

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



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Food as Family History



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Editorial

We are glad to report that we had a great response to our appeal for volunteers to help staff our Family History Research Centre in Aberdeen. As a result, we are now back to being open five days a week (Monday to Friday; 10.00 am–4.00 pm). If you think you could spare an hour or two on a regular basis to meet and greet our visitors and help them with their family-history research, please do get in touch to find out more. Training is available in all the packages we use in the centre and you will find a very friendly, sociable crowd there. It has been known for cakes and goodies to appear in the kitchen, too, if that is an incentive. To find out more, email chairman@anesfhs.org.uk.

Food as Family History

Our main theme for this issue is food and the way recipes, like DNA, get passed down through families and shape our heritage. Traditional recipes can give us an insight into how our forebears lived. They are also the cornerstone of the seasonal feasts that form such a big part of our sense of home or family life. Margie Mellis has seasoned her Library Report with some fine culinary tips as well as an excellent set of reference texts. Graham Robertson's wonderful collection of kitchen paraphernalia is so extensive that we had to give the Mystery Object extra space this time around. We've been really pleased with the response to the theme and we don't think we've exhausted it. As we move into the season of Thanksgiving in both Canada and the USA, with Xmas and Hogmanay close behind, we hope these tasty tales will inspire some discussion round your festive table.

Ancestor Charts

The Charts team has been making great progress with the indexing project but we currently don't have a great number of charts that have been submitted for inclusion in the journal. We'd be glad to hear from you if your chart has been checked and you are willing to see it published here. It's a great way to make connections.

Write for us

As always, we'll be delighted to receive your stories. We do have some material in hand but are always on the look out for an entertaining read. We'd like to do more pieces on your ancestors' experience in the militia. One of our members has asked if readers have memories of old-fashioned Soutar (shoemaker) shops. Does that ring a bell?

Another suggestion we have received is Family Myths. Has your research helped to prove or disprove a family story? And finally, do you have a suggestion for a Feature Parish? If you provide the story, we can help fill out the Bibliography. Our deadline for submissions for J177 (February 2026) is 10th January 2026.



The Editorial Team

Alex McKenzie; Barbara Bodden;
Bobbie Jeal; Yvonne Milbank;
Matthew Davidson; Ivor Normand;
Steve Edwards; Elaine Petrie.

Cover image: A collage of traditional cooking books and recipes and the portrait of Annie Strachan whose recipes feature in our lead article.

Photos: Claire Callender; E. Petrie. Design work: Steve Edwards.

ARTICLES

Annie Strachan's Lessons in Cookery, Aberdeen, 1894–97

Sometime in the mid-1890s my great-grandmother, Annie Strachan, enrolled in the School of Domestic Economy in Aberdeen. A young widow from Fyvie, she made her way to the city to learn to cook. During her time there she filled a notebook with recipes and notes; that notebook made its way through subsequent generations, well-preserved though a little fragile, to me, the unofficial keeper of family treasures. I transcribed it and share here a few details of Annie's short life and her recipes.

Annie was often talked about by my granny, who was only three years old when her mother died, and later by my mother, as an almost mythical figure – red-haired, beautiful, and far too young when she died after giving birth to her eighth child at the age of 40. Annie was born in Fyvie on 21st December 1868 to John Strachan and Christian Donald, the seventh of ten children. The Strachans were tenant farmers at Cardenwell in Fyvie for four generations from 1786 until 1923, when the last Strachan farmer, Annie's eldest brother John, retired.

Although deeply rooted in farming, several of the Annie's siblings distinguished themselves in other ways. John was a long time elder of Fyvie United Free Church. He sat on the parish council and the school board. James and Robert were both accomplished scholars who went on to become Free Church (FC) ministers and professors.

Elizabeth Strachan was one of the first four women to graduate from Aberdeen University in 1898. She and two other sisters, Margaret and Christina, became teachers. In contrast, Annie's early life was a bit of a mystery. She married Gavin Catto, farmer at neighbouring Lendrum, Monquhitter on 5th June 1889. They had only been married for 18 months when Gavin died suddenly of "abscess of brain, 3 days." After his death, Annie went to live with her brother James, who at the time was a Free Church minister in St Fergus. She is listed in the 1891 census living at Shielhill manse along with her sisters Margaret and Christina. In 1892 their father John Strachan died, and Annie returned to Fyvie. For some period between 1892 and 1897 she and her mother were living at Park Burn Cottage in Fyvie. Christian Strachan had probably moved out of Cardenwell when her son John took over the farm. Widowed and without an income, Annie went to the School of Domestic Economy.

This precursor to the Aberdeen "Do' School" was established by the Aberdeen Educational Trust and officially opened on Wednesday 7th October 1891 at 352–354 King Street, Aberdeen, the site of the former Boys' and Girls' Hospital. On opening day, the *Aberdeen Evening Express* reported that the school was to provide "efficient instruction in cooking, laundry work, dressmaking, general house management etc. to a number of girl foundationers and to outsiders who may care to avail themselves of the opportunity that will be afforded..."

Annie, in her twenties, was one of those outsiders. There were no dates in Annie's notebook, but her own name was recorded in the front as Annie Catto, and on the first page she noted her teacher's name: Miss Cook. On 6th February 1894 the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* reported the appointment of Miss Nellie Cook as a teacher of cookery. And so, Annie attended the school sometime between 1894 and late 1897 when she married my great-grandfather, Adam Logan. She was probably originally motivated to find employment as a



Annie Strachan

Photo: C Callender

cook or domestic servant, or as a teacher like Miss Cook or her own sisters, but as the wife of an itinerant farm worker and mother of several children she would certainly have put her newly acquired cooking skills to good use.

The cooking program at the School of Domestic Economy offered classes in “Plain Cookery”, “Household Cookery” and “High Class Cookery” in various daytime and evening classes. Some timetables, lists of dishes to be cooked and exam questions are held by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives. The recipes in Annie’s notebook did not tally exactly with the timetable of any specific class so she may have attended some classes from each category. However, her recipes are mostly for simple fare typical of the era, suggesting that she favoured the Plain Cookery classes. Her recipes led me to research kitchen equipment, cooking methods, serving dishes, and the presentation of food for various occasions that were common in North-East Scotland at that time.

Annie’s Kitchen

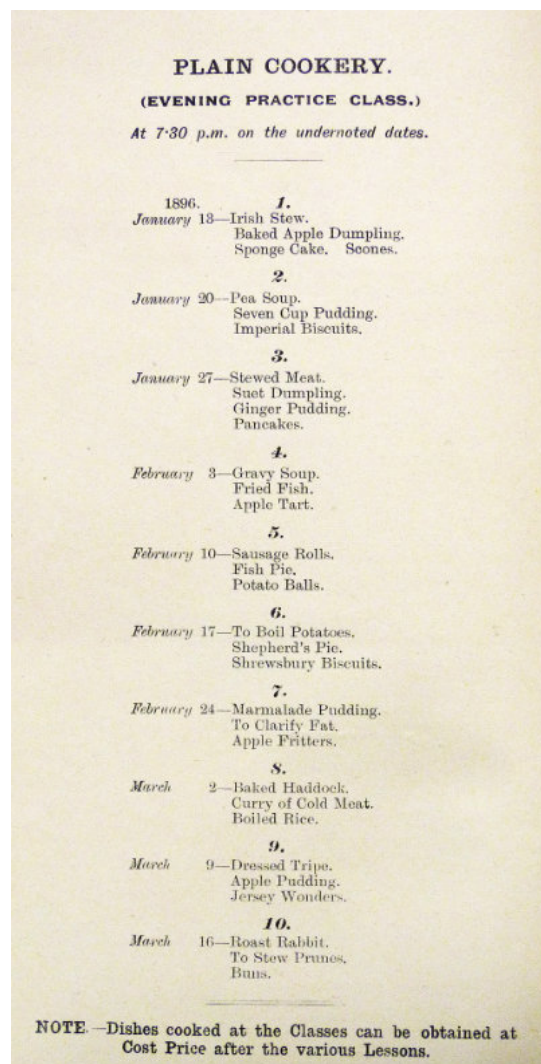
Some clues to the type of cooking equipment available in the late 1890s can be found in Annie’s recipes. If baking was required, the recipe called for a “fast”, “moderate” or “slow” oven. A Scots farm kitchen in the 1890s would have had a coal fired range with one or two ovens and space on top for large cast iron pots. Careful tending of the range fire was required to control temperature, and some experience and practice was likely required on the part of the cook to produce high quality baking. There was also plenty of work involved with keeping the range black-leaded and shiny. The range may have been in a scullery, where

most of the cooking was done. Coal was stored where it could be accessed from the kitchen or scullery. The kitchen itself was the centre of the home, where the family ate and lived.

The kitchen fire may also have had space around it for small pots; some of Annie’s recipes mention moving pots to the side of the fire, perhaps suggesting use of the kitchen fire. The kitchen would also have housed a large table for food preparation, and a dresser to store plates and serving dishes. Measuring was all done with spoons and teacups, and possibly a pint measure. There was no refrigeration.

The Recipes

The recipes in the notebook were all written out in Annie’s stylish hand, and many included tips and tricks that were probably direct quotes from Miss Cook as the dishes were being prepared. The ingredients mostly reflected what was available locally, but some surprising foreign flavouring and garnishes were called for which led me on an interesting trip down the streets of turn-of-the-century Aberdeen to find where they might have been purchased. Meat, generally unspecified but likely beef, featured in several recipes. Sometimes mutton was mentioned, and occasionally pork. Rabbit featured more than once, its preparation described in grand detail. Vegetables were typically only carrots, turnips and onions, although parsley was sometimes added as a garnish. Several variations of soup are described and of course, the legendary Scots sweet tooth is well-



Lesson plan from the School of Domestic Economy by permission of Aberdeen City/Shire Archives.

catered for; more than half the recipes are for baking or puddings. The quantities are all measured in spoonfuls, pounds and ounces, or sometimes teacups. No serving sizes or numbers are mentioned but by today's standards the amounts seem sparse. Despite the emphasis on puddings, few people were overweight!

A few favourite recipes from the Puddings and Baking categories are presented here. My granny and my mum still made these long after Annie was gone.

Puddings

More than half the recipes in Annie's notebook were for puddings and baking. This is a typical steamed pudding from the Plain Cookery class.

Seven Cup Pudding

1 teacup flour	1 teacup breadcrumbs	1 teacup currants	1 teacup raisins
1 teacup sugar	1 teacup milk	$\frac{3}{4}$ teacup suet	
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda		$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon mixed spices	

Chop suet finely. Wash and dry currants. Pick raisins and mix all dry ingredients thoroughly together. Beat up the egg, add milk to it and mix all well together.

Grease a pudding mould well. Cover with a greased paper and steam 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hrs – 2 hrs.

The puddings may be steamed in small moulds or cups, or in one large tin. The longer they are steamed, the better they are. After pudding is steamed remove paper and allow to stand a few minutes before dishing it.

Scones

Scones were one of the first things Annie learned to make in the Plain Cooking class.

$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. flour	pinch salt
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda	1 oz. butter
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cream of tartar	enough milk to make into a stiff paste

Sift flours and acids together. Rub butter lightly amongst flour. Make into a stiff paste with milk. Turn on to a floured board, knead a very little, roll out into a paste. Cut into divisions. Place on a floured baking tin and bake in a moderate oven for 7–10 minutes. When nearly cooked brush them over with a little melted butter and milk.

1. Same for the girdle, only thinner.
2. They can be sweetened with sugar.
3. 1 tablespoon of washed currants may be used.
4. With buttermilk, use a little less bicarbonate of soda.
5. It is always best to flour baking tin lightly.

Shortbread

Shortbread didn't appear on the lesson plans, but it seems a good place to end as the tip for using rice flour to make the best Scottish shortbread was passed down to me and it still works!

3 oz. flour 1 oz. ground rice 2 oz. butter 1 oz. sugar

Place sugar, butter and ground rice on a table. Knead it into a paste using fingers. Add flour very slowly. The better it is kneaded, it is the more crisp. After it is a solid paste, roll it into a round cake. Ornament with thumb and finger, prick it over top with fork. Cut in four or eight. Place in a floured baking tin and bake in a slow oven till a pale brown colour. Allow to stand in baking tin for a short time.

$\frac{1}{4}$ oz. chopped peel may be added. It is most economical to cut in a round and cut in eight. Bake for 7–10 minutes.

Annie wrote the recipes in her notebook as Miss Cook taught them –with meat in one lesson, fancy cakes the next, soup the following – but I have organised them into categories. *Annie Strachan's Cookery Book* with all the recipes in each category, including meat, fish, soup, other savoury dishes, puddings, and baking, along with any interesting facts and observations about ingredients or cooking methods can be found by visiting Claire Callendar Connections at https://clairecallender.com/?page_id=335.

Claire Callender, Canada

—oOo—

Food as Family History

We've been asking about people's memories of the food they associate with family memories, especially recipes associated with growing up in the North-East. We've had some wonderful responses.

Broth!

Your request rang a bell in my 80-year-old memory bank! So, have you heard of Resurrection Broth then?

I have had generations of family involved in farming in Aberdeenshire and the meal routine was fairly standardised back then. On Sunday it would be broth with a bit of boiling beef or mutton thrown in and because Mondays and Tuesdays were wash days and baking days, irrespective of what the weather outside was like.

There was not a lot of time allocated for *cordon bleu* menus on those days, or any other day for that matter. So, we had the broth again on a Monday with some cold meat and quite often on the Tuesday as well. I had a great-uncle who would remark he was getting a plate of resurrection broth, using the biblical reference to point out it had reappeared on the third day!

The footnote is, that some 80 years later, resurrection broth is still served in our kitchen!

Tony Watson, Tain

—oOo—

Yirn Milk, Crudes and Murly Tucks

In response to your request for Granny's Recipes, my Granny and Grandfather farmed in Glenlivet. Unfortunately, my grandfather died at the age of 62 but Granny continued to farm with the assistance of her youngest son. Granny had a docile milk cow named Bridget who provided copious pails of milk and the left-overs were used to make yirn milk. Yirn milk is warm milk mixed with rennet to produce cheese like cottage cheese or crudes i.e. curds. Absolutely delicious on her homemade oatcakes baked on a girdle over a peat fire.

Another milk "recipe" is murly tuck. I've never experienced it but there is a coffee shop in Tarves called Murly Tucks named after the aforementioned dish. It would appear to consist of warmed milk with oatcakes crumbled into it.

Kate Duncan, Forres

Ed.: The Concise Scots Dictionary (CSD) defines "murlie" as "crumbly".

—oOo—

Food Memories and Treats

You mentioned you are hoping to publish some food recollections. Our family Christmas last year was a very quiet one and my son-in-law did all the cooking. The only slip up was his visit to the butcher when he forgot he was not doing his usual mass catering. Need I say more – we were TURKEYED out.

However, I picked up a couple of interesting snippets from TV and Zoom recently. One related to fisher lassies as there was a mystery over a small chest which still smelt a bit fishy and had a woman's name inside. I had assumed that the fisher lasses carried their belongings in bundles but it appears they had kists [chests]. This now makes make sense when connected to a Lewis recipe I have. Evidently some employers allowed the girls to have the fish guts as "perks" so they maybe created what I know as cropinhead (my version of the Gaelic name). This was an equal measure of oats and fish liver kneaded well together, seasoned, packed into a fish head or small bowl with a good covering of flour and boiled for 30–50 minutes in fish stock or water. Whether it originated on the mainland or isles I know not but it was delicious and now appears on gourmet menus!

I also remember my ghoulish fascination as a child, watching a sheep's head bobbing around in the broth pot. My mother, who grew up in Lewis and went to Aberdeen University, wrote a journal which mentions the food treats she and her family enjoyed. Here are a few of my mother's stories from "Henrietta's Journal":

Candy a Chlobh (Tongs)

When our elders went to evening church service, we had a marvellous way of making candy without danger of leaving any telltale traces. Two sins if found out: first stealing the sugar and second breaking the Sabbath! Correct order? Could be!

First you put the "penny ended" tongs in the fire and found some strong brown paper. Then you stole 2–3 tablespoons of sugar and heaped them on the paper. You tested the heat of the tongs near your cheek to make sure they were not too hot before gently squeezing the heaps between the "penny" ends until the sugar became crisp and caramelly. It was delicious and, by consigning the used paper to the flames and the candy to our stomachs, not a trace of incriminating evidence was left.

Lobster Claws

During the very low spring tides one could visit the lobster caverns. Armed with a very long stick and a string wound round a cod hook, off we set. In the innermost corners lurked the lobster, so when you spotted one, you shot the hook at it and heaved. If you were successful, you immediately set off for home carrying the beast by the hook or by the large claws. The peat fire would be glowing and the claws were set in there to bake for about ten minutes. Then we retrieved them, hurried outside to crack the shells and eat the delicious meat inside. We had never heard of chips and crisps – the popular snacks of modern youth – nor realised that our treats were in the gourmet class by today's standards.

Sheep Tails

My old friend next door used to give us her sheep tails. Sheep were killed around November, salted and smoke dried for winter consumption. In our home, I think the tail was the only part of the animal discarded but my old friend regarded them as a treat. We skinned the tails then "sandwiched" one between glowing peat embers removed from the fire and laid on the hearth. I can't remember how long they took to cook but will never forget how crisp and delicious they tasted.

Anna Doxford, née Garden, Somerset,

—oOo—

Ceann Cropraig or Crappit Heid

"Cropinhead" is *ceann cropraig* in Gaelic, or crappit heid in Scots, a dish that was a staple all over Scotland, or at least in the fishing communities. Both my grannies (Aberdeen and Fraserburgh) used to make it. There are different recipes, but basically all are a mixture of fish heads, fish livers and oatmeal. Nothing wasted!

I recently came across another recipe in F. Marian McNeill's *The Scots Kitchen* (1929). It follows on from her recipe for crappit heids and is more like Anna's description of the recipe her mother made. It's called cropadeu and it says it's a Hebridean version of crappit heids. You take oatmeal and water, make a dumpling, put a haddock's liver in the middle and season well. Boil it as you would a clottie dumpling. The liver dissolves in the oatmeal "and eats very fine".

Margie Mellis, Aberdeen

—oOo—

Scottish Women's Rural Institute (SWRI) Recipes

For the adventurous, here is the recipe for Crappit Heid as it appears on page 132 of the section on traditional Scottish recipes from the *SWRI Cookery Book*, (Jubilee Edition). The Scottish Women's Rural Institute was formed in 1917, in Longniddry, East Lothian. As well as promoting the use of home-produce foods, its aim was "to provide social, educational and recreational opportunities for those who live and work in the country...". The same page has recipes for Cullen Skink and nettle broth, with sheep's head broth (and pie!) appearing on the following page. One theory as to why you find nettles growing in such profusion around derelict crofts is that they were used as a nutritious food source at a time when fresh, green vegetables were often in short supply.

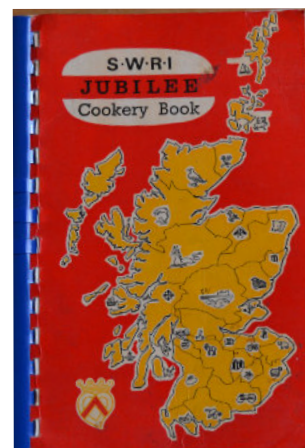


Photo: E. Petrie

Crappit Heid

Take four large cod heads and boil till all the fish leaves the bones. Then remove the bones and put the fish back in a stew-pan with a good large spoonful of salt butter and bring it to a nice brown. Season with pepper and serve hot, either on toast or on oatcakes.

Cullen Skink

A Findon haddock, onion, mashed potatoes, buttermilk, pepper and salt.

Skin the Findon haddock and place in a pan with sufficient boiling water to cover it (no more). Bring to the boil and add a chopped onion. When the haddock is cooked, take it out and remove all the bones. Flake the fish, return bones to the stock. Boil for ½ hour, strain the stock and again bring to boil. Boil about a pint of milk separately and add it to the stock with the flaked fish, and salt to taste. Boil for a few minutes. Add enough mashed potato to make the soup a nice consistency, with a tablespoonful of butter, and pepper to taste, and serve.

Ed.: A Finnan or Findon Haddock (first on right) is filleted and cold-smoked, as opposed to whole hot-smoked haddock or Arbroath smokies (far right). Findon, known locally as Finnan, is a coastal village between Aberdeen and Portlethen "noted for its smoke-cured fish" which were prepared with "the smoke of green wood" (CSD).



Photos: (left) Downies of Whitehill; (right) E. Petrie

Sheep's Head Broth

One sheep's head, sufficient water to cover it, three carrots, three leeks, three teaspoonfuls of salt, three turnips, one teaspoonful of pepper, ¼ lb. oatmeal.

Clean the head well and let it soak in water and salt for 2 hours to get rid of the blood. Put into a saucepan with enough water to cover it, and when it boils, skim well. Add the

vegetables peeled and diced and the remaining ingredients. Before adding the oatmeal, mix it to a smooth batter with a little of the liquor. Keep stirring till it boils up, then cover the saucepan closely and let it stew gently for 1½ to 2 hours. It may be thickened with rice or barley, but oatmeal is best.

Nettle Broth

Chicken stock, barley, nettles, pepper and salt.

Gather young nettles from the higher part of the wall where they are clean. Wash the tops in salted water and chop very finely. Have the stock boiling with the barley in it. Add the nettles, simmer till tender and season to taste. The soup may be thickened with some mashed potatoes.

Brose

Put the amount of meal wanted in a basin with a little salt. Pour enough boiling water over it to wet the meal thoroughly and stir well. Stand for a few minutes to let the meal swell, but do not let it get cold. An excellent dish if eaten with rich milk or cream.

Turnip, kale and cabbage brose is made as above using the boiling liquid from the vegetables and adding a pinch of sugar. Serve with a little hot vegetable liquid instead of milk or cream.

Ed.: It should be noted that brose is not the same as porridge which is made by soaking oatmeal in water overnight then bringing it to the boil and simmering till the desired consistency is reached. The traditional seasoning is salt.

—oOo—

Barley Sugar

I did indeed yearn for Scottish foods in France. One of them was a barley sugar cane which used to be sold in our local chemist's shop. I got some strange reactions when I tried to buy some in Parisian chemists! Mince and tatties was always a great favourite, but I was able to make that myself.

Bobbie Jeal, Dalbeattie

Foraging

My mum is an excellent cook and the both of us can make fine broths and soups, but little specifically has been passed down recipes-wise from either side of my family tree. My paternal grandmother preferred to avoid the kitchen entirely, having accidentally set fire to it at least twice. The only thing I recall she really put effort into was straining fruit for jelly pudding! Grandad would often drive us out to little lanes alongside fields to forage for brambles, goosers and rasps (blackberries, gooseberries and raspberries). We'd come back covered in cuts and stains with bulging bags of fruit.

Matthew Davidson, Aberdeen

A Doric Diet

When North-Easters meet, their ears are finely tuned to pick up the open vowels and the giveaway cadences that mark a Doric upbringing. They are equally sensitive to any conversation about food. When meeting a new acquaintance, a recently-returned expat, we easily found common ground in talking about stovies, the right way to make mince, and the ecstasies of oatmeal stuffing, mealie jimmies and skirlie. .

North-East songs abound in references to food: from “Grat for Gruel” where the grumpy weaver “winna wint his gruel”, to the celebration of “Tatties an' Herrin”. (Both songs are well executed by The Gaugers, a folk group from Aberdeen, and are easily found on YouTube.) That fine songsmith George Bruce Thomson celebrated a meal an' ale (a bit like

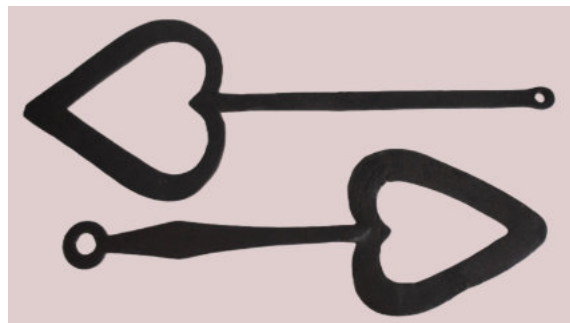
a harvest supper) ostensibly held at a farm called Balmannocks, an easy rhyme opportunity, there. He listed all the dainties set out in the spread: pease brose, sowens, pancakes, pace eggs (Easter eggs) and yes, sautie bannocks. (*You knew that was coming, right!? - Ed.*). The orra loon in “Nicky Tams” knows he's onto a winner with the kitchie deem when she “clorts a muckle piece tae me wi' several kinds o' jam”.

My father, a moderate and unfussy eater, liked to tell the tale of the bothy chiel who was being asked what he got to eat at the three main mealtimes, breakfast, dinner and tea (nothing so refined as lunch, and the appropriate hour for meals is a whole other story). The answer for all three was brose (oatmeal in water). The interviewer suggested that this unvaried diet might be wearisome and got the puzzled reply: “Fit wey wid ye get tired o' yer meat?” And of course “meat” in this context simply means food, not animal flesh.

It's true that oatmeal, the key ingredient of brose, is a central element in many North-East goodies. Oatmeal stuffing (oatmeal, onions, breadcrumbs, salt, pepper and butter) is central to any chicken or turkey roast dinner, replacing sage and onion, or other peely-wally (pale) substitutes. Skirlie is a pan-fried alternative (minus the breadcrumbs) and beef olives in the North-East are stuffed with oatmeal, not sausagemeat. Fresh filleted herrings, coated in oatmeal and fried, are another delicacy, that can improved only by the addition of spicy brown sauce.

I remember my granny making oatcakes on a girdle (flat pan made of iron) on a swey over the fire. I was fascinated as they curled slightly at the edges in their neat farls. A farl is a triangular wedge cut from a rolled-out circle of dough and is a term also applied to triangles of shortbread. Newly-made oatcakes were perfect with fresh farm cheese and you can still see stone cheese presses outside derelict crofts, a sign of their common use. In the old days, beef dripping (rendered fat) would be a common ingredient but melted bacon fat, or butter, can be a toothsome alternative. When we speak about oatmeal we are talking about either finely ground oatmeal or pinhead oatmeal (coarsely ground), not rolled oats – the form now most often seen and used in mueslis or flapjacks. The classic oatmeal dish is, of course, porridge. My blacksmith grandpa supped his parritch (porridge) daily, with the porridge in one bowl and an additional blue-and-white, striped bowl filled with top of the milk as its accompaniment. He took a spoon of salted porridge, dipped the loaded spoon in the cream, then ate it. Oddly, porridge (and soup) were referred to as “them”. Oatmeal would be steeped the night before, ready for boiling up the next morning. Rolled oats count as a fast food by comparison. Toasted oatmeal is also a fabulous dessert when served with lightly whipped cream and fresh raspberries as cranachan. So, you see, it's a very versatile grain.

Tatties (potatoes) were usually central to the main meal and appeared in various forms: boiled, mashed, baked and latterly, chips. Leftovers were served fried as a hash so that tatties, in some form or another, were the comfort food and chief filler for a growing family. Tatties cooked in their skin were described as “peel an' eat tatties” and new season tatties were tumbled around in a basin of water to clean them, then lightly boiled in what was left



Iron bannock spades, ideal for turning scones and oatcakes.

Photo: Graham Robertson

of their skins. They were a treat when finished with butter, chopped chives and, oh yes, oatmeal. Sometimes we might call that dish new tattie stovies but of course classic stovies are mature tatties, thinly sliced and layered in a pan with onions, dripping and any leftover meat. With the addition of seasoning and a little water and a tightly fitting lid, they were intended to cook slowly on the top of the range or stove, over a steady low heat. The caramelised mixture at the bottom of the pan was another unforgettable treat. Clapshot was popular in our house, because of our Orcadian links. It's a tasty

mash, a mixture of tatties and neeps (orange swede turnip) and it was amusing a while back to hear Jamie Oliver, promoting mashed mixed root vegetables as a culinary discovery.

Hairy tatties were the fishy alternative to stovies. Traditionally they were made with dried cod where the reconstituted fish fibres dispersed through the tatties and gave them their famous hairy texture. Nowadays, as fish is frozen rather than air dried, dried cod is rare to come by. I've had a tasty modern alternative which is essentially mashed tatties with pieces of smoked mackerel mixed through. Herring, haddock (both filleted and smoked), cod and cod roe (coated in Ruskolene and fried), with the occasional bit of sole were the usual fish offerings with, once in a blue moon, a special delicacy, skate knobs (nuggets of flesh from the body section of the skate). Salmon was Alaskan and came in cans. Mackerel wasn't regularly available and when it started to be widely sold, my sea-faring paternal grandpa refused to eat it, classing it as a "dirty fish" because of its reputation as a scavenger. The rest of us recognised it for a tasty meal, fully of the "good" oils and other nutrients. Herring was the most versatile fish, though, and worthy of its celebration in song. As well as being tasty when fried or smoked as a kipper, it was often turned into a salad dish by being seasoned, rolled up, placed in a casserole with vinegar and water and baked in the oven. It's a cooked alternative to Scandinavian pickled herring.

Hens and eggs were plentiful. There was usually a hen for the pot, boiled along with assorted chopped vegetables to make a hearty soup, with a chicken main course to follow. The traditional Scotch Broth mix of dried pulses (split yellow peas, marrowfat peas, lentils and barley) gives broth its characteristic rib-sticker bite, usually reinforced with an assortment of seasonal root vegetables, along with leeks, cabbage and kale. Recently I let a pan of onions, tatties and green veg sotter away (simmer) gently in stock and when the soup was served, my lunch companion said it was like being at their granny's house, proving that kale and leeks are just as potent to a Scot as Proust's madeleines.

If meat was in short supply, tatties and cabbage alone could serve as a meal. More unusual was Washing Soup, made of pearl barley and milk, and therefore slightly sweet. It took time for the barley to soften but was easy to prepare because no chopping was required so it was ideal for a day where there might be a big blanket wash on and there was no time to chop vegetables or stand in attendance over a stove.

There is also the whole world of pancakes, bannocks, and scones. My Orkney grandpa called these last "cookies", irrespective of whether they were oven scones or girdle scones. Confusingly, "Scotch" pancakes are also called dropped scones, despite having a different recipe to scones.

I haven't even had time to mention that sublime thing that is a rowie, the Aberdeen butterie or morning roll, nor yet ingin braddies (onion bridies to our Forfar cousins), both superior to a Cornish pasty, which some might say they resemble.

So, if you want to get a taste of how your ancestors lived, find and try some traditional recipes. And if you are looking for a good way to start a family-history conversation with an elderly North-East relative, ask them what was the favourite food their granny made them.

If you can find them, some of the popular cookbooks were the *Homecraft Book: Cookery, Laundry, Housewifery*, compiled by "a Committee of Dundee Domestic Science Teachers" and then the Scottish Women's Rural Institute Cookbook. Molly Weir's cookery books later proved to be a reliable and widely-used alternative.

Well, it's fly-time (break-time) now and I need a cuppa and an oatcake or a butter biscuit.

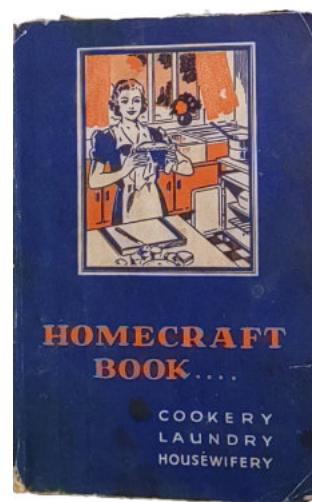


Photo: E Petrie

Food Thoughts from Abroad

I was nine when my family moved to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in Central Africa. When we lived in Aberdeen, our diet was a very plain one and fairly typical of the North-East. I don't remember my mother doing much baking. She did, however, make lovely soups. I was never fond of broth – I only liked the barley in it, but she made skink soup from shin of beef and I loved that. I also was very fond of fish soup which she made with ling. We always had a chicken at Christmas because my paternal grandfather would bring one in from “the country”. He had a farm near Tarves. It was always prepared with oatmeal stuffing which I really loved (and still do!). We had a traditional Christmas pudding and cake. A favourite dish was stovies with oatcakes and a glass of milk. I spent quite a lot of time with my great-grandmother and great-aunt. Granny, as we called her, was a good plain cook and I loved her porridge made with oatmeal. She sometimes used to get a rabbit and stuff that with oatmeal and that and the gravy she made was delicious.



Valaine and family get a musical send-off. Her grandmother is on the train and she and her father and brother are standing front right.

Photo: Valaine Middleton

Once in Africa, our diet changed considerably. We lived 32 miles from Bulawayo at Mzingwane Government School where my father taught Agriculture and Veterinary Science. We did have porridge oats because I remember feeding them to the goldfish in a pond in the garden. Our breakfast usually consisted of a variety of cereals with milk. The cream always formed a crust on top of the milk and we children tried not to get the blobs on our cereal. Meat was different as the cattle slaughtered were older than here and so it required long cooking. We always had silverside for Sunday lunch with a glass of goat's milk, as there were goats on the farm. Occasionally my father would slaughter a pig and then each of the European families would put in a request for whichever cut of meat they required. I remember being amazed how many of them wanted the trotters!

We had a large variety of fruits in the garden, some familiar and some new. We had oranges but they were very sour. We also had lemons, guavas (which were a great favourite of mine), large green mangoes, mulberries, figs, Cape gooseberries (*Physalis*), very small sour green grapes, which grew on a pergola near the fishpond, and Kaffir oranges which had a very hard shell. We did not eat them. We still had chicken at Christmas and the usual Christmas pudding and cake. In the grocery store there were icing sugars in a wide variety of colours and our servant, Sarah, used to make us a blancmange pudding for lunch in lurid colours such as purple or bright pink. Cheese came in the form of a spread in small decorated glasses which were then used for our Sunday goat's milk. Another new food which we occasionally had was maize, which was much drier and coarser than sweetcorn. We had biscuits very rarely and sweets were even rarer. Chocolate was a problem because the heat tended to hatch maggots in it. The telltale sign was cobwebs when the wrapping was undone.

At the age of ten I was sent to the Coghlund School for Girls, a boarding school in Bulawayo. Many children boarded because of the distances between schools and settlements. My diet changed remarkably there. My favourite meal was breakfast. We had a variety of porridges followed by something cooked. One was called Maltabella, another was made from meallie meal (maize) and Sundays we always had corn flakes followed by a boiled egg. The meat was generally horrible and the mutton was awful. We also had squashes and pumpkins which I hated but we had to eat everything and not complain. We had a rest after lunch and then we had “tuck” which usually consisted of a sweet, a biscuit and a small mango and then we went outside to play.

When I was 12 we moved to Nyasaland, now Malawi. We lived 12 miles from Lilongwe, which was just a small place at that time. Our house was newly built for us and there was no established garden so no variety of fruits to hand but people would come to the house selling fruits, mainly oranges and bananas. I went to another boarding school, St Andrews School at Blantyre! There I was introduced to another fruit which is still a favourite of mine, namely the granadilla, or passion fruit.

We came home to Scotland on leave when I was 14 and, for a number of reasons, we did not go back to Africa although we were due to. We were back to plain North-East food again.

Valaine Middleton, Glasgow

Ed: We owe Valaine an apology as we neglected to credit her as the author of the report on Ken Nisbet's talk on "Investigating Your Relative's Service in the Second World War" on 24th May 2025. See Journal 175 (August 2025), pp. 35-36. Ken Nisbet provided the resource list. Thank you, Valaine for your efforts on our behalf. The Meeting Reports are an important part of the journal and we greatly appreciate the work of members in preparing them.

—oOo—

Sangster Artisans: A Story of Castles and Clocks

The Hay family is closely associated with the parishes of Slains and Cruden, styling themselves the Earls of Erroll. Sir Gilbert Hay acquired Old Slains Castle (just north of Collieston) from the Comyn family following recognition from Robert the Bruce in the 14th century. It was demolished with explosives in the late 16th century by the forces of King James VI as Francis Hay, the 9th Earl had supported the Catholic cause. Francis was exiled to France, but when pardoned and restored to his position, he built a replacement castle further north along the coast overlooking Cruden Bay. Originally called Bowness, then New Slains, today most people call it Slains Castle. In subsequent years it was heavily modified to become a mansion house.

Cruden Bay became a popular recreational centre with its refreshing beach environment, golf links and hotel accommodation in the 19th century, with the castle being the centre of social life in the district. The village was linked to Aberdeen by railway line. The area in its heyday had a great number of visitors, perhaps most famously including Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula*. (See Mike Shepherd, "The Cruden Bay of Bram Stoker and Adam Drummond", Journal 172 (November 2024), pp. 8–10.) In 1919 the castle with contents was sold to John Ellerman, a shipping line magnate. In 1925 taxes and death duties became too large for the family to sustain and they decided to decommission the building by removing the roof.

In the 18th century, farmers often set up their own blacksmith workshops to make the implements they required. This was true for my Sangster forebears, including Alexander Sangster of Cruden parish, who did this prior to obtaining a lease from Lord Hay for farmland near the fishing village of Whinnyfold. A description of his activities is given in articles published in local newspapers. From these it is clear that he was well known locally and was often invited to give speeches at community functions. We also learn that his workshop made grandfather clocks for a range of clients including Lord Hay. For more about the Sangster family line, see my earlier



A Sangster Clock
Photo: Alan Sangster



Photo: Alan Sangster

article in this journal, “Voyages of Discovery”, (Journal 110 (February 2009), pp. 47–48).

A number of clocks were installed in Slains Castle while others were bought by tradespeople and fishermen. Clocks of the latter type were sometimes of lesser height so they could be accommodated in houses with low ceilings.

At Slains Castle, the Sangsters visited weekly to set the correct clock times and carry out regular maintenance. Alexander’s son James (born 1820) followed in his father’s footsteps and established his own clock and watch business, in due course taking over the servicing of the clocks at the Castle. According to one account, “when any customer came to look at clock in his shop he would remark – ‘That’s a guid clock, a guid gaen clock, a clock that’ll gi’e ye gran’ satisfaction’.”

Prior to the abandonment of Slains Castle, its contents were sold by auction. Several of the grandfather clocks were purchased by members of the Sangster family who still hold them today as family heirlooms. To see illustrations of Scottish Grandfather clocks of this era, search online for “Scottish 18th Century Long Case Clock Archives”.

Sources

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With grateful to Alan Sangster of Cruden Bay, who early on in my research provided information on the family origins.

Alan Baldwin, Palmerston North, New Zealand

—oOo—

Jack Spark Innes : Painter to the Stars

I became a member of ANESFHS in January 2004 and received my first journal the following month on the day that would have been my father's 100th birthday. It fell open at the centrefold to reveal the family tree of Robert (Bob) Innes, a resident of Los Angeles. To my amazement there was my great-grandfather's name, Andrew Innes, my father's namesake.

As a result of letters and a visit to the USA, I learned about the interesting life of our common ancestor, John Spark Innes, Bob's grandfather, known to his friends as Jack. The following information has been gleaned from Jack's diary of his time in Canada, edited by his daughter-in-law, Diana Innes, and from a letter written to me from Charlotte Innes Thomson, his last surviving daughter, who died in San Francisco in December 2024, aged 95 years.

Jack was an only child, born in Aberdeen in 1886, and by the age of 15 he was an apprentice in the painting trade. His love of travel along with the opportunity of free passage on an ocean liner to Canada and work on the railroads was enticing. Jack “sang” as his fare on the ship, according to his son, Kenneth. He left Glasgow in February 1907, aged 20, and found living quarters at 271 Robert Avenue, Winnipeg. Working on the railroad proved to be less than desirable, so one night Jack escaped and began a new life working as a painter with





Hower and Sons, located at 690 Langside Street, Winnipeg, later associating with a Mr Thorpe and a Mr Ewing, also in Winnipeg.

Sometime later, he returned to Aberdeen, where he resided at 24 Skene Row, working as a journeyman house painter. Café Royal on Broad Street was the location of his marriage on 18th February 1910 to Helen (Nellie) Noble, a fancy box maker, who also happened to be his second cousin. Her parents were Jane Paterson and John Donaldson Noble. Jack Spark's mother, Elizabeth, and Nellie's mother, Jane, were first cousins.

In due course, Jack returned to Canada with Nellie and Stuart, their first-born. They eventually settled at 776 Ingersoll Street, Winnipeg and were the proud parents of five children: Stuart, Clifford, Kenneth, Nellie and Gertrude. Family and work kept Jack busy, but he found time to remember his Scottish heritage by performing as a stage comedian, singer, master of ceremonies and other activities with the Scottish Lodges (Order of Scottish Clans and Daughters of Scotia). The Lodges have since been dissolved.

Nellie died during her sixth pregnancy due to complications from a fall down cellar stairs. The young widower had no choice but to put his children in an orphanage (1921–24) while he worked to support them.

In 1923, Jack left Winnipeg and travelled with a friend to the United States, arriving in Southern California to investigate job opportunities. It was here in Los Angeles that he met his second wife, Margaret Liston, who was also from Aberdeen and, like Jack, a singer performing in concerts at the Scottish Lodges. They married on 23rd February 1924, and a few months later returned to Canada, to gather Jack's children. The eldest son, Stuart, had to remain in Canada as there was a quota for Scottish immigrants at the time. He would have been around 17 years old.

On 19th October 1924, the family arrived in Los Angeles and Jack went into the house painting business again, forming the partnership of Thorpe, Innes and Ewing. He worked at the homes of many celebrities including Joe E. Brown, Edward G. Robinson, Joan Crawford, Jack Benny, Lucille Ball and Marion Davies, the actress who was the mistress of William Randolph Hearst.

Margaret was a loving stepmother to her new family and on 8th December 1930, baby Charlotte was born. Shortly afterwards, Jack and Margaret bought a house at 2940 11th Avenue in Los Angeles and lived there from 1931 until 1959. They continued to perform at concerts and house parties, and Jack had a trunk full of costumes and accessories: hats, wigs, stage make-up, etc. In particular, he performed a Harry Lauder tribute act complete with kilt and crooked cane.

His repertoire consisted mainly of Scots songs, such as "Only a Working Man" and "When Heather Bells are Blooming" and bothy ballads, including "The Muckin' O' Geordie's Byre" and "McGinty's Meat and Ale".



Margaret specialised in the songs of Robert Burns and sacred songs. She would wear a washerwoman's outfit complete with creel, to sing songs like "Caller Herrin'" and sang "The Crookit Bawbee" as a duet with Jack. Margaret died in 1955 and Jack in 1967, aged 81. This handsome, happy Scotsman was self-effacing and charismatic with a jovial personality and a great sense of humour. He is loved and remembered fondly by his family.

All images by kind permission of Brenda Cattanach.

Brenda Cattanach, Solihul

George Rennie's WW2 Hussif

The Glasgow Group had a fascinating “show and tell” Members’ Day last year on 11th May 2024 with the topic of “Family History in Samplers and Other Textiles”. See Journal 171 (August 2024), pp. 5–7. Clothing, like the food industry with male chefs and female cooks, splits along gender lines with small numbers of men dominating glamorous couture and huge numbers of women engaged in practical dressmaking. However, when needs must, divisions blur and basic but necessary skills are employed by all. This struck me as I looked for something to bring to that meeting and re-discovered my Grandpa’s WW2 hussif (described below). The magic of this mundane little object is that it was the prompt to learn about my Grandpa’s war service.



George Rennie

Photo: Kate Clack

Prior to WW2 there was the traditional division of labour in my grandparents’ Aberdeen home. George Rennie was employed as the manager, a.k.a. “lightning barman”, at the Bridge Bar (no facilities for ladies) while Edith ran the house. He earned the money and improved the home with his DIY skills while she budgeted, cooked, cleaned and saw to the family’s clothing requirements. No mean feat with five children. She was a keen and accomplished dressmaker with very high standards in presentation, hence the family was always immaculately turned out and told that only five brushes were necessary to be presentable: toothbrush, hairbrush, nailbrush, shoe brush and clothes brush. She failed to mention her sewing machine, expertise with fabric, and workbox stuffed with notions.

George Rennie’s war service was deferred two or three times due to staff circumstances at the Bridge Bar. When these changed, he was called up and assigned to the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC). He was taught to drive but never took to the roads in civvy street. Twenty was indeed plenty for him, but zero was better. Perhaps his lack of enthusiasm for burning rubber, combined with an occasional shortage of men in the Catering Corps saw him redeployed at times. My Mother suggests that the English commanding officer seeing “bar manager” on a list of potential men pictured a rural English pub catering for its clientele by preparing and serving wholesome food by a roaring fire or in a pleasant beer garden. Alas George’s skill with food was limited to eating it. But he embraced cooking and baking mountains of food. In some measure it suited him as he was a pacifist at heart.

Active service was very different from civilian life in many ways and included taking responsibility for keeping his own clothing in top notch order. While Edith made do and mended in Hilton Drive, George was issued with kit, including the hussif, and was sent off to serve in foreign parts, Carrickfergus, Derby, York and latterly Germany, whose countrymen genuinely impressed him with their fine citizenship.

His military-issue hussif was a simple fabric envelope with tape ties. Inside there was a flap of flannel for needles and pins. It contained a few buttons, scissors, cards of military issue thread and thin wool in the appropriate colour for your service. I imagine using the kit may have been challenging for most men at that time. From what was included, it appears personnel had to be able to sew on buttons, mend seams and most challenging of all, darn. The contents of our hussif have all gone, but it is interesting to note that my mother remembers a solitary pristine card of khaki green darning wool left inside! This is the only evidence I have of my



George Rennie's Hussif

Photo: Kate Clark

Grandpa's dip into the world of sewing. He did however become a keen baker after his war service.

Objects we find in the family archive often come with a story which adds to the richness of our family history. Names, dates and places are bare and dry, but viewing objects with curiosity, contextualising them to give them meaning and relevance to our ancestors brings the people alive. For me, it is also especially nice to have the opportunity to talk with my Mother and learn about my Grandfather's very ordinary war service through a very ordinary little object. We may not all be glorious heroes in dramatic circumstances, but our stories are still worth knowing.

Kate Clark, Glasgow

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Episcopalianism in North-East Scotland and Orkney

There has been a particularly strong history of Episcopalianism in the North-East, and unlike other dioceses there has been a Bishop in Aberdeen from earliest times to the present with one six-year gap from 1715 to 1721. This continuity has meant that while in the central belt of Scotland many parishes are based in cities and towns, there are many Episcopal village churches in Aberdeenshire, as well as a good number along the coast.

Rural depopulation has led to the loss of several ancient charges, at Lonmay, Forgue and Folla Rule, and others have dwindled in recent years. Churches founded during the missionary activities of the 19th century tended to have been in Aberdeen City, or along Deeside and Donside. In Glasgow, for example, churches were built and abandoned as industry and its workers moved about the city, but in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire industry was more settled along the coast and in farming communities, so there is continuity. Though plenty of English people attend the Scottish Episcopal Church, it is least deserving in this diocese of its nickname of "the English Church".



Photo: N.J. Mills

Orkney and Shetland, which are also part of the diocese, have a much patchier record of Episcopalianism, losing any trace of it in Orkney in 1754 and in Shetland in 1761. Ministry was re-established in the mid-Victorian period, in Lerwick in 1861 and in Kirkwall in 1873. Shetland is, however, the home of the most recent Episcopalian religious community founded in Scotland, the Society of Our Lady of the Isles on Fetlar, which began in 1982. Aberdeen had two religious communities founded in the mid-Victorian period, the Community of St Margaret of Scotland on the Spital and the House of Bethany in the Hardgate. The latter was an orphanage from 1876 to 1954, and the community remained until 1980. The Spital community had several roles over the years since its foundation in 1862, including children's home and old people's home, and only came to an end with the death of the last surviving sister in 2023. The buildings, with the chapel designed by Sir Ninian Comper, had been sold several years before.

One claim to fame for the diocese is that it was here in Aberdeen that the first Anglican bishop for North America was consecrated. Samuel Seabury was elected by his fellow clergy in Connecticut to be made bishop for their diocese in 1763. Following tradition, a bishop can only be consecrated by another bishop, so Seabury made his way to England to approach the Archbishop of Canterbury. Unfortunately, one of the conditions of consecration was that the candidate should swear allegiance to the King – in this case George III. As America had just become independent, even though Seabury had been on the loyalist side in the revolution, he could not in all conscience swear allegiance, so he

travelled on to Scotland, where he had been to university, and sought out the Primus or chief bishop here.

Bishop Alexander Kilgour of Aberdeen was at that time that man: he lived in Peterhead, but he came to meet Seabury, also bringing Bishop Arthur Petrie of Moray and gathering in the house of Rev. John Skinner, who was assistant bishop to Kilgour in Aberdeen. John Skinner lived in Longacre, where Marischal College now stands. His father had been Rector of Longside and had been imprisoned under the Penal Laws, and John, as a boy, had chosen to accompany his father to prison, then went on to be ordained himself. His chapel was in his house, a common arrangement in those days where the laws did not allow very many people to gather together for worship. After several days of discussion, Seabury was consecrated in that upstairs chapel by Kilgour, Petrie and Skinner, and returned to serve in Connecticut. The ties between the two dioceses are still strong, and the American prayer book is still based on the Scottish one. There is a plaque in the courtyard of Marischal College to commemorate this event. Skinner went on to succeed Kilgour as Bishop of Aberdeen and as Primus, and was instrumental in the final repeal of the Penal Laws, bringing the church to some kind of unity after the dissensions of Jacobite times. He founded St. Andrew's Church in King Street shortly before his death. St. Andrew's went on to become the diocese's cathedral in 1914.

The historical records of the Episcopal Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney will soon be (mostly) in the same place, in the University of Aberdeen's Special Collections. The Diocese, which is part of the Anglican Communion, dates from 1865, when the two separate dioceses of Aberdeen and Orkney were united. The records that relate directly to the charges in the Northern Isles are still kept in the respective archives there. Until recently some material was held at Aberdeen City Archives but this has now been transferred to the University. More recent material which had been held at St. Clement's Church, Mastrick, has now been assessed and listed and will shortly be moved to the University, though, like similar data containing personal information, much of it will be subject to the UK General Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

Charges maintained their own registers of baptisms, marriages, burials, and confirmations, as well as service registers, both before and after general registration in 1855. However, as with the other non-established churches some of these registers were not as well preserved as they might be, particularly for the chaotic period under the Penal Laws. The archives also include vestry or management committee minutes, accounts and correspondence and often records of buildings, but information on individual clergy is limited and usually has to be deduced from other records. Some charges still hold all their own records, and should be applied to separately. Some records remain of the two Victorian religious communities: the records of both are closed under DPA but information (which is mostly limited to dates of admission and departure, referring officers and home address) can be accessed by those directly named or proven next-of-kin in the case of deceased relatives.

Enquiries regarding access and availability should be directed to Aberdeen University Special Libraries and Archives. All other enquiries can be directed to Aberdeen & Orkney Diocesan Office (office@aberdeen.anglican.org).

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N.J. Mills, Acting Diocesan Archivist, Aberdeen

Andrew Robertson (1880–1963) in Scotland and New Zealand

Andrew Robertson was born at Woodfield, Coull, Aberdeenshire on 25th February 1880, the eighth child and fifth son of George Walker Robertson and Mary Bain. In the 1881 census he lived with his parents and siblings, among them elder sister Mary and younger brother William. By 1891, Andrew, William and Mary still lived at home along with three younger brothers. Little is known of Andrew's childhood at Woodfield. His father was a crofter of four acres of arable land and there were several other crofting households nearby. Andrew attended school until at least the age of 11 and by the 1901 census he was working as a horseman 13 miles away in Wester Sinnahard, Towie.

On 29th April 1910, Andrew, aged 30, emigrated to New Zealand (NZ) from London on the S.S. *Arawa* with William and William's wife Jeannie Duncan Whyte. They were most likely part of an assisted immigrant scheme where both shipping companies and the government were required to contribute to reduced fares and where passenger and shipping agents were paid bonuses to recruit certain types of workers. An item from the *Aberdeen Daily Journal* of 26th August 1909 shows that NZ was keen to hire Scottish folk, especially "farmers, domestic servants, and farm hands".

The *Evening Post* (NZ) reported that the journey seemed uneventful although some rough seas were encountered. It noted that Halley's Comet had been seen to advantage not long after leaving Tenerife and during their journey they heard that King Edward VII had died. Their ship arrived in Wellington, NZ, on 13th June 1910 after a six-week voyage. They were met by Robert Kirkpatrick Simpson, their first NZ employer, and taken to Heaton Park, Bonny Glen, near Marton. Heaton Park consisted of several thousand acres, part of the Rangitikei block, being brought in for sheep farming. Andrew and William worked here as skilled ploughmen using draft horses and would have spent many an hour ploughing the land so it could be turned into pasture for grazing sheep.

When the Great War broke out on 28th July 1914, NZ was a Dominion within the British Empire, and it was just 74 years since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (between the British government and the Maori chiefs giving the British sovereignty). When the NZ Expeditionary Force (NZEF) was created in August 1914, over 14,000 men from 20 to 40 years of age volunteered in the first four days, not surprising as most of the European population was either born in or had family ties with the UK. From August 1914 until September 1916, all NZEF recruits were volunteers.

Andrew could not have predicted that within five years he would be returning to the other side of the world to fight for his homeland. He would have felt duty bound to volunteer. William, however, had a pregnant wife and three young children, so volunteering was not really an option for him. He stayed to support his wife and family and to continue with his job on the farm.

Andrew's official *New Zealand World War One Personnel Record* contains many details including a description of his physical features, his injuries and his time in the army. His attestation form notes he worked at the time for a Mr E. Newman. His next of kin were given as Mary Robertson, mother, Mains of Findrack, Torphins, Scotland, and his brother William Robertson, of Marton. Andrew was 34¾ years old, 5 feet 6¼ inches high, weighed 144 pounds, had blue eyes, fair hair and fair complexion. He was Presbyterian, and it is noted that he had contraction of the flexor tendon of little finger of left hand.

Papers Past (an online database of old NZ newspapers) provides good information about his enlistment and activities up to his posting overseas. In November 1915 Andrew passed his medical examination and went to camp with the 10th reinforcements. Also in this same group was Charles Anderson, who was Andrew's nephew, the illegitimate son of his sister Mary. This group was requested to fall in at the Bulls Town Hall. Three days later Andrew and Charles were among a party of soldiers seen off by the local Mayor and the Marton

Brass Band at the Marton Junction railway station. They were each presented with fruit, pipe and tobacco, and a gift from the Patriotic Society.

Their first three months were spent in Trentham, NZ, preparing for going overseas. In his excellent book *New Zealand and the First World War 1914–19*, D. Fenton writes how recruits received concentrated basic training based on the British system of marching, fighting and gun training as well as building “trench networks, field fortifications, gun emplacements and barbed wire entanglements in an effort to simulate battlefield conditions”. Further training was to be carried out in England, most likely at Sling Camp on Salisbury Plain, which was the main NZ base from mid-1916. Training focussed on team building, latest tactics at platoon, company, battalion and brigade levels, and developing individual skills and knowledge in specialist camps.

Andrew was in the 3rd NZ Rifle Brigade in the 1st Wellington Battalion. The *Nominal rolls on NZ Expeditionary Force Vol 2 Wellington* and the *Auckland Museum Cenotaph database*, record that on 4th March 1916 both Andrew Robertson and Charles Anderson embarked on either the *Willochra* or the *Tofua* along with other members of the 4th reinforcements to the 1st Battalion, E Company NZ Rifle Brigade, headed for Suez, Egypt. Andrew’s war records expand on his whereabouts. On arrival on 10th April 1916, the battalion disembarked and three days later embarked on the *Kinfauns Castle* at Port Said for Étaples in, France. On 26th May 1916, Andrew was transferred from the 1st Battalion to the NZ Rifle Brigade and joined the 2nd Wellington Battalion.

Like so many soldiers at the Western Front he was soon wounded in action. Initially admitted to 2nd Company Hospital in France on 25th July 1916, he was then sent on the ship *Jan Breynal* to England on 19th September 1916 where he was admitted to the 2nd General NZ Hospital in Walton-on-Thames. Later in September Andrew was transferred to the 3rd NZ hospital in Codford. By November he was still in England and given a short period of leave before reporting for duty at Codford’s NZ Command Depot, attached to the reserve group at Sling Camp, Salisbury Plain. In December 1916, he was posted to the 2nd Wellington Company. In March 1917 they headed back to Étaples, France. Shortly afterwards Andrew lost three days’ pay for urinating in the field.

At the end of May he re-joined the 2nd Reserve Wellington Regiment only to receive a gunshot wound to his right foot in Étaples on 5th June 1918. He was admitted first to the no. 9 Australian Casualty Clearing Station, then no. 32 Special Hospital in France, before embarking on *St Andrews*, a hospital ship bound for England. His records state that his wounds were caused by shrapnel from an enemy shell while on active service but, curiously, also indicate that this was the first occasion he was wounded. Once in England, just five days after the injury occurred, he was admitted to the 1st NZ General Hospital at Brockenhurst, Hampshire, possibly for surgery to remove the shrapnel, and in August was admitted to NZ Convalescent Hospital in Hornchurch, London.

He was transferred to the first NZ Entrenching Battalion on 26 March 1918 and was posted to the 7th company the following month. For two weeks in June 1918, he was detached to the Lewis Gun School before rejoining the Battalion at the end of the month. His records indicate that he was killed in action on 31st August 1918. The entry is cancelled and states he was wounded for the third occasion. One has to wonder if his mother or brother were prematurely informed of his death.

He was attached to the NZ Infantry and General Base depot at Étaples in September 1918 and on 14th October he rejoined the Battalion. He was probably with this battalion when they stormed and conquered the French town of Le Quesnoy on 4th November 1918. This action has been verified by the Le Quesnoy Campaign research undertaken by the NZ Society of Genealogists as part of the development of New Zealand Liberation Museum.

Shortly after, on 8th November, he was admitted to the General Hospital in Étretat with influenza and a fortnight later was sent to the convalescent depot. He returned to the NZ Infantry and General Base depot in the middle of December 1918.

Although the war was declared over on 11th November 1918, he did not leave London until 25th January 1919, on the *Port of Melbourne*, possibly due to a shortage of available ships. He was discharged in NZ on 11th April 1919 on “termination of period of engagement”, having served a total of three years and four months overseas. His abridged Medical Board records show that he had “*pes cavus* and complains of aching with swelling of right foot on marching – worse when the boot is taken off”. The condition was assessed for pension purposes as being less than a 20% degree of disablement.

Andrew was an ordinary rank and file member of the NZ Army. He was one of many young Scots-born New Zealanders who experienced physically and psychologically challenging situations that changed their life forever. Conditions were often arduous, with lots of marching or heavy physical work, always facing the threat of being killed by snipers’ bullets, sleeping in rough conditions in close quarters with strangers and with no option but to follow instructions. Just how badly Andrew was affected I am not sure as, like many of his fellow soldiers, he never talked about it. When he returned to New Zealand he went back to being a labourer on farms around the area. At some stage he bought a house in Marton’s Milne Street, possibly with money saved during the war years. When William was badly injured in a fall from a horse and had to leave the house that went with the job, Andrew welcomed him and his family into his home until they bought a house in Bell Street. Andrew never married, but he was very good with William and Jeannie’s children and grandchildren. Their youngest daughter remembers him listening to her reading after school and sitting by the fire with the family in the evening.

Andrew was my great-uncle and I am the second daughter of William and Jeannie’s eldest son George Robertson. My sister and several of our cousins called him Uncle. As my grandfather died when I was three, he was like a grandfather to me. When we visited Grandma and other relatives on our biennial trips to Marton, he was usually around helping her or entertaining us. He taught me to play Euchre and he fed us children not lollies (sweets) but Throaties! He was a man of few words, but a caring, loving member of our extended family.

At some stage he went to live in the Returned Services Association home in Levin for a while but he also boarded with my grandma. He died, aged 82, on 6th January 1963 in Whanganui Hospital. At his request his body was cremated and his ashes are in Aramoho Cemetery, Whanganui. He left what money he had in equal parts to his sister-in-law, Jeannie Robertson, and her three youngest children.

It is worth noting that the recently-established Liberation Museum in Le Quesnoy in France (see link below) is of particular interest. Much of set up and layout was done by Weta Workshops who worked on Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* movies as well as major WW1 and WW2 displays in Wellington and the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre, in Blenheim (both NZ) – home to rare WW1 and WW2 aircraft brought to life through stunning displays and stories of the people behind them. See <https://www.omaka.org.nz>

Yvonne Milbank, New Zealand

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Graham Robertson's Mystery Object Quiz

Our mystery quiz has “gone large” this time with a wonderful selection of kitchen objects to fit in with our food stories.



Timeless tools



How many of them do you recognise? Guess what they are and check your answers at the end of this issue.

Photos: Graham Robertson; Graphic design: Steve Edwards



10



11



12

How many of these vintage household utensils can you identify?



13

14



15



16

17



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Yvonne Milbank, New Zealand

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Lost at Sea: Recorded in St Machar's Cathedral Kirkyard

In the Kirkyard of St Machar's Cathedral 62 men and women are commemorated who were lost or otherwise died at sea. Their stories are now largely lost to history but some can still be told. But even those who are now anonymous reflect the history of the 18th and 19th century. There are numerous references to deaths on voyages to and from the Empire: “died at sea on the way to Bengal”, “drowned at Miramichi” (Canada), “drowned off Cape Horn” and many more. Others reflect the local merchant and fishing fleets: “drowned in Aberdeen Harbour”, “drowned in the River Thames”; two are recorded as having drowned off Archangel in separate incidents two years apart, and so on. I have been able to track down stories of 21 so far – and it is an ongoing project. The numbers refer to gravestones in the Churchyard, as listed in the Society's MI booklet *The Kirkyard of St Machar* (AA090).

E144: James Henderson, master of the *Caledonia* and George Henderson, mate of the *Caledonia*, the sons of Alexander Henderson, salmon fisherman at the Bridge of Don were lost at the Bay of Nigg in February 1815. The *Bristol Mirror*, Saturday 11th February 1815, carried a letter, dated Aberdeen 28th January, which gave a graphic description of the loss of the *Caledonia* which had left Sunderland with a cargo of coal:

On Thursday last, after a very intense frost, a thaw commenced with a gale from the ESE which, in the course of the night and yesterday increased to extreme violence, occasioning the most tremendous seas on this coast we have witnessed for many years. Three unfortunate vessels were seen yesterday forenoon, when two of them, a brig and

a schooner appeared standing to the southward; but, from the strong flood-tide were carried near the Girdleness when it was too evident their situation was extremely critical and perilous. The brig [*Caledonia*]... before one p.m. stood for harbour and for some time a hope was entertained for her being able to gain port with safety but this was most unhappily frustrated by the awful catastrophe which the many assembled anxious spectators with painful and agonised feelings, soon witnessed; for in a few minutes the vessel, in hauling to the northward, was struck on the broadside by a tremendous wave, which, breaking over her as high as the tops, threw her on broadside with the topsails in the water. The vessel, after being thus for some time overwhelmed, again righted, when the sails to appearance torn and flying loose, owing to the sheets giving way, she was no longer manageable and lay until hit by the succeeding wave, she was engulfed with all on board in the merciless ocean.

That same night the two other vessels were wrecked at Girdleness, the Smack *Thames* of Aberdeen and the schooner *Providence* whose master, Captain Findlay, was the only survivor from all three ships. A few days later the wreck of another ship the *Betsey* came ashore at the Bay of Nigg.

D119: John Hogg is recorded as a shipmaster and owner in Aberdeen, and his son James Hogg was a shipmaster at Peterhead. John drowned in the *Thames* in 1832 and was buried in St George's in the East Cemetery, London while James "drowned at sea" on a date as yet unknown and under what circumstances I have not been able to discover.

In 1832 a vessel named *Alert* under the command of Hogg was engaged in trade between Peterhead and Stettin in Poland with cargoes of barrels of herring and it would be reasonable to assume that this is the above John Hogg. On 1st November the *Alert* was bound for London with a cargo of staves and landed at Gravesend near London on 10th November 1832 with Hogg named as master. I have been unable to find reports of his death and unfortunately there were several vessels with the name *Alert* and it has been difficult to trace the movement of Hogg's vessel from Gravesend but certainly none named *Alert* sailed with anyone named Hogg as master. An *Alert*, commanded by a Mr Edward was recorded at Port Gordon, Morayshire on 16th November. Could this be the same ship?

G71: In July 1851 the *Press & Journal* carried a report from the master of the brig *Agnes* that William Peterkin the mate, aged 42, lost his life when he fell overboard at 4 o'clock in the morning on 28th May while just off Archangel. The report noted that "the deceased has left a widow unprovided for". His wife, Marion Fraser Will, died in 1897. His gravestone records that they also had a son, William Tully Leslie who would have been about a year old when his father was lost.

C26: John Smith, the adopted son of William McIntosh, a sailmaker in Aberdeen and his wife, Catherine Marr, and their son, James McIntosh, were lost at sea in 1858. John was master of the *Pakenham* and James was First Officer. In December 1857 the *Pakenham* sailed from Bombay (Mumbai today) bound for Kooria Moorla (Khuriya Muriya) in the Arabian Sea just off Oman. In February 1858 she is reported to have been there for 21 days, as yet without a cargo. She seems to have hung about for some time, and it wasn't until March that it was reported that she was almost fully-loaded with 850 tons of Kooria Moorla guano. In late October she put in at Fayal (Faial Island) in the Azores bound for Stockton, where Smith reported that the *Pakenham* was leaky and short of provisions. The next day she



*An unusual aerial view of
St Machar's Cathedral, taken in 1937
Photo: Sandy Riddell*

proceeded without survey, the master not wishing to have her repaired there. Was this a fatal error? I have been unable to find any further reference to the vessel but the monumental inscription in St Machar's reads that both were drowned at sea in November 1858 and so I can only assume that the ship foundered somewhere between Fayal and Stockton. John Smith was 36 years old and James McIntosh was just 22.

B72 and G182: Two gravestones record a tragedy which took place on the Goodwin Sands off the coast of Kent in March 1862 but oddly both would appear to carry the same error. Robert Leslie (B72), credited with being master of the brig *Piazina*, and Margaret Topping (G182) are reported being lost on the same vessel. I could find no record of the *Piazina* but further research revealed that Captain Leslie was lost with the foundering of the brig *Paisano* on the Sands in March 1862. I found no trace of Margaret Topping but we must assume that she was also on the *Paisano* which suffered further indignity by being called the *Poisano* or *Paisand* in different newspaper reports.

On 22nd March the supposed loss of a large outward-bound vessel on the Goodwin Sands was reported. A heavy gale and snowstorm from the north and east raged during the whole of Thursday night. On Friday a large wreck was discovered by some luggers. The boatmen cruised around in the hope of picking up something which might afford a clue as to the identity of the ship but because of the heavy sea running, they were compelled to bear away and when they left, only the lower masts and the yard were showing and there was little doubt that every soul aboard had perished. On the following Monday a boat was picked up with "Glasgow" inscribed but the name of the ship was illegible. On Tuesday, the ship was at last identified when the lugger *Florence Nightingale* brought in part of a mainsail painted blue with a small portion of a mainsail marked *Paisano*. Later a chest was picked up containing women's clothing and some letters in a writing book. One of the letters was dated Glasgow 26th February and signed John Proudfoot: another was dated Antwerp on the same date and signed Louis de Mary. Both were addressed to Captain Leslie of the brig *Paisano* of Glasgow. A silver watch was also recovered from a cabin. Why were the letters to Captain Leslie in a chest containing woman's clothing? Was it Margaret Toppings chest? Is there a connection between Margaret and Robert? I suspect it will remain a mystery.

Robert Leslie was 35 years old, the son of William Leslie a shoemaker in King Street Road and his wife Catherine Gillan. Margaret Topping was 24 years old and daughter of John Topping, whose other children also died at a young age – George aged 14 in 1860, Frederick in 1863 aged 12, Thomas who died in Japan in 1873 aged 27, and Agnes aged 31 in 1875. The *Paisano* had sailed from Antwerp for the Clyde on 19th March 1862 with a cargo of sugar.

E13: The *Edinburgh Evening News* 22nd July 1874 tells us of the death of Charles Stephen: "Fatal Accident at sea. The master of the barque *Peri* reports a fatal occurrence on board his vessel. On 29th April last, Charles Stephen, a carpenter, supposed to have belonged to Aberdeen, while engaged in repairing a bloc, fell from the foretopsail to the deck. He died shortly afterwards from the injuries he received". The *Peri* of Leith was *en route* from Calcutta to Dundee. Interestingly, an uncle, also called Charles died at sea in 1812 on passage home from St Iago de Cuba,

A50: Perhaps the most poignant memorial is that of William Morison, aged 18, drowned off Quebec on 4th June 1842 "attempting to save the life of a fellow creature". William was the son of John Morison, Shipmaster, and Jannet Leslie. Further tragedy struck the family when another son, Alexander, and his wife, Jane Ganson, drowned in the Cook Strait in New Zealand in 1884.

A50 and E180: On the 28th May 1884 the *Lastingham* sailed from London for Wellington, New Zealand, carrying goods and passengers. It was under the command of veteran captain Alexander Charles Morison who was one of the most experienced captains employed by the company and had sailed for the majority of his life. He was mainly involved with Chinese

shipping, usually accompanied by his wife Jane Ganson. It is said that he was forced back to sea when he lost all his savings in the collapse of the Glasgow Bank in 1878.

It was dark when the *Lastingham* reached Cook Strait, New Zealand, and by this time the weather was thick with rain and blowing such a gale the ship began to struggle. The storm quickly came upon them so fiercely that land was only visible from less than a mile in the distance. At nine o'clock a cry rang out that land was on the port bow. Captain Morison called for the sails to be cut away and for the next hour the ship sat uncontrolled in an attempt to wait out the storm. The crew and passengers grew even more concerned when the ship struck hard on Jackson's Head. For an hour the ship was forced upon the rocks, allowing the waves to wash virtually everything overboard. The lifeboats were smashed to pieces and slowly each mast went but some of the crew managed to scramble ashore. Once the final mast fell the ship pulled back out to sea and swung around broadside where she lay for a short while before sinking below the waves. The Captain was seen in his cabin, clutching his wife in their final moments. When they were last seen, the water was already up to their armpits and he was holding his wife above the waves. Alexander and Jane are commemorated on both the Morison family grave and that of the Ganson family.

G100: William Duncan was second engineer on board the *Corsica* when she ran aground on rocks off Cape Roca on the coast of Portugal on 11th October 1881 while on a voyage from London to Bombay, with the loss of 21 lives. A handful of survivors said that she sank within 10 minutes, having sailed on for about a mile after striking the rocks. A board of enquiry found that the Captain, James Robertson, was to blame for the wreck by altering course for Cape St Vincent too soon as he approached the rocks. One survivor, the steward Edward Savidge, said that he was asleep in his bunk when he was wakened by the shock of the ship striking the rocks. He went to the bridge where he found the Captain calm and self-possessed. The men were already trying to lower the lifeboat which appeared difficult to clear. Robertson shouted twice to try the other large boat but the crew persisted with the first which was large enough to carry all of them. Eventually the boat was lowered and 17 men boarded it, but they did not get clear and the boat capsized pitching them all into the sea. Five managed to get back in and rowed to the shore. One man was washed overboard and another died as they landed. William Duncan, son of William Duncan, Treasurer of Police, and Mary Nisbet was 58 when he died. He was married to Mary Matthew, daughter of George Matthew, farmer, and Ann Henderson.

C142: George Shepherd, shipmaster, is recorded as "lost at sea" in 1883, aged 36 years. He was Captain of the *Resolute*, a vessel of some 1072 tons, owned by the Aberdeen firm of Donaldson & Rose. For several years she was engaged in trading in Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Peru from London, Liverpool and Glasgow and latterly from continental ports to the United States often with a cargo of refined petroleum oil. On 22nd January 1883 the *Resolute* sailed from New York bound for Bremen and was last reported in early February at 42°N and 56°W, having made good progress, but nothing is known after that. There were reports of an unusual number of icebergs for the time of the year but the most likely explanation for her disappearance was the violent storms which struck the North Atlantic on 12th and 13th February. Other vessels reported "furious weather", "terrific squalls", "wind of hurricane force" and "mountainous seas". Coincidentally a second vessel named *Resolute*, a whaler, was forced to take shelter from this same storm in Kirkwall Bay.

Captain Shepherd is reported to have been left an orphan at an early age and joined Donaldson & Rose as an apprentice, rising through the grades with the same company to become shipmaster. He married Mary A. Dunn, daughter of William Dunn, a salmon fisher, on 14th March 1877 in Brussels. They had three children. One of them, William D. Shepherd, drowned accidentally in 1890, aged 8, and so was just a year old when the *Resolute* was lost. The monument in St Machar's also records that Mary died just two years after her husband in 1885, aged 32. Also recorded is Isabella Shepherd, who died in 1878 aged 3.

G53: On 30th March 1889 it was reported that two boats with the name *Bongollyun*, London, painted on them had been washed ashore in Cemlyn Bay on Anglesey. The *Bongollyun* had sailed on 27th from Liverpool bound for Iquique in Chile. The ship's master was George B. Webster, aged 51. No other wreckage or bodies seem to have been recovered but in May a Board of Trade inquiry into the loss, found that the master and pilot were justified in putting to sea, notwithstanding a storm warning. Some evidence pointed to a collision, with wreckage from two vessels having come ashore on the Anglesey coast. On the other hand the *Bongollyun* may have failed to clear land; the court could only arrive at a conjectural conclusion. Webster had commanded the ship



St Machar's Cathedral

Photo: Sandy Riddell

for some years, sailing regularly from Liverpool in the trans-Atlantic trade. His memorial in St Machar's is another which contains an error, spelling the ship's name as *Bongolluyan*. It's another warning to researchers not to trust the accuracy of everything they find.

C60: John Wight Philip, 22, of 12 Urquhart Road, Aberdeen was an engineer aboard the SS *Coanza* when he died as a result of an accident at Akassa in Nigeria on 1st November 1891. He was the son of George Philip, a joiner and house agent, and his wife Helen. John was a twin, his brother having died at just 5 months old. The *Coanza*, a 1,518 ton passenger ship built in Govan, later ran aground and was wrecked on Bayak Rock, Baujah Reef near Sinou, Senegal. She was *en route* to West Africa from Hamburg in 1893.

E111: Perhaps not surprisingly, there are several examples of tragedy at sea striking the same family more than once, as seafaring often ran "in the family". George Rennie, aged 19, perished aboard the *Columbo* in May 1851 according to the grave inscription in the Kirkyard but I can find no details of how he died. He was buried in Colombo. His brother, John Rennie, drowned in Aberdeen Harbour on New Year's Day 1869 but it might be disrespectful to speculate on the circumstances. It is interesting to note that the *Columbo* was wrecked off the coast of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) during a storm whilst carrying a "cargo of Chinese coolies". Over a hundred lives, comprising men, women and children, were lost.

E200: Andrew B. Duncan, aged 30, 12 Castle Terrace, Aberdeen was chief engineer on the SS *Burswell* when she sailed from South Shields on 5th December 1885, bound for Genoa with a cargo of 2,118 tons of coal of which 600 was for bunker use. The *Burswell* was an iron steamship built in 1878 and was of 1,860 gross tonnage. She was taken by the pilot as far as Dover where he left her on 6th and that was the last that was ever seen of her or her crew of 28. There was a report that she had put into Malaga for repairs but this proved to be erroneous. Another vessel also bound for Genoa, which was passing through the Bay of Biscay at the time when the *Burswell* would have been expected there, reported severe weather causing substantial damage. A court of enquiry decided that the *Burswell* was perfectly seaworthy and not overladen, concluding that she may have sunk in the severe gales which swept across the Gulf of Lyon on the 18th and 19th December.

G142: On 11th November 1874, the Aberdeen-registered SS *Bride* left Alexandria bound for Hull with one passenger and 1,173 tons of cotton seeds. Amongst the crew was James Prosser, aged 39. The *Bride* put in at Malta on the 25th and passed Gibraltar on 6th December. She was never heard of again.

Sources

<http://www.theprow.org.nz/yourstory/the-wreck-of-the-lastingham-1884>

<https://www.familytreehq.com/blog>

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>

<https://www.wrecksite.eu>

Sandy Riddell, Aberdeen

—oOo—

Echoes of the Past: Aberdeen's Silent Sanctuaries

I'd like to share information about a project called Echoes of the Past: Aberdeen's Silent Sanctuaries. To me, Aberdeen's cemeteries are far more than resting places. They are time capsules, where history, remembrance, and nature intertwine, speaking in hushed but eloquent tones.

Each of Aberdeen's varied cemeteries has its own presence and I've defined three core photographic perspectives for the final piece. First, the wide-angle context shot establishes the scene, offering a sense of how the cemetery sits within the landscape, whether nestled within the city or standing in quiet communion with nature. It absorbs the mood of the place, that distinct feeling that lingers in the air. Second, the intimate detail shot draws the eye to what often goes unnoticed: softened inscriptions worn by time, ivy tenaciously gripping cold stone, moss weaving delicate patterns in the smallest of cracks. These visual fragments carry profound emotional weight, each an unspoken story of resilience and remembrance.

Third, the black-and-white mood shot strips away colour to distil the essence of the place, an interplay of light and shadow, a contemplation on history's weight. Monochrome enhances the timelessness, evoking a sense of quiet reflection. And then, the unexpected. Every cemetery holds surprises or a feature that demands attention. A towering entrance gate hints at countless lives passing through; a dramatic statue set against a shifting sky, an ornately carved mausoleum, or a gravestone with an unusual form all spark curiosity. These are the unplanned elements that shape each location's unique narrative.



Photo: Alex Giles



St Clement's kirkyard

Photo: Alex Giles

Aberdeen's historic city cemeteries will be my first focus: St Nicholas Kirkyard, where centuries of the city's inhabitants lie in quiet repose; Grove Cemetery, with its more secluded atmosphere; and the lesser known but equally compelling ones like Nellfield Cemetery. I've already encountered names and histories in the Society's journals that resonate with the silent stones. Echoes of the Past, is more than a photographic project, it's an engagement with Aberdeen's history, a chance to listen to the quiet voices of the past. It's about finding beauty in time's imperfections, honouring the legacies etched into the city's sacred spaces.

For those interested in following its progress, I'll be sharing updates and selected images from each site on my website. My hope is that Echoes of the Past invites others to see familiar landscapes anew, and perhaps to hear the faint yet enduring echoes of the lives that have shaped our community. Go to <https://viewfinderchronicles.com/photography-projects> to find my photo-essays and a monthly newsletter.

Alexander Giles, Aberdeen

SOCIETY MEETINGS AND REPORTS

Aberdeen Report

Bruce Durie, “Demystifying Heraldry”

20th September 2025

Bruce Durie got our new season off to a flying start, promising that we’d soon be able to sort our dexters from our sinisters and our Gules from our Argent. There are indeed a great many coats of arms on buildings and monuments round any city centre, and it was fascinating to learn how much these images can tell us. Councils, corporations and societies like our own can all apply to have coats of arms, reflecting their activities and interests.

Contrary to popular understanding, heraldry did not start with the Norman conquest but was the result of changes in armour a couple of generations later, in Flanders. When the closed “pot helmet” was introduced to protect a soldier’s face, there was no way to identify who the combatant was except by a bold design on the linen surcoat worn over the armour. Soon shields, pennants and coloured livery for the horses were all used to identify different individuals by distinctive use of shapes and colours. Pre-existing messengers called heralds collected descriptions of the colours and images used by named individuals so that people knew who the participants were in a battle or jousting match. The descriptions, or blazons, were eventually collected into reference catalogues or “Armorial”. This was regularised in Scotland in 1672 through the introduction of a Public Register of Arms in Scotland, maintained to this day at New Register House (home of Scotland’s People).

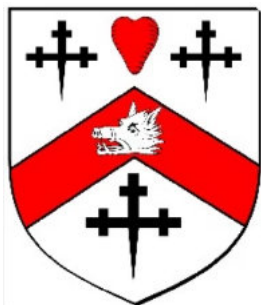
Unlike in England, Scots heraldry is governed by the Statute Law of Scotland, under the charge of a judge – the Lord Lyon King of Arms. This prestigious office dates back to at least the time of King Robert Bruce. The present Lord Lyon is the Reverend Canon Dr Joseph Morrow, a keen supporter of the work of Scotland’s family history societies and an expert on Episcopal Church history. All petitions (applications) for arms must be approved by the Lord Lyon. It is illegal to use arms without permission, to use someone else’s arms or to create a fake set of arms. Infringements are punishable by fines of £100 per day and ultimately by imprisonment. Finding a set of arms on the internet and putting them on your house or products could result in a visit from the Dingers Doon, the official enforcers who will confiscate any items showing the arms and who will literally break down any building works with the wrongful arms on them.



Bruce cited the example of the brewing company that had 48,000 cans of lager confiscated because they had the Scottish Standard printed on them. More recently Donald Trump ran into bother when he wanted to use a Trump set of arms on his Scottish golf courses. The good news is that the Lyon Court will happily work with individuals and agencies to create an appropriate set of arms. Trump can’t get a Scottish coat of Arms as he wasn’t born here and doesn’t live here but a coat of arms was created for his Trump International Golf Club Scotland Ltd. The motto he chose was *Numquam Concedere* (Never concede) but in fact there was no way round the legislation relating to Scottish arms.

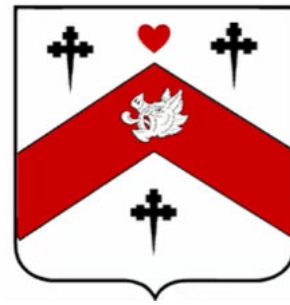


Perhaps surprisingly, there is no such thing as a family coat of arms in Scotland. A coat of arms belongs to an individual. On death, an individual’s coat of arms may pass by inheritance to their eldest son or failing sons, the eldest daughter. Other family members can apply to have a “differenced” coat of arms which will show their link to the original holder. For example, a second son will have arms with a gold bordure (border). The only correct and legal heraldic device that can be used by a non-armiger (arms-bearer) is the strap-and-buckle crest badge.



Brooches and kiltpins in this form are commonly sold in the tartan shops.

Bruce led us through the anatomy of a coat of arms, teaching us how to read the different elements in a coat of arms and its accompanying blazon. The blazon is like a compact equation that will always generate effectively the same resulting set of arms, even if the details look a little different. Thus the



wording “Argent on a chevron Gules between three cross crosslets fitchee Sable a boar’s head of the First, in the middle a chief point a man’s heart of the Second” neatly explains to the heraldist that there will be a red chevron on a white background, with three black crosses of a particular design, a boar’s head in white with a red heart. It will be immediately identifiable as the arms of Kennedy of Girvan Mains, a set of arms that was first recorded (matriculated) in 1672.

Bruce often deals with enquiries from antique collectors who believe that a coat of arms on an object may indicate important or unusual provenance and he is able to “translate” the symbols in the arms to confirm the attribution or more often to disprove it. On the other hand, these heraldic summaries can often provide the clues necessary for breaking down a brick wall. Having whetted our appetites, he told us how to search for arms by going to the legal records section of the Scotland’s People website. To submit an application for arms through the Lyon Court, go to <https://courtofthelordlyon.scot/coats%20of%20arms.htm>.

All images by kind permission of Bruce Durie.

Sources

Durie, Bruce, *Scottish Genealogy* (The History Press, 2012)

Durie, Bruce, *Documents for Genealogy & Local History* (The History Press, 2013)

Paul, James Balfour, Lyon King of Arms, *An Ordinary of Arms Contained in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland* (1893 and 1902–03), downloadable as a searchable PDF at:

<http://ia600408.us.archive.org/7/items/ordinaryofarmsco00paul/ordinaryofarmsco00paul.pdf>

Stevenson, J.H., *Heraldry in Scotland* (1914) on <http://www.bruce-durie.co.uk/books.html>

Journal Team

Now here’s at test. Using the information that Bruce has provided, what coat of arms is being described in this blazon. The answer will appear at the end of this issue.

Per pale Argent and Gules, an oak tree eradicated between two acorns slipped and leaved all counterchanged.

—oOo—

Moray/Banff Group Report

Our first meeting after our short summer break was held on 6th September, on Zoom, with our usual start-of-the-new-season topic of “Bring Along a Brick Wall”. Some members had submitted their brick wall queries in advance while others had them lined up on the day. Over forty members took part and it was, as always, interesting and encouraging to see the range of expertise as we all tried to help with ideas and potential solutions.

We had been hoping to be back in Elgin Library for a face-to-face meeting in October after our long wait for the meeting rooms to re-open after the renovations. However, although the Library website was promising “September/October” for this new start, it eventually became clear that our October meeting on “What I’m working on just now” would be online. In order to avoid a clash with the excellent Banffshire Field Conference, to which

many of our local members were signed up, we switched our meeting to 11th October, rather than our usual first-Saturday-of-the-month. As the darker evenings close in family history research starts to take over again and it seemed a good idea to compare notes on where our research is heading and just what we are setting out to do. It is also a chance to share ideas, to pick up some tips and to enjoy the enthusiasm of fellow researchers.

We are still in limbo as far as our November meeting is concerned. Although the Library is “hopeful” that rooms could be available, “this could change”, so although our meeting is on the website for 1st November, the venue and topic are still to be confirmed.

We will be having our usual Christmas Lunch at Threaplands Garden Centre and we are also planning a Zoom meeting on the first Saturday in December with a seasonal theme: “Christmas is coming. If you could invite just three of your ancestors to your Christmas lunch who would you invite and what question would you want to ask each of them?” It will be interesting to hear the results!

moray.banff@anesfhs.org.uk

Mary Evans, Elgin

—oOo—

Edinburgh Group

Jill Williams, “Researching Irish Ancestors: the Same but Different”

13th September, 2025

Jill Williams, a Fellow of the Irish Genealogical Research Society (IGRS), made a welcome return to our Society and gave a wide-ranging talk on how Irish research is “the same but different”. However, problems delayed the start of our hybrid meeting and disappointed our online audience, to whom we apologise again. Jill had kindly supplied a very thorough handout which has been e-mailed to all who tried to attend.

Many of the Irish sources are similar to Scotland’s (parish registers, civil registration, census (1841–1911), Poor Law, probate/confirmation, taxes, newspapers, military records) but there are often unexpected differences in organisation and accessibility. Divergences can be based on history and geography; culture and language; the prevalence of religious nonconformity; the start dates, cost and even existence of records; names; land records; the administration of Poor Relief; and the high incidence of emigration.

Key dates in Ireland’s chequered history affected the existence or accessibility of records: the Plantation of Ulster from 1609; the Penal Laws of the 1690s; the 1800 Act of Union; Catholic emancipation (1829); the Great Hunger (1845–52); Dublin’s 1916 Easter Rising; and the events of 1919–21 such as the intensified war of independence; partition; the Anglo-Irish Treaty) and June 1922 to May 1923 (civil war and the creation of the Irish Free State).

On 30th June 1922, a large explosion destroyed Dublin’s Four Courts. Lost in the fire were: the decennial censuses of 1821–51; over 50% of Established Church registers; most wills and testamentary records; and all pre-1900 legal court documents and local government documents.

So where do you start? It helps to know the land and administrative divisions: The island of Ireland consists of 32 **counties** grouped into four **provinces**: Munster in the south-west (6 counties), Leinster in the east (12 counties), Connacht in the west (5 counties) and Ulster in the north-east (9 counties). Since 1921, six of Ulster’s counties have formed the country of Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. The other 26 counties form the Republic of Ireland.

The next division is the **barony**, of which there are 273. Then comes the civil or church **parish**, of which there are nearly 2,000 (i.e. twice as many as in Scotland). Finally, there are

over 64,000 **townlands**. Overlapping with all the above, there are also Poor Law Union divisions and Superintendent Registrar Districts!

Ireland began recording personal information in 1821, but all censuses to 1851 perished in the 1922 fire, with very few surviving fragments. The 1861–91 census returns were later destroyed by civil servants in a botched attempt to keep up with England. Ireland had no enumerators' transcript books or any other copies of the information from these censuses.

The 1901 and 1911 censuses survive and are free to view at <https://nationalarchives.ie>. Go to <https://census.militaryarchives.ie> for other census-like materials such as a November 1922 Free State military census and records in support of claims for an Old Age Pension when this was introduced in 1908.

The population of Ireland was under 3 million in 1740, and climbed steadily to above 8 million by 1840. The Great Hunger caused starvation, emigration and a sharp drop of 1 million in 10 years and another 1 million by 1860. The decline continued until the 1930s, bottoming out at 4 million. Since then, it has risen to nearly 5½ million in the Republic, plus 1½ million in Northern Ireland, thereby matching the all-Ireland level around 1850.

In Scotland in 1851, Irish-born residents comprised 18.9% of the population in Dundee, 18.2% in Glasgow and 12.7% in Paisley. In 1871, these figures had dropped to 11.9% in Dundee, 14.3% in Glasgow and 9.8% in Paisley.

Irish civil registration began on 1st January 1864. Records available online include: births 1864–1924; marriages 1864–1949 (also non-Roman Catholic marriages from 1845); deaths 1871–1974. There are some all-Ireland records from before 1922, but from 1922 they exist only for Northern Ireland, available at <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk> (GRONI online). You can find a free index at <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie> and through the Family Search website at <https://www.familysearch.org>. You can obtain full certificates from for the Republic here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/campaigns/general-register-office> and go to GRONI for certificates for Northern Ireland.

We saw an example of a civil certificate of a 1912 marriage in a Catholic church in Cork. It closely resembled an English marriage certificate of the period, whereas Catholic church certificates rarely recorded the names of the spouses' fathers at this time.

Naming patterns, and spellings/recordings of names, could be highly variable. An example was Quaid/Quaide/McQuaid; and watch out for the prefixes Mc/Mac or O'/O suddenly appearing in later records when there was no pattern in the family in earlier records.

If looking for wills, then probate/confirmation records are ecclesiastical before 1858, then civil from 1858.

The Church of Ireland had almost 1,000 parishes, but over 50% of pre-1870 records are lost. In the 1911 Irish census, the population was 83% Roman Catholic, 13% Church of Ireland, 2% Presbyterian or Methodist, and 2% Quaker, Jewish or Huguenot. Records are still held for all of the above: see <https://registers.nli.ie>.

You can find a colour-coded resource of what survives, where it is, information on copies, transcripts and online indexes and a detailed list (2016) of Church of Ireland registers at: www.ireland.anglican.org/news/6518/a-colourcoded-resource-of-what.

Many record sets survive intact, for example: land valuation records; tax records (Griffith's Valuation 1847–64: <https://www.askaboutireland.ie>); tithe applotment records (1823–37); the Convert Rolls (1703–1808). See Irish Genealogical Research Society of London (IGRS) at <https://www.irishancestors.ie>; and newspapers. Many newspapers in the USA, Canada, Australia and Argentina also carried news and announcements from back home. Irish records held outside Ireland (mainly in London) include military, naval, coastguard, Royal Irish Constabulary, railway employment 1833–1921 and many others. A collection of Irish wills is also held in the USA.

For military service records, see these sites:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

<https://www.fold3.com> (pay to view)

<https://www.militaryarchives.ie>

<http://irishamericancivilwar.com>

<https://www.coastguardsofyesteryear.org/news.php>

The Registry of Deeds, held in Dublin, exists intact from 1709: see the indexing project at www.irishdeedsindex.net.

Additional Sources

Grenham, John. *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, 5th edn (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2019). <https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com>: many useful pages, links and explanations.

<https://www.facebook.com/IrishGenealogicalResearchSociety>: regular news updates.

<https://thecore.com/seanruad> if you know the townland but aren't sure of the civil parish, Poor Law Union, barony, county etc.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk> (accessible via FindMyPast). These pay-to-view sites now have over 250 Irish titles; and see <http://www.irishnewsarchive.com> (paid site; which often offers discounts around St Patrick's Day) for earlier Irish newspapers, with some overlap.

<https://www.libraryireland.com>.

<https://www.swilson.info/dirdb.php> a database linking to historic directories of Ireland.

<https://www.irishancestors.ie/unique-resources>.

Pay-to-view sites hold a great deal of information and include Ancestry's Irish collection as well as <https://www.rootsireland.ie> and <https://www.findmypast.ie>.

edinburgh@anesfhs.org.uk

Ivor Normand, Edinburgh

—oOo—

Glasgow Group

Members' Day: Remembering your relatives' experiences in WWII

27th September 2025

Twice a year the Glasgow Group meets in person to socialise and share our North-East family history. These meetings are most enjoyable, and everyone is made very welcome. As we met in-person, we had the additional fun of Graham's intriguing Scottish Counties Anagram quiz and the delicious generosity of Valaine's cupcakes.

The theme of the meeting was WW2 in recognition of the 80th anniversary of the end of that war. There was an opportunity to share artefacts, personal memories and family stories which prompted much discussion. Historical facts are well documented but can be dull and dry whereas discovering how our people were affected by events breathes life into those facts and triggers reflection and emotions that range from sadness to hilarity. Woven through it all there was lots to learn and many ideas for research.

We are fortunate to have members who were able to share first-hand experiences, albeit viewed through very young eyes. For country people there was darkness with frightening unexplained sounds, having to milk cows in the open air to avoid milking parlour lights attracting bombers, or racing out to remove a crashed hot air balloon to prevent cattle choking on the wires. This was surely a tad less glamorous than the later task of using the salvaged silk to make dainty garments. The changing landscape in the built up areas, caused by bomb damage and the removal of garden railings as part of the drive to collect metal,

followed by the slowness to rebuild, all made an impression on the young town people. Memories of sweetie rationing led to a general discussion about how our families navigated rationing with good housekeeping and enterprising, sometimes dodgy, practices to supplement food and goods. The longed-for situation where food was “off the ration” could have a downside when best clothes became a bit nipit!

Due to the possibility of combat, conscription was often viewed with dread. But for others it was an opportunity. Indeed, some who were physically exempt or engaged in a reserved occupation jumped through hoops to serve. The fire service featured often. We heard that for conscientious objectors, whose moral principals were opposed to combat, the fire service was an occupation where our ancestors could preserve lives and property. One member’s father was serving in the military fire service and was delighted to be sent abroad. They came upon a station recently abandoned by the Nazis and found a store packed with new helmets. Everyone chose one and took home a souvenir. Father “liberated” one with a narrow rim and it was only years later when he was home he discovered it was a Nazi fire-fighter’s helmet, the perfect companion piece to his own allied forces fire helmet. It was a great story and very well told.

A recurring theme was the number of people who were away from home. Serving men and women were posted all over the UK and abroad, but some who dreamed of far-flung, exotic places found themselves ten miles from home! Allotted occupations could also excite or disappoint. Despite their best efforts, “land girls” from the city often failed to match the capable standards of their rural peers. The story of a saddler sent to the mounted rifles, who were no longer mounted raised much wry laughter.

The mixed blessing of inherited photograph collections was discussed. The heartbreak of not knowing the significance of un-named people and places was a direct contrast to the delight of an annotated collection with matching diary.

Except for our primary witnesses, most of us have gathered our knowledge from family oral histories and possessions. Being curators of this legacy gives us a huge responsibility to ensure future generations can benefit as we have done. Some members have got to grips with this, but a good few of us left the meeting resolving to get busy putting our archives in good order. Thoughts naturally drift on to curating one’s own life. Recollections may vary but it’s an opportunity to write your “own truth”.

Kate Clark, Glasgow

—oOo—

London Group

February saw group member Nick Hide, a genealogist and historical researcher, give a talk on Clan Davidson (<https://clandavidson.org.uk>). Many of our group have Davidson connections so found it very informative. We heard diverse stories including information about the Davidson window in Tarves Kirk; hidden histories in Lonmay, Inch and Garioch; why the Fiji police attended the coronation in 1902; and Byron’s relationship with the Davidsons of Cairnbogie. Perhaps most mysterious was James D.G. Davidson of Tarland – Tinker, Sailor, Shepherd, or Spy?

The Davidsons come from all over the North-East and many were butchers, whalers, sailors, shipmasters, fishers and land workers, while some were involved with the Salvation Army and others with Glendronach distillery. Society members who couldn’t attend the talk in person contacted me with information and questions for Nick, who has since responded and found some good connections as a result. Thank you, Nick.

In May we met in person and the subject was “Family Finds”. Members shared photographs that solved a mystery or produced a bigger one; others told stories of what they had found...

or couldn't find. We tried to solve a few mysteries, such as that surrounding Flora Clark, born 1890 in Glasgow to ancestors from Aberdeenshire. Her father and grandfather proved tricky to follow and the mystery remains unsolved for now. The group spent a busy couple of hours swapping stories and offering suggestions as to the where, when and why.

The September meeting was a first for the London Group. For the very first time in our history we had a hybrid meeting. I have to admit I was nervous about this but all was well, or it was with 30 seconds to spare. I had managed to lock myself out of the Zoom account and I was the host for the meeting. It was a lesson learned: always make someone a co-host.

We welcomed 35 people online and ten in the hall all keen to hear from our guest speaker, a very weel-kent face within the Society. Helen Taylor took us through the various steps for sorting out your DNA once you have your results. Helen spoke for around 90 minutes with a mixture of presentation and Q&A. Nothing was too tricky for her to answer. Following the meeting, some members submitted further questions and queries for Helen who had said she would be happy to help anyone who needed it. Thank you, Helen.

Our next meeting is on Saturday 22nd November at 12:00 and is an in-person only meeting. But after our online success, we will be back with another hybrid session next year.

london@anesfhs.org.uk

Sheena-J Clark, London

—oOo—

Southern Ontario Group Report

Jamie Lees, “Left at the Wellgate: the Untold Story of Mary Petrie Smith”

20th September 2025

Our September meeting featured Jamie Lees: writer, designer, producer, and a director of the Scottish Studies Foundation board. Jamie has been deeply immersed in genealogy research for over 25 years. Her most recent work uncovered the hidden story of her great-grandmother, Mary Petrie Smith – a story that spans two continents, three generations, and one unforgettable act of silence.

Mary Petrie Smith was a complex woman who left Scotland in 1911, leaving behind her two children. An exhibition held in Dundee on 14th September 2024, the anniversary of Mary's departure, explored her life as an immigrant, bigamist, and survivor. Jamie emphasized the emotional journey of uncovering Mary's story, which was kept hidden for 114 years, and highlighted the community response to the exhibition, including a workshop where participants investigated Mary's mystery. The exhibition included visuals, expert talks, and personal artefacts, offering a broader historical context for Mary's life and leaving, and space for interpretation of her decision to leave her children. Jamie has told Mary's story without judgement, allowing each observer to make their own decision about how they feel about what they see.

Jamie introduced her grandparents, Adolph and Esther Lees, and explained that Esther had saved documents and photos that helped trace the family history. The discovery of a black notebook written by Mary, Esther's mother-in-law and Jamie's great-grandmother, revealed her birth name and Scottish heritage. Discrepancies in official records suggested Mary may have been hiding something about her past, and the posthumous discovery of Mary's personal notebook revealed that she had married William Clark in Dundee in 1909 and had



A panel from the “Left at the Wellgate” Exhibition in Dundee

Photo: Jamie Lees

two sons, John Douglas Clark (b. 1909) and Gordon McLeod Clark (b. 1910), before she left Scotland in 1911 and married Andrew Lees in Canada in 1912.

Jamie reviewed Dr Morgan Allen Campbell's work on 19th and 20th century Scottish women's mental health challenges, which led her to consider how context might have influenced Mary's actions. An overview of Dundee in 1911 highlighted social, political, and economic upheaval, including the suffragettes' census boycott and the city's jute mill workforce. Mary's story revealed personal struggles, including her husband's legal issues and their crowded living conditions. A letter from Eric Clark, a Dundee cousin with knowledge of the family history, revealed that Mary had abandoned her two young sons outside a pub in Dundee at the Wellgate. Jamie then faced the challenges of finding Mary's ship manifest and the details of her journey to Canada aboard the SS Laurentic.

Mary and Andrew Lees had three sons. The family moved frequently before settling in Kingston, Ontario. They ran a fishing lodge in La Macaza, Quebec, after Andrew's retirement. Despite her difficult past, including leaving her sons in Scotland, Mary found reconciliation and peace in her later years, ultimately returning to Scotland to live with her sister in 1968. She died there in 1971. Jamie's presentation concluded with reflections on the generational echoes of Mary's story and the enduring Presbyterian Covenant of forgiveness.

Jamie noted her plans for a book, a presentation at the Women's History Scotland Conference in 2026, and a theatrical production inspired by Mary's life. Jamie also discussed her ongoing research and plans to bring the exhibition to other Scottish cities, including Aberdeen. She invited the Zoom audience to sign up for a monthly newsletter at her website: <https://www.jank.ca/leftatthewellgateexhibition>. The audience expressed appreciation for the emotional and authentic presentation.

ontario@anesfhs.org.uk

Susan Brouwer, Rod Coates, David Joiner

—oOo—

Australia and New Zealand Group Report

Helen Taylor, "Using Ancestry DNA matches to find Common Ancestors"

6th September 2025

We had a large number of members and visitors logging in to watch Helen Taylor talk us through how to navigate the Ancestry DNA functions. Helen explained how you can use DNA matches to examine Shared matches and Common ancestors and potentially both to validate your existing tree and to extend your tree. Helen set us all homework to improve the quality of our Ancestry trees, which will keep us all very busy.

australia@anesfhs.org.uk

Robin Price, Australia

—oOo—

Library Report

Our library has a wide selection of books on food. Not recipe books, although some do contain recipes, but books about food, food as part of social history – books like *The Oral History of Aberdeen's Food* which was produced in association with Aberdeen City Council and based on interviews conducted throughout Aberdeen during 2005. The book contains many memories of school dinners, shopping, eating out, food businesses in Aberdeen, together with some of Aberdeen's traditional food and recipes.

Although *Recipes for War-time Cookery* contains recipes only, it is also a reflection of social history with its simple nutritious recipes making the best of what was available at the time. It was compiled by the principal teachers of domestic science in Fraserburgh and Peterhead

Academies and published by the *Buchan Observer* in 1940.

Annette Hope's *A Caledonian Feast* (Grafton, 1987) and Catherine Brown's *Broths to Bannocks: Cooking in Scotland 1690 to the Present Day* (John Murray, 1990) are also good examples of books about the history of food in Scotland, as is Catherine Brown's *Feeding Scotland* (National Museums of Scotland, 1996). These books frequently refer to F. Marian McNeil's *The Scots Kitchen: its Traditions and Lore with Old-Time Recipes* (Blackie, 1929) and this is a book well worth reading.

One of the more unusual books is *Onward and Upward: Extracts (1891–96) from the Magazine of the Onward and Upward Association founded by Lady Aberdeen for the Material, Mental and Moral Elevation of Women*, edited by James Drummond (Aberdeen University Press, 1983).

Lady Aberdeen was born Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks in 1857 in London. In 1877 she married the 7th Earl of Aberdeen, John Campbell Hamilton-Gordon, who later became the 1st Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair. Even before she married, she was very involved in social reform and in healthcare, horrifying her parents by her “rescue work” among young prostitutes in London. Her husband served as Governor General of Canada from 1893–98, and when they returned to Haddo House in Aberdeenshire she funded a local school and hospital. She also set up the Onward and Upward Association, which provided education and opportunity for servant girls. It became almost a forerunner of the Open University and spread throughout Scotland, with eight hundred girls and five hundred women who acted as teachers and mentors. The magazine itself is a mixture of household hints, moral aphorisms, economical recipes, improving stories. Lady Aberdeen's story is told in Lord and Lady Aberdeen's reminiscences, *We Twa*, published in 1925.

One of the sections in the magazine is called “What to do with the bitties” and I was particularly interested to find a familiar recipe there. When I make mince, I thicken it with oatmeal. The mince tastes good hot – with potatoes and mealie pudding – but also delicious cold. The oatmeal gives it a good consistency, and when cold it's very tasty spread on toast. This often raises eyebrows, but it's something both my husband's granny (west coast) and mine (east coast) have always served as a light meal, and here it is mentioned in the late nineteenth century as an economical way of using leftovers.

Mince and mealie is a recognised combination. Mealie puddings or mealie jimmies are a mixture of oatmeal, suet and finely chopped onions, seasoned and put into sausage skins, although nowadays the casings are usually artificial. Despite using only a few ingredients, their balance and the level of seasoning means that mealies are not all the same, and you get to know which butcher makes your favourite.



A commemorative card marking the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Lord and Lady Aberdeen in 1927.

Reproduced, with thanks to the Cromar History Group, from an article in Echoes of Cromar's Past, Issue 13 (2007), p. 16 by the late Dorothy Reid, a former ANESFHS member, .

In Sue Lawrence's *Taste Ye Back: Great Scots and the Food that Made Them* (Hachette Scotland, 2009), footballer Dennis Law recounts how when he visited Aberdeen, he always bought mealie puddings and rowies to take back home, something I know many exiled Aberdonians still do. Skirlie is another dish with the same ingredients of oatmeal, suet, finely chopped onions and seasoning, but the method of cooking is different. The ingredients are cooked in a pan and can be used as stuffing or as an accompaniment.

Oatmeal has always been an integral part of Scottish life and a staple of the Scots diet, and Wallace Lockhart in his *The Scots and their Oats* (Birlinn, 1997) traces the history of the oat crop over the centuries. In his life of Dr Johnson (1791) James Boswell writes: "Doctor Johnson proposed to define the word 'oats' thus: A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.' And I replied: 'Aye, and that's why England has such fine horses, and Scotland such fine people.'" We may not be dependent on oats nowadays, but we still use them a lot in cooking and baking – as well as mealie puddings and skirlie, other well-known dishes are porridge, herring in oatmeal, oatcakes, bannocks, beef olives with oatmeal stuffing, Atholl brose (a mixture of oatmeal, honey and whisky) and cranachan (a mixture of toasted oatmeal, cream, raspberries and honey).

You can't talk about food in North-East Scotland without mentioning rowies or butteries, a particular delicacy in this part of Scotland. My understanding is that "rowies" are Aberdeen and "butteries" are Aberdeenshire, but I'm prepared to be corrected on that one. And I have seen a report in the local paper in 1917 which talks about the "buttery rowie". With its ingredients of flour, salt, sugar, butter and lard, rowies have been described as similar to French croissants, but more delicious and slightly less healthy. In *Taste Ye Back*, author Alexander McCall Smith remembers a butterie and a mug of tea as being one of the most delicious things he has ever eaten – but to be fair that was in the context of coming off the Aberdeen boat at Lerwick in the early hours of the morning after a particularly bad journey. As for mealies, there is a basic recipe, but different bakers will use a different balance of ingredients, and most people will buy only from their favourite baker.

Cullen skink is another well-known Scottish dish. I know skink as a cheap cut of meat, the shin or shank of beef, often used to make soups or stews, but according to Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1808), "Scotch skink which is a pottage of strong nutriment, is made with the knees and sinews of beef, but long boiled," and F. Marian McNeil (1929) gives an 1826 recipe for "skink: an old Scots stew soup." Cullen skink is therefore presumably a "stew soup" or hearty soup but made with fish which was more readily available in the fishing communities than meat.

There are several variations of Cullen Skink out there, but the base ingredients always remain the same: smoked haddock, onions, potatoes and milk or cream. It is, or can be, a very cheap soup to make, but it's becoming increasingly popular nowadays on restaurant menus where it is generally much more expensive than other soups on offer. There is even a Cullen Skink World Championship with two categories, one for best Cullen skink, and one for Cullen skink "with a twist". Cullen skink recipes vary from one person to another, and one person making the same recipe never makes it the same way twice. The same is true of Scotch broth, another hearty, warming soup.

If you want traditional Scottish recipes, then booklets produced by the SWRI (Scottish Women's Rural Institutes) or as fundraisers by churches are often a good source. More recent books which are perhaps easier to get hold of are Liz Ashworth's *Teach the Bairns to Cook: Traditional Scottish Recipes for Beginners* (Scottish Children's Press, 1996) or Carol Wilson and Christopher Trotter's *A Taste of Scotland* (Lorenz Books, 2015) or Janet Murray's *With a Fine Feeling for Food* (Aberdeen University Press, 1972).

Everyone will have their own favourite recipes, and most handed down over the generations will have changed slightly over the years. Recipes can be adapted to taste or availability of

ingredients, and there is no “wrong” way of making something. Best of all of course is that preparing and tasting the food you ate as a child can trigger so many long-forgotten memories.

library@anesfhs.org.uk

Margie Mellis, Aberdeen

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tracing George Mitchell of Banff

My wife Kim’s family name is Mitchell. She and I had a great time in Scotland when we visited earlier this year in May. We flew into Inverness and spent some days exploring that area and going on various tours. One of the highlights was visiting the Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre. We discovered that Mitchells fought in the Battle of Culloden in 1746 in the second line of attack under Lord Ogilvy. We haven’t yet identified a direct link between those Mitchells and Kim’s family but the Mitchells who fought in that battle came from the same areas as Kim’s family, Banff and Dundee, Aberdeenshire.

We hired a car and met up with two of her cousins from Inverurie, a brother and sister, who took us to see the Banff and Macduff War Memorial which has Kim’s great uncle George Mitchell on it. He was killed in action in WWI in the Battle of Cambrai as part of the Gordon Highlanders Regiment. We visited the Battle of Cambrai Memorial in France earlier on our trip. Then we went to see the Mitchell Family Memorial in the King Edward Cemetery which contains the names and details of six family members. We stayed in Aberdeen for a night then caught the train to explore Edinburgh for five days, and included a visit to the WWI Memorial at Edinburgh Castle where George Mitchell is again listed: born in Inverkeithney Banffshire and killed in action on 2nd December 1917.

My wife and I have already done a lot of research on her family and she interviewed her parents and an uncle on the family history before they all passed away. We just haven’t pulled it all together yet into one solid research work. We will do so in the years to come.

Peter Bartley, Newcastle, NSW Australia

—oOo—

Superintendent George Ingram

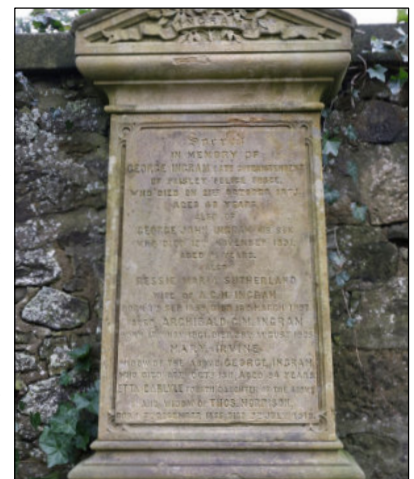
I was intrigued to see an item from Ann Swain, Australia, in Journal 173 (February 2025), p. 11, mentioning a gentleman bearing my family name, Ingram. Now, I realise that this is a common Aberdeenshire name, but as it was coupled with his wife’s maiden name, Irving/e, of which there are also a few in my lineage, I eagerly read the article. I was also surprised to see that Captain Ingram had married Mary Irving in Dalton, now in Dumfries and Galloway, which is not too far, as the crow flies, from my own home in Dalbeattie. He later moved to Langholm, one of the outlying towns to the east of the county before transferring to Paisley where he became Captain (or Superintendent) of Police of the Burgh.

This led me to doing some research of my own and I discovered that George is indeed a relative of mine, the son of my 2g-grandfather’s brother. It appears that he was not only a well-respected member of the police force and the community, but also introduced many changes in policing along with a high degree of professionalism. At a time when industrial and



*War Memorial
Macduff*

Photo: P.Bartley



George Ingram’s grave

Photo: Bobbie Jeal

manufacturing growth in Paisley were on the rise, with concurrent growth in the criminal cohort, Superintendent Ingram adopted many new techniques to bring about the reduction of crime in the region.

In October 1871, he died at the young age of 48 from typhus fever which was rife throughout the Burgh, leaving behind a widow and 11 children. I am very proud to add his story to my family history and would like to thank Ann Swain for drawing his name to my attention. One of the great benefits of the ANESFHS Journal is discovering stories and connections you wouldn't have otherwise come across.

Bobbie Jeal, Dalbeattie

—oOo—

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Obituary: John Alexander Cruickshank V.C. 1920–2025

Here at the King St Research Centre, we were all saddened to learn of the death of John Cruickshank at the incredible age of 105. He was the last survivor of the 114 people awarded the Victoria Cross for Gallantry in World War 2.

I remember coming across John when I returned to Aberdeen in 2000 and rejoined Rubislaw Church where I had worshipped from the age of five. He was a regular attender right up until the Church was forced to close in 2023.

He used to wear his medals on Remembrance Sunday and was always invited to sit at the front with the children on the carpet in front of him. He would tell the children about his medals and let them examine them. It was such a moving occasion. John rarely talked about his experiences during the war except to say he just felt he had to get on with things and do the best he could.

Edna Forbes remembers John coming into our King Street Research Centre just after his 100th birthday to renew his Society membership. We last saw John at the funeral of a former Rubislaw member earlier this year, when he walked into church and chatted to friends before the service started. He remembered names and commented on various bits of family news.

Anne Park met John at the Gordon Highlanders Museum where he used to go regularly to meet friends. He would sit in one of the rooms and chat to visitors. His first-hand reminiscences made him not only a font of knowledge but an entertaining and informative speaker... especially to young people.

After chatting with Anne one day, he announced that he would like to join ANESFHS to start researching his family history. At this point he was 89! Anne commented that he had perhaps left it a bit late. John obviously rose to the challenge. He was a member for ten years until he moved into sheltered accommodation.

It just goes to prove that Anne was wrong – it's NEVER too late!

Liz Foubister, Aberdeen

—oOo—

Obituary: Jimmy Forbes, Rettie

We were also sad to hear from Liz Middleton of the recent death of Jimmy Forbes whose stories about his Forbes ancestors at Rettie and Cowhythe, communicated via Bill Lemmon, have made a lively contribution to recent issues of this publication, notably in Journal 174 (May 2025), pp. 38–40.

Journal Team

Volunteer with ANESFHS:

If you have a few hours to spare, please consider joining one of our teams and lending a hand to keep the Society flourishing.

Finance Team: Accountant

Do you have experience in accountancy and book-keeping? Our Finance team is looking for someone to help:

- prepare the annual accounts
- liaise with auditors on finalisation and audit of accounts
- assist with the preparation and submission of the OSCR return
- monitor the balances in the Financial ledgers on a monthly basis and correct if necessary,
- provide back-up for the administration of the Sage procedures we have put in place

The Society uses the Sage cloud-based accountancy package. Please get in touch if you think you may be able to help. All enquiries should be directed treasurer@anesfhs.org.uk.

Research Centre

Why not share your knowledge and love of North-East genealogy?

If you live in or near Aberdeen, we are always looking for folk to help in the Research Centre.

If you live further afield, your nearest local area group will be glad of assistance to organise and publicise events.

For general enquiries about volunteering with the Society, please email chairman@anesfhs.org.uk.

Thank you!

—oOo—



Graphic design: Steve Edwards

Quiz Answers

Bruce Durie's Mystery Blazon Challenge



It was of course our very own coat of arms, awarded in 2013.

Our Letters Patent were presented to the Society by Elizabeth Roads who was, at that time, the Snawdown Herald and the first woman to be appointed as an Officer of Arms. See Journal 130 (February 2014), p. 2 for a report.

You can see the full illuminated parchment on display in the Research Centre.

The Society commissioned the distinguished heraldic artist Anthony Maxwell to create the design based on the official blazon, which reads:

Per pale Argent and Gules, an oak tree eradicated between two acorns slipped and leaved all counterchanged.

Graham Robertson's Mystery Utensils

1. whisk; 2. horn ladle; 3. cast iron cooking pot (from the Carron Iron Works in Falkirk); 4. skimmer; 5. extending toast fork; 6. tin openers; 7. wooden butter hands, for shaping butter into blocks; 8. toffee hammer (for "Coo Candy", made by McCowan's of Stenhousemuir and famous for the picture of a Highland cow on its packaging); 9. cheese sampler; 10. wooden bread board; 11. wooden brose bowl; 12. pewter "tappit hen" (that belonged to Robert Burns's friend, John Lapraik); 13. wooden egg cups and bone spoons; 14. commemorative teapot; 15. egg balance, used for grading eggs for sale; 16; jelly mould; 17. Cornish Ware storage jar.



—oOo—

KEY CONTACTS

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Key Contacts

100 Club	Sheila Symons	100club@anesfhs.org.uk
Advertising (Journal)	Ronald Leith	advert@anesfhs.org.uk
Ancestor charts	Helen Strachan and team	charts@anesfhs.org.uk
Centre manager	Barbara Lamb	Barbara.Lamb@anesfhs.org.uk
Financial co-ordinator	Margaret Stevenson	Margaret.Stevenson@anesfhs.org.uk
First World War / Gordon Highlanders	Anne Park	Anne.Park@anesfhs.org.uk
Journal team		journal@anesfhs.org.uk
Librarians	Margie Mellis and team	library@anesfhs.org.uk
Finance Reporting / Membership	Sheila Symons	membership@anesfhs.org.uk
MI and MI Index co-ordinator	Moirra Lawrence	Moirra.Lawrence@anesfhs.org.uk
Postal sales	Nick Reid	postal.sales@anesfhs.org.uk
Research co-ordinator	Gillian Marriner	research@anesfhs.org.uk
Secretary	Ronald Leith	secretary@anesfhs.org.uk
Social media	Susan Freer	Susan.Freer@anesfhs.org.uk
UKGDPR compliance officer	Helen Strachan	Helen.Strachan@anesfhs.org.uk
Website / IT	Dave Anderson	webmaster@anesfhs.org.uk

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

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

Mrs. Margaret Davidson, CSFHS, Grampian Ancestry Research
6 Bayview Road, Inverbervie, Montrose DD10 0SH
E-mail: grampian.ancestry@btinternet.com
Tel. 01561 361500

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 or queries@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 **February 2026**. Last date for submissions is **10th January 2026**.

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**.

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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 <https://anesfhs.org.uk>, “Publications” tab.

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ABERDEEN & NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

158–164 King Street, Aberdeen AB24 5BD

Scotland

Tel. +44 1224 646323

E-mail: enquiries@anesfhs.org.uk

Website: <https://anesfhs.org.uk>

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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