

THE TALE OF ANDREW KERR

Andrew leant on the cairn and stared out at the view. From the top of Law Hill it is possible to see the river where it broadens out; the town is just visible in one direction, beyond the woods and fertile fields; and by looking the other way, Gallow Hill just hid the cottage where Andrew was born. But he was not looking at any of the familiar landmarks: for once, he wasn't watching or spying on anyone, because he was concentrating on making a decision about what he should do.

After a long while, when he had convinced himself that there could only be one solution, he set off down the hill, past the old mansion with its charred and jagged roof timbers; round the carriage drive built by his father and grandfather long before he was born, and now carpeted by grass and other weeds; and along the overgrown avenue that led past his own home and towards the road. At the gardener's cottage, which was almost hidden by the skirmishing *Clematis montana* and a 'Marshall Neil' -- a heavy, old-fashioned rose that his uncle remembered being planted -- he paused, and snapped off a couple of late flowers and sniffed at their browning petals, but their scent was as pale and autumnal as their colour.

He briefly caught another scent, acrid and sharp, and he paused again then stepped softly into the walled garden, searching for the fox. A blackbird exploded out of the weeds beneath an apple tree, its clattering alarm drawing Andrew's attention to the remaining windfalls. Small birds chattered in the ivy that had grown up over the wall.

The garden was reverting to wilderness, a wilderness of imported exotic plants where only those that could tolerate the long northern winters triumphed. It had once been a fine garden, with deep herbaceous beds, and paths lined by rose pergolas and pleached apples and pears. There had been lilies: the day-lilies had survived, but the tall speckled *Lanceolatum rubrifolium*, were long gone. Even their metal labels had vanished in the tangle.

The vegetable patch that he and Danny had cleared for their own use was thick with yellowing groundsel and chickweed. "Dig for Victory!" What a stupid idea that had been! All those Englishmen on the radio, telling them to do this, do that. What did they know about anything? His irritation flared briefly and he picked up a stone and hurled it at a broken sheet of glass, causing the blackbird to shout with indignation. He and Danny had had to dig for themselves and Cathie - there had been no-one here to stop them because the gardener had gone off to fight. Cathie had not been happy with what she called their thieving, but she had soon been pleased enough to have the extra food. Andrew screwed up his face in sudden anguish and clutched at his beard. If only Cathie were still with them, then he would not have to do this terrible thing.

There was no light in the cottage, but he could hear music when he opened the door. Daniel was slumped in the big armchair, so still that Andrew was momentarily shocked into thinking that he had already died.

"Danny? *Danny!* "

His brother stirred, and opened his eyes, bemused. "Andy - where have you been? It's almost dark. Light the lamp, Andy." He slowly pushed himself up out of the chair.

"I picked you some roses."

"Ah, the good Marshall Neil. And did you dig us some leeks, too?"

Andrew flicked a sideways glance at him, then made himself busy lighting the lamp. "There's not much paraffin. You will need to get some more tomorrow."

Daniel sighed. "Aye. And the radio battery is getting low, it needs to be taken for re-charging."

Andy turned the knob on the radio, but the voices which replaced the music were now barely audible. He waggled the contacts on the accumulator, but the radio merely whistled and crackled in response. "We could use the one I've been mending for Mrs McGillivray. You can take it back to her in the hand-cart tomorrow when you go down to the shop, and she will never know."

Danny was leaning against the table, gripping its edge, still holding the two roses in his other hand.

"Danny?"

"Andy, I want you to listen to me. You must take a note to the farm. I will write a note and ask them to send for the doctor. I think it would be best if he could come here soon."

"Soon? You are not needing a doctor, you are only feeling tired because you are hungry. You will be better after we have had our tea. Here - " Andrew opened the small cupboard that acted as their larder, "We still have two eggs. Mrs McGillivray will pay us with more eggs tomorrow. And we have potatoes. I will go back right now and pick up apples to stew ..." Not the doctor, not yet, he had only just decided what he had to do! He needed more time to get used to the idea. "I will go back and fetch some apples," he said again. "I will dig some leeks too." Panic welled up inside him, and his hands began to shake.

"No, Andy. You cannot go for apples in the dark, don't be daft, lad. Tend to the range and put the kettle on to boil."

Daniel went to their father's oak bureau that had come with them from the other house, and took out some paper and a pen, but the ink, when he opened it, was dry and hard. "I shall have to write with a pencil and that will not look good," he muttered.

"You know I cannot go to the farm!"

"It will be all right. It is dark and they will not see you - leave the note under a stone by the door. The dogs will be tied up for the night, so you need not fear." Daniel spoke kindly, as he wrote. "It is all right, Andrew. The doctor will give me some medicine and I will be better soon."

Earnshaw drove up the rough track past the cemetery, fearing for the car's undercarriage. The louring gloom of the trees that pressed in on each side added to his feeling that the journey was timeless, and might never end; fallen branches caused him to swerve and muddy water splashed up from untended pot-holes. When he reached the cottage he remained uneasy. Its door was closed, the place looked shut up and empty - but there was a sweet smell of

the wood-smoke that was drifting from the chimney. There would be no shortage of wood for the forester's sons, he thought, even if they had little else.

He shut the car door with a heavy thud, and the front door of the cottage opened at once, suggesting the men had been waiting for him.

On his last visit, when he had come with Allan Galbraith, the patient - if he could be called that, the "subject" perhaps would be more accurate - had taken himself to his room, to lie down on his bed, and they had had to climb the narrow stairs to examine him. Daniel had remained downstairs in the living-room; he seemed to know what his younger brother was proposing, but Earnshaw wondered if he knew the reason for this late-in-life decision: that Andrew was frightened that Daniel - who was now clearly suffering from the gradual onslaught of pernicious anaemia - might die and leave him on his own. And Daniel Kerr had never been allowed to see "the Thing", as Andrew called it. Not since Andrew was a wee lad.

But this time both brothers stood at the open door, Andrew staring out and apparently anxious to start his journey.

Daniel took his arm: "Andrew, let the doctor by, he'll be needing a rest and a cup of tea after his journey."

But Andrew did not even greet Earnshaw, and rudely pushed past him. Earnshaw noted that he smelt less unpleasant than previously, and his black hair and beard, still surprisingly free of grey for a man of fifty, had been washed and combed: perhaps his brother had had some influence there.

"That isn't a two-seater. The other doctor said we were to drive there in his Allard."

Earnshaw was taken aback. "I'm very sorry, Mr Kerr. Mr Galbraith has had to attend a meeting at the Infirmary today. But my car's a Riley Kestrel, and I'm sure you'll find it an exciting ride. I will do my best to make it so," he added, jokingly. Of course someone as senior as Galbraith would have had no intention of collecting Kerr himself, the man must have misunderstood.

Daniel Kerr had come outside too, and Earnshaw observed that he seemed even paler and weaker than on the previous visit. Unlike his brother, he was grey-haired and slightly balding, and his body was thin and stooped. "I am sorry, doctor, he has never been in any sort of motor-car before, and even when he went in the wagon it was not on a main road. Hearing the other doctor talk about his cars made him that excited." He was clearly very anxious. "It's what has kept him to his resolve, you see."

Earnshaw nodded, and said quietly, "Don't worry yourself, Mr Kerr. I'll get him to the hospital." He walked back to the car and opened a rear door. He smiled at Andrew. "See, there is a fine green leather bucket-seat, and it has a pneumatic cushion to ensure you can sit comfortably. And do you see the blind on the back window? You can pull it down with this cord if the sun is too bright." Andrew remained where he was, not to be coerced, so Earnshaw opened the front passenger door. "Or you would be welcome to sit in the front next to me, if you think you would prefer that. You will have a better view of the road, and you will be able to examine the gears and dials as we drive."

Andrew looked directly at Earnshaw for the first time, then quickly averted his eyes, before he nodded.

"Aye. I will sit at the front."

He climbed in, and for a moment his long skirt, which appeared to be made of a length of woollen cloth of a non-descript colour, caught on the sill, and he moaned and made little panting noises as he pulled it close around his legs.

"I will fetch your clothes, Andy," Daniel called and he picked up the cloth bag that was resting by the door and brought it across to Earnshaw. "I have added a few things from his room. And a pair of my own trousers They might not fit too well. But I thought he might need them. After."

He twitched his neck and rested his head awkwardly against his right shoulder, then he bent down to touch his brother on the shoulder.

"You will be all right, then, Andy? The doctor will fetch you back here soon."

Andrew looked up at him. "I wish Cathie could have come. I wish you could come," he said, almost pleadingly.

Daniel patted him, and nodded, and when he stood up Earnshaw was embarrassed to see that the man had tears in his eyes.

"Is there really no-one who could come and visit him?"

Daniel shook his head. "Our elder brother's a forester over at Blairgowrie, and he would not be able to get away. And both our sisters have - passed on. How long will he be in there, doctor?"

"I cannot say, Mr Kerr. But perhaps a week or two."

"It will be strange. I have never been on my own - in sixty years. And Andrew has always had us to look out for him. Always ..." He turned away, but then quickly turned back and beckoned for Earnshaw to come close. "He is not at all used to other folk, you know that? He will be very troubled."

"I understand, and I will make sure they understand that at the hospital." Privately, though, Earnshaw was deeply worried.

He shut the passenger door, and when he had walked round and climbed in behind the steering wheel, he saw that Daniel had already disappeared inside the cottage, and that Andrew was peering at the dials on the dashboard and fidgeting uncomfortably in his seat. Earnshaw was a young man, still in his thirties, and the prospect of the long drive to the hospital at Bridge of Earn in the company of this gruff, unmannerly recluse, made him a little apprehensive.

After half an hour, Andrew was so uncomfortable and fearful that he could not remain silent.

"Stop! I want to sit in the back." He hadn't meant to shout. "Please."

The doctor immediately braked and pulled the car over. "Of course," he said and got out, coming round to help Andrew with the door. "I have no doubt that it is all a little over-whelming," he murmured.

Andrew, standing on the verge and in the open air, had a sudden urge to run, to run home to safety and familiarity, away from his enforced proximity to this stranger, and the smell of leather and tobacco smoke. But Dr Earnshaw caught hold of his elbow and gently guided him towards the rear seat.

"Now, you spread out and make yourself more comfortable," he said, in a kindly manner. "And the bag that your brother made up for you is right there beside you. You can open the window by turning this handle, if that would help."

Cold air streamed in noisily but Andrew felt less trapped. The doctor spoke to him sometimes and asked him questions, perhaps about his family - Andrew could see his eyes in the tiny mirror - but it was difficult to hear and Andrew did not answer. He stared out at the changing countryside, the gentle hills, the fields of stubble, the small wizened apples left on the trees; he stared at the metalled road, the houses, the motor-cars and occasional lorries; the bridges and river crossings. The doctor pointed out a train, trailing staccato puffs of smoke as it climbed an incline, but that was no novelty for Andrew - he had often watched the trains as they passed near his home. He had never been so far from home and yet he was soon disappointed, with the motor-car, with the villages, the journey. He pulled his jacket tight around him, lifted his bundle of belongings onto his lap, and closed his eyes.

The hospital was the final disappointment, this was not the grand stone building such as he had imagined, but seemed to be a collection of long low sheds. Dr Earnshaw parked the Riley in front of one of them, and said, "We're here, Mr Kerr - let me take you inside."

As they walked up the wooden steps, Andrew said, "You will go back and look after my brother, you must promise." It was an order, of sorts, and Earnshaw knew it was important he should agree.

The day was not going well, Munro thought.

Matron had had to be very determined with Kerr, it had been a difficult job to clean him before his examination. He'd become noisy and quite aggressive, indeed he had shouted, that nobody was to come near him, and he would wash himself, but Matron had eventually persuaded him that his skin needed to be cleaned in a special way for the operation and that he must allow her to do it. Munro, who had only recently taken up his appointment as Registrar, thought that Matron had, in the end, been surprisingly gentle with the man and had managed to gain his confidence to a small extent. He was also rather impressed that Matron had taken the task of washing and disinfecting the man and his grotesque appendage upon herself.

Her comment, directed at Munro, had been a quiet reproof:

"From what Dr Earnshaw has told me, it seems that Mr Kerr has lived like a recluse for all his life - and who, Dr Munro, having seen the disability that the poor man has had to bear, can blame him? I will be frank with you. I think the man is very frightened."

Later, Munro had to speak sharply to Nurse Thomas because he overheard her gossiping and giggling with Nurse Stephens, "Did you see the size of it? He keeps it strapped to his right leg in the daytime. He can't wear pyjamas, we didn't know what to dress him in."

The patient, wearing a dressing-gown, had been walked across to the radiology building yesterday to have several X-rays taken, and today when the radiographer had discussed the plates with Munro and Galbraith he had pointed out a shadow in the mediastinal area that could possibly be a large tumour. This had been an unpleasant surprise for the surgeon and his Registrar, but since Kerr had made no complaints about chest pains and seemed to be suffering no ill effects, the chances were that it was benign. It

would have to be ignored for the present, Galbraith said, and the patient would not be informed.

It was the man's third leg that was the focus of their attention. The X-rays of Kerr's extra limb showed that the femur articulated via a bony ankylosis with a distorted tibia, but the patella and fibula were absent: the toes of the inverted stunted foot had the normal complement of bones plus an additional toe that lacked a nail. It was the proximal end of the leg that concerned them, where there was half of a rudimentary pelvis: but it seemed to be unattached.

"Let's go and have another look at the man himself," Galbraith said. "Get MacLeod to come too and take some photos - we shall get them today however obstructive our patient tries to be!"

"Perhaps he will find it easier if we keep the female staff away and deal with him ourselves?"

But despite banishing the nurses, Munro's hope was ill-founded and another furious battle of words ensued before Kerr would allow photographs to be taken of the lateral and posterior aspects of his third limb.

Galbraith remained as affable and impeccably well-mannered as usual. "I apologise for the trouble to which we have put you, Mr Kerr, and I wonder whether - since you will soon begin a new life with, I hope, a great deal of freedom from its former constraints - you would also wish to have your beard shaved and your hair trimmed? To give you a new appearance as a form of celebration?"

Andrew Kerr ignored him completely, and merely picked up his gown and began to cover himself again.

As he and Galbraith walked back to the surgeon's office, Munro said, "Why did he never get anything done about it before? Fifty years, for goodness' sake!"

"I asked Earnshaw the same question, although of course he's far too young to have had any personal involvement himself, and he put me in touch with old Lattimer in Edinburgh, he was the local chap, you know, before Earnshaw. Lattimer was there at Kerr's birth, and he told me the father was the forester for the estate, when the Dalgleish family had it. Apparently the father died about 20 years ago, though he'd carried on working until he was seventy-odd. A tree fell on him or something like that, one of the hazards of the job I suppose." Galbraith laughed as he sat down behind his desk. "Of course they had to move from their tied house, but the estate looked after them, still looks after them according to Lattimer, even though it's been fragmented and bits and pieces have been sold off. Kerr's brother - the one with pernicious anaemia, interesting case incidentally - worked there in some sort of capacity too before he had to give up. The Lady Dalgleish or whoever it is that owns it now probably felt she still had some sort of obligation. Rightly so, of course. Would you mind sticking your head out of the door and asking someone to bring us some tea, Munro?"

Munro went to find one of the secretaries, wondering as he did so if Mr Galbraith had the same paternalistic attitude to the servants on his Sutherland estates.

When he returned to the office, Galbraith was holding Kerr's X-rays to the light again. "But you asked me why this limb -" he tapped the plate, " -

remained in situ. It's an absolutely fascinating story. Lattimer told me that when he delivered the child he recommended that the appendage be removed at once - it was very small in relation to the rest of the child's anatomy at that time. But the parents refused! And their reason? The birth of this '*monster*' - that is the word the father used - was a punishment to them for some unspeakable sins of their forebears. Lattimer wasn't allowed to see the boy again until he reached adolescence - they hid the boy away, wheeled him around in a perambulator. He wore a kilt until the limb was too big, then a dressing-gown - so Lattimer heard. Beyond belief, is it not? Come in! Ah, the tea. Yes, just put the tray there will you?"

Munro remained silent as he tried to imagine Andrew Kerr's early years. He shook his head in amazement. "Unbelievable!"

"I hope I'm not being unreasonably optimistic but I cannot see that this operation will afford us too many difficulties, Munro. There seems to be nothing needed in the way of separating a bony connection and I suspect the main problem will be in fashioning a suitable skin flap. I am assuming that the tests are accurate and there is no connection to the urethra. It should be considerably less taxing than operating on the knee-joint."

Munro smiled politely, acknowledging that Galbraith's great *oeuvre*, on injuries of the knee-joint, had just been published to great acclaim.

"If all goes well, our Mr Kerr should be back home with his brother in a few weeks. I gather from Earnshaw that the elder brother is now fairly poorly, so perhaps they will have a reversal of fortunes - the revitalised younger Kerr caring for the elder."

Can two men change the habits of their long life-times? Munro wondered. Earnshaw had told him privately that he was extremely concerned about Andrew Kerr's future state of mind. Munro wondered, too, if Andrew Kerr had always known his parents considered that he was a monster and a punishment: surely not, for what child or man could live with that knowledge about themselves?

"I also gathered from Lattimer that two of the father's brothers changed their names and emigrated to America. Fascinating, don't you think? One does wonder about the gravity of the so-called 'sins'. Well, we have an interesting day ahead of us tomorrow." Galbraith picked up his wide-brimmed black fedora and took his overcoat from the hanger. "Good night, Munro. See you in the morning, bright and early."

There was more food than Andrew was used to. When he first arrived he had been too nervous to eat, but as his wound began to heal and knew he was getting better and would go home, he had begun to eat well. He wondered if he could take some of the food home with him. One day he had been served liver; he hated the taste and texture of it - but Danny needed to eat liver to make himself well again, Dr Earnshaw had told him so. They had lent him a radio, too, the modern sort without a battery that plugged into a socket in the wall. At first he had had to lie on his side to let the wound drain and heal, and he had listened to the radio all the time, ignoring the staff and their interference and questions. They touched him, too, lifting him, pushing his body around.

When he was allowed to swing his legs off the bed and stand, he was weak and unstable, as though he would at any moment fall forward on his face. Dr Munro had held his arm and explained that there was no counterweight behind him. Had it been so heavy? It had always been part of him, so he didn't know. He frequently slipped his hand into the back of his pyjama trousers, his fingers probing the deep indentation and wrinkled skin on his right buttock. "The Thing" had really gone. Its absence upset and puzzled him.

He knew how to deal with the hospital now. You asked the nurses to get you things, and if you told them to go away, they usually did. He disliked the nurses, they were mostly young women who were always rude and giving him orders or disagreeing with him. The Matron was all right although she was very strict with him, the way mother had been.

He wanted to go home so violently that sometimes his heart actually ached. He thought constantly about home, and he worried about Danny, he wished he knew what he was doing. He thought he might even show Danny the Thing, now it was not joined on to him; Dr Munro said they had put it in a big bottle.

"Will you give it to me now?" he had asked Mr Galbraith, a couple of days after the operation. "I will take it home with me."

Mr Galbraith laughed, "My dear fellow! No, of course you cannot take it with you."

"Why are you laughing? It's *mine*, it belongs to me. What are you going to do with it?" He was speaking too loudly, he knew, although he was weak with rage.

"We shall take care of it for you, do not worry, Mr Kerr." Mr Galbraith smiled coldly and gestured to the two young doctors who were accompanying him that they should all move on.

Andrew continued to ask for the Thing to be returned to him. Two weeks after the operation his skin was healed but now, when he asked, no-one even listened any more. He loathed the hospital, with the noise and smells and so many people, never any peace, everyone talking and poking and pushing things at him. He had to escape, he needed to be outdoors. He climbed out of bed and felt around in the little cupboard for his bag. There were trousers in there, and the rest of his clothes. His fingers searched for and found the small hard object, and he pulled it out and stroked it: the flake of red sandstone that he had found in the quarry near the cottage, with the embedded fossil fish. Danny had put it in the bag to remind him of his room at home.

He had to go home! But he had no idea how to get there, it must be a long way. His legs felt weak, but he would walk, if he knew in which direction. Then he had an idea. He left his room and walked down the corridor to the Ward Sister's desk.

"I want to see Dr Earnshaw," he said.

"He doesn't work here, Mr Kerr, and I'm afraid I don't know when he's next expected. But I'm sure he'll be coming soon to see how you are getting on. And now, since you are here, I have a letter for you. But before I give it to you Mr MacLeod wants to take another photograph to show how well you have healed."

"NO!" Andrew bellowed. " No more photographs. You've no business to be looking at me any more. I want to go home, I want Dr Earnshaw to take me home."

The Sister took his arm and he struggled hard and pushed her away. MacLeod grabbed him too, and all the while he was shouting, shouting that they should leave him alone and give him back 'the Thing' and let him go home. It was, finally, too much. His throat was tight, he began to sob.

"I want to go home."

Great shuddering breaths and howling sounds burst from him.

Matron walked briskly to the desk to see what the racket was about, but she seemed to understand at once and she put an arm round Andrew's shoulder.

"Now then, Mr Kerr. We'll send you home very soon. Come along now, we'll go back into your room and we'll let Mr MacLeod take his photographs, then Sister will give you the letter that came for you. And perhaps we can get you a cup of tea." Andrew could not stop shaking and tears poured down his face and into his beard, but he let Matron take him to be undressed and photographed.

"Would you like Sister to send someone to read the letter to you?" she asked afterwards. He stared at her, uncomprehendingly. "In case you find it difficult ..."

He looked at Daniel's round clear writing on the envelope, writing that he knew so well, for had he not copied it hundreds, thousands of times, when Cathie and Daniel taught him to read and write.

"I am not blind, nor am I stupid," he said. "I will read it myself."

Danny must have been to the shop to buy some new ink: "*Dear Andy, I hope your op has gone well and that you are getting better. I saw Dr E. two days ago in the village and he said he would come and see you next week and bring you home if you were well. The house is strange without you, and I hope you will come home soon. Perhaps we can go down to the harbour together. I went down there after you left and I saw a kingfisher. Do you remember how we all went with father to see the big windjammer that had come in for potatoes? It was a 200-tonner with two masts ...*"

I was only ten or twelve, Andrew thought, remembering: so Daniel would have been twenty or so, working for our uncle who was a pendicler over at Whiteriggs. Father had come back from work, and said he had seen the big ship from the road. Cathie was with us too, but surely she should have been working at the Dowager House in those days? He frowned, trying to remember why she was there; probably she had come over to hear him read, she liked to make him read from the Bible. They were all going to go down to the quay. Not me, I had to stay at home with mother.

Andrew stared unseeingly at the letter. He had gone out, though, up the Gallow Hill, and he had seen the masts in the distance, with their great white sails furled. So he had run away to see it, down to the port. There were herons in the trees. And there were so many people, but he had not cared, he had seen his father with Daniel and Cathie, and he had run to them, and held onto Daniel. People had stared at him, but Cathie had taken his hand, too.

They saw their elder sister Jane, and she came over with her husband and their son James. It was her fault, really. She made a fuss of Andrew and

said he and James should go and have a closer look at the ship. Cathie said to stay with her, but Andrew had thought he would go, he would be all right with family.

Then that girl had seen him. "Lookit him! There's the wee bogeyman, the bairn wi' a tail. Gie's a lookit yer tail, laddie!"

Everyone, all the villagers, all the crew, had looked at him.

Andrew remembered, even now, how he had run and run, leaving Danny and Cathie behind. He had hidden in the quarry until it was dark and they were out calling for him to come home.

Their father had been furious, but not with him. "How do they know?" was all he kept saying, "How did they find out?", and their mother had said, "It would have been Jane, she never could keep her mouth shut, she was always making mischief even when she was a lass."

They had never bothered much with Jane and her family after that. *"... and we watched her from the hill when they took her out on the tide. Do you remember what a fine sight she was? I thought I would like to join the navy and go to sea."*

But I wouldn't let you, Andrew thought. He climbed into his bed. There was a rage and sadness deep within him. He had been cheated, all his life. But now he would lie here and wait for Doctor Earnshaw. He will soon come and take me home, he thought, and Danny and I will go down to the port and watch for herons and kingfishers, and in the Spring we will collect duck-eggs. Perhaps we will even walk to the old quarry and look for fossils.

As he lay there with his eyes closed, another idea came to him. When he was back home, he would look in the bureau for Uncle Daniel's letters to their father, that had been full of news about plants and trees and the farmland he had bought, somewhere 'out West'. Perhaps he and Danny should take a trip to find their cousins in America; perhaps the cousins could even help them with the fare.

Notes

The names of the "man with three legs", his family, and the doctors and surgeons involved, have been changed.

The article, "*The man with three legs*", (IS Smillie & JS Murdoch, 1952, Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery), gave some hints as to where 'Andrew Kerr' might have lived, and I obtained background information about the area at that time from several useful books and parish records.

All the archival research (censuses, births and deaths registers etc) was carried out by Anne Carroll, Local Studies Assistant, at the A. K. Bell Library, Perth. Anne also pointed me in the direction of many other useful sources, and carried out some of the archival research for "*Janet's story*". I am extremely grateful to her for her help and investigative enthusiasm.

Some further details (including letters) generously provided by the great-grandson of one of the "uncles who went to America", helped me to find out - then fictionalise - some aspects of the 'Kerr's' family life.

Here are some facts:

'Andrew Kerr' was in hospital for nearly 4 weeks.

He died at home approximately three months after his discharge from hospital, in April 1949, aged 50. The cause of death is entered on the certificate as "teratoma of the lung; gastro-enteritis; cardiac failure". According to the Smillie & Murdoch paper, "he died ... from an acute infection of the urinary tract."

His amputated extra leg is preserved as specimen GC13817 in the Collection of the Surgeons' Hall Museum.

'Daniel Kerr', "forester, retired", died four years after his brother in hospital, of broncho-pneumonia and cardiac failure, aged 64.

The Man with Three Legs

Diana Hendry

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'In the autumn of 1948 a message was received from a rural practioner stating that in the course of a vist he had discovered a man who, from the cursory glance that had been permitted, had a large sacral appendage with the appearance of a massive tail.'

The Mother

He was a monster, yes,

but he was my monster and I loved him.

His father would have done away with him
when he saw that limb, that leg
with its curled up foot hung from behind
like a huge tail. Always between prayer
and drink, my man. Said he'd been sent
as a punishment for our sins – *your sins*
he'd say, looking at me mad-eyed
for he'd rather the boy was not his at all.
The runt of the litter, he'd say, that freak.

His brothers and sisters were sworn
to secrecy with the threat of the belt or worse.
I'd take him out in the pram. Until he was ten
I could hide him in that. We'd walk in the woods.
I'd sing to him. He'd sing back.
I hoped the thing would fall off or shrivel away.
I dreamt I'd wake one morning and find it
on the floor and him as normal as the others.
When he was too big for the pram
I bought him a kilt. And when he grew out
of the kilt I made him a long flannel gown.
O the shame of him. And the blessing.
My youngest who I loved the most
and kept most hidden.

A Local

As bairns we cried him Frankenstein –
Frankie fir short. He was oor monster,
ken whit ah mean? Fowk said how
he'd be oot at gloamin in the woods
happed in a lang sark, nae breeks
an wi this awfy tail hingin oot ahint him.

Maw telt me no tae be daft. She said
he's naebit a puir body who mendit watches.
We didnae believe her. We thocht him a deil,
hauf mannie, hauf beastie. Me an ma pals
wid daur each ither tae throw clabber and chuckies.
Gie us a look at yir tail! we'd shout
and laugh tae see him fleein hame.

**From the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery,
University of St. Andrews**

'The operation consisted of little more than careful dissection through fibro-fatty tissue. Any difficulty lay in the pre-op preparation of the skin and then in fashioning suitable skin flaps. We thought we'd gained his confidence during the unsavoury task of preparing his skin and suggested he celebrate his successful treatment with a shave and a haircut. The suggestion was received in silence and disregarded. He showed neither pleasure nor gratitude. The post-operative photograph was secured at the second attempt only after angry words and our accusation of ungracious behaviour.'

The Patient

I knew I was a medical curiosity.
Those photographs! Essential
for the treatment plan, they said.
Me, stood there bollock naked before
strangers! Even with my back to them,
even in the polite medical silence,
I heard the ghost of my father
calling me *freak*. I could tell
they were writing their paper
in their heads. I ask you,
who can photograph the mind or the heart?

They expected to be thanked
for making me 'normal'.
Suggested 'a change of personality'.
Gave me trousers. All I felt
was loss, as if what had been
taken away was who I was –

father's freak, mother's blessing.

Afterwards, I stayed home, mending watches,
seeing no-one. A stranger to myself.

**From the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery,
University of St. Andrews. Postscript**

'In spite of our hopes to the contrary, it became evident that this unfortunate man had lived too long with this tumour to change his ways. He returned to his room and his watches and was not seen outside the house. Whatever plans he had for the future, his new-found freedom proved short lived. He died unexpectedly at his home three months later from an acute infection of the urinary tract.'

Museum visitor

In its glass box, the leg
looks like a joint of meat.
I can picture it in the oven.
It would feed about ten.

The exhibit is entitled
Supplementary Appendage. Leg.

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