

J Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society **Journal**



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**Drama
on the
High Seas**



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Editorial

New team member

In this issue we are delighted to welcome yet another new team member. Yvonne Milbank joins us from New Zealand, meaning that our team now stretches right round the globe!

A change in format

We have been delighted to pick up tips and strategies from our growing team and from this issue we are introducing a slight change to the order of presentation. The articles will now appear in the front half of the publication, followed by meeting reports, and Society News will be in the second half. We are aiming to plan each issue a little further in advance and, since most of the Society pieces come in close to the publication deadline, it leaves little time for the actual editing and layout process. So, we hope to make this stage more relaxed by getting the articles set up in good time, adding the reports in the final stages. It's the opposite of the old journalism adage, "Hold the Front Page!", where the front page was set out as the last job, and reserved for exciting last minute items.

Write for us

And don't worry, we still have room for all your contributions. Do keep your stories coming in. The Journal is an excellent way of recording your hard-won research and making sure it will be accessible to your family in the future. The digital version of each issue is stored on the Society website and you can use the search function to identify any articles that may deal with your family names or places of interest. For this reason, we try to ensure that story titles are factual and descriptive, as it facilitates this search process

Legacy planning

On the topic of planning for the future, please read Sally Low's article on how to specify what should happen to your software accounts when you no longer need them. Making an arrangement with a friend or family member to take over your account will ensure that all your precious research remains available. Don't see that diligent work go to waste

Rogues and skallywags

Reviewing the material we have collected for this issue, it seems that we have a few stories of people who came to a sticky end or who were opportunistic in some way. A previous Glasgow meeting had some lively contributions when the call went out for tales of ancestors who were rogues. Do send us in your story if you have one that fits the bill. Our cover was inspired by the rather beautiful sculpture of the sailing ship, *Nymph*, that visitors to Stonehaven will recognise. We wanted to find out more about the people behind this striking artwork.

Thank you again to all our contributors and advisers. Our November issue will focus on family history "conserved" through food traditions. Do tell us your favourites.



The Editorial Team

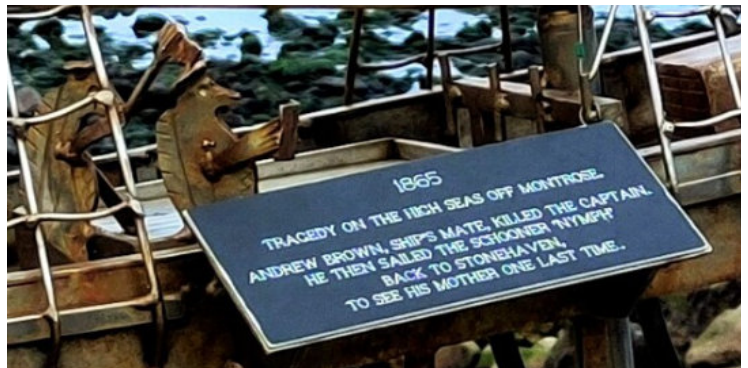
Matthew Davidson, Ivor Normand, Alex McKenzie, Barbara Bodden, Bobbie Jeal, Yvonne Milbank, Elaine Petrie.

Cover image: SS Nymph sculpture by Jim Malcolm, Stonehaven. Photo by Elaine Petrie.

ARTICLES

Andrew Brown and John Greig: Trouble at Sea

Anyone who has walked along Stonehaven's seafront from the harbour northwards to the swimming pool will have been fascinated by the metal sculptures that line the walkway. Most are of maritime features, including a Viking longship, a fishing boat and a lighthouse. One of the most striking is an 1860s sailing vessel in full sail. It makes a handsome silhouette against the waters of Stonehaven Bay. But look closer and you'll see it commemorates a strange story, complete with a tiny figure wielding an axe. The sculpture is one of a series produced by Jim Malcolm of Stonehaven to commemorate sea life ... and death!



Detail of sculpture and plaque. Photo: E. Petrie

On Wednesday 6th September 1865, the schooner *Nymph* of Montrose set sail from there for London with a cargo of wooden flooring. The vessel had a crew of four: captain John Greig, aged 36; the mate, Andrew Brown, aged 24; and two crewmen, John Pert and Andrew Raeburnes.

Apparently, Greig and Pert had “enjoyed a glass of ale” before they all set sail around 1p.m. Once the *Nymph* had been safely towed out of the harbour and was under way, John Greig decided to take advantage of the fine sunny afternoon by lying down on the deck for a snooze. John Pert was on duty at the wheel while Andrew Brown strolled on deck smoking his pipe. Andrew Raeburnes was below deck. Around five o'clock, when they were just off Inverkeillor (about halfway between Montrose and Arbroath), Pert heard a strange noise behind him and, on turning round, was horrified to see that Andrew Brown had taken an axe and was attacking the sleeping captain. Pert rushed forward to disarm him, but not before Brown had severed Greig's head. Pert and Brown struggled, and Pert eventually managed to secure the axe and cast it overboard. He later claimed that Brown said it was just as well he had done so, or he would have suffered the same fate as Greig.

Brown then took charge of the *Nymph*, and Pert and Raeburnes acquiesced, although they refused Brown's request to help him throw the body overboard. Brown then turned the vessel northwards, heading for his home port of Stonehaven, because he said he wished to see his widowed mother one more time.

On arriving at Stonehaven, Pert and Raeburnes reported the murder to the police. Andrew Brown, who had indeed gone straight to the house of his mother Elspet Brown, was arrested and taken back to Montrose. A murder trial was held in January 1866 and widely reported in the press. *The Dundee Courier* and other papers carried detailed accounts of the trial and the eventual execution of Brown at Forfar. The reports claimed that 5,000 to 6,000 people gathered to watch the execution.

The records on Scotland's People show that John Greig died “off the coast of Forfarshire”, with the cause being “wounds on the head and face inflicted with an axe”. He was a single man, the son of John Greig, a shipmaster, and Mary Henderson. Andrew Brown was hanged “in terms of a sentence pronounced by the High Court of Justiciary” on 31st January 1866 at the place of Public Execution, George Street, Montrose. His parents were Alexander Brown, a seaman, and his wife Elspet Bremner (“Brebner” in other records).

Alexander Brown and Elspet Bremner married in Dunnottar parish (on the south side of Stonehaven, close to the harbour) on 20th June 1835. In the 1841 census, the family was

living in King Street, Stonehaven, and had three children: Elizabeth Valantine (September 1835), Margaret (November 1838) and Andrew (newly born on 2nd April 1841). By 1851 the family address was Back Wynd, still in the old harbour area, and two further children had been added: Christina (July 1844) and Alexander (January 1848). Andrew addressed him as Alick in his letters from prison.



*Harbour area, Stonehaven
Graphics: Steve Edwards*

In 1861, Elspet and the family were living in Wallace Wynd, with Alex, now at school, and a granddaughter Margret Moir, aged 1. Alexander senior may have been at sea at the time. He died, aged 54, in 1864 from scarlet fever. His death record described him as first mate, a merchant seaman like his son, and his parents were James Brown, a whitefisher (fishing for haddock and cod) and his wife Christina Stephen. It was Andrew, who registered the death and signed the register.

Elspet Bremner, Andrew's much-loved mother, was born in Dunnottar parish in 1817. Her parents were George Bremner, a shipmaster, and his wife Anne Law. Elspet died in 1878, and at the time of her death she was living in Castle Street, making her living as a fish cleaner (gutter). The years following Andrew's trial and execution must have been difficult for her. The newspaper accounts of the trial said Andrew "frequently expressed his regret at the position in which his conduct had placed his poor old mother". And he begged his brother to look after her.

The papers speculated on what might have been the reason for Andrew's attack on John Greig. His crew mates claimed he said he had a grudge against Greig, but Andrew denied this in his letters and claimed the witnesses had lied. So, why did he commit the crime?

All he was able to say was, "It came into my head all at once, like the shot of a gun, but it was no sooner done than I would have given all the world to have gotten him to live again, and I have sincerely grieved for him ever since".

Perhaps one clue lies in his imploring his brother to avoid drink and bad company: "Always look for company that is better than you are yourself, and not with worse, or you will soon go astray. Dear brother, I can find no cause for the destruction I have done but only one thing, drink." He also reflected on the violence and bad behaviour he had witnessed among the seafaring community. As the newspaper put it, he "occasionally talked freely of the scenes he had witnessed since he went to sea. He sympathised greatly, he said, with seafaring men, not only because of the perils to which they were exposed, but also because they were in a great many instances thoughtless and reckless; and he heard with pity that so many vessels had been lost during the late gales, and so many souls suddenly hurried into eternity".

He may also have suffered head injuries that had affected his cognitive function. The newspaper account says that he was "weak in constitution" as a youth due to "severe injuries which he sustained in childhood having fallen headlong into the hold of a vessel". Most of his male relatives were seamen, and he readily followed the family trade. Aged 15, he went to sea and gradually grew stronger thanks to the physical routine. However, around 1862 "he met with another severe accident in Aberdeen". After this, he reportedly became sullen and silent and prone to violence after he had a drink.

Alexander, his younger brother, fared rather better. He married Ann Sutherland in 1880 in Ross-shire and eventually returned to Stonehaven where he died, aged 73, in 1921. His death registration gave his profession as ship captain.

Online Account Legacy Settings

It's actually very easy to designate someone to manage your online accounts after your death, although the thought is daunting. Here are a few suggestions for common programmes.

On Ancestry, a feature called "Legacy Contact" will allow you to designate someone – who does not have to be a family member – to ensure your family history information, any DNA results, photographs you may have uploaded and personal messages can be securely kept, managed and passed down.

When signed in to your Ancestry account, click on your profile picture then "Account Settings". Click on the option "Legacy Contact". Enter the name and email address of the person you wish to inherit your account, then click on the option to "Update Legacy Contact".

The person chosen will be able to take over and make decisions for your account. Ancestry has a process for account turnover including changing email addresses and telephone numbers for password recovery, however, I suggest that you share your Ancestry password with your designated person. Ancestry will confirm new payment details for the account and you should discuss this in advance and leave sufficient monies to allow your friend to have time to consider options.

On Facebook, which many of us use to connect with other family history groups and share information, tips, maps and photographs, there are complicated legacy settings to allow you to designate someone to manage the account after your death. Again, this person does not have to be a family member. They could write a pinned post to explain what has happened and give details of your memorial service, and they could update your profile picture and respond to friends, however, they cannot see any of your old messages. More details are outlined here: <https://www.facebook.com/help/1568013990080948>.

To add, change or remove a legacy contact on Facebook: firstly, log in to your account and click on your profile picture. On the drop-down menu, select "Settings & Privacy" then "Settings". On the left hand side of the next page, click the Accounts Centre area and this will open into a more detailed view. Click on "Personal Details" then "Account Ownership and Control". On the pop-up that opens, click "Memorialisation" (not the account deletion option).

MyHeritage accounts can be passed on after the death of the account holder. The recipient will have to contact their customer support team and provide them with the deceased's account email address, a copy of the death certificate, and the names of three living relatives on the family tree there. Only a first degree relative can apply for this service.

FindMyPast does not currently have an option for adding a contact to maintain, update or eventually close your account.

In all these cases, and for other programmes and sites, there is another way... a few years ago, a very dear friend died; before doing so he gave me his password and left instructions for me to follow.

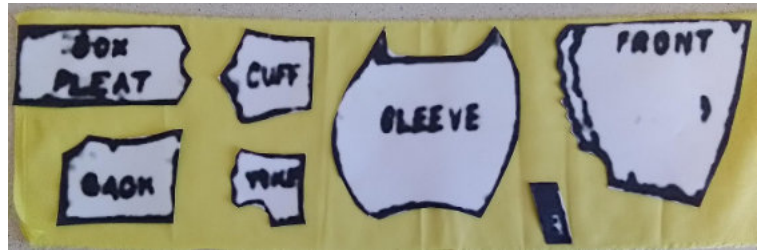
Sally Low, Edinburgh

—oOo—

Staying Fashionable: 1890s Home Sewing For Style

"Better oot at the cleats than oot o' style". It was all very well for my Granda to say that as he slipped on his neat toonser shoes rather than ferm tackety beets. But for fashion-conscious young women in the North-East, keeping up with the latest styles may have been

more challenging given the expense of couture and distance from the fashion houses of London and Paris. *Nil desperandum*, help was at hand for those with modest sewing skills and budget, as the North-East press often featured on-trend fashion and occasionally advertised dressmaking patterns as a free gift.



To prove it was possible to be *à la mode* in Aberdeenshire, even with a modest budget, I used an article in the *Aberdeen People's Journal*, Saturday 25th January 1908. It promised a free blouse pattern with the next Monday issue. There was an illustration of the blouse and a sketch of the cutting layout, enticing young women to buy the Monday paper.

I scanned the cutting layout and enlarged it to A4 size, scaling it up to create doll-sized blouse pieces. Remembering my O-grade sewing skills, I selected my fabric, cut out the



paper pieces, arranged, pinned and cut them out ready for assembly. Sewing instructions for the blouse and the full-size pattern were to be included with the issue of Monday 27th January 1907, but alas I had none. It turned out to be a fascinating and engrossing exercise to work out how the pieces fitted together.



The long cuffs peaked into the fullness of the upper sleeve at the outer elbow. The scalloped yoke attached at the front to pin-tucked panels and placket for the buttons. The only part which defeated me was attaching the sleeves to the bodice. The armholes were much larger than the arm and no matter how much easing and gathering I tried, they would not marry.

Suddenly it hit me. I remembered a photo of an ancestor stretching (provocatively) and gazing into the camera lens of her *amour*. Her raised arms exposed her oxters allowing the said area to be airy and fresh, a bit like current day vented ski-jackets.

Once I decided this was the answer, I was able to complete the hand-stitched miniature



garment. Considering the journey from blotchy newsprint to the blouse before me, achieved with my diminishing dexterity and eyesight, I felt very satisfied with the execution of the challenge. I was less pleased with the quality of the finish and was certain my sewing teacher, Miss King, would have looked coldly on my efforts.

My miniature garment proved the point that it was relatively easy to be up-to-date with fashion in the North East –

with moderate skill and budget – if you wished. As an enthusiastic amateur photo-dater, this is useful to consider alongside the fact that single young women were most likely to have the time and money to devote to their desire to be in style.

Kate Clark, Glasgow

—oOo—

The Sampler of Mary Scott, Peterhead 1820–21

When I saw the sampler which was on the cover of Journal 170 (August 2024), it immediately recalled by its age, colours and imagery, a sampler which I saw and photographed in the house of Wanda Noble in Mannofield, Aberdeen, when I was researching the family tree of my father-in-law James Bruce Pirie (1896–1965). (See “James Bruce Pirie, MM, the Aberdeen ‘Swimmin’ Mannie” Journal 168 (November 2023), pp.18–21.)

The sampler had been handed down to Lizzie Donald, m.s. Pirie, who was James’s aunt. She in turn passed it, via her daughter, Ina Donald, to Wanda, whose daughter Janice took the photograph shown here.

The sampler is approximately 12 x 20 inches. It was sewn by Mary Scott around 1820–21 when she was between seven and eight years old and living in Peterhead. The most prominent lettering was AL/MFL, which I recognised right away as my prediction for her maternal grandparents Alexander Lawrence, weaver, who was married to Mary Freeland (b. 1756, Cruden). Freeland is an unusual name for this locality. I believe it may have origins in Sussex. One can imagine Alexander, as a weaver, guiding his grand-daughter in her sewing.

Mary Scott’s parents were easily identified as John Scott (b. 1792, Peterhead), a coal merchant, who married Janet Lawrence on 16th February 1809 in Peterhead. Her paternal grandparents were Alexander Scott, a labourer, who married Ann Bruce. Mary was her parents’ eldest child, baptised on 18th January 1813, in the married quarters of Eskbank Barracks, Lothian, when her father was in the Volunteers, a body of troops raised to repel any invasion by French forces who might attempt a landing at Leith.

Mary Scott married John Sutherland, a slater, in Peterhead on 19th October 1837. Together they had five children. She died at 55 Longate, aged 90, in 1903. The 1871 census tells us that her husband had “gone away” and we find him at 18 Lodge Walk. He died at no. 12 in



Photo: Janice Noble

1882. Their eldest daughter, Mary Ann Sutherland, married William Pirie (b. 1837), a tailor. They set up home in Manse Street and their union resulted in 12 children, four of whom died in infancy or early childhood in the insanitary conditions of the Longate. This couple are my wife's paternal great-grandparents.

Alas, that is as much family detail as I can contribute. The task of transcribing and identifying the other letters on the tapestry is perhaps one for a Scott? But Mary Scott's sampler helps demonstrate some interesting social history. It was created just after the Napoleonic wars ended in 1815. At that time Peterhead, like other larger towns, was pulling in labour from the surrounding crofts and farm areas and packing families into streets like the Longate, which had some very unhealthy sewerage. But the streets were lively, full of tradesmen, coopers and ship's carpenters. It was a time of great mobility. Families were able to switch trades and the Sutherlands, for example, moved into joinery and cooperage. Mary Scott herself benefitted from the boom, as her profession was described by the census enumerator as "merchant in grocery goods".

In this way you can exploit the clues which the initials provide to make the period of the original stitcher come alive. In Mary's case, the Napoleonic War explained her birthplace, while the buzz of the Peterhead boom during her lifetime led her into serving the grocery needs of her part of the town. A tough old lady.

David Paterson, Edinburgh



The Longate in the past and the present. With thanks to Paige Donald for the modern photo.

—oOo—

Robert Bruce, Born 1850: Who Was He? Which One Was He?

The Robert Bruce we are interested in was born in Longside according to census records, yet he is first recorded in the Old Parish Record of St. Fergus (NRS OPR Film 991132) which shows "William Bruce, Corhill, & Elizabeth Shewan ~~his wife~~ had a son born this day (20th February 1850) baptized and named Robert in presence of John Park of Mid Essie and Alexander Watson Sr of North Essie". The struck through words make all the difference to understanding his story and records which follow.

The 1851 census features the household of William Bruce aged 63, his wife Harriet (Allardyce), 50, their son William, 29, their daughter Margaret, 23, and their grandson Robert, 1, born in Longside. A tree or two on Ancestry have incorrectly put Robert as the child of William and his sister Margaret. It is understandable that the child, Robert, might be taken to be Margaret's son and that she might then be interpreted as an unwed mother. These scenarios are incorrect.

In the 1861 census, William Milne Bruce, (indexed as Bruer), now 39, is the head of the household (due to the death of his father William in 1859). His mother Harriet, 64, was still living and this time Robert Bruce, 11, born Longside, is noted as his son. From this point forward Robert Bruce is no longer shown in a census with his father.

William Milne Bruce's 1871 census listing includes his mother Harriet aged 73. William married Mary Murray (born June 1842), the daughter of John Murray and Sarah Ogston, on 16th November 1876 in St. Fergus. Within a few years Mary gave birth to three children. The 1891 Census confirmed that William Bruce was many years older than Mary. This census listed their children as William, Harriet and George with no signs of a son called Robert Bruce.

It might be inferred that Robert had died or emigrated, however there were three Robert Bruces, born 1850, living in the Aberdeen area in the 1871 census: one, a Commission Agent, lodging in St. Nicholas; the second living in Old Machar, and the third in Peterhead as a 21-year-old lodger, a stone cutter, in the household of Mary Wilson and her 10 year-old son William. This one is listed as born in Longside. This must be him, but is it? What of the Robert Bruce of the same age in Old Machar? His birthplace was given simply as Aberdeenshire and he was listed with the family of Robert Bruce (born about 1819 Longside) and his wife Elizabeth. As we are looking at transcripts, it is just possible that the head of household could have been mistaken for a Robert instead of a William. Would the real Robert Bruce please stand up!

This other Robert Bruce, born 1819–20 in Longside and married to Elizabeth Black, can be picked up in the 1851 Census of Old Machar, Aberdeenshire, and a good clue to help identify the family line is that the household also included Elizabeth's brother John Black, 17, born Old Deer. The family can then be tracked throughout the Old Machar censuses with their son, Robert Bruce, born 1850–51 in Old Machar, showing as a scholar in 1861 and a merchant in 1871.

It is easy to confuse the two Roberts, who both had mothers named Elizabeth, especially when it seemed the "correct" Robert had disappeared. Did he emigrate as many stone cutters did? Moving forward in time, the only Robert Bruce born in Longside in exactly 1850 who shows up in the 1881 census of Old Machar, is a book deliverer with his wife, Isabella, three children, and in-laws Elizabeth Reith and Jane Reith. Who were these people? Who goes from being a stone cutter to a book deliverer? Was the latter a merchant?

The problem is that a wider search in the 1881 census for Robert Bruce, born in Aberdeenshire in 1850 +/- 1 year, shows not only the Robert Bruce above but also one born about 1849 in Peterhead, an unmarried fisherman, listed with his likely father, Alexander Bruce aged 68, a seaman, born in Lonmay. So, who went missing, the merchant of Old Machar, the stone cutter of Peterhead or the Commission Agent?

The list of Robert and Isabella's children grew in the 1891 Census to a total of seven. Yet again Robert Bruce is listed as born in 1850 in Longside, living in Old Machar, with his occupation now given as insurance manager. By 1901, Robert Bruce and Isabella's family included another son and a nephew with the surname Reith. Robert was yet again listed as born 1850 in Longside and still in the same occupation.

Clearly, by the time I was looking at the 1881 Census, I was beginning to doubt myself and my abilities to do genealogy! Several trees on Ancestry said different things. I was coming up with differing records all adding to the confusion – it was time to get some registration documents for Robert Bruce, married to a person called Isabella.

The marriage record started to help make sense of things – Isabella's surname Reith fit with the 1881 census and the 1901 nephew. She was the daughter of James Reith and Barbara Matthew who were married on 13th May 1849 at Peterhead, which now brings us back to where my Robert Bruce was in 1871.

This marriage record confirms his parents as William Bruce and Elizabeth Shewan, just as in the St Fergus OPR. What happened to Elizabeth Shewan, mother of Robert Bruce – had she died? That crossed out section had me thinking – they weren't married! So best to be

looking for her in the census and, lo and behold, she appears in the 1841 census of Longside, as a servant in the household of Robert Hutchison, and in the 1851 census of Peterhead as a house servant for William Bruce aged 50. Finally, she can be found in the 1861 census in Peterhead as a teacher of a day school with her sister Mary Wilson and Mary's 10-month-old son William! Robert's mother was listed as a school teacher, deceased, on his 1874 marriage record. The final confirmation was Elizabeth Shewan's 1868 death record which had her son, Robert Bruce, illegitimate, as the informant.

To complete this investigation for the life journey of my Robert Bruce, the death registration was needed, so it was back to Scotland's People. Would you believe there were two Robert Bruces, aged 70, that both died in St. Machar in 1920? I chose the first record, and it was wrong. With nothing to lose (but my mind) I paid another 6 credits for the second entry and the wife was correct, the parents were correct and the informant was his daughter Edith, also correct!

Robert Bruce was my first cousin, 3 times removed, and I am proud to have met him and his family... finally!

Barbara Dawes, Ontario

—oOo—

The Ogilvy Family and Robert the Bruce's Wax Seal

In late 2014, London auction house Timeline Auctions sold a wooden box containing a matrix pair of wax seal moulds pertaining to Dunfermline Abbey. The lot fetched more than £150,000 and was purchased by an overseas anonymous buyer. The implication was that the seals had been commissioned by Robert the Bruce and were therefore a rare and important find.

The seals were listed as belonging to an un-named London gentleman and previously with Ebenezer Henderson (author of a history of Dunfermline) who had inherited them from his father, an eminent jeweller in Dunfermline. A handwritten label on the wooden presentation box stated that Mr S. Henderson had been presented with the seals by the "Hon. W. Ogilvie – Cowden's Muck(h)art 2nd February 1867". Another label mentioned "The Cokete Seal of the Regality of Dunfermline A.D. 1323".

This is where the story gets confused as the auction house and also the Dunfermline Historical Society, who repeated the story, wrongly state that the Hon. William Ogilvie died in New Zealand in 1861. I was drawn to the story because William Ogilvie, who did indeed die in New Zealand, was my first cousin, four times removed, born to a Banffshire father, and it seemed very unlikely he would have been in possession of these seals. It simply did not fit into his life story which has been thoroughly researched by myself and my cousin, Margaret Shand. Also, our William Ogilvie died in 1861 so how could he have presented the seals to Mr Henderson senior in 1867? His father died in 1825 not 1824 and he was Baronet of Carnousie not Carnoustie. There were so many glaring mistakes that it required further investigation.

As the purchaser of the seals was based abroad, the UK Government stepped in to put a temporary block on the export licence. The Arts Minister at the time said "this incredibly rare item is of outstanding significance to the study of seals and is all the more fascinating for its potential association with Robert the Bruce. I hope that a buyer comes forward to help keep this unique object in the UK so we may learn more about its history". The Reviewing Committee (RCEWA) recommended the suspension of the licence until its history could be further investigated.

It was fairly easy, using my research skills to build a small tree, to establish that the "Hon. Wm Ogilvie", named on the label, was the Hon. William Henry Bruce Ogilvie, eldest son

of David Ogilvie, 9th Earl of Airlie and his second wife, Margaret Bruce, who had inherited the Cowden Estate on the death of her father. (The eldest son of David's first marriage inherited the Airlie title.) This Ogilvie family were cousins of my ancestor. The most interesting part of this story is not that William descended from the Ogilvies of Airlie, but that his mother was Margaret Bruce.

Her father was William Bruce of the Cowden Estate and her great-grandfather was Henry Bruce, last Baron of Clackmannan, and allegedly a direct descendant of Robert the Bruce. The Bruce lines are often quite “fuzzy” but in 2022, researchers from Strathclyde University found a distinct genetic marker carried by males descended directly from the Bruces of Clackmannan, meaning anyone living today who tests positive for the marker is from the same family as King Robert. Could his connection to the Bruces of Clackmannan be a reason that the Hon. William H.B. Ogilvie had these seals?



I contacted the Scottish Arts Council and was sent the conclusion of their investigations. They could not confidently associate the seals with Robert the Bruce's commission as scientific analysis had nothing to compare them with, however, they did say they were consistent with a date earlier than the 19th century. They discussed a seal found in 1809 by a Mr Dalyell but could not conclude if this was the same seal as transmitted in 1867. Nevertheless, they did agree though that the seals were of outstanding significance and the export licence should be deferred again to allow a UK buyer to be found, as agreed by the purchaser at auction. At the end of the deferral period, no purchaser was found and the seals were eventually allowed to leave the country.

The auctioneer's provenance statement for the seals makes no mention of the background of the Hon. Wm Ogilvie of Cowden. Was this short sighted? It seems possible to me that there was a reason for the seals being in possession of the Bruce family and this should surely have been investigated and at least considered. The seals are now abroad and not displayed in a UK or Scottish museum as they should be. A fund was instigated at the time to raise enough money to match the purchaser's price with the intention of donating it to the National Museum of Scotland (NMS), however, the target sum was not achieved.

Further investigation and correspondence with the NMS revealed that they already hold one half of the original leaded bronze seal and that the seals sold by the auction house were brass and very likely a reproduction of the originals. The Museum could not match the price the buyer offered based on the assumption that they were medieval objects. Presumably the buyer is a serious collector and was aware he was buying a reproduction and not the originals. This does not seem to have been made clear by the auction house who implied a direct connection to King Robert.

The writer of the article in the Dunfermline Historical Society website, which has now been corrected at my request, wonders why the Ogilvie family had the seals and why they were handed over in 1867. The NMS advised that members of the Bruce family were possibly given relics when the tomb at Dunfermline Abbey was opened in 1818. Research revealed that young William Henry Bruce Ogilvie lost his mother in 1845 when he was five years old. His father, David Ogilvie, Earl of Airlie of Cortachy Castle, died four years later. In the 1851 census, William and his three younger siblings were living at Cowden with their maternal grandmother but she also died in 1854.

As the eldest son, William inherited the Cowden Estate aged 14. He had a very troubled life,

becoming dependent on alcohol, being in and out of jail and eventually ending up in an asylum. In 1867, the year he gave or sold the seals to Mr S. Henderson, he also put Cowden Estate up for sale, along with the contents of the house. He had married in 1866 and moved to England with his wife so he likely wanted to offload his Scottish assets.

Of further interest, Ebenezer Henderson, of Muckhart, the historian and collector, who already possessed a fine impression of the wax seal, was on a committee in 1867 that wanted to erect a monument of Robert the Bruce in Dunfermline and a stained-glass window in Dunfermline Abbey. Ebenezer died in 1879 with no issue. When his wife died, she left everything to a local joiner and house factor, John Robertson. He also died without issue and it is not known what happened to the extensive estate assets as he died intestate according to his 1897 Inventory from Scotland's People. It is possible that the seals could then have somehow ended up with the gentleman in London.

The Hon. William Henry Bruce Ogilvie died in 1912. He and his wife had no children.

Sources

Thanks to the Scottish Arts Council for advising me of the outcome of the investigation.

Thanks to Dr Alice Blackwell, National Museum of Scotland, Department of Scottish History and Archaeology

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Sonia Packer, Aberdeen

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Family History Within Grampian Health Records

As I was looking back through past issues of the Society's journal, I noticed it's been almost ten years since there was an article about health records in the North-East of Scotland and how they can be used in family history research – definitely time for an update! While this article focuses on the collections held by NHS Grampian Archives (NHSGA), there may be similar records held by other health boards across Scotland as well as the rest of the UK and it is always worth asking the relevant archive.

Health records can provide information on people who may not be recorded elsewhere, especially before 1855 and the introduction of statutory registration in Scotland. They can also be used to show where people were living and working, family relationships, and to track their movement between census years. Social history can also be researched, helping to build up a fuller picture of the time an ancestor was living in.

Prior to the formation of the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948, hospitals were run by their



own sets of managers, and were independent of each other. They kept their own records, and as a result there are some hospitals which have a better collection of surviving records than others. On the whole, the type of records which survive may include minute books, financial records, and patient records. There might also be information on hospital staff.

Hospitals were created for different reasons and for treating different types of illness. These include general, mental health, infectious disease hospitals and poorhouses with a hospital function. A person may not have been sent to their nearest hospital, depending on the reason for their admission, so sometimes it can take a while to track people down – if the record has survived.

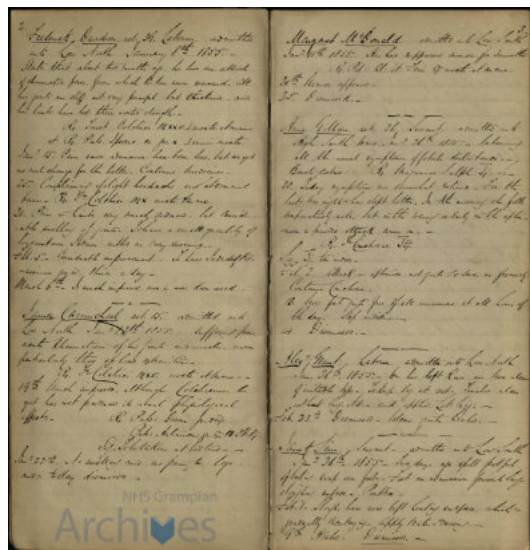
Start with the information you already know about the person you're researching and establish the basics: place of birth and age; where they lived; their occupation. Do they vanish between other known sources? Could they have died between a range of dates? Gathering as much information as possible makes it easier to rule out or add in possible matches and sources.

Finding which record may hold the information you are looking can be challenging. There is an online catalogue of some of the records held within the collections which provides lists of the records held. This can be found at <https://calm.abdn.ac.uk/archives> and the records held by NHSGA all begin with the reference GRHB. Admission registers may have a different name in the catalogue, and can be listed under any of the following: Admission and Discharge registers; Registers of Admissions; Registers of Patients; Registers of Operations. This is not an exhaustive list but it can help when trying to identify a record to look at. It is always worth scrolling through the list of records, as while they may appear to be in basic chronological order, there may be different types of registers listed.

Few admission records have indexes, though some are available both online and in publications. These include deaths in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI), published across four volumes by ANESFHS between 1995–98. Beginning in 1743 and continuing to 1897, these are an excellent source for finding people, especially prior to 1855. I am extremely grateful to those who worked on the project, and to the previous NHSGA archivist Fiona Watson who made the records available.

Some hospitals also created their own indexes to records, and these are often a useful starting point. A few name indexes to records are available online, via the NHSGA website, available at www.nhsgrampian.org/archives and this can be useful to narrow down a selection of possible matches. Additionally, www.scottishindexes.com has indexes to mental health admissions across Scotland, and use the various online indexes available via the ANESFHS which includes poor relief indexes for the North-East.

Once you have found the person you are looking for, there may be other supporting information about their time in hospital. Case notes are much rarer, except when it comes to mental health admissions, though there are instances where there may be other records available. This is especially true of earlier records, including those of ARI and Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin. Further information on treatment is available for ARI from 1743–1807, and there is some information in the Dr Gray's Hospital admission records from its opening in 1819 to 1894. Case notes survive in an almost complete run from the early 1800s to the 1940s for Aberdeen Royal Lunatic Asylum (now Royal Cornhill Hospital) and for other specific hospitals such as admissions to Tor-Na-Dee for treating tuberculosis.





Where there is no relevant indexed entry, or pinning down a date may be tricky, you may find yourself having to look through a number of registers to try and find information. It helps to bring as much information about other family members who may also have been admitted.

Once you have found a likely record, there are a number of ways it can be accessed. The most satisfying is to visit the collections and see the original volumes! As this may not always be suitable, another way is to contact NHSGA and request the information. This involves sending an email with as much information as you know and the archivist will see what can be found. This may take some time, as there is only one of me!

As some of you will already be aware, there are restrictions on accessing records depending on their date. Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, there is an exemption from the general right of access to the health records of a deceased person for up to 100 years from the date of the record. What this means in practice is that you can apply for information dating from within 100 years to be released, and a request will then be made to NHS Grampian's Caldicott Guardian for review. Some people may already have received information from within this time period, but following the updated publication of NHS Scotland's Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care in August 2024, the 100-year closure is now in place for historic information. Don't let this put you off though, as each request is looked at.

Health records can provide extra information about more than just medical matters, such as occupations, family members, physical descriptions, who their friends and neighbours were, and sometimes if they have been out of the country.

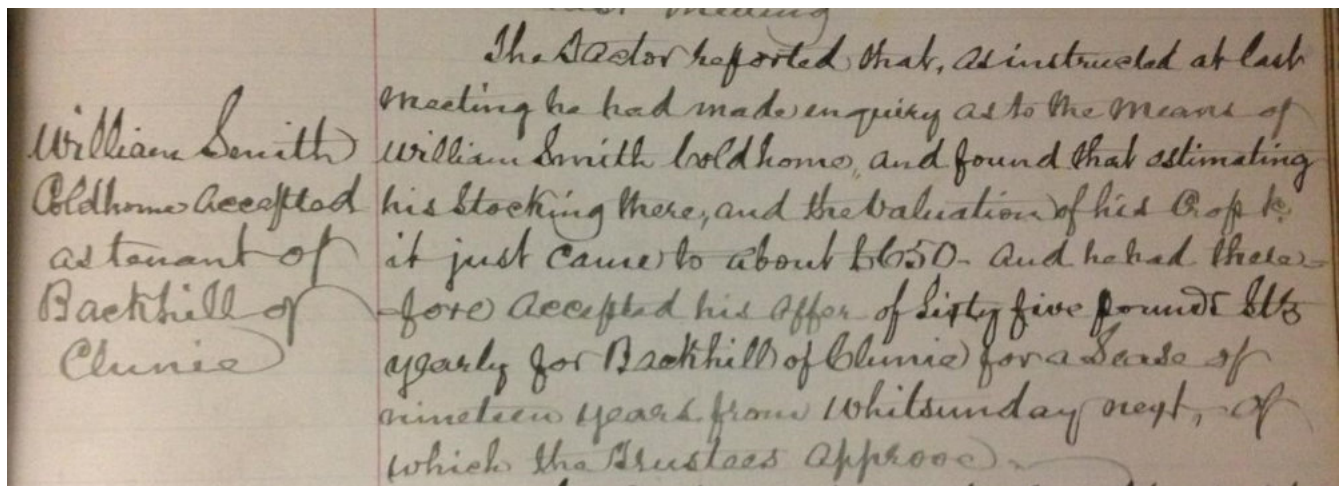
There may also information on staff, if you know that someone possibly worked at a hospital. There are usually notes in the minutes of the appointments of senior staff, such as surgeons and physicians, matrons and senior nurses, but there may not be information about attendants, gardeners, and other hospital staff. Some hospitals do have the odd register here and there, but there doesn't tend to be a comprehensive list of every staff member.

While Aberdeen and the North-East is known for a great many medical firsts and

breakthroughs, and you may have a medical pioneer for an ancestor, there are few records relating to the research of individuals within the collection. There may be such information elsewhere, such as with the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society, or the University of Aberdeen's Collections Centre, and it is always worth getting in touch with them.

Hospital records can also include information on people who may never have been admitted, but made donations. There are lists of subscribers and donors in various records, and annual reports can be a good way to track these down. There is a reference in the annual report for the Royal Aberdeen Hospital for Sick Children in 1891 that two rocking horses were donated for use in the hospital (see photo opposite), one by the Hon. Major Napier, and the other from Mrs Machray of Struan Cottage. There are still rocking horses at what is now the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital, over 130 years later!

There can also be information about land which was owned by hospitals as a means of income, e.g. within the records for ARI there are estate records for Towie and Kinaldie which names some of the tenant farmers. There are also mentions in various minute books for other hospitals, including Chalmers Hospital in Banff which records the changing of tenants on some of the farms.



Supplementary information can also be provided from local newspaper reports or they can be the source of information which leads to looking at hospital records. These are a useful resource, as reports of accidents, fires, industrial incidents, and medical breakthroughs can all be found. This can then mean further investigation within the records of the relevant hospital.

Social history within medical and hospital records is an often overlooked aspect of family history research. There are references to various outside influences on the running of hospitals, including the disruption caused to Aberdeen's Infirmary in 1745 and 1746 when both Cumberland's army and the Jacobite troops were in the area. The various effects of both the First World War and the Second World War can also be found not just in the admission records, but also the minute books where it is detailed how things would be run. Building up a wider picture from health records helps to better understand the circumstances our ancestors were in.

While there are no digitisation plans for the collections, there is a lot of information that is available online via the NHSGA website. You can read stories from the collections, including the histories of hospitals, as well as explore the catalogue and search some online indexes. More will be added, so make sure to bookmark and return to see if there is anything new. At www.facebook.com/NHSGrampianArchives there is also a semi-active Facebook page where updates may be posted. Go to www.instagram.com/nhsgrampianarchives for an accompanying Instagram site.

Please don't hesitate to email gram.archives@nhs.scot with any questions. This article is a

very brief look at using health records to research family history and I hope that some more avenues have been opened up.

fiona.musk@nhs.scot

Fiona Musk, NHS Grampian Archivist

All images by kind permission of Grampian Health Services Archive.

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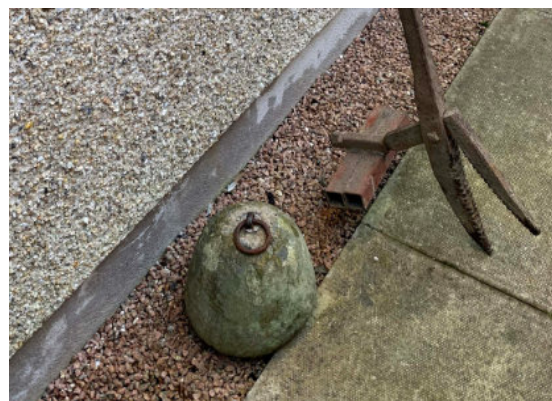
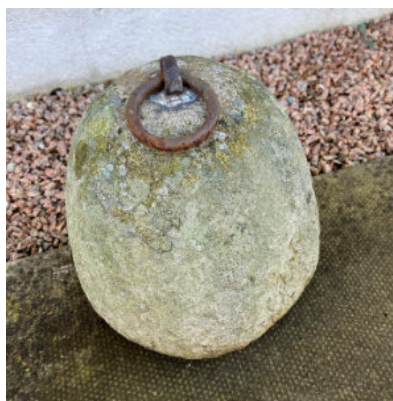
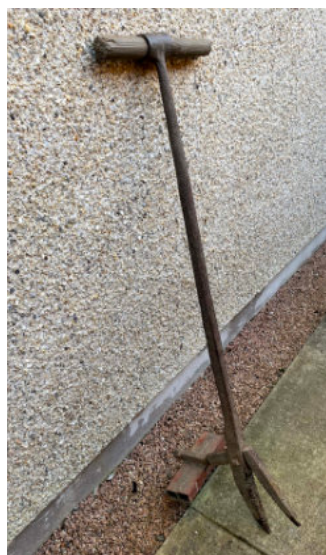
Mystery Objects: Breem Dog and Baikie

Many years ago, we purchased a croft at Keithhall, Inverurie and in the outbuilding were several farm-related items. The two that are shown here are the ones I thought it worth to keep.

Firstly, the long metal item, referred to as a “Breem Dog” is an old tool used for rugging oot breem or siclike. The open jaws are placed around the stem of the plant to be removed and the rear horizontal short bar is placed on a flat stone or something firm. Pressure is then applied by the handle at the top pulling downwards, resulting in the jaws closing tight to grip the stem and, with this leverage, the tool pulls the plant from the ground. I have used it many times to remove unwanted plants, tree roots, etc. It has been loaned out, too, to a gardening friend who used it regularly.

The steen wi the ring leaded intae it is called a “Baikie”. This was used to tether an animal in order to restrict the area in which they could eat, often used in “common” (unfenced) areas. I’ve seen them used for a snare or trap, too. There is an area at the west of the trunk road from Oldmeldrum to the Tulloch straight called Baikiehow (O.S. reference 765332 on the Aberdeen 1 inch to 1 mile sheet).

Bill Lemmon, Inverurie



The mystery farmyard implements: breemdog (left), baillie (centre) and both together for a sense of scale. All photos by Bill Lemmon.

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What Happened To The Loban Name In Scotland?

There is a well-known legend that the name Loban originated at Drumderfit in the Black Isle region of the former county of Ross and Cromarty. If you search websites with maps of family name distributions, you find the name is most common in the country of Belarus, but those Lobans are not related to the Scots ones. In fact, the two families in Scotland with the name Loban are unrelated.

The Highland family became Logans, and their descendants include Willie Logan of LoganAir. The Lowland family became Lobban, except for one family that emigrated to Virginia, USA and remained Loban. Through collaborations with several genealogists and genetic genealogists, I used Y-DNA to establish relationships older than the extant historical records, and used the records to work out the diaspora. Go to <https://lobban.one-name.net> to see full detail. Y-DNA traces the paternal lineage through the Y chromosome that is passed intact from father to son. This biological perspective allows the genealogical connection of lines where the surname has changed, when descendants show up in the DNA matches.

The Lowland Lobban of Scotland all trace their ancestry back to a most recent common ancestor born about 1450. That is not to say that he was the founder of the family, although it is possible that the founder arrived about then. The DNA identifies him as Germanic, unlike the Highland Loban/Logans who are Celtic. (The branches do connect way, way back, of course, but they are effectively unrelated.)

The concentration of Lobban in one area suggests that this founder arrived after surnames were universally adopted in the 13th Century. Possibly he arrived directly from the Continent, among the many emigrants to Scotland from Flanders, or possibly the emigrant came over in Norman times, perhaps into England, with the family working its way north until one of them settled in North-East Scotland. We may eventually get a clue as to which way this went from the families that are related further back than 1450.

My DNA guru, John Sloan, discovered a “Lobban motif”, a pattern in the DNA common in all the Lobban tested, that can be seen developing over several branch points, and was complete by Norman times (12th Century), pre-surnames. We already see a branch of Holmes and one of Scarborough connected to the Lobban back then, recognised by this motif. We have to remember that the common ancestor was only one person in a continuous line, who had brothers and uncles and grandparents just like his descendants. As we get more families testing into the group, eventually we may be able to determine where those other family names originated. If the immigrant or founder came directly from Europe to Scotland we would expect most of those earlier connections to be families in Europe, but the link to Scarborough might suggest a place name as well as a surname. There is no way to find these other families, we just have to wait for them to show up in the tests.

We knew early in the study that the Lobban line has connections to lines with other names, because a Logan, a Laban, and myself were the first three that established the 1450 common ancestor. Both the Logan and the Laban knew that their earliest records showed the name as Loban. Among the Labans, a William Loban of Scotland went to Holland in 1620 (the same year the *Mayflower* sailed to America) in a regiment supporting the Dutch in their war of independence from Spain. He married into Dutch families (twice) and the children were recorded as Laban. Subsequent generations are well documented, but William’s baptism record is lost. We can tell from the Y-DNA of one of his descendants that he belonged to the

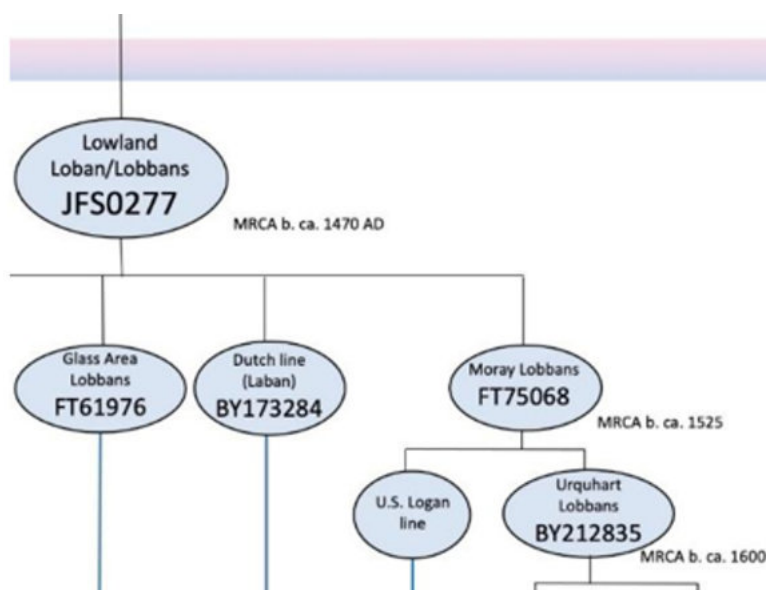


Figure 1. An extract from the complex Lobban DNA tree.

Photo: Christopher Lobban

Lowland Loban/Lobban family. Similarly, Y-DNA got us past the brick wall of the Virginia Lobans, where the details of the emigrant were well known but there was no baptism record to identify his parentage.

As far as I can find so far, doing the One Name study, the only Lobbans not part of the family are in or from Jamaica, descendants of slaves held by Joseph Lobban and his close relatives in the early 1800s.

I have focused on the Lobban motif because to me this is the most interesting and novel aspect. The Lowland Lobbans are a success story for Y-DNA. It is rare that one gets such a clear glimpse into pre-surname connections and it doesn't always work so well. The Highland Logans are much harder to find among the many other Logans, partly because there was a much more casual use of surnames in the Clans. You can view the entire tree with both Celtic and Germanic branches on the Lobban One Name Study website linked above.

Figure 1 shows part of the genetic tree of Lowland Lobbans and others with the Lobban motif. Go to https://lobban.one-name.net/?page_id=3391 to view and enlarge the full image.

Christopher Lobban, Guam

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The Kincardineshire Prison Board

The Kincardineshire Prison Board Minutes are held in the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives. They span two volumes covering the years 1840–60 and 1867–78 (reference KP/1-2).

Prison Boards were formed across Scotland from 1840 in response to the Parliamentary “Act to Improve Prisons and Prison Discipline in Scotland”. They were annually elected by the Commissioners of Supply. The board members were local people of prominence such as landowners, sheriffs or members of the aristocracy.



The entrance to the Sheriff Court building

Photo: Lorraine Stewart

The Kincardineshire board met in Stonehaven at the county court and jail (now the police station and former Sheriff Court on Dunnottar Avenue). The board had responsibility for this prison, overseeing its enlargement and modernisation, as well as for smaller lockups in Inverbervie and Laurencekirk. These two gradually lost prominence and the board's attention.

As well as overseeing building costs, repairs, and management, the board appointed staff for the prisons (governors, matrons, surgeons, chaplains), oversaw its own accounts, and disseminated information from government. In a few rare cases they argued against policy, for example successfully against the directive to merge with Forfar to form a new General Lunacy Board.

The first chairperson was John, the 9th Viscount of Arbuthnott, who remained in post for seven years, followed by William Innes of Raemoir and Sir John Stuart Forbes of Fettercairn. Other prominent members over the early years included Peter Christian (the chief magistrate of Stonehaven), Anthony Mactier of Durris, and William Stewart of Hilton. From 1867 through to the closure of Stonehaven prison in 1878, Colonel William McInroy of The Burn (near Edzell) was chair. Among those who served under him were Alexander

Scott of Brotherton, Alexander Innes of Raemoir & Cowie, and James Badenach-Nicolson, younger, of Glenbervie. From inception the clerk was James Tindal, solicitor in Stonehaven, who finally relinquished the position at the age of 82 in 1870 to his nephew Robert Tindal, also a solicitor there.

The entries in the minutes followed predictable patterns. Each year, the board would be re-elected, the quarterly accounts would be reviewed, and in later years visits would be made to the adjacent prison. The formats of these meetings rarely varied and were recounted in florid verbiage. They must have been a chore for the clerks. The prison governor made money from selling the work done by the prisoners, including oakum, sheep-nets, tailor work, or carpet shoes. Surprisingly, details of the prisoners themselves were rare. The board usually commented on the numbers and statistics of male and female prisoners, whether they were criminal or civil (i.e. debtors), tried or untried. It took unusual circumstances for any to be named.

On 6th October 1854 there was a successful break-out by George Wilson, who had been found guilty of theft and lock-picking. It was the first major incident the board had to address. George had managed to fashion an 11ft long rope with an iron hook out of his hammock and bed-sheets. He used this to scale the prison roof and run along the wall until he found an exit point over one of the adjacent gardens. The minutes do not record his eventual recapture. The board was forced to change the warden's procedures in response.



Prison roof from the back

Photo: Lorraine Stewart

In another example, on 6th April 1872, the clerk received a letter from Mr J. Folliott Powell, Inspector of Prisons, regarding his recent visit to Stonehaven prison. He formed a poor opinion of it, giving five main complaints: that male prisoners were using a female-only area as a workshop, that prisoners were accessing restricted areas to wash clothes, that ventilators and flues were dirty, that not all the cells enabled communication with the warden and that prisoners were observed working together unsupervised. The prison governor maintained that the place had been unusually busy that day. Quotes were sought for the reorganisation of the prison but the decision to act on them had to be forced through in July by Hercules Scott of Brotherton.

On 1st November 1873, untried criminal prisoner George Hay made an unspecified complaint against the governor and medical officer in regards to his treatment and asked to speak to an agent of the poor. In George's interview with solicitor Mr James Crockatt, both the chief constable and the governor were present, which could be construed as intimidation.

Over four months across 1876 to 1877, James Moffat alias Murphy, who transferred to Stonehaven from Perth whilst serving a six-month sentence for theft, made a rare complaint about his treatment, alleging that the food was not good for his health. Perth prison confirmed that he had been set a gentler diet (bread and milk instead of the staple porridge and milk). James repeated his complaint with every board visit, culminating in accusing the cook of mixing in broken glass to poison him. The governor was interviewed but the board quickly determined that there was no substance to the allegation. It was noted that James had served four months of his sentence in Perth, meaning by rights he should have been released in November. His allegations may have prolonged his imprisonment until January.

The board also addressed staff behavioural issues. On 26th October 1858, Janet Norrie, wife of James Robertson the keeper of Stonehaven prison, and Charles Duncan, interim keeper, were reprimanded for their behaviour towards a magistrate member of the board. Unusually, deserters held under the Mutiny Act had their maintenance paid for by the keepers. This had never occurred before, had clearly never been discussed with the staff, and Janet Norrie did not have the money on hand, the need for which was never explained to her. Nevertheless,

she and Charles Duncan were the ones forced to apologise.

Occasionally, the board would praise the good behaviour of prisoners and staff alike. On 18th May 1853, John Brown was to be released after seven months imprisonment. The board awarded him 2s 6d plus the cost of his train fare for good conduct. Similarly, on 15th January 1876 when surgeon Dr Alexander Martin stepped down early due to poor health, the board sympathetically awarded him his full year's salary.

Notes

This is a revised version of the article published on the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives blog (<https://aberdeenarchives.blogspot.com>) in June 2023. An index of the Kincardineshire Prison Board members and any named prisoners is available on the archive website here:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/aberdeen-city-and-aberdeenshire-archives/other-indexes-and-transcriptions>

matthew.davidson@anesfhs.org.uk

Matthew Davidson, Aberdeen

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George Wilson: Escaped Jailbird with Multiple Identities



The Sheriff Court as it looks now with the police station at the back, Hearings were transferred to Aberdeen in 2015.

George Wilson was the first prisoner who successfully broke out of Stonehaven Prison in October 1854. A search among archival copies of the *Montrose Review*, *Stonehaven Journal*, and *Dundee People's Journal* has shed more light on these activities.

He was initially in Stonehaven Prison for the charge of theft and lock-picking in relation to having broken open the till of the Stonehaven Railway Station ticket office in September 1854 and stealing £4 5s in gold, silver and copper coinage. He was sentenced to 60 days' imprisonment with hard labour. Much of this time had passed when he made his escape.

As recorded later, George had an alias: Henry Campbell. A young carpenter by that name broke into the till of the Broughty Ferry Railway Station in June 1855 and stole 19s 6d in silver and 4s 3d in copper coinage. He was found guilty and sentenced to eight months' imprisonment in Dundee.

It was due to this incident that he came to the notice of the Stonehaven officials, and at the conclusion of his sentence in February 1856, Henry/George was returned to Stonehaven Prison. This time he was committed on a double charge of burglary and prison-breaking.

As none of the articles record George's age beyond being a "young man" in 1855, he clearly moved around and as he used an alias, it is difficult to identify him definitively on statutory records or censuses, especially as there were several people with those names at the time. Few are recorded as living in the Stonehaven area in the 1841, 1851 or 1861 censuses, and none seem like good matches by age and occupation. One, in the 1861 census, is recorded as a saw miller, but would have been too young to be involved in the railway station crimes years earlier.

Other Stonehaven-based George Wilsons in trouble with the law included one who stole a

pair of shoes from the Whitsunday Market in 1855. He was described as the son of James Wilson, labourer, implying this George was not yet an adult. Similarly, another young George – the son of Helen Molloy or Wilson – was sentenced to two years' detention for stealing strawberries and gooseberries from a garden in 1859. Neither of these crimes seem consistent with breaking into railway stations five years earlier.

A George Wilson of Stonehaven was imprisoned in 1855 and 1856 for theft of a mare or pony as well as cutting down trees on Dunnottar estate. The exact dates conflict with the prison terms of our George.

Almost a decade later, in 1864 a George Wilson of Stonehaven was convicted of assaulting two local women and sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment in Perth. Another "young" George was also sentenced to five years in prison for a series of thefts around Forfar – presumably not our man unless he appeared unusually youthful!

If anyone has more information on George Wilson, the escapee, please get in touch with us at journal@anesfhs.org.uk.

matthew.davidson@anesfhs.org.uk

Matthew Davidson, Aberdeen

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Alexander Simpson, the Errant Fiscal

I subscribe to various resource banks, including the British Newspaper Archive (BNA), to collect items relating to Glenbuchat (old spelling Glenbucket). One valuable find has been Ken Cruickshank's book on the former limekilns in Upper Donside, which lists farms to let in the glen and gives the names of their tenants, providing a potential family history source.

While looking for newspaper articles from the 1870s, I came across an item about my great-grandparents, William Johnston and Margaret Brown. Margaret's sampler and her family details form the subject of an article that appeared in Journal 170 (May 2024, pp. 38–41). In 1877, William and Margaret applied to inherit the estate of one George Brown. Since he died single and intestate, with no children or other obvious heir, his estate had fallen to the Crown as the *Ultima Haeres* (the last or ultimate inheritor).

George Brown was born in Glenbuchat on 1st June 1812 and was the illegitimate son of Margaret's father, my 2g-grandfather, Alexander Brown (1779–1869). He was recorded as a farm servant at his uncle James Michie's farm of Newbigging in Towie in 1841 and 1851. In 1861 he was at Beltimb, Glenbuchat, his father's farm, and in 1871 at Cushlachie, Towie. He died in 1877 in Towie. His mother, Isobel Michie, was born 28th October 1790 to Alexander Michie and Rachel Young. Isobel's half-brother James Michie was born 11th February 1794 to Agnes Tossach and died in Aberdeen on 2nd January 1883.

George's father, Alexander Brown, subsequently married Jean Gauld (1798–1859) in 1820. My great-grandmother Margaret Brown (1821–1900) was their only child. So, Margaret Brown Johnston was George Brown's half-sister.

In August 1877, the Johnstons and James Michie applied to the splendidly-named Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Office for the "gift" of George's estate and were granted it in 1879. However, when they tried to uplift the inheritance of £104, plus interest (£121 3s 8d by 1882 – over £18,000 in 2025 money), from the Union Bank of Scotland, they were refused permission because the Procurator Fiscal, Alexander Simpson, had already uplifted the money and given the bank a discharge, allegedly on behalf of the Crown.

In July 1881, there was a debate before the Sheriff, where the Johnstons and James Michie claimed the discharge given to the bank was illegal and the bank claimed that, having already paid the money, they should not have to make a second payment. The Sheriff upheld the grant to the family. The bank then appealed to the Sheriff Principal who also upheld the

ABERDEEN & NORTH EAST SCOTLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
(A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds General Fund £	100 Club £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Incoming resources from generated funds -					
Voluntary income -					
Covenants and gift aid		7,815	-	7,815	7,592
Donations		3,728	-	3,728	3,807
Courses income		506	-	506	-
Legacy income		-	-	-	3,000
Annual fees		-	1,153	1,153	1,201
Investment income -					
Interest received		5,821	-	5,821	4,112
Incoming resources from charitable activities -					
Subscriptions	2	51,861	-	51,861	55,908
Publication sales		5,820	-	5,820	7,829
Research and queries		3,778	-	3,778	1,343
Other incoming resources-					
Other income		4,314	-	4,314	1,549
		<u>£83,643</u>	<u>£1,153</u>	<u>£84,796</u>	<u>£86,341</u>
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Charitable activities	3				
Direct charitable expenditure		62,311	563	62,874	59,766
Depreciation		6,031	-	6,031	6,142
		<u>£68,342</u>	<u>£563</u>	<u>£68,905</u>	<u>£65,908</u>
Net (outgoing) / incoming resources		15,301	590	15,891	20,433
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		395,604	7,781	403,385	382,952
Total funds carried forward		<u>£410,905</u>	<u>£8,371</u>	<u>£419,276</u>	<u>£403,385</u>

ABERDEEN & NORTH EAST SCOTLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
(A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

3. TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED – CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

GENERAL FUND

	Direct Charitable Expenditure £	Depn £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Publication cost of sales	-	-	-	1,684
Society journal	14,150	-	14,150	14,178
Postages and journal distribution	8,045	-	8,045	8,088
Stationery and office supplies	1,181	-	1,181	1,046
Insurance, heat, light and telephone	11,226	-	11,226	9,185
Rent	6,000	-	6,000	6,000
Rates	3,313	-	3,313	3,164
Meeting expenses	-	-	-	1,323
Conference and course expenses	29	-	29	110
Affiliation fees and subscriptions	2,040	-	2,040	1,987
Advertising	28	-	28	25
Internet and IT expenses	1,088	-	1,088	196
Accountancy fee	1,400	-	1,400	1,200
Bank and credit card charges	1,501	-	1,501	2,120
Sundry expenses	8,163	-	8,163	4,999
Building and library repairs	4,147	-	4,147	3,890
Depreciation	-	6,031	6,031	6,142
	£62,311	£6,031	£68,342	£65,337

100 CLUB

Prizes etc	563	-	563	571
	£563	£ -	£563	£571

family claim in a lengthy judgement in November 1881. One phrase in the judgement particularly stands out as it stressed the need for “the diligence customary between good men of business”.

The bank then took their appeal to the High Court but abandoned the case in February 1882, perhaps because by then Mr Simpson had been charged with eight counts of embezzlement, breach of trust and fraud. On 20th March 1882 he pleaded guilty to one of the charges and was sentenced to six months in prison. As he had been in prison for five months prior to trial, this only meant a further month in confinement. Mr Simpson’s trial was reported in detail in the Aberdeen and Banff papers and the case for the Johnstons case also occupied several column inches.

What can we learn about Alexander Simpson (1826–1910)? He was initially a successful lawyer, a Major in the Militia and Procurator Fiscal for Aberdeenshire. He was born on 16th May 1826 to William Simpson (1791–1858), advocate, who later became Procurator Fiscal for Aberdeenshire, and his wife Helen Still (1799–1888). Alexander was admitted to the Society of Advocates in Aberdeen in 1848 and was known there as Alexander Simpson junior, despite his father’s name being William. This was because another Alexander Simpson had joined the Society a few months earlier than he had.

By 1861 he had taken over as Fiscal and was established at 56 and 58 Bon Accord Street sharing his home with his first wife, Harriet Stuart Forbes Laurie (1834–73), four children and five servants as well as Australian-born visitor Mary M. Gammie. By 1871 he had moved out of town to Woodbank, Banchory-Devenick with family and servants, but the 1870s saw him face a range of difficulties. His second son, Alexander (born 1859), died of typhoid in 1871 while at Trinity College, Glenalmond. Then his wife Harriet died in 1873 leaving him with seven children all aged under 16 years old to care for.

By 1881, Simpson had remarried and had gone to Canada with his children and his second wife, Isabell McBain. In 1882, presumably following the trial, he retired as an advocate, but by 1891 he was once again in Aberdeen, at Hampson Cottage, described as a procurator. In 1901 he was in Musselburgh and in 1911 at Mill of Fowlis, Leochel-Cushnie. He died there on 7th February 1910.

What made him jeopardise a successful career by embezzling funds? Did he have money troubles, as his frequent change of address might hint? The 1882 trial cited the death of his wife and son as mitigating circumstances. Perhaps we should not be too harsh in judging him, after all.

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Alan Johnston, Aberdeen

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Research undertaken in North-East records, also at the
National Archives of Scotland and New Register House
All enquiries welcome

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6 Bayview Road, Inverbervie, Montrose DD10 0SH
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Tel. 01561 361500

William McQueen: Schoolmaster of Braemar

The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) was founded in 1709. The first school in Braemar was started under their auspices in 1710 or shortly thereafter. The schoolmaster's glebe, and presumably the school itself, were in Castleton (close to Kindrochit Castle) in the spot now occupied by Victoria Hall of Castleton, which was built in 1887. According to *Dictionary of Deeside*:

Their plan in those days was to carry on a school for some time in one locality, affording the means of rudimentary instruction to children and young adults there, then shift both teacher and school to another locality. Braemar, Monaltrie and Clachinturn seem to have been taken in succession, the schoolmaster being Mr. John Young ... A spinning school for training, especially in the spinning of lint, was set a-going in Castleton about 1755 ... by Lady Sinclair, wife of Mr Farquharson of Invercauld ... A qualified spinning mistress was engaged, but at first it was difficult to get the young women to attend, and so the laird of Invercauld had to speak to his tenants, and in a manner compel those who had two or three daughters to send one of them to the spinning school.

My 2g-grandfather, William McQueen, was born in Ardlach, Nairnshire, on 30th January, 1791. His father was a "teacher and catechist" so William grew up in a household where education was valued. I have found little information about his early schooling. Many country boys attended the Aberdeen Grammar School to prepare for entrance to King's College, Aberdeen but he is not recorded as one. He graduated from King's College in March 1818 and in 1819 was appointed schoolmaster of the Braemar SSPCK school.

Now in a secure job, William married Henrietta Leslie (Lesly) of Ardlach on 1st September, 1820. The SSPCK minutes for the meeting of 1st March, 1821 note a number of appointments for the teaching of domestic skills to girls, and among those appointed was Mrs McQueen of Castleton (supported by a pledge of £4 by Mrs Farquharson of Invercauld).

The McQueens had eight children between 1821 and 1833: Jane (born 22nd October, 1821), Ann (4th February, 1823), John (25th September, 1824), Alexander (16th July, 1826), Henrietta (24th February, 1828), Mary and Christian – twin girls – (15th February, 1831), and Richard Rose (30th September, 1833).

The Braemar school was inspected several times by the SSPCK during William McQueen's tenure as Schoolmaster. One inspection was made during 1824, but the inspection report makes no mention of specific schools or their masters. Another inspection followed in 1827 but there is no mention of either Braemar or William McQueen in the report. An inspection was scheduled for 1829 but the Muckle Spate interrupted this trip and the inspector returned to Edinburgh without visiting Braemar. All we know of the Braemar school under William McQueen is taken from the report of a visit made 28th April, 1830.

This is one of the most efficient and useful schools on the establishment of the Society. William McQueen has been teacher here for eleven years. He is a very judicious, sensible man. He is in the midst of a numerous body of Catholics. ... Our Teacher has uniformly conducted himself with great prudence and propriety, and from the uniform standing and correctness of his conduct has commanded the esteem of the people and even of the Catholics, many of whom send their children to his school.

The number of children attending this school in winter is about 100. There were upwards of 40 pupils to day although it was fair day in the village, and they had no idea of my being there till after I was in school.

The accommodations here are in every respect excellent. The school room is large, well lighted and sufficiently furnished... The dwelling house is very commodious, consisting of three rooms and kitchen besides attics.

There are five bursaries to this school. One set of these was a mortification ... by one of the Invercauld family, called the Farquharson bursary, which is for three children of the name of Farquharson, for each of whom the teacher has ten guineas annually for bed, board, washing and education. ... The other two bursaries are from a sum mortified by a Mr Farquharson and his wife whose name was McDonald. It is called the Farquharson and McDonald bursary, and is intended for a boy and a girl of any of these names, and for each of whom the sum of £10 is allowed the teacher annually. ... These bursaries are all now filled and the teacher has thus five boarders at an annual sum of £51.10. It was to accommodate these boarders that so large a dwelling house was provided.

Although this is a district where... Gaelic is the only language understood by many of the old people, yet there is not a young person that does not speak and understand the English as well as the Gaelic. There is a regular Sabbath Evening school. Well attended. The school on the second patent [domestic skills] here is succeeding remarkably well under the charge of Mrs McQueen. It is extremely useful in the district, and is well supported.

Henrietta Leslie McQueen died 25th January, 1836, and was buried in the Braemar churchyard. Her eldest daughter Jane took over her teaching responsibilities. The census of 1841 shows 14 people in the household headed by William McQueen, Schoolmaster. They include his daughter Jane, Schoolmistress, six other McQueen children (all except Alexander), five Farquharson children ages 11–16, and one McDonald child age ten. Undoubtedly five of the boarders were provided for by the school bursaries.

The Statistical Account for Crathie and Braemar, compiled in 1842, reports: “The number of schools in this parish is nine, and at all of these about 250 boys and girls attend during the winter season, of which number nearly 40 come from the adjacent parts of the parish of Tullich and Glenmuick... Five of the schools above mentioned are on the first and second patents of the SSPCK, that is two for boys on the first, and three for girls on the second patent.” The report goes on to say that two of the schools are supported by the General Assembly, and two by the Roman Catholics for three months during winter. Thus it appears that the Braemar schools under Mr McQueen might indeed have been responsible for around 100 students in 1842.

The Disruption

In 1843 the Scottish church was split in two over the issue of patronage, in other words whether landowners or the congregation had the right to appoint the minister. A large percentage of the Presbyterian congregation left the established church to found the Free Kirk. A contemporary writer, Angus McIntosh of Glen Clunie, wrote in a letter dated 5th May 1843: “the only thing spoken of here is the ministers. Mr McRae has left the Kirk on Sabbath (yesterday) he preached in the Fyfe Arms to 170 hearers – while Mr Anderson preached in the Kirk to 100 sitters – mourn for your native vale – divisions and strife are within it. Mr McQueen and John Atken has left. All in the Fife interest has gone to Lows Barn.” Note that Braemar is divided by the north-flowing Clunie River which empties into the Dee. The section of Braemar east of the Clunie is called Castleton and is owned by the Laird of Invercauld; the section to the west of the Clunie is called Auchendryne and is the property of the Earl of Fife. Invercauld was hostile to the Free Kirk but Fife was a supporter. The Braemar church and SSPCK school were all in Castleton. The Fife Arms Hotel is in Auchendryne. William McQueen and John Atken were Elders of the established church, and William was the Session Clerk, which made their departure noteworthy to the letter-writer. Lows Barn was a converted stable.

The records of the Braemar Free Kirk begin: “In the wooden church Auchendryne, 24th December 1843, the Kirk Session of the Free Church at Braemar being met and constituted, there were present Rev. Farquhar McRae Moderator, Major James Gruer and William

McQueen Elders.” This indicated that McQueen was one of the Elders of the Braemar Free Kirk from its inception. This, of course, represented a conflict with his position as Schoolmaster of the SSPCK-supported school. The record of SSPCK Schoolmasters shows his tenure ended in 1845. The SSPCK made a formal announcement on 5th November 1846 that “all teachers, Missionaries, or catechists who have left the Established Church, ceased to be connected with the Society from first May last.”

The Earl of Fife gave permission for a wooden building to be constructed to house the church adjoining the Cluny Road. It was built in a few days and opened in late 1843. In 1845 it was replaced by a stone building opened on 6th July 1845. A personal communication from Angus Howatt states: “The Free Church opened a school of their own with [William McQueen] as teacher and gave him the wooden building for school and schoolhouse when it was replaced by the stone building”. *Living Stones* adds “In 1870 a new church was built. The 1845 building was taken down, stone by stone and re-erected at Aberarder as a preaching station and a school.” Although he was no longer alive in 1870, it seems likely that William McQueen would have approved of this re-purposing.

The 1851 census shows William McQueen living in Auchendryne, still listed as a Schoolmaster. His daughter Henrietta was living with him as housekeeper, and a three-year-old grandson, William McKenzie, is also recorded in the census. The grandson is listed as having been born in Kirkmichael, Banffshire and is the first child of Ann McQueen and John McKenzie (my great-grandparents). I suspect William McQueen was actively engaged in teaching at a Free Church school in Braemar, but I have found no details. He died 10th January, 1861 from “ossification of arteries of brain” with “paralysis of right side”. He was buried with his wife, and daughter Christian, in the Braemar (Presbyterian) churchyard.

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Alexander McKenzie, Florida

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Graham Robertson's Mystery Object Quiz

Do you know what this lovely shiny object is and why Graham has given us so many pennies to spend?

You don't need to be from the North-East to have encountered this object. It was widely used. Your ancestors may have been glad to see it... but you may remember it too.

What was it for? The answer appears later in this issue.

SOCIETY MEETINGS and REPORTS

Aberdeen Report

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of ANESFHS

Saturday 17th May 2025

Trustees in Attendance: Bert Lawrie (Chairman), Ronald Leith (Secretary) Sheila Symons (Membership), Barbara Lamb, Sheona MacDonald, Ivor Normand, Susan Freer, Helen Strachan (Minutes), Bob Strowger.

Quorum: In addition to the Trustees, 40 households attended the meeting online by Zoom and 24 people attended in person at the Fountainhall Church Centre.

1. Welcome and Introduction of Trustees

Bert Lawrie opened the meeting and introduced the Trustees.

2. Apologies

Apologies, including those submitted in advance of the meeting, were received from Graeme Nicol; Mrs Nicol; Geoff Hare; John Corral, Kit Corral, Joe McLeod, Moira Lawrence and Andy Horne.

3. Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), 18th May 2024

The EGM was held on 18th May 2024. Minutes appeared in Journal 171 (August 2024, pp. 14-17). The minutes were also available to members on the Society website. There were no matters arising from the minutes and they were accordingly approved. Proposed: John Urie; Seconded: Sheena Clarke.

4. Chair's Report

Bert Lawrie reported on a very successful year for the Society, with many positive activities underway and an increasing interest in the work that the Society does. The numbers of visitors to our Research Centre had been steady and some days all the computers were in use at once. On the very quiet days the duty volunteers were able carry on with their own research – a family-historian always has leads to follow! Research methods have changed over the years, particularly with the development of online research platforms. This trend was on the increase since well before Covid closed us down and Bert suggested this may be the reason that membership numbers continue to show a slight decline over the years. During the outbreak of Covid the Society had introduced Zoom calls as a means of group communication and supporting the continuation of our monthly meetings. Members are now very familiar with the hybrid meetings we host and which can sometimes achieve up to 100 members and non-members attending.



Bert Lawrie, Chair

Bert went on to say that we are a unique service in the North-East and volunteers regularly find themselves unpicking some of the on-line research that our visitors present us with, to achieve the accuracy and detail we pride ourselves in as a Society. Local members will be glad to know that we have subscriptions to Ancestry, FindMyPast and the British Newspaper Archive and recently increased the number of workstations at which the last two are available. The Centre is thus a good place to come to follow up lines of inquiry and get assistance from our experienced volunteers.

We had recently refreshed the Memorial Inscriptions (MI) group after the retrieval of Gavin Bell, a stalwart of our MI research since Bert started attending 15 years ago. In recognition of his services to this area of work, the Trustees awarded Gavin an honorary lifetime

membership of the Society, which he had accepted. Bert expressed delight that several enthusiastic volunteers had shown an interest in this area of work. The MI group had begun mapping Monquhitter graveyard in recent weeks and their first publication was expected later in 2025. Bert expressed the Board's gratitude to Bob Strowger for his work and enthusiasm in helping to form the new group and was pleased to report that Moira Lawrence had become our new MI Co-ordinator. Our Research team was also reviewing its paperwork and procedures and Gillian Marriner, ably assisted by Helen Taylor, was taking this project forward. Our local ANESFHS groups in Canada and Australia continued to flourish and nearer home, Moray/Banff, Edinburgh and London, were meeting regularly. Their talks, like our Aberdeen events, were mostly accessible through Zoom, often with over 80 on-line Zoomers listening in and asking questions. This had become an increasingly important part of our work and a change from how we operated five years ago.

In recent years, thanks to the generosity of members, we had received some individual legacies and we had used these to purchase 11 new computer workstations and new chairs for the Research Centre. The old ones had done good service and, after 15 to 20 years, they were due a rest. The old ones were being donated to a charitable group in Moray who would check them over, install new software and then send them to Africa where it was hoped they would continue to give useful service for another fifteen years. Nothing wasted!

Many would recall the recent Granite Roots Appeal when the money raised exceeded all our expectations. We had used these resources to refurbish and update the Research Centre as well as our back-room facilities at 164 King Street. Member donations helped make the refurbishment a reality but in 160-year-old buildings, like our King Street premises, the maintenance and upgrading work continues.

Most members would not be aware of the existence of our premises at 136 King Street that originally functioned as our office and store. It was used for several years as the office before volunteers transferred back to 164. One of our volunteers had recently reorganised the ground floor and basement at 136 to improve access to our pedigree charts, extra stock of our Family Record booklet, MI booklets, *The People of...* booklets, as well as our finance records, which must be retained for a number of years.

Recently the roof three floors above developed a severe leak and the Society had spent six months trying to get repairs done and to get agreement from the various owners to pay for the repairs. It is one of the ongoing challenges that everyone faces in traditional tenement properties. In the previous week there had been water damage in 164 due to leaks from flats on the upper storeys of the building. Repairs are expected to be covered by our insurance.

Bert stated that, as Chairperson, he felt immensely proud of all the work that our volunteers undertake on the Society's behalf. With the refurbishment of all our buildings completed, and with updated computers and comfortable chairs available for visitors and volunteers, Bert said the Society could look forward to a bright future.

5. Financial Report 2025

The summary audited accounts appear on pages 22–23 of this journal. Sheila Symons reported that the finances of the Society remained in good heart. 2024 showed a slight drop in overall income, primarily due to a reduction in subscription income, the result of a decrease in membership numbers.

On the expenditure side, running costs increased in most areas, with gas and electricity being the most significant. The costs of printing the journal and journal distribution were also a major expense. The audited accounts show an increase in sundry expenditure compared to the previous year. This heading includes items such as refuse collection, our intruder alarm service, cleaning, meeting expenses and general expenses submitted by volunteers.

On the income side, general donations continued to provide support to the Society. However, this income was less than in 2023 when we received a legacy of £3,000. Gift Aid income remained stable and we are grateful to all the members who have signed up to this scheme. Publication sales were £2,000 lower than in 2023 but the Publishers' Licensing Service represents a new income stream for us. They are an umbrella service that works with publishers and the copyright licensing agencies to collect and distribute royalties for publications that are consulted through bodies such as libraries and universities. We signed up with them in August 2024 and, after an initial retrospective payment, we now receive income payments of around £400 twice a year. Income from research increased by £500 to 31% above the 2023 level.

A £4,000 goodwill payment was received from our insurance broker as compensation for having arranged cover for us with a provider who did not deal with charities. The broker also paid the premium for our replacement 2024-25 insurance cover and refunded the payment we had originally paid. We are very grateful to John Urie, the volunteer who negotiated our insurance contract, for noticing the discrepancy with the original policy and for following it up with the insurance broker and securing this compensation for us. Sheila thanked our Finance Team volunteers, who provided administration support during the year and prepared the Annual accounts at year end, which were submitted to an external auditor (Azets, accountants). She thanked Dave Anderson, as ever, for his continued IT support.

The Trustees were extremely disappointed at the delay in receiving the audited accounts back from Azets this year. There were no significant changes from previous years in the pattern of our activity to account for the delay. One new feature of the audit process was that Azets now arrange for anti-money-laundering checks on the Trustees in line with guidance from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). The 2024 accounts are downloadable when you log in to the Society's website. Copies were available at this General Meeting and are also obtainable by post if required.

There were no questions arising and the Financial Report was accordingly approved. Proposed: Helen Strachan; Seconded: Sheona McDonald.

6. Secretary's Report

Ronald Leith explained that a review of the membership data shows that the annual number of new members to the Society seems to remain stable at about 300. There were 328 new members recorded in 2023 and 300 in 2025. Despite this, there has been a slight decline in overall membership numbers annually. In 2006, there were over 5000 members and by the end of 2024, membership has fallen to about 2500. Ronald suggested that if this trend were to continue until 2044, then the Society will have no members, but we think he was joking!

He reminded attendees that the downward trend may not continue. In asking "what can we do about this?", Ronald suggested that perhaps members attending social functions from time should enter into conversation with those present. He encouraged everyone to bring up their interest in family history, tell others that we have a Research Centre and exhort them to visit us. Most people will know something about their ancestors, and it is surprising how willing they are to communicate what they know about the family past.

In response, Ivor Normand stated that the decline in membership numbers highlighted by Ronald mirrored that of other Societies. He added that membership peaked in 2007.

7. Centre Manager's Report

Barbara Lamb reflected on how time marches on apace and that it didn't seem as if a year had passed since our last Annual General Meeting. Firstly she thanked all the volunteers who staff the centre on a daily basis. Without them we would not be able to operate. We are open for 6 hours a day, 2x3 hour shifts, 5 days a week. On each 3-hour shift we have a minimum of two volunteers. This means that we need to have at least 20 volunteer hours a

week. Put like that it sounded viable but once you factored in holidays, child minding and illness it changed the picture. Barbara asked anyone who would like to volunteer to please come in and talk to us. This year we had been lucky enough to add FindMyPast to our selection of programmes and had a volunteer who could access Forces Records and was happy to look up information for any of our members.

Visitor numbers fluctuated as always and the team were never sure how many visitors might arrive in any one day. Friday morning remained our busiest with all computers in use. Mentioning computers, we had now replaced most of the tower computers with a small box about 5x5x2 inches which was more powerful than said towers! Technology was amazing and Dave Anderson and Rob Ritchie remained essential to our service. Barbara thanked them for all they do. Barbara's message for members was to please keep using the Centre and the expertise of our volunteers who were happy to help and if they couldn't answer a question they might know someone who could.

8. Election of Trustees

Clause 62 of the Constitution stated that Board Trustees were elected to serve for a period of three years, after which they retire and would be eligible for re-election if they wish. Susan Freer had ended her three year term in 2025, and was eligible for re-election and willing to stand. Her re-election was approved by the meeting. Proposed: Elizabeth Foubister; Seconded: Ivor Normand.

9. Ratification of Co-opted Trustees

Under clause 63 of the Constitution, the Board co-opted Robert (Bob) Strowger to the Board of Trustees on 1st July 2024. His co-option had ended but he was willing to stand for election as a full member of the Board. Members approved Bob as a Trustee, eligible for renewal in 2028. Proposed: Elizabeth Foubister; Seconded: Susan Freer.

10. Proposed Changes to the Constitution

All members had been invited to vote electronically in advance of the meeting via the Society website. The results were:

Changes to clauses 17: Approved by 99.05%

Change to clause 57 : Approved 100%

Changes to clause 61: Approved 100%

Changes to clause 62: Approved 100%

Deletion of clauses 18 and 19: Approved 100%

The Motion to amend the Constitution by changing clauses 17, 57, 61, and 62 and deleting clauses 18 and 19 was approved. Proposed: Sheila Symons; Seconded: Bob Strowger.

11. AOCB

During the meeting, and immediately after the Chairman's report, John Urie raised three questions. Bert reminded attendees that Trustees did call for AOCB questions to be submitted in writing by 9th May so that the relevant information could be provided at the meeting. The Board had not received any submissions. Bert undertook that, since all the details required to address these additional topics were not to hand, the Trustees would note the questions raised and ensure that John received a response.

A vote of thanks to the Board of Trustees for all the work that they have done in the last year was proposed by Gillian Downie and seconded by Patricia Taylor.

Nicolas LeBigre, “The Work of the Elphinstone Institute”

12th April 2025

Nicolas LeBigre (Nic) teaches at the Elphinstone Institute (EI) and manages the Institute archive. He entertained us with an engaging and informative overview of the EI and its work.

The Institute, based at the University of Aberdeen, was founded in 1995 to liaise between the University and local community. It also commemorated the quincentenary of the University – itself founded in 1495 – and is named after Bishop William Elphinstone, the University’s celebrated founder. The EI has three main roles: research, community engagement and teaching. The research work includes fieldwork to record local activities, community projects, public events and festivals. Additionally, it has a well-stocked library which specialises in topics related to the North-East and to tradition and folklore studies. It is available for public consultation and has an online catalogue.

A key priority is to consider and record everyday culture – sometimes thought of as “intangible cultural heritage” or perhaps tradition. In other words, it focuses on ordinary people making meaning out of our everyday lives by, for example, collecting the stories we tell to describe our lives, and examples of the things we make, the songs we sing, the food we eat, and so on.

It is recognised that this kind of work can increase cultural confidence and build social resilience. It is a far cry from the attitude that some may remember from their schooldays, when they were told not to use Doric or any local dialect words, with the implication that these were somehow inferior to high culture and “proper” English. Culture helps people and contributes to health and wellbeing. The Institute supports this by carrying out research into local activities. This includes community partnerships with new Aberdonians as well as those whose forebears have lived there for generations. One example is the long-running Polish-Scottish song group.

Nic showed us a diverse range of snapshots of the project work and activities that the Institute has recorded over the years. It was a fascinating collection including singing, stories by Stanley Robertson, films of local events such as the Burning of the Clavie and New Year’s Day march of the St Combs Flute Band, which was founded to celebrate the Temperance movement. Examples of material culture (objects and pictures) featured and attitudes to contemporary events, such as the way people responded to the Covid lockdowns and Black Lives Matter, have also been recorded. The Lockdown Lore project recorded around seventy-five interviews.

The Institute delivered around 60 events in the past year so there are many ways that any of us can get involved. They have a range of projects and courses, with successful students ranging in age from 21 to 82 years! Their extensive audio and video archive can be accessed by arrangement with Nic. Even if you are not based in Aberdeen, you can still support their activities by becoming a Friend of the Elphinstone Institute. Details of all these activities are available on their website.

You can contact the Institute at elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk and this link will take you to their programmes of study page: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/programmes/>. Graduates of Aberdeen University get a 20% discount on tuition fees. If anyone is interested in the course, they can get in touch with Nic directly at n.lebigre@abdn.ac.uk.

Those who weren’t familiar with the Institute were surprised and delighted by the range of work it carries out and we’d be delighted for Nic to return at some point and tell us more about the latest projects.

Graham Robertson's Mystery Object Quiz Answer

Graham gave us a rather cheeky answer for this object: If your ancestor had poetic but antisocial tendencies in 20th century Aberdeen, they might have scrawled this popular verse on a cubicle wall in a public toilet: "Here I sit broken-hearted; paid a penny and only..." It literally cost a penny to "spend a penny" as a coin had to be inserted in a brass box like this before a cubicle door would open. The boxes were removed during the great typhoid epidemic and from 1st June 1964 it was free to pee.



—oOo—

Ronald Leith, "Songs My Father Sang"

17th May 2025



Following our AGM, Ronald whisked us back in time to the days of his boyhood and to New Year's Day in the Leith family household. It was a day of incessant first footing with Ronald and his father visiting his maternal aunts, the Misses Scorgie, who lived above Jessiman's pie shop in Causewayend in Mounthooly. After some drams there and elsewhere, they arrived home for the "New Year Denner". After a snooze to recover, further jollifications ensued.

Visitors arrived in the afternoon and many of the men went off to the Ne'er Day football match at Pittodrie, after which even more relatives arrived. Ronald remembers that his father could then be persuaded to sing one or other of his two party pieces: "Nicky Tams" and "McGinty's Meal and Ale". These outstanding comic songs are often regarded as examples of North-East bothy ballads or cornkisters. Bothy ballads got their name from bothies or chaumers, the rather basic outbuildings where male farm servants were accommodated in the fermtouns of the 19th century. The songs were sung at social gatherings and people sitting on the kists (chests) used for storing grain, kept time by enthusiastically drumming their heels on the wooden chests.

Ronald's mother was a member of the church choir and also sang at social gatherings, sometimes performing duets with her brother. Her repertoire was a little more elegant and included Scots art songs and songs by Robert Burns. Ronald reminded us about the heyday of Grampian TV's *Bothy Nichts*, a television competition that ran for many years in the 1960s, celebrating bothy songs and music. He also enumerated some of the well-known artists performing Scots song on stage and screen: Robert Wilson, Calum Kennedy and Andy Stewart, who was especially good at comic songs like "Donald, Where's Yer Troosers".

The real musical heroes of the afternoon, however, were G.S. (George Smith) Morris (1876–1958), Willie Kemp (1888–1965) and George Bruce Thomson (1864–1914). Kemp started art school but got involved in concert parties and became a popular performer on stage, for example at Aberdeen's Tivoli Theatre. He was also recorded by Beltona Records and many North-East households had 78 RPM records of Willie Kemp or copies of the song collections he produced for Kerr's music publishers. Kemp set and performed his own songs and those of Morris and Thomson, among others.

His family ran Kemp's Hotel in Oldmeldrum and his sister, Agnes, married G.S. Morris who had originally trained as a blacksmith. The 1921 census lists Morris as living with his wife and son at Kemp's Hotel and gives his profession as "cycle agent". When he died in 1958, the hotel had become known as "Morris's", with himself as the hotelkeeper. He was well suited to the sociability of the hospitality industry, given his knack for penning comic songs in the Doric, with "A Pair of Nicky Tams" and "Aikey Brae" being amongst the most

popular. Go to <https://youtu.be/QPgShYTSHrg?si=Ki5-1nMBJydgGEWZ> to hear him singing “Nicky Tams” in a fine strong voice.

New Deer’s George Thomson (1864–1914), was referred to in the song sheets as George Bruce Thomson, presumably to differentiate him from the earlier George Thomson (1757–1851), who got the lyrics of various Scots poets, including Burns and Hogg, set to music by European composers such as Haydn and Pleyel. He had intended to study to become a doctor and, according to some accounts, signed up as a ship’s doctor for a time but ill-health may have disrupted his ambitions as he saw out his career as assistant druggist in his father’s pharmacy in New Deer. He died comparatively young, aged 50, of chronic Bright’s disease, a kidney ailment.

Thomson’s comic, tongue-twisting lyrics were tremendously popular. Gavin Grieg, the song collector, found them in the repertoire of local singers in the 1910s and published the words in his *Buchan Observer* articles. As well as the cautionary tale of McGinty’s pig getting drunk, so popular in the Leith household, his compositions included the equally impressive “McFarlane o’ the Sprots o Burnieboosie” and “McGinnis and his Cross Eyed Pet”. Go to <https://youtu.be/KBsTMaDy2mA?si=yo6ugld2WYbrWLzc> to hear Willie Kemp singing “McGinty’s Pig”.

Ronald’s account of family musical life was topped off by his rendition of “Nicky Tams” and “McGinty’s Pig”. This was well-received, with many folk joining in, both online and in Zoom, and it was a heart-warming way to round off our 2024–25 season of talks.

Next meeting

We start off our 2025–26 season on 20th September with Bruce Durie demystifying heraldry for us.

elaine.petrie@anesfhs.org.uk

Elaine Petrie, Falkirk

—oOo—

Moray/Banff Group Report

With the eightieth anniversary of VE Day on the 8th May, it seemed very appropriate for our meeting just a few days before that to have the topic “Ancestors at War”. We were invited to bring along tales of family members who had been involved in wars across the globe and through time. Most tales were inevitably from the two World Wars. Some had photos as well as stories but the most poignant records were the letters which had been preserved, both from the soldiers and from the families. These gave us a glimpse into the realities of war, not only from the point of view of those on the battlefield but also of those left behind to keep the household or the farm running. It was interesting to see how both sides tried to strike a positive note when writing.

After a considerable amount of indecision we finally fixed on a date for our face-to-face meeting over Afternoon Tea at Threaplands Garden Centre and 13 of us gathered there on the last Saturday in May. It was lovely to meet up again and we were all able to catch up with the local genealogical news.

It had been a busy year of meetings with some of our Zoom gatherings having almost 90 participants so it was decided to end the year on a more gentle note. The topic for our June meeting was “Genealogical Chat”. It was a chance to catch up, share some tips, tell a few stories, ask questions, and share highlights of the year’s research. It also resulted in some useful contacts for a couple of members.

Our meetings will resume in September with the starting date being a Zoom meeting on Saturday 6th September. For this we will use our traditional first-meeting-of-the-year topic of “Bring Along a Brick Wall”.

After months of managing without access to our usual meeting room in Elgin Library the Council website is currently stating, “We look forward to offering our new room arrangement in September/October and will announce the details later”. However, since we were originally told that the room would be available back in May it seems sensible to wait and see before making plans for October!

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Mary Evans, Elgin

—oOo—

Glasgow Group Report

Ken Nisbet, “Investigating Your Relative’s Service in the Second World War”

24th May 2025

Ken Nisbet has kindly provided us with notes relating to his presentation to the Glasgow Group. He will be presenting another course on the Second World War for the Society later in the year.

- Start with what you have at home such as postcards and newspaper clippings or other ephemera.
- Official Documents e.g. paybooks, other documents. Watch out for Army spellings of names which may vary from what you are expecting to find. If your relative served in the RAMC, Signals corps etc., you will need to know what sub-unit they were in.
- Campaign Stars and Medals, including gallantry medals: War medals 1939–45, 1939–45 stars for France and Germany. There are no identifying numbers on these medals. Up to five of the following eight campaign stars may be awarded to a single individual: 1939–45 star; Atlantic star; Air crew Europe star; Africa star; Pacific star; Burma star; Italy star; France and Germany star. None of these were awarded in the First World War. These stars and medals had to be applied for and not everyone did so. There is a Regulations Book setting out how they were awarded. Civilians in some occupations could be awarded some of them and parents could apply on behalf of deceased soldiers, even many years afterwards. Medal application cards for have not survived for all regiments although Scottish ones do seem to have survived. The Medal Application cards are on Ancestry.com and details of the awarding of Gallantry Medals can be found in the London Gazette. Citations have survived in some cases, and even awards of Mention of Despatches may have citations.
- Commonwealth graves organisation can provide information cards. Amount of detail about where and when persons died may vary. The Scottish National Memorial website has all this data.
- Check soldiers’ wills, written in their paybook, which can be found on the Scotland’s People website. Officers’ wills can be found at Kew.
- Check local newspapers for details of casualties, both those who died and those injured and taken prisoner of war. Awards of gallantry medals may also be reported.
- Some cemeteries contain casualties of both World Wars e.g. Ypres.
- Prisoners of war can be named in local newspapers with details of when captured and when released: St Valery, Tobruk, Arnhem, Normandy, Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong.
- The National Records Discovery Portal is free to use to find details of prisoners and where they were imprisoned.

- The National Records Office, Find My Past, Ancestry also have information about prisoners of war.
- Questionnaires – each prisoner had to complete one of these at the end of the war. Ancestry online has these now. There are no references to war crimes or massacres by the SS, nor details of shooting or lynching, especially of RAF prisoners, near the end of the war.
- Service Records for the Army – there is a project with Ancestry to digitise these records after 2026. There is no target date for online publication. Officers' details can only be found at Kew. The cut-off is 115 years after the date of birth. To get such details requires a Freedom of Information request to be submitted to the Ministry of Defence.
- Royal Air Force – use National Records, the Ministry of Defence, or Ancestry. Combat Reports are on the Discovery Portal and can be downloaded free as PDFs. Operational logbooks are online at Ancestry. Citations can be found online at Find My Past, and the London Gazette. Details for Mentioned in Despatches and Died in Combat are also available.
- Royal Navy – these records will be coming online but there is as yet no specific date. Find the name of the vessel. If a vessel was sunk by a U-boat the U-boat.net website is useful. Ancestry has Royal Navy officer service cards for 1904-1970.
- FindMyPast has the Merchant Marine cards. The Arctic Star was not awarded until after 2012. There are no lists online. Various cemeteries have Admiralty plates. Some fishermen were commissioned to fight.
- Home Guard – some later were sent to the Regular Army. Ancestry has some English County Home Guard records but no Scottish ones.
- In 1946, children got a letter from King George VI.

A number of authors and titles deal with North-East servicemen in various areas during the war. Some of these can be found at King Street.

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War Office (2024), *The Official Regulations to the Qualifying and Awarding of the Campaign Stars and Medals Instituted for the 1939–45 War for Service on Land, Sea, Air & Approved Civilian Categories*

Ken Nisbet. Edinburgh

Southern Ontario Group Report

David Joiner, “Ancestral Mapping Using Google Earth Pro”

26th April 2025

David Joiner, one of our Group’s executive members, is a recently retired secondary school geography teacher with an interest in family history and expertise in geographic information systems (GIS). David used the migration stories of his Scottish and Irish ancestors to show how family-history details can be mapped using Google Earth Pro.



Family-history researchers gain much satisfaction from discovering and recording information about their relatives, but sharing that information in a spatially relevant, visual form can be even more rewarding. David explained that Google Earth Pro for Desktop (GEPPro) is a free downloadable application with many useful features for genealogists. Among other features, GEPPro allows users to add informative placemarks and lines on a map, use polygons to highlight regions of interest, run automated tours of mapped points, include image overlays to give context to family history, access historical imagery to link family stories with land surface changes over time, and share and store mapped details.

David first explained how to use the GEPPro sidebar to organize place features and map layers, how to use the navigation tools to move around a map, how to change the viewpoint, and how to zoom to different levels of scale. The drop-down menus and tool bar applications were also introduced.

Specific mapping features were then highlighted using personal family history. David’s maternal 4g-grandfather, George Laird, was born around 1795 in Ireland. He married Rachel Guinnis about 1816, and census records show the Lairds living in Tattymacall, County Fermanagh, in what would become Northern Ireland. George and Rachel had 10 children, their eldest daughter being Jane, David’s 3g-grandmother. Jane married James Robinson and emigrated to Canada around 1840, after the birth of their first child.

In 1847, with Ireland in the grip of the potato famine, the rest of the family decided to emigrate. They chose to follow their daughter’s path to Canada. On 15th May 1847, George, Rachel and seven of their children boarded the ship Durham for Canada. Their six-week journey is described in a diary kept by their son, Rev. John Guinnis Laird, during their crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. This diary is now stored in the Archives and Special Collections of Western University in London, Ontario.

Using locations mentioned in the migration diary, David first demonstrated how to search for a location, add and edit place-marks, organize these placemarks into folders, and play placemark tours with references to his maternal ancestors.

David then switched to his Scottish paternal ancestors to show how to add polygons to a map. His great-grandparents were born in Aberdeenshire: George Joiner in 1860 at Huntly, and Elizabeth Jessie Robbie in 1856 at Easter Ord, Skene. They raised their family in various places around North-East Scotland, including at Menie Estate, where George was the head groundskeeper from 1884 to 1900. They had seven children, including Edward (David’s grandfather, who emigrated to Canada in June 1912 at the age of 16 years) and Charles, who was killed in France in 1917 during the First World War.

Although Charles’s final resting place among the battlefield trenches is unknown, he is remembered at the Arras Memorial in France. David showed how to locate this Memorial in GEPPro and then use the Polygon tool to name and outline this place of remembrance, along with adjusting the colours and transparency of the created polygon.

David proceeded through his presentation in a similar fashion by demonstrating how to add a path feature, by using his maternal ancestors' migration route to Canada, and how to add image overlays and provide historical context to the Irish Famine, using a map of regional population decline in Ireland, 1841–51.

He used GEPPro to view historical imagery by looking at aerial photographs and remote sensing imagery for the area around the ANESFHS Research Centre in Aberdeen. He also shared how to store and share files created for GEPPro features in the My Places sidebar and discussed how he has used his family stories to create activities for classes of elementary school students.

Step-by-step instructions and relevant resources were shared with meeting participants so they could attempt genealogical mapping on their own.

David's experience with digital mapping and his passion for linking it with family history were clearly evident, and we thank him for sharing his knowledge with us.

Next talk dates

20th Sep 2025 Jamie Lees on her Dundee exhibition "At the Wellgate: The Untold Story of Mary Petrie Smith" about an abandoned family member.

15th Nov 2025 Jess Smith will talk about Scottish Travellers and will include some Aberdeenshire examples.

28th Feb 2026 Janet Few, author of *Tracing Your Marginalized Ancestors*, will talk on this topic, with examples from Aberdeenshire.

25th Apr 2026 Yvonne McEwan will present on Scottish and Indigenous Canadian relationships.

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Susan Brouwer, Rod Coates, David Joiner

—oOo—

Australia and New Zealand Group Report

Vernon Knight, "Tragedies and Triumphs of the South Pacific Seafarers"

7th June 2025

We had 11 attendees online for this meeting and a special presenter, Vernon Knight, who told of his Aberdonian seafarer ancestor, Captain James Shirreffs McIntosh and his voyage to the south seas.

Captain McIntosh visited Kolombangara in the Solomon Islands to undertake trade with the locals and was led into a trap and killed. Vernon has recently published a book about this voyage, entitled *Esperanza*, the name of the vessel they sailed in.

Vernon visited the Solomon Islands, following James McIntosh's journey, in the process of researching material for his book. We were all very interested to hear about his research experiences and the story of his interesting ancestor.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 6th September at 4 p.m. AEST. Helen Taylor (who will be getting up early for us) will talk on "Hints on how to use your DNA matches to find your Common Ancestors".

We have not previously had any meetings on DNA, so this is a first and should be an enlightening session. I hope that you can join us.

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Robin Price, Australia

—oOo—

Library Report

We update the displays in the windows of our Research Centre regularly with books and photographs, usually on a specific theme. We recently commemorated VE Day with material showing how Aberdeen was affected during the Second World War. Many people are unaware that the city of Aberdeen suffered the greatest number of air raids of anywhere in Scotland during the Second World War. One raid in particular, in April 1943, is known as the “Aberdeen Blitz”. In the space of just 44 minutes, 127 bombs fell, damaging or destroying more than 12,000 homes and killing 98 civilians and 27 soldiers. My daughter-in-law has a lovely picture of her grandmother, Mary Newlands, as a student at Aberdeen University in 1941, perched (left) on the roof of Marischal College on duty as a fire warden. Nobody could go up there now without a risk assessment, a hard hat and a harness. Following on from the VE display was a celebration of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire's fishing heritage with photographs and books relating to the herring industry, and our present display celebrates the place of agriculture in North-East Scotland.



Photo: Margie Mellis

I have a 4g-grandmother from Shetland and a 4g-grandfather from Ireland, but apart from those two, my ancestry is firmly rooted in North-East Scotland, one side from the land, the other from the sea. If your ancestors lived in the North-East you may well find the same.

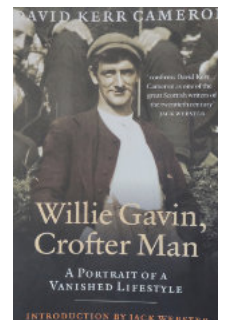


Hairst at a farm in Cardow, 1920s. My husband's grandfather David Mellis (seated far right) wearing a splendid pair of tackety beets. Photo: Margie Mellis

If they worked on a farm, were they farmers, tenant farmers, crofters, agricultural labourers, tacksmen, orra loons, kitchie deems? And what's the difference? Two very helpful books are Peter Buchan and David Toulmin's *Buchan Claik: the Saut an' the Glaur o't: a Compendium of Words and Phrases from the North-East of Scotland*. The other is Adam Gray's *A Scots agricultural glossary* published by the Dumfries & Galloway Family History Society. What implements would they have used? Bob Powell's *Scottish*

agricultural implements will help here. It provides an insight into different kinds of agricultural tools and their evolution.

And if you want to find out what life on a farm was like, then David Kerr Cameron's trilogy gives a very good description of what was involved. In the first part of his trilogy, *The Ballad and the Plough*, he gives us a folk history of life around the old Scottish fermtouns; in the second part, *Willie Gavin, Crofter Man*, he gives us the reality of that basic rural unit, the croft; in *The Cornkister Days* he gives us the life of the fields and the work routines of the old farming countryside, its seasons and rituals, the background against which farming folk lived out their days.



Another interesting book is Charlie Allan's *The Truth Tells Twice: the Life of a North-East Farm*. Charlie Allan's grandfather was Dr Maitland Mackie and the farm in question is Little Ardo of Methlick. He gives an affectionate and humorous portrait of rural life and the way

it has changed in the North-East of Scotland over the six generations his family has farmed there.

Farming was a hard life, but a life with a sense of community where people lived and worked together. The unmarried male farm servants lived in bothies or chaumers, simple buildings on the farm, and the North-East of Scotland is home to the bothy ballad or cornkister, songs sung in the evenings by the farm servants. At our final meeting before the summer, our secretary Ronald Leith gave us an introduction to bothy ballads and ended his talk with a spirited rendition of two of the best-known songs associated with bothy life. There is a full report in the Aberdeen section of this issue.

By the time you read this, the window display will have changed to feature the return of the Tall Ships to Aberdeen with more than fifty sailing vessels from across the globe berthed in Aberdeen. We're looking forward to welcoming them to Aberdeen and to seeing Aberdeen harbour once more a sea of masts as in the old 19th century photographs. And who knows what eye-catching display our volunteers will come up with after that?

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Margie Mellis, Aberdeen

—oOo—

UKGDPR: news from the Information Commissioner's Office

23andMe Data Breach Outcomes

Members who have been following the case against 23andMe will know that the DNA testing firm was recently fined £2.31m over a data breach in 2023 which affected thousands of people. The case against the company was led by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), in partnership with Canada's privacy commissioner, following their investigation into the company's data security measures. They found that the company had failed to ensure that adequate measures (password authentication and verification processes) were in place to ensure the security of sensitive data and that 23andMe were guilty of a “profoundly damaging breach” of data which included health conditions, personal information, and family histories. The stolen data did not include DNA records.

The loss of data will be a significant concern to those who subscribed to 23andMe, not least because the company, having declared bankruptcy, is in the process of being sold (at the time of writing) and the potential buyers have not stated what they intend to do with the data or how subscribers will be able to access their data in the future. The ICO has stated that it will do everything possible to uphold the highest standards of data security possible.

The Data Use and Access Act 2025 (DUAA)

The Data Use and Access Act 2025 (DUAA) became law on 19th June 2025. According to the ICO, the Act does not replace the current UK General Data Protection Regulations, the UK General Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR), but does make changes to some aspects of data protection law. They emphasise that the focus is on making things easier for organisations and individuals, by providing organisations with the opportunity to do things differently and to be innovative in their approach to UKGDPR compliance. Changes will be phased in between June 2025 and June 2026. Meanwhile, the ICO has begun the process of updating guidance for organisations and will publish these as the changes come into effect. As you can imagine, this is a fairly weighty tomb to work through and I cannot say what the implications will be, if any, for the Society at this time. We will keep members up-to-date through Journal items or Newsletters, as required. Meantime, if you do have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Helen Strachan, Aberdeen

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ensign William Ogilvie

I have just read the latest Journal and the article on the Fencibles. The author, Sonia Packer, says she is related to an Ensign William Ogilvie, mentioned in her article.

I have an old book called *The Grant, Strathspey or First Highland Fencible Regiment 1793–1799*, by H B Macintosh, published in 1934.

I looked up her William Ogilvie and in the Biographical Notes it says: “William Ogilvie, 7th March 1794, vice [i.e replacing or succeeding] Peter Grant; appointed to the 11th Regiment of Foot. 16th December 1795; Lieutenant, 2nd March 1797. Was first cousin of the Ogilvie that married the Duchess of Leinster”.

My great-grandfather’s brother was David Grant (1824–86), a published poet. The family came from Strachan, in what was Kincardineshire.

My copy of this book was first presented to David Grant’s son, Henry Keith Grant (1880–1951), by the author, and his sister sent it on to relatives in Australia on Henry’s passing.

Sue Hateley, Melbourne

We are happy to report that, following this, Sue and Sonia have had a very productive exchange of information. Ed.

—oOo—

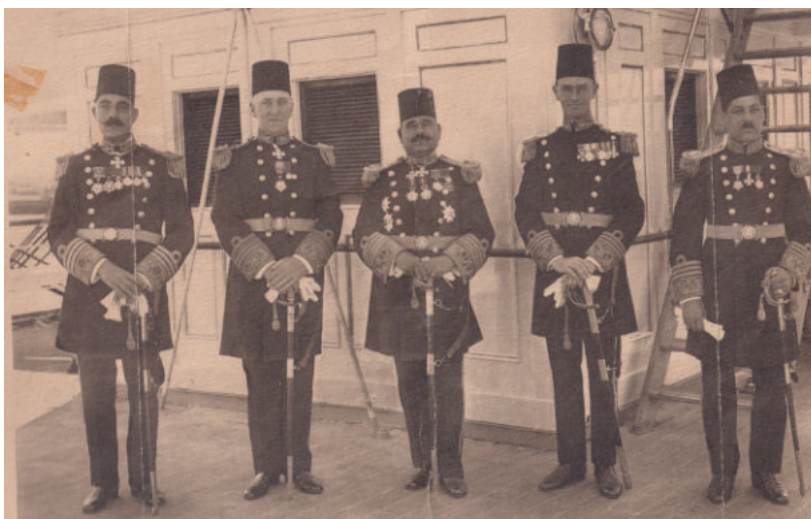
George Allan, Chief Engineer on the Egyptian Royal Yacht

You recently featured an article on Marine Traditions of the North-East. Perhaps your readers might be interested in my grandfather, George Allan, born in Banff in 1875 to John Allan, a solicitor and town clerk of Banff. My George qualified as a marine engineer who ended up as the chief engineer on the Egyptian Royal Yacht *Mahrousa*. My grandfather’s first two children were born in Glasgow, Scotland and Wicklow in Ireland respectively but the births of his next three were registered in Egypt in 1914, 1916 and 1919.

Egypt was for many years part of the Ottoman Empire, ruled from Istanbul/Constantinople, until the collapse of that empire about the time of the start of the First World War when it became a British Protectorate in 1914. I imagine, but have no direct evidence, that this was when grandfather George obtained a job as a marine engineer in Egypt. He would therefore almost certainly been involved in the change to diesel power.

He rose to the rank of Engineer Captain and I have a publication from 1928 about the Royal Yacht with illustrations of the crew and, judging by the gold stripes on his sleeves, he must at that stage been second only to the officer in control of the boat who was probably an Admiral.

He was awarded the order of Commander of the Nile and I imagine as one of the state visits of King Fuad was made a Commendatore (Knight) of the order of the Crown of Italy and a



George Allan, second from left, in dress uniform

Photo: Michael Skivington



Chevalier (also Knight) of the Legion of Honour (French). He was also given another award which I suspect is a Turkish order although I have so been unable to positively identify this.

The Mahrousa was built in 1863 and was initially powered as a paddle steamer. The power source was changed to turbines in 1905 and again to diesel power in 1916. A banquet was held on board the day before the opening of the Suez Canal and after many refits it is now a naval training vessel based in Alexandria harbour.

My grandfather George Allan is second from the left in the picture of the senior officers of the Egyptian Royal Yacht and in the centre of the front row in the picture of the engineers, mechanics and drivers.

Michael Skivington, Bournemouth

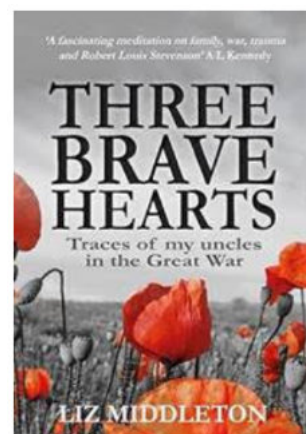
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Forbes of Cowhythe

I was delighted to read about the Forbes part of my family in the article on “The Forbes Family of Rettie and Cowhythe but not Blairshinnoch” in Journal 174 (May 2025), pp. 38-40.

My late mother was Dr Mary Isobel Forbes, and the Charles Forbes of Dallachy mentioned was her father, my grandfather. The Gordon Highlander, James Clapperton Forbes (mentioned on the gravestone image on the right), who tragically died at Ypres, was my great uncle. I wrote about him in my book *Three Brave Hearts: Traces of my Uncles in the Great War* (available on Amazon). There is a lot of family history in the book.

The Jimmy Forbes quoted in the article is my second cousin, whom I played with as a child at Rettie. In fact, I visited cousin James Forbes, and his late wife Frances, a year or so back, before she sadly passed away. Frances was a diligent custodian of much family history, war medals, letters and documents.



Liz Middleton, Broughty Ferry

Go to: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Three-Brave-Hearts-Traces-uncles/dp/B0CKWJBVG6> to find Liz's book.

NEWS & INFORMATION

News from Irish Ancestry Research Centre

The Irish Ancestry Research Centre (IARC) at University College, Cork is a leading provider of services designed to help people understand their past and save it for future generations. With this in mind, they offer a Diploma in Genealogy (NVQ 7), which is available by distance learning. Find further Information at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace-dgnl/>.

Past experience has indicated that this course has been of interest to members of family history societies and those living overseas who have Irish Heritage. Financial assistance in the form of a loan could be available for this course.

More about the Course

The Diploma in Genealogy combines practical skills with portfolio-based assessments designed to equip our learners with transferable skills aimed at genealogy, heritage and tourism employment. The course offers modules in genealogy, fieldwork, collection care and portfolio building. The Diploma offers participants the opportunity to engage in an interdisciplinary study of the past while developing genealogical research skills.

The Diploma in Genealogy (NFQ, Level 7), is a part-time course which runs over two years. It starts in September 2025. Participants will complete five modules per academic year worth a combined 60 credits. This course is taught through a series of lectures and workshops.

For Academic Queries and Course Content Queries please contact the Programme Co-ordinator David Butler.

d.butler@ucc.ie

David Butler, University College, Cork

—oOo—

FamilySearch – a Handy Tip



I have been talking to a few people about FamilySearch's Full Text Indexing and what an amazing research tool it is.

If you haven't tried it yet, definitely give it a go! It allows you to search the actual words found within millions of digitised historical documents – not just indexed names or dates. It has been a total game changer for me!

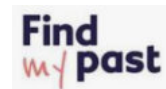
I had a look around for the best YouTube video to explain how it works and found this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSoqVGHLXiQ>.

You can access the Full Text search by logging in to your FamilySearch account and then going to: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/full-text>. I hope that all of you can find something new too!

susan.freer@anesfhs.org.uk

Susan Freer, Cruden Bay

—oOo—



FindMyPast Discount Code

You may be aware that some of the Society's MI data is available on the FindMyPast website through a licensing arrangement we have with them. One bonus of this arrangement is that they offer a discount to any member of ANESFHS who opens or renews a FindMyPast account. To get your copy of the code, please contact Susan Freer via *susan.freer@anesfhs.org.uk*, quoting your Society membership number. The code changes each year.

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Volunteering Opportunities with ANESFHS

The Key Contacts list gives a flavour of the different activities carried out by the volunteers who run this Society.

If you have a few hours to spare, please consider joining one of our teams and lending a hand to keep the Society flourishing. If you are based in Aberdeen, we are always looking for folk to staff the Research Centre. If you live further afield, your nearest local area group will be glad of assistance to organise and publicise events.

As always, we welcome your articles for the Journal and would also be glad to have your help in sourcing and editing articles. To enquire about volunteering with the Society, please email chairman@anesfhs.org.uk. Thank you!




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Journal Submissions

Submissions to the Journal are always welcome. Please send text and images **separately** (not embedding images in a document), e-mailed to journal@anesfhs.org.uk.

Prospective articles and other items should have genealogical *and* preferably North-East Scotland content. Articles, extracts or images may also be published on the Society's website or may be re-used in subsequent ANESFHS Journal editions. All submissions will be acknowledged by e-mail.

The next Journal will be published in **November 2025**. Last date for submissions is **10th October 2025**.

Format – Please type your article on a computer and send it as an e-mail attachment. Sorry, we no longer accept handwritten submissions. Source/reference lists are fine, but we prefer **no** footnotes/endnotes.

Illustrations – For best reprographic results in the Journal, please send images at the **highest** possible resolution. We have limited space, and the A5 size format means that the quality may be somewhat less than you expect. If you wish to send any originals, then please contact the Editor (**not** the Centre at King Street). If you require originals to be returned, then please state this clearly and include return postage.

Permissions and credits – We can only publish copyright material if due permission has been obtained and is included. For copyright material, and for all photographs and other images, please always state the source (publication, website, photographer and so on).

Length – Keep it reasonably short, please. We have limited space, so long articles may be edited. If you have a really long tale to tell, then why not write it as two (or more) parts?

Computer details – Please use a format that can be read by a PC running Microsoft Word. Any font or size of text is acceptable. If in doubt, send plain text. If sending **illustrations**, any standard format is acceptable – as long as these are in files **separate** from the text.

Advertisements

Electronic copy is preferred. Note that the original size of the Journal is A4 before photo-reduction to A5, and so a quarter-page advert should be prepared as 175mm (w) x 60mm (h).

The rates for advertisements, per Journal issue, are:

- £30.00 (black and white) or £45.00 (colour) per quarter-page (doubled for a half-page)
- £45.00 b/w or £60.00 colour for one third of a page (175 x 90mm)
- £90.00 b/w or £120.00 colour for a full page (175 x 270mm).

Writing to the Society

Please send all correspondence to The Family-History Research Centre (address on back cover). To help us be more efficient, please detail your requirements on separate sheets (with your name and membership number) according to which service you wish to call upon or which office-bearer you wish to write to – or use the appropriate e-mail address (see opposite page) to minimise delays.

Change of address

If you have access to the Internet, then **PLEASE** use the special form on our website to notify address or e-mail address changes. This form is processed automatically on receipt, ensuring fast service. If you write to the Membership Department, *please quote your membership number*.

Publications Sales

We stock a wide range of titles with emphasis on Scottish genealogy. Individuals who are prepared to place a standing order for all Society publications qualify for a 33% discount. A searchable, filterable list of all our publications is available on our website.

For all information on publications and how to order, see www.anesfhs.org.uk, “Publications” tab.

Disclaimer

The Society cannot vouch for the accuracy of offers of services or goods that are advertised in the Journal, or be responsible for the outcome of any contract that a reader may make with an advertiser. Views expressed in contributions are the author's and not necessarily the Society's.

The Editor reserves the right to amend any copy. The Society Library does not necessarily hold copies of books quoted or referenced in this Journal



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Centre opening hours

Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

Saturday morning by appointment: please telephone

ANESFHS Family-History Centre closures, 2025–26

Closed on local holidays: 21st April, 5th May, 14th July and 22nd September 2025

Closing at 4:00pm Friday 19th Dec. 2025; re-opening at 10:00am Monday, 5th Jan. 2026

See website for further details

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