

# The Watsons of Kilconnor, County Carlow, 1650 – present



Robert Gray Watson 1821-1908

*Peter J F Coutts  
and Alan Watson*

Paragon Publishing, February 2019

ISBN 978-1-78222-621-5

More info at <https://watsonsofkilconnor.home.blog/>

## About the authors

Dr Peter Coutts is an Australian archaeologist, now retired, with a special interest in the economic and social history of Irish Quakers. He was motivated to write this book when he discovered his own family had Quaker origins on his mother's side. As



he delved further into his family history he was pleasantly surprised to find that he was related to a truly extraordinary family who have and continue to leave their imprint on society at large. Dr Coutts was the foundation Director of the Victoria Archaeological Survey and when he retired in 1986, Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the History Department of LaTrobe University, Victoria, Australia. He is an economic prehistorian, author of a wide range of books and articles that deal with a diversity of subjects mainly, but not confined to, prehistory and historical archaeology in Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines.

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Alan Robert Watson, the youngest child of Alister George Douglas Watson, is a descendant of John Watson of Kilconnor in two ways. Like his father Alan set out to be a mathematician, but was diverted by student politics and didn't do a stroke of academic work. Instead he



became president of the University of Warwick Students' Union and later Treasurer of the UK National Union of Students. After working for the Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales and taking an MBA, he moved into banking, first at HSBC and then BNP Paribas. He met his wife Yuying (a biology professor) when the bank sent him Taiwan. He left to study Chinese there and still lives in Taipei. A few years ago he became interested in his family history, which now occupies much of his time.

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## Buying the book

The book is available in colour paperback and ebook formats from on-line and other booksellers. For example:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/WatsonsofKilconnorCountyCarlow1650/dp/1782226214> (paperback)

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07NF5F2J6> (Kindle)

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-watsonsof-kilconnor-county-carlow-1650-present-peter-coutts/1130415993?ean=9781782226215> (paperback)

# The Watsons of Kilconnor, County Carlow, 1650 – Present

## About the book

This book describes the history of a humble family that migrated from England to Ireland in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> c and put down roots at Kilconnor, County Carlow. By the end of the century many members of the family had joined the Society of Friends and were part of the landed gentry. During the late 17<sup>th</sup> c and 18<sup>th</sup> c family members established themselves elsewhere in Ireland and later in Australia, England and New Zealand where they rose to prominence in a wide variety of roles, eventually abandoning Friends for the established church. Today the family is still held in high regard for its past and ongoing contributions to equestrian sports including horse racing, fox-hunting, polo and in this era, three-day eventing.

In Ireland, Solomon Watson established a well-known but doomed bank in Clonmel, County Tipperary. John Henry Watson of Ballydarton, County Carlow, master of the Carlow and Island hunt, started the Watsons' association with hunting in which they became preeminent from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. After serving in India, a later John Henry Watson helped develop the game of polo, and his Freebooters team won the first international polo match against the Americans. Corona Deane Lecky Watson is remembered with great affection for her exquisite cultivated gardens at Altamont, County Carlow, which she bequeathed to the Republic of Ireland. In recent times John Wilfred Watson represented Ireland in the Olympics, won silver in the world eventing championship and team gold in the Europeans. His son Samuel James Watson won a team silver in the same event in 2018.



***Samuel James and John Wilfred Watson holding the later John Henry Watson's 'pig-sticker' and the 2018 Melbourne Cup, which toured Europe following George John Watson's admission to the Australian Racing Hall of Fame.***

In England, John Boles Watson established theatres in the South-West, the Midlands and Wales, including the Theatre-Royal in Cheltenham, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> c John Arthur Fergus Watson became a reforming magistrate, prison visitor, campaigner on juvenile justice, author and president of the Royal Society of Chartered Surveyors. Alister George Douglas Watson was secretary of The Cambridge Apostles and friend of Keynes and Wittgenstein.

During WWII he helped design millimetre radar and later became head of anti-submarine warfare research. Peter Wright, the author of 'Spycatcher' accused him of being 'the fifth man' although later evidence showed otherwise.

In Australia, George John Watson, 'the prince of starters', developed the hunt in Victoria, ran a coaching business, bred horses, raced and helped found the Victorian Racing Club. His children were well-known sportsmen, adventurers and pioneers in Queensland and the Northern Territory. His cousin William Currie Watson, a popular sportsman, was a pioneer in Gippsland, Victoria, where he cleared 300-ft trees and dense scrub to create a dairy farm and help establish a thriving dairy industry. John Watson, another relative, shipped to New Zealand in 1843 where he was appointed magistrate for the wild frontier district of Akaroa on the South Island.

Again, from the 19<sup>th</sup> c onwards, many family members served with distinction in the military, in India, South Africa, Europe and the middle east.

The stories related in this book derive from meticulous research conducted by the authors who have utilised information provided by Watson descendants and from collections of diaries, photographs, letters and other documents. The book is A4 sized, printed in colour with 578 pages of well referenced text, 262 illustrations, 30 tables and a comprehensive index. It includes genealogical charts for the various families, a colour code for each branch and an ID number for each individual.