



Research Services

Sample Research Plan

(This plan was prepared during 2004. Much has changed in the world of on-line genealogical research since that time.)

Research Plan – ATKINSON Family

You have expressed an interest in learning more about various individuals of your Atkinson family as well as researching the lineage of the parents of your Thomas Atkinson who was born circa 1798 at Greatham, Durham [particulars obtained from 1851 Census]. Accordingly, I will address the individual issues first.

Edward Stanley Atkinson

There are several aspects of Edward Stanley's life that you indicated you would like to expand upon:

1. his military service during the Boer War and in particular his reasons for such an early discharge;
2. his military service for Canada during the First World War;
3. his emigration to Canada; and,
4. the possibility of adding events to a chronology of his life for the periods of time he appears to have evaded.

I am about to suggest may seem somewhat backward in scope. However, we always begin a search with the last known verifiable place of residence of an individual when we commence research into that individual's life. Accordingly, and in view of Edward Stanley's involvement in the military, I would suggest that you begin your search for him by searching the Land Grant Database for Western Lands on the National Archives of Canada website.

http://www.archives.ca/02/0201_e.html

Do not attempt to select a place on the search page. Rather, simply type in "Edward Stanley Atkinson" and see what search results are returned.

If Edward Stanley received lands in western Canada by grant you would definitely want to review the file pertaining to the grant that is maintained by the National Archives. The file will have to be requisitioned through your public library in Niagara Falls. The details of the grant file, including the National Archives film number, should be included with the database listing. Amongst the papers of the land grant file there should be some form of Declaration stating when and how Edward Stanley arrived in Canada as well as giving some indication of his last, or then current, place of residence. Much of the information from this file will hopefully start you off in the right direction for piecing his life back together.

Once you have a more firm time during which Edward Stanley emigrated to Canada you will then be able to start examination of various ships' passenger lists for arrivals at Quebec and in Halifax. In the meantime, if you have not already done so, you may wish to search the records of Ellis Island in the off chance that he arrived in New York and travelled overland to Canada. The website is at

<http://www.ellisland.org>

Do not pay for any hard copies of passenger lists as they can be viewed for free and a copy saved to your computer by right-clicking on the image. Choose the option "save target as" and follow the onscreen windows to save a copy of the image to your computer.

Secondly, you should also search the National Archives website, above noted, in the database of First World War soldiers. Again, on the search page simply type in Edward Stanley's full name. His attestation paper should be posted on the website. In order to access his attestation paper, once the search engine has found his entry you will be taken to a page that gives a brief catalogue description of his file. Either print that page out or carefully record all information on that page concerning the accession of his military service file. There should be a National Archives reference number as well as Edward Stanley's regimental number. Below the description you should see two page icons. Clicking on the first icon will call the first page of his attestation document. On that document you will find his birth details as recorded by him and the name of his next-of-kin. Do not be surprised if those details differ from other information that you may have already in your possession. The second page icon will call the second page of his attestation papers. After the images load onto your computer they will shrink to a small size within a few seconds. Hold your cursor over the lower right-hand corner of the image and a re-size button will appear in that corner in about 5 seconds. Click on the re-size button to expand the image back to normal size. Save a copy of each of the attestation papers to your computer by right-clicking on the image and choosing the "save target as" option, as explained above.

You can also order a copy of his entire military service file - which may or may not be substantial in page number depending upon his length of service - by writing to the National Archives of Canada at:

Library and Archives Canada
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
CANADA
K1A 0N4

With his military file should be a Will. Although it was a standard form Will it may prove informative if he had decided to make a bequest to a relative other than his wife and children. Photocopies run at Cdn\$1.00 per page and generally the archives requires payment in advance of approximately Cdn\$40.00 with any excess being refunded to you after copies are mailed out.

On the National Archives website you would also be able to search and read or download the war dairies that would be pertinent to the movements and engagements of the corps in which your great-grandfather served. Here is the link to that feature:

http://www.collectionscanada.ca/02/02015202_e.html

The war dairies are a grind to sift through. But, the information that can be gleaned from them can be extremely helpful in providing much background of day-to-day, even minute-by-minute, engagements of the corps, their living conditions, casualties and so forth.

Thirdly, you should search the PROCAT catalogue which is online at

<http://www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk/default.asp>

This is the catalogue for the National Archives of England. Again, on the search screen in Item 1 type in Edward Stanley's full name. In Item 2 specify the time frame as being between 1895 and 1905. In Item 3 type in "WO" which is the Archives file code for War Office records and files. When the search returns a list of matches you will probably see a listing that runs from one surname into the Atkinson surname – such as Adams-Atkinson. This is the method by which all Boer War soldier's documents were filed. If you click on the "Context" tab you will see a display of what exactly is included in the file for the soldiers. In your case, I suspect that it will be related to discharge from the 3rd Middlesex Artillery and will likely, in view of the history that his father had managed to pull him out of the military, be tied to discharge to the Royal Chelsea Hospital. If this is the case, then you will have to order the record direct from the National Archives. Unfortunately, Salt Lake City has not been able to microfilm more recent Royal Chelsea documents. To order the file direct from the National Archives, on the search results page you will see, in the upper right-hand corner, a link to "Request this now" or some form of request link. Be aware that you will be required to pay a deposit of £10.00. The archives will then pull the document and advise you if any further payment is required.

I think that from the above documents and files you should gain a wealth of information concerning Edward Stanley's life and movements, including a sense of where he might have been during 1901. You can certainly attempt a search of the 1901 English and Welsh census at Ancestry.com or at

<http://www.census.pro.gov.uk/>

Also, remember while searching the census indices that he may or may not have been recorded on the returns by his second given name or by one or both of his initials, rather than by Edward. He may have simply been recorded as E. S. Atkinson. If you use a birthyear search qualifier then be sure to permit at least a 5-year range on either side of his expected age of 23 years.

Without first having examined any Western Land Grant file, I would suggest that you attempt a search of the 1901 Canadian census. That census is not indexed by surname in its entirety as yet and therefore, in light of the relatively common Atkinson surname, the results may be unreliable. An index to the 1901 Canadian census has been prepared by and is searchable on-line at

<http://automatedgenealogy.com>

Margaret Atkinson, daughter of Thomas and Margaret

Information concerning Margaret Atkinson will have to come, firstly, through her association with her parents and Edward Atkinson, her brother. In relation to Edward Atkinson, and to Thomas and Margaret you should search the 1871 and 1891 English census as it is currently online with Ancestry.com. There is no charge to search Ancestry.com at the LDS Family History Centre. Printouts from the site are \$0.10 or you have the option of saving your images to a CD-Rom or floppy disk.

Begin first by searching for Edward Atkinson in 1871. Having regard to the niece that was found living with him during 1881, you just may discover another Ridgeway individual in the household, if not that same niece. If this is the case, I would highly suspect that the Ridgeway is, in all likelihood, Margaret Atkinson. In the event that you do discover another Ridgeway or Helen Ridgeway in the household in 1871 you would then have a time frame between which to search for a likely marriage of Margaret Atkinson. That marriage would have to have occurred sometime before 1868 (Helen Ridgeway's possible birth year) but not earlier than circa 1855 allowing for Margaret to have married early in life. You would search that time frame for marriages of Margaret Atkinson and then cross-reference any discoveries with that of the Ridgeway or Ridgway surname to see if you can discover a match. You might want to first approach the FreeBMD at

<http://freebmd.rootsweb.com>

The vast majority of marriage index entries have been indexed on this site now, saving and excepting the period during the mid-1860s. Our LDS Family History Centre has the entire run of GRO marriage index 1837 through 1930 on microfiche so you will be able to search the missing years and at the centre. There is no charge for searching any of the resources that are already on-site at the Family History Centre so I hesitate to suggest that you buy credits on a pay-for-view web site for the remainder of the marriage search.

If, indeed, you are successful in locating a marriage between a Margaret Atkinson and a Ridgeway male, you might consider purchasing the certificate for further verification that you have the correct Margaret Atkinson. The certificate can be purchased via verification using her father's name, Thomas, as the proving point. As you know, I can make this purchase on your behalf. If you wish to attempt it yourself, you can purchase the certificate directly from the Office of National Statistics via their web site at

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/registration/certificates.asp>

You will need a credit card to complete the purchase. Follow all of the instructions carefully on that website in filling out each page of the certificate request form. Pay particular attention to the "reference checking" option as this is the avenue through which you may specify that the marriage be verified using the father's name as a point of reference.

Before beginning a search of the G.R.O. indices of marriage for an Atkinson-Ridgeway marriage, on speculation, you should also search the 1871 and 1891 census on Ancestry.com for Helen Ridgeway who, in 1871, would have been approximately 4 years old and approximately 24 years old in 1891. This exercise, particularly the 1871 census information, will hopefully provide a given name for her parents, which would make searching for an Atkinson-Ridgeway marriage much easier.

You might also search for Helen Ridgeway on the 1901 English and Welsh census. again, online at Ancestry.com or at

<http://www.census.pro.gov.uk>

You should start your search with the name Helen Ridgeway, then graduate to Helen Ridgway. You should also attempt a search with the name "Ellen" Ridgeway, Ellen and Helen having been commonly used interchangeably. Include her estimated age, which would be 34, with a 5-year spread. Also, in the "Place Keywords" box – not the "Place of Birth" box – include Poplar, which, in the 1881 census, is the place she claims at which she was born. If no results are found, repeat the search but eliminate the surname. Be sure to indicate that you are searching for a female. This is a speculative search only but just may turn up a few interesting tidbits if you are able to fairly certainly identify her in 1901.

In that you have been unable to find a birth registration for Margaret Atkinson in several quarters of 1840, you will have to expand your search into other years. It is possible that her age had not been recorded correctly on the census. Remember, families during the early and mid-19th century did not have the luxury of celebrating birthdays as we do, today. Rather, there may have only been a quick reference made to her that "this is the day you were born" with no connecting reference to how many years ago that birth took place. Consequently, and this is seen in many 10-year census examinations, the age of an individual will vary between 1 and 15 years.

If it proves out that Margaret Atkinson did marry a Ridgeway individual you will then, from the various census returns, have a beginning of a family for Margaret. You will have to follow up with G.R.O. indices of marriage for any and/or all of the children.

Edward Atkinson and Lucy Ann, nee Pegg

In relation to each of these individuals, as indicated above you should search the 1871, 1891, and 1901 census online with Ancestry.com. Even though Edward died prior to the 1901 census there may still be useful information to come out of the entry for Lucy Ann Atkinson in that enumeration.

With regard to Edward Atkinson, I would advise that you search for a Will for him. Naturally, any Will is generally filled with points of much interest and is a good gauge for identifying any other familial lines, such as brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews and so on. In that Edward died post-1857 you will have to start your search by requisitioning the index of the Principal Probate Registry for 1900 from Salt Lake City. I will help you to complete this step as it is somewhat complex. Inasmuch as this search is speculative, you naturally do not know if he left a Will or if he did not, if his estate was of sufficient value to require a grant of Administration. If it appears that estates were categorized separately during the early 1900s, you may have to search both the "Probate" and "Administration". The LDS Family History Library Catalogue will indicate separate film numbers, one for Probate records and one for Administration records, if this is the case. If an index entry is identified concerning Edward Atkinson, then a copy of the Will or Administration, as the case may be, must be ordered direct from the Principal Probate Registry office in Yorkshire. That address is:

Principal Registry of the Family Division,
1st Avenue House,
42-49 High Holborn,
London
ENGLAND
WC1V 6NP
Telephone: 0171-9367000

Fees for copies of estate documents are charged out at the rate of approximately £1.00 to £1.50 per page with a minimum order of £5.00. Much heated discussion has been had concerning the cost of copy Wills ordered from the Principal Probate Registry and it may be that they have since lowered their fees. You may wish to check for current fees on the Court Service website at

<http://www.courtservice.gov.uk>

You should also repeat the Will search for Lucy Ann Atkinson. As she died a widow she would have been legally entitled to draw her own Will.

Sir Edward Temperley Gourley

It would be instructive to your overall family history to have some more detailed information concerning Sir Gourley's connection to the family.

Inasmuch as he died on 26 April 1902 he should be able to be found on the 1901 English/Welsh census. Again, this census can be searched on Ancestry.com or on the National Archives census website. This census will provide you with his place of birth.

I would also suggest, having regard to his political career, that you make a search of the books titled "Who Was Who" for 1902 and a few years beyond. Typically, short biographies were included in the book that was issued during the year of death. However, as his death occurred later in the year, his biography may not have been included until 1903 or even 1904. You might also want to attempt a search of the "National Biographical Dictionary" which is an alphabetical series of biographies that include names of parents as well as birth dates and places. Sometimes, siblings are also mentioned or other family relatives if those relatives were instrumental to a person's public career. Both of these series are part of the Adult Reference Department at Centennial Library, Church Street, St. Catharines. The collection is also held in the Niagara Falls Public Library but for limited years.

Again, in relation to Sir Edward Gourley I would also suggest that you attempt a search on PROCAT at

<http://www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk/default.asp>

for any files that might be held at the National Archives.

I would also suggest that a search for a Will in the Principal Probate Registry might also be instructive. Despite the cost associated with obtaining a copy of the Will, I still believe that such a Will might contain many many interesting family connections. Of course, the gamble is that he left nothing at all to any of his relatives.

Lastly, I would suggest that you conduct a search for his birth on the FamilySearch website. Use the "Search for Ancestors" option of the "Search" file tab. Choose "All Resources" first and then gradually narrow your search to the I.G.I. specifically. This search might return a quick answer to Sir Gourley's parentage.

Thomas Atkinson, born circa 1798

You now know from the 1851 census that Thomas Atkinson was born at Greatham, Durham. This is a great step forward for it opens up an entirely new search in new records.

The first step you should take is to attempt a search of the 1871, 1881, and 1891 census for England/Wales. The 1881 census, of course, can be searched with on CD at the Family History Centre or online on the FamilySearch website. Be sure to include the newly found information in your search parameters. Inasmuch as you do not have a death date for either Thomas or his wife, Margaret (nee Temperley) you will have to keep an open mind to the fact that Thomas may be listed as a widower or wife a new wife. You will recall that during our meeting I suggested that Margaret, due to the vast difference in age between Thomas and her, was not his first wife. I am still leaning heavily in that direction as there appears to have only been the two children – Edward and Margaret - born to the marriage.

After you have completed the above census searches, you will then have a few more ideas of when certain events happened in Thomas and Margaret's respective lives. Approximate dates of death and approximate dates of remarriage, if either of them seem to have remarried. In the event, it appears that Thomas survived Margaret and went on to a third marriage, then you would be in a perfect position to verify Thomas's father's name from the third marriage certificate. In order to correctly identify any third marriage you would have to first identify when Margaret had died. For the death and marriage searches you will have to rely on the G.R.O. indices. However, you may be able to search parish burial registers to aid in identifying burial dates. Those registers would likely be for the parish in which Thomas or Margaret were living during 1871, 1881 or 1891.

The second step you should take to is revisit a search of "All Resources" on the FamilySearch website. Focus your search to include his approximate birth year of 1798, plus or minus 5 years. Keep scrolling through the entries until you find a Thomas Atkinson at Greatham. If, indeed, you do have a match, then I would say you are well on your way to discovering several new generations of your Atkinson family. Of course, all information on the site is considered to be tertiary and will have to be followed up in actual records. I am hoping that you will find information not only on the I.G.I. portion but also in the Ancestral File and/or Pedigree Resource File. The Pedigree Resource File information will indicate a particular disc # or pin #. You actually do not need to purchase the disc and the pin # will only operate with the disc. To navigate around in the Pedigree Resource File online, just keep clicking on links until you extract the most information you can. You will eventually come to a page that includes a "Submission Number". If that is the case in your search, double click on the "Submission Number". You will be returned to the search screen, which will then be completed with that number. Type in the Atkinson surname only and click on "Search". Hopefully, that will take you to an index listing of all of the Atkinsons that have been included in that submission. Keep clicking on links until you have exhausted all of the information.

If it appears that Thomas survived Margaret then we know that, if he left a Will that Will would also have to come from the Principal Probate Registry. If, indeed, Thomas did over-live Margaret, there would be no Will left by Margaret as married women were not permitted to make

a Will without the written approval of their husband. Many women did not bother to take this step. On the other hand, if Margaret over-lived Thomas, then you would want to search for any Will that she may have left. In either case, again, I would assist you in identifying the correct film(s) to order for the year of death identified.

Also, now having an indication of Thomas's parish of birth, you will have to revisit the search of parish registers. Parish Register Transcripts for the period 1559 through 1812 are available from the LDS on Film #0090786 item 4. Please check our indefinite holdings before ordering this film. Although it is a transcript, it is the only copy of the Parish Registers that are available for Greatham. There is a Bishop's Transcript for Greatham St. John church on LDS film #1867310 items 5-6 which covers baptisms 1743-1812, marriages 1564-1812 and burials 1727-1812 and 1864-1993. Monumental inscriptions for the churchyard at Greatham were indexed and published by the Cleveland Family History Society. The society can be contacted by writing to:

Cleveland, North Yorkshire & South Durham Family History Society
1 Oxbang Cl.,
REDCAR,
Cleveland,
England
TS10 4ND
Telephone or fax: 01642-486615
(remember to add international dialing codes)

Eventually, you may also wish to examine the earlier (1841, 1851 and 1861) census records for Greatham to identify siblings and/or parents of Thomas. I feel that now with this new information you are about to open up quite a lot of resources through which you will be able to continue the research of your paternal lineage. As such, it is very difficult to expand on advice much beyond this point. Next steps in research will flow directly from the amount of information that you are able to accumulate concerning your earlier ancestors from the FamilySearch website, parish registers and census returns.

Eventually, you may also wish to search for a Will for one of more of any new ancestors that you discover during this process. If at any time during this research you reach a point where the Atkinson family disappears from Greatham you will have to turn your attention to other parish documents for more clues to their origins such as settlement and removals orders. If this event should occur please let me know and I will be happy to help you with that search.

I hope that I have addressed sufficient research steps for you concerning the various individuals in your family. If I can be of further assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Happy Hunting!

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