

Golden age of the family? It's a modern-day myth

History full of cohabitation, step families, and single parents

SUSAN SWARBRICK

THE halcyon days of Scotland's traditional family may never have existed, with family breakdowns and single parents commonplace in the 19th century, according to new research.

Experts at Glasgow University who analysed trends in family breakdowns have challenged the belief that the demise of the household unit is a relatively modern phenomena.

In a study examining the years 1855-1976, Professor Eleanor Gordon of the university's economic and social history department found working-class families north of the Border were as fluid and diverse as they are now.

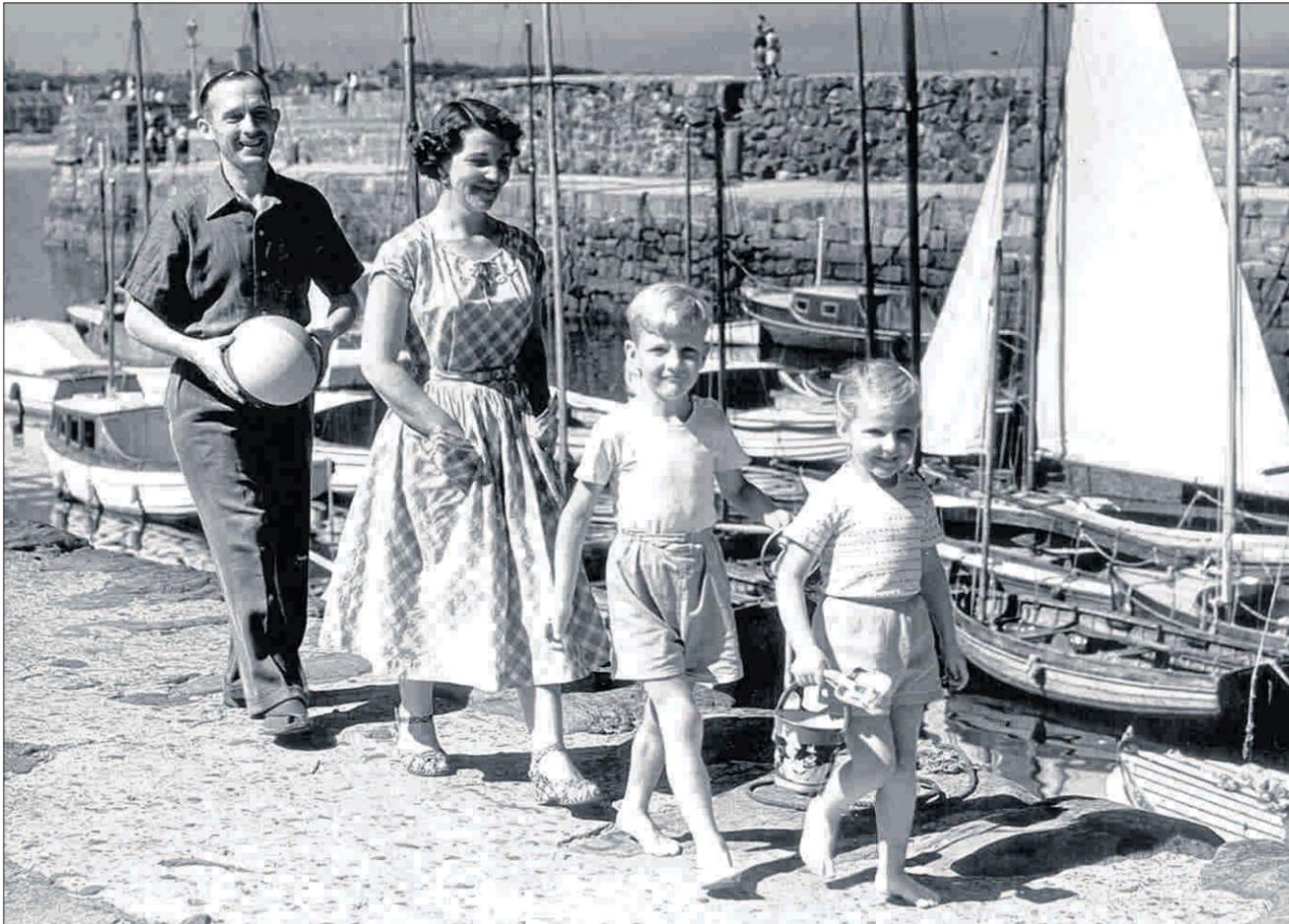
This includes significant numbers of single parents, separations, desertions, co-habiting couples, "blended" families including step-children, and plenty of "irregular marriages" where vows were exchanged without any witnesses or any ceremony.

Ms Gordon said: "The general consensus seems to be that, until recently, the family has been a stable unit organised around parents and children.

"It was assumed that multiple family forms were a fairly modern development attributed to an increase in divorce, marriage, co-habiting and single parenthood. As historians, we knew that wasn't right.

"The historical evidence of the past few centuries suggests that because of death, desertion and separation the family has been a fluid and complex unit for a very long time."

She added: "If the traditional family ever existed - in terms of this stable unit organised around parents and children - it was probably for a short time in the 1950s and 60s when divorce rates were low, the average life expectancy went up and marriage rates were high.



ALL TOGETHER: A family holiday in North Berwick in the 1950s. The era was perhaps the origin of the idea of a stable family unit thanks to low divorce rates.



ANALYSIS: Professor Gordon looked at family breakdowns.

"But in truth it's a historical anomaly."

Discovering why this anomaly occurred will form a key part of the next stage of the project.

"Preliminary research looking at the period ... shows that, although the family unit seems stable, divorce was still costly, difficult to obtain and there was a lot of opprobrium directed at those who were divorced.

"People have said too that they stayed in marriages where they were unhappy," she said.

"In short, I don't think it was a golden age. Perhaps there was this unit of parents and children, but only at the surface level. It doesn't tell us what is going on underneath these structures. What lies beneath is a lot more murky."

Working alongside Ms Gordon is a core research team of Dr Annmarie Hughes, who special-

ises in the study of domestic abuse; Dr Rosemary Elliot, an oral historian with expert on births, deaths and marriages; and Dr Jeff Meek, who specialises in family and relationships.

They hope the research will help bridge the gap in Scotland's cultural and social understanding of its past, particularly among women.

Because of death, desertion and separation the family has been a fluid and complex unit for a very long time

The years between 1855 and 1976 are significant as the former date is when civil registration in Scotland began, and the latter is when "no fault" divorce was introduced.

One area already proving intriguing is that of irregular marriage.

Ms Gordon said: "What we call 'irregular marriage' was legal in Scotland until 1939.

"Three different forms were legally recognised, one of which, 'co-habitation with habit and repute', was only abolished in 2006.

"The figures vary but the average percentage of marriages registered as irregular up until 1939 was 12%.

"Pre-First World War the figure was around 8-9%. During the war it rose to as high as 40% in some areas while in St Giles, the busiest district of Edinburgh, it was greater than regular marriages at 52%.

"Registering 'irregular marriage' allowed people to be entitled to separation allowance and other benefits such as war widow's pension.

"In the post-war years in the two largest cities, Glasgow and Edinburgh, it fluctuated between approximately one-fifth and one quarter of all marriages."

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Warning law puts freedom of speech at risk

NEIL LANCEFIELD

BRITAIN is sacrificing its commitment to freedom of speech to protect people from hearing views they do not like, a think-tank has warned.

Civitas has called for the scrapping of a law which it claims is being used to constrain freedom of speech.

It targets Section 5 of the Public Order Act, which has been criticised by free-speech campaigners.

David Green, director of Civitas, said: "The freedom to speak our minds without fear or favour is an important part of the live and let live ethos that has typified this country for centuries.

"Throughout most of human history the suppression of unwelcome opinions has been normal, and open societies in which we try to conduct arguments without violence have been a great human achievement. Speech laws are an attempt to return to the primitive ways we have left behind."

The think tank has today published a book, *Feel Free To Say It*, which says Britain is sacrificing its commitment to freedom of speech to protect people from hearing views they do not like.

According to author Philip Johnston, a raft of laws from recent decades are having "a significant and deeply chilling effect" on speech in public.

He warned the law is being used to constrain opinions "because some people may not like them", and claimed the UK was in danger of "throwing away the freedom that makes all other liberties possible".

In January the Government said anyone caught making spurious insults in public should not be prosecuted.

Home Secretary Theresa May said ministers planned to drop the word "insulting" from Section 5, which saw a number of spurious arrests and court cases.

Traveller's Med cruise ruined by noisy sea

COMPLAINTS by cruise ship passengers include one by a woman who moaned about the sea being "too loud", it has been revealed.

And a couple accused a captain of being "rude" for sailing off when they had left a note saying they needed more sightseeing time in port, travel agency bonvoyage.co.uk found.

One woman, having learned Take That star Gary Barlow had been on her ship on an earlier trip, demanded to know why he was not on her voyage.

Then there was the man who complained about not getting "an impressive tan" and being unable to swim in the pool each day - while on a trip around Alaska.

A woman travelling with the company, called Celebrity Cruises, asked for a refund as there were "no celebrities on board", while a Yorkshire couple wanted compensation after spending "a lot more money than planned" on staff tips.

The woman who complained about the noise of the sea said she had not been able to sleep well on her Mediterranean cruise and demanded cabins be "better sound-proofed".

Another female traveller, having booked an inside cabin, then complained about not having a view of the sea and asked for a window to be installed.

Bonvoyage.co.uk cruise development manager Steph Curtin said: "From time to time we come across a few quirky complaints that we can do little to help.

"I'm afraid we can't be held responsible for the sea being too loud or the lack of celebrities on board."

Pay equality campaign 'still failing working-class women'

FEMINISM has failed working-class women by focusing too much on gender equality in high-profile roles, according to new research.

While the average gap between the earnings of men and women has narrowed in the last 50 years, differences between professional and unskilled women are significantly higher than those between men, a report by the

Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) found.

With or without a university degree, men earn more than their female counterparts. But researchers found women with a degree born in 1958 earned nearly three times as much as women in unskilled jobs born in the same year (198% more) - compared to a difference of less than half (45% more) between men in the same groups.

Dalia Ben-Galim, IPPR associate director, said: "While feminism has delivered for some professional women, other women have been left behind.

"Many of the advances for women at the top have masked inequality at the bottom.

"The 'break-the-glass-ceiling' approach that simply promotes 'women in the boardroom' has not been as successful in

changing family-friendly working culture or providing opportunities for other women to advance.

"Gender still has a strong independent impact on women's earnings prospects - but class, education and occupational backgrounds are stronger determinants of a woman's progression and earnings prospects."

Motherhood was also a key

factor, with women who had children earlier seeing their earnings prospects decrease compared to those who postponed forming a family, the study found.

For men the reverse was true, as fathers enjoyed a "fatherhood pay bonus" that saw them earn more than men without children.

The IPPR called for a more progressive parental leave

system, more affordable and accessible childcare and better-paid part-time jobs to address these issues.

It said the breaking down of stereotypes should be the priority. The report found the number of "house husbands" in Britain trebled over the last 15 years, with 62,000 men staying at home to care for their family and remaining economically inactive.

Mother's search for son on Easter Day

THE mother of a university student who went missing almost three months ago spent Easter Sunday co-ordinating her own land search for signs of her son's body.

Donna O'Halloran, 41, has been relentless in her attempts to find out what happened to her only child, David, who disappeared as he made his way home to his Stirling University halls of residence from a night out.

She has already spent much of the past three weeks trawling the River Forth in a tiny dingy amid horrendous weather conditions, hoping to find closure in the icy waters.

The 18-year-old Stirling University student was last seen after a night out.

Mrs O'Halloran and her partner Malcolm McDougall, 46, were joined by a handful of volunteers, after an online appeal for help to scour parts of Bridge of Allan, about two miles from the university campus.

The group started at 10am outside the Allanwater Cafe, where CCTV captured David staggering past the window in the early hours of January 18.



DAVID O'HALLORAN: Has been missing since January 18.

Mrs O'Halloran said: "We need to cover as much ground as possible and while we will continue to keep searching along the river, we also have to look on land too.

"The emphasis so far has been on the water, so now it's time to try other avenues. As I have said before, there is no way I can sit at home doing nothing, wondering and waiting for the knock on the door. I have to keep searching, Easter or not."

She also posted online a poster featuring images of David as a youngster.

Greek doctors to fill Highland vacancies

TWO consultant physicians from Greece have been appointed as locums to fill vacancies at a Highland hospital.

Dr Nikolaos Zakythinakis-Kyriakou and Dr Petros Karsaliakos have joined staff at Caithness General Hospital in Wick on year-long contracts.

NHS Highland has had to hire locums after it was unable to attract doctors to permanent positions following the departure of two consultants.

NHS Highland said the new consultants were highly experienced and would prove to be real assets to the NHS and the Caithness community.

Managers added that they were striving to address a long-standing concern over the recruitment and retention of staff in remote and rural communities.

Dr Zakythinakis-Kyriakou and Dr Karsaliakos, who joined the NHS last month, are undergoing an intensive

induction process before taking up their roles.

Gill McVicar, director of operations for NHS Highland's North and West Operational Unit, said: "We are delighted to have these two highly-experienced physicians join us, following the decision of two consultants at Caithness General Hospital to leave us.

"We did everything we could to attract people to substantive posts in Caithness but to no avail.

"However, we are determined to ensure that the level of provision we provide there is as safe and sustainable as possible.

"Both consultants, who were recruited through agencies, come to us with considerable experience and skills, and I am sure they will prove to be real assets to us and the Caithness community," she said.

NHS Highland has previously used Polish doctors as locum consultants at the Wick hospital's maternity unit.

Divorced McColgan quits Scottish home

RACHEL LOXTON

LIZ McColgan is to leave her Scottish home for England in a bid to rebuild her life following the break-up of her marriage.

The 48-year-old Olympic and Commonwealth 10,000 metres medallist currently lives near Carnoustie in Angus.

However, she has revealed she plans to move to Leicestershire in the wake of her divorce last week from her former manager Peter McColgan.

It comes after the mother-of-five suffered public embarrassment when she was falsely accused of punching her estranged husband.

She was cleared at Arbroath Sheriff Court in 2011 of assaulting Mr McColgan and throwing his clothes out of a window in front of their children.

Mrs McColgan said she found the episode "extremely embarrassing", adding: "Now I feel everyone knows my business and that I can't walk down the street without finger-pointing.

"I absolutely love Scotland and I'm still very loyal to my country. It was my choice, as my



NEW START: Athlete spoke of embarrassment over court case.

career took off, to remain in Scotland and bring up my children here. Since my marriage broke down I feel like I've been in a goldfish bowl, with my dirty washing being aired in public, and that hasn't been easy."

Mrs McColgan, who won a silver medal in the 10,000 metres at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, hopes to launch a new health club in Loughborough and work as an endurance coach.

Mrs McColgan said: "It's time to move on. I'm looking forward to being free to begin rebuilding a new life with my children."