: *to support and relieve the necessities of our eldest son Charles McYlrea*. In the 1737 Agreement, Charles jnr was also required to forgive his father his debts, and to pay his father *“the half of nine pounds and ten shillings”* All financial roads seemed to lead towards Charles snr in the family and all responsibility away from him.

Charles snr did not leave a will and neither did his wife, a not particularly unusual situation if they had already passed on all of their assets to their only surviving child. Charles jnr made an observation in his 1739 mortgage with Ewan Looney that *“his father shall recover”* – ambiguous in interpretation but perhaps indicating that Charles snr was unwell or afflicted in some way.

The death of Charles Mylrea snr was not recorded in Manx parish registers even though his wife Margaret remained resident in Malew. Was he always a mariner and never truly a farmer? Did he die at sea or in some foreign place? Wherever it was, he would have been in his 50s when he died because Margaret Mylrea described herself as a widow in her Quit Claim in 1748

Charles McYlrea jnr

(1718-1792)

Charles Mylrea jnr married when he was in his late teens. His wife was Mary Bell als Bridson, and they had five sons: Charles (1738-1741), John (1740), Robert (1742), William (1746) and Thomas (1750). Nothing is known about the lives of the sons, apart from Charles who died as an infant. Neither Charles jnr nor Mary left wills or other legal documents so the fates of these four Mylrea *Fildraw* descendants are lost. There is also no record of the marriage between Charles jnr and Mary.

As the only surviving son of the steward of *Fildraw*, Charles jnr was entitled by law to inherit the family's lands. At the age of five, in 1723, he had already inherited land in Malew known as the *Creggans*¹⁵ from his great uncle, Charles Shimmin¹⁶. Charles Shimmin was presumably Elizabeth Shimmin's brother, a bachelor, and a wealthy one at that. The bypassing of Charles snr by uncle Charles Shimmin might have been an explicit expression of a negative view that Charles Shimmin had formed about his nephew, Charles snr. On the face of it, however, Charles Mylrea jnr had a very bright future from a very early age.

The poison chalice

When Charles jnr was about 14 years of age, his father made his first legal Agreement with his son to neither mortgage nor sell parts of *Fildraw* – manifestly untrue at the time of signing; in 1737, Charles jnr received the usual Marriage Contract establishing the transmission of the Mylrea estate; in 1740,

¹⁵ *Creggans* = “rocky area” in Manx. The *Creggans* in Malew is where the Ronaldsway Airport now stands (Ref: George Broderick. A Dictionary of Manx Place-Names)

¹⁶ The traditional name of Charles in the Mylrea clan might have its origins in the Shimmin family, when Elizabeth wife of John named her oldest son Charles after (say) her father or her brother

his parents surrendered their half share of the **Creggans** to Charles jnr for 40/- and required him to take over the mortgages associated with the *Fildraw* fields.

This 1740 surrender handed Charles jnr responsibility for *Fildraw*'s economic stability even though he had already taken charge:

- he took a mortgage for £20 over three *Fildraw* fields in 1739, the purpose of which was in part to settle his father's 1730 mortgage to the Bells.
- he sued his aunt and another individual, also in 1739, over the 1722 sale of *Fildraw* lands to Thomas Mylrea and Ann Mylrea, younger siblings of Charles snr. His father was directly involved in the original sale and had had nearly two decades to act in his own right on the matter but instead left his young son to take legal action. Moreover, the original Sale contract carries the annotation: "8th October 1723 I do acknowledge to have received the remainder of the consideration money mentioned in this Bill of Sale in full of all demands concerning the same Witness my hand John McYlrea my mark X". It is difficult to understand the basis on which Charles jnr could have taken such action. Was it at his father's urging?

In 1741 Charles jnr sold the **Creggans** for £40, a sign that his 1739 efforts were not sufficient to relieve the economic pressures on *Fildraw* (and the Mylrea family) – or that other financial pressures for which no records survive were weighing heavily. Remember that this young man was all of 23 years of age in 1741, already a husband and father, and inextricably tied to *Fildraw* and its future by both law and tradition.

Downfall complete

There were many sales and mortgages of *Fildraw* fields over the years of Charles's reign, initiated no doubt by the settle his father's mortgages. He seems to have battled on for twenty years but probably spent the final 30 years of his life living in the *Fildraw* homestead while all of the surrounding *Fildraw* lands had long since passed into the hands of others.

			<i>Value</i>	<i>Other party</i>
1740	Sale	Voase /Mylrea's Creggans	£40	William Stole
1741	Sale	Quayne's Garden	12/-	Ewan Looney
1741	Sale	an Abbey meadow	£5	John Brew
1741	Sale	Close? beg	£2/9/-	Robert Stole
1744	Mortgage	Fildraw Mooar	£33/10/7	William Stole - cancelled 1747
1747	Mortgage		£60	William Stole - cancelled 1748
1748	Sale	Two Hills, Lough Volley, Garey Lower	£60	John Bell Lough Volley first mortgaged in 1729
1748	Mortgage	Fildraw Mooar	£70	Matt Taubman - cancelled May 1756
1752	Mortgage	1748 mortgage extended	£30	Matt Taubman - cancelled May 1756
1754	Sale	Injage ye Chrink & a part of the Ballyquane	£3/4/-	Thomas Cain jnr
1754	Sale	A certain parcel of Fildraw land	£93	Finlo Clucas
1758	Sale	Inylak	£31	Robert Quayle
1759	Sale	Faij Fildraw	£82	John Corrin
1782	Sale	Fildraw homestead	£10/1/2	William Quaggin

Mary died in 1782 and Charles jnr in 1792. He had nothing to leave to his sons, if indeed any had survived and the tainted *Fildraw* legacy was at an end. He sold the Fildraw dwelling in 1782, and where he spent his last decade is unknown.

Economic viability

The 1728 sale of *Cronk Fildraw* by Charles snr removed a significant chunk of land from the family estate. One consequence had to be that less land was under cultivation or available for grazing livestock. The sale of the *Creggans* by Charles jnr in 1740 would also have had a significant effect on the Mylrea's productivity on the estate. Doubtless, the subsequent sales in 1748 and 1754 exacerbated the problems faced by Charles Mylrea in trying to keep *Fildraw*

economically viable. The catalyst for the latter sales was almost certainly his inability to service the mortgages he had taken out in earlier times, surely just futile attempts to hang on to the estate. Once the vicious cycle had gathered momentum, there was no salvation for Charles jnr until the estate was gone.

The reality was that the ever-diminishing estate became less and less self-sustaining. In turn, it would have become impossible for Charles jnr to service the increasingly large mortgages.

Thomas Mylrea

(1689-1728)

Thomas Mylrea was the second son of John Mylrea and Elizabeth Shimmin. He was born in 1689 in Malew, married Jony Kinley in 1712, and had five children: John snr (1713), Thomas (1716), Isabel/Elizabeth (1718), John jnr (1721), and Charles (1726). Isabel/Elizabeth died as a small child. The two sons named John must prove endlessly problematic for family historians but the will of their youngest brother Charles in 1740, their mother's 1741 will, and their own burial records confirm the **snr** and **jnr** elements to their names. They both lived to adulthood, both became coopers in Castletown, and both became fathers – each naming their sons John, Thomas and William just to confound the genealogists further!

Thomas seemed a capable individual. He negotiated the 1708 Marriage Contract of his sister Elizabeth to Tom Norris when he was about 19 years old and his parents still very much alive. He also seemed to be his father's favourite. Despite his unusually generous Marriage Contract, he did not receive the legacy promised in the Agreement (how could he, as the second son, unless his parents were not expecting the older son Charles to return. His future parents-in-law must also have believed the statements in the Agreement – perhaps Charles was the prodigal son?). However, Thomas was able to purchase land from his father in 1722, presumably what became known as *Fildraw beg*. Sadly, Thomas did not live to enjoy what might have been the start of a second Mylrea estate in Malew.

Genetic legacy

It is possible that Thomas, who died at 38, passed on a genetic weakness of some kind. His sons John snr and John jnr also died young – at 32 and 35 respectively – leaving their children (all underage) and fatherless. His son

Charles died as a teenager. On the other hand, his son Thomas almost certainly married Isabel Gelling who died almost immediately, and then married Elizabeth Shimmin. This man lived into his eighties.

John jnr

In the same way that Thomas, second son of John Mylrea & Elizabeth Shimmin, appeared to be the favoured son, so too did John jnr, third son of Thomas Mylrea & Jony Kinley. When Jony died in 1741, she left everything to John jnr - as she was entitled to do since the *Fildraw beg* lands were purchased and not inherited. In fact, Jony virtually disinherited her other two sons by leaving them sixpence.

John jnr became a cooper in Castletown, as his older brother John snr had been before him. However, John jnr was also the titleholder of the *Fildraw beg* lands and it is quite possible that brother Thomas took care of the family estate while John jnr plied his trade as a cooper. Thomas migrated to the parish of Rushen soon after 1757, the year in which John jnr sold the *Fildraw beg* holdings.

The evidence available by which to judge John jnr suggests that he, of the four brothers, was a capable individual. He bought a house in town, then the land beneath it; he took two mortgages, neither large. He tidied up his family's affairs in 1757 and died a month later, perhaps an indication that (a) he knew he was going to die and (b) he was able to leave his family well cared for and with no messy entanglements of a financial or familial kind. There is no evidence that John snr travelled a similar route although his widow, Mary Kelly, took a mortgage in 1748 (two years after John snr died) and used her dwelling house as collateral.

The decision of John jnr to swap rural for urban life, to swap farming for trade might speak volumes about John's ability to recognise the changing times. He would have seen from a close distance the constant struggles of his cousin Charles jnr and realised that the life of a small farmer did not have a future.

Thomas's grand children

Both Johns (snr & jnr) had sons whose destinies are unknown. These were John (b1738) & Thomas (b1743), and William (174*), John (b1749) and Thomas (b1754). Maybe they left the island or simply moved away from Malew in search of work.

Additionally,

- Mary, the daughter of John snr and baptised in 1740 probably married Christopher Kenniagh in 1764 and then they both disappeared from the genealogical landscape. Of the other children in the family, nothing is known
- Only one of the children of Thomas married, and that was Margaret who wed Peter Christian in 1792

Footnote to *Fildraw*

The Malew Mylrea families had all but disappeared from the parish by the end of the 18th century. Several had died out well before that, but not the *Fildraw* clan. Of the sons of Charles Mylrea jnr – John (b1740), Robert (b1742), William (b1746) and Thomas (b1750) – nothing further is known, nor is much known about the children of John snr, Thomas and John jnr.

Potential descendants

One “stray” is John Mylrea, a cooper, who died in 1812 in Peel. He was somewhere between 25 and 35 in age, and had married Catherine Quilliam in Patrick in 1801. Assuming he had been born in about 1775, he could have been the grandson of either John snr, John jnr, or Charles jnr.

Another two individual who made a brief appearance in the Manx parish registers, and surely descendants of the *Fildraw* clan were:

- **Charles** Mylrea who married Elizabeth Miller als Halsall in 1786 (so born early 1760s? and had a daughter Cath in 1787; and
- **John** Mylrea who married Mary Stephen in 1793 (so born 1770s?) and had a son John in 1795

Also potential descendants of the *Fildraw* clan, grandsons of John snr, John jnr or Charles jnr, were two young men living in England in the early 1800s.

- In 1804 in London, a James Fisher Mylrea was married. He earned his living as a brushmaker in Bethnal Green, and probably about 21 years of age at the time. His parentage is completely unknown but he named his third son, Charles, having named the first two Thomas and James. The name Charles was subsequently handed down through the generations in

this family. The story of James Fisher Mylrea and his descendants is told in *The Brushmen of Bethnal Green*¹⁷.

→ In 1814, a Thomas Mylrea was married in Deptford in Kent and probably had a birth year in the early 1790s. Apart from the names of his wife (Hannah Hart) and daughter (Jane), nothing further has been found about Thomas except that James Fisher Mylrea was a witness at Jane's marriage, a fairly clear sign of a link – most likely brothers.

Rushen

The parish of Rushen is to the south of Malew and not surprisingly several Mylrea families made their way there. With its villages of Port St Mary and Port Erin serving as harbours to fishing fleets, and surrounding countryside as home to tenant farmers and the mines, the parish held several employment opportunities.

Five Mylrea families are represented in the Rushen Cemetery, and it is reasonable to think that a few could be of the *Fildraw* clan.

- 🍏 Thomas Mylrea & Margaret Waterson, with daughters Jony & Margery
 - Thomas's parentage is uncertain but he and Margaret were married 1702 in Malew, suggesting that Thomas was born around 1675-1680.

buried

Thomas	23/8/1723
Jony	20/6/1724
Margaret	2/3/1744

- 🍏 Thomas Mylrea & Elizabeth/Isabel Shimmin married in 1746 in Malew, and had several children in that parish and the youngest two in Rushen
 - Thomas was most likely the second son of Thomas Mylrea & Jony Kinley of *Fildraw beg* in Malew

buried

¹⁷ <http://www.mylrea.com.au>

John	23/4/1765
Catherine	28/4/1765
Elizabeth	10/3/1781
Jony	26/7/1797
Thomas	28/4/1801
Deborah	17/12/1802
Charles	22/6/1809



John Mylrea & Catherine Quilliam married 1801 in Patrick

- John's family links were almost certainly back to Castletown where two men, brothers and both named John, earned their livelihoods as coopers. Each had several sons and this John Mylrea is likely to be the grandson of one of those men. While the occupation of this John Mylrea is unknown, his son and grandson both worked as coopers in Rushen.

buried

John	9/4/1878
Esther	20/11/1868
Elizabeth	20/5/1894
James	12/4/1904



Daniel Mylrea & Ann Keighan married 1767 in Rushen, so Daniel was born in the early 1740s. He died in German in 1815.

- The name Daniel is not found amongst the Mylreas of Malew so this Daniel might be either the son of Edward Mylrea & Susannah Cashen of Peel OR the son of John Mylrea & Eleanor Quayle of Ballaugh where the name Daniel is very common

buried

William	3/4/1772
Daniel	22/10/1772
Ann	25/1/1790

- There were also two infants belonging to Thomas Mylrea & Eliza Jane Kinread, originally from *Ballacooiley*, who married in Ballaugh in 1865. Thomas later worked in the lead mines of Furness so perhaps he worked in the mines of Rushen for a time.

buried

Eliza Jane	3/12/1872
John James	3/12/1872

RESOURCES

Most of the resources for this story are available on the Mylrea Resources website: <http://www.mylrea.com.au>. Those resources are largely wills and other legal documents such as Mortgages, Deeds of Sale, and Marriage Agreements, all giving information about the Mylrea families on the Isle of Man in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The website and the stories it showcases are the result of an enormous amount of support from the Manx National Heritage Museum & Archives. *A Manx Notebook, an electronic compendium of matters past and present connected with the Isle of Man*, was the go-to reference <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/> during the preparation of the stories, including this one – *The Fatally Flawed Family of Fildraw*

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