

John Clyde: Scotland's first film star

Written by Donald Fullarton - Last Updated Monday, 15 April 2013 17:09



SCOTLAND'S leading stage actor of his generation, John Clyde, who died at his daughter's home at 34 John Street, Helensburgh, on November 1 1920, also had the accolade of being Scotland's first film star.

Father of film actors Andy and David Clyde, and stage star Jean Clyde, John was the best known actor-manager of the 19th century in his home country — but only the most ardent film buff is aware of his place in cinema history.

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Rob Roy was his most famous part on stage, and he transferred it to the screen in September 1911 in the black and white silent film of that name.

It was directed by Arthur Vivian for producer James Bowie, and was the first three-reel movie made in Scotland. It lasted about 45 minutes, and it held the record as the longest movie drama for a year.

A year earlier, William John Bendon had founded Scotland's first film studio at Rouken Glen, Glasgow, based in a disused tramway depot. Its power supply still came from the tramway power station, so one tram passing meant the light faded, and two trams passing meant filming stopped.

The studio's first two films were unsuccessful, but in 1911 the film Rob Roy, based on Sir Walter Scott's novel, was made there, with a location trip to Aberfoyle. Also in the cast were Theo Henries as Rob Roy's wife Helen, opera singer Durward Lely, W.G.Robb and George Hunter.

Anne Wade, of the Glasgow-based Scottish Screen Archive, does not believe that any copies of the film exist today. "It is unfortunately on our list of films 'missing, believed lost'," she said.

But it was on stage that John Clyde, who born in Rattray, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, on November 20 1860, made his name.

He married Glasgow-born Mary Allan on June 4 1884 in Glasgow, and they had six children. When they moved to Helensburgh, by 1890, they are thought to have lived for a time in Ardencaple Farm which was actually in Rhu.

The couple had six children, who were . . .

□ John McIntosh Clyde, born in Glasgow on December 26 1884 and killed in action in France in the First World War on December 11 1916. He was known as Johnny.

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□ Mary Clyde, born in Glasgow on May 6 1886, who married a Helensburgh man, Adam Bain Paton, and they had one child. She died in Glasgow on April 16 1954. She ran the M.Clyde confectioners shop at 41 Sinclair Street.

□ David Clyde, actor, born in Glasgow on May 27 1887, died on May 17 1945 in the San Fernando Valley in California. He married Birmingham-born actress Fay Holden, who died on June 23 1973.

□ Jean Clyde, actress, born in Glasgow on March 17 1889, died in Helensburgh on June 24 1962. She married twice, actor David Urquhart who was lost at sea, then Edward 'Bill' McQuaid from Wishaw, who died in Glasgow in 1949.

□ Andrew Allan Clyde, film actor, born in Rattray on March 25 1892, died in Hollywood, California, on May 18 1967. He married Londoner Elsie Maud Tarran in San Bernadino, California, on September 23 1932 and they had one child, John, born in 1935 and died in 1944.

□ Helen Geral

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Darwin,	Me. JOHN CLYDE, JR.,
Lady Somerby Creamley,	Miss M. ALLAN,
Mrs. Charles Torrens,	Miss MAUD WILSON,
Emma Torrens,	Miss MARTHA WILSON,
Graham,	Miss EFFIE WATSON,
Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine,	Miss BELLE CECIL,

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ACT II.—Drawing Room at Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine's—Charles Torrens on a Shooting Expedition—The gay young Widow—An unexpected meeting of old Lovers—"Didn't you cause me to go to sea?"—"And didn't you cause me to think of another?"—The Serious Family again—A Subscription for the longed-for Checkings of Passamagoodby—A Dignified Exit.

ACT III.—Same as Act I.—The Captain on the war-path—The proposed Ball—Mrs. Torrens receives a New Witness—The Captain a Friend of the Family—Gaily the Serious Family ends.

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