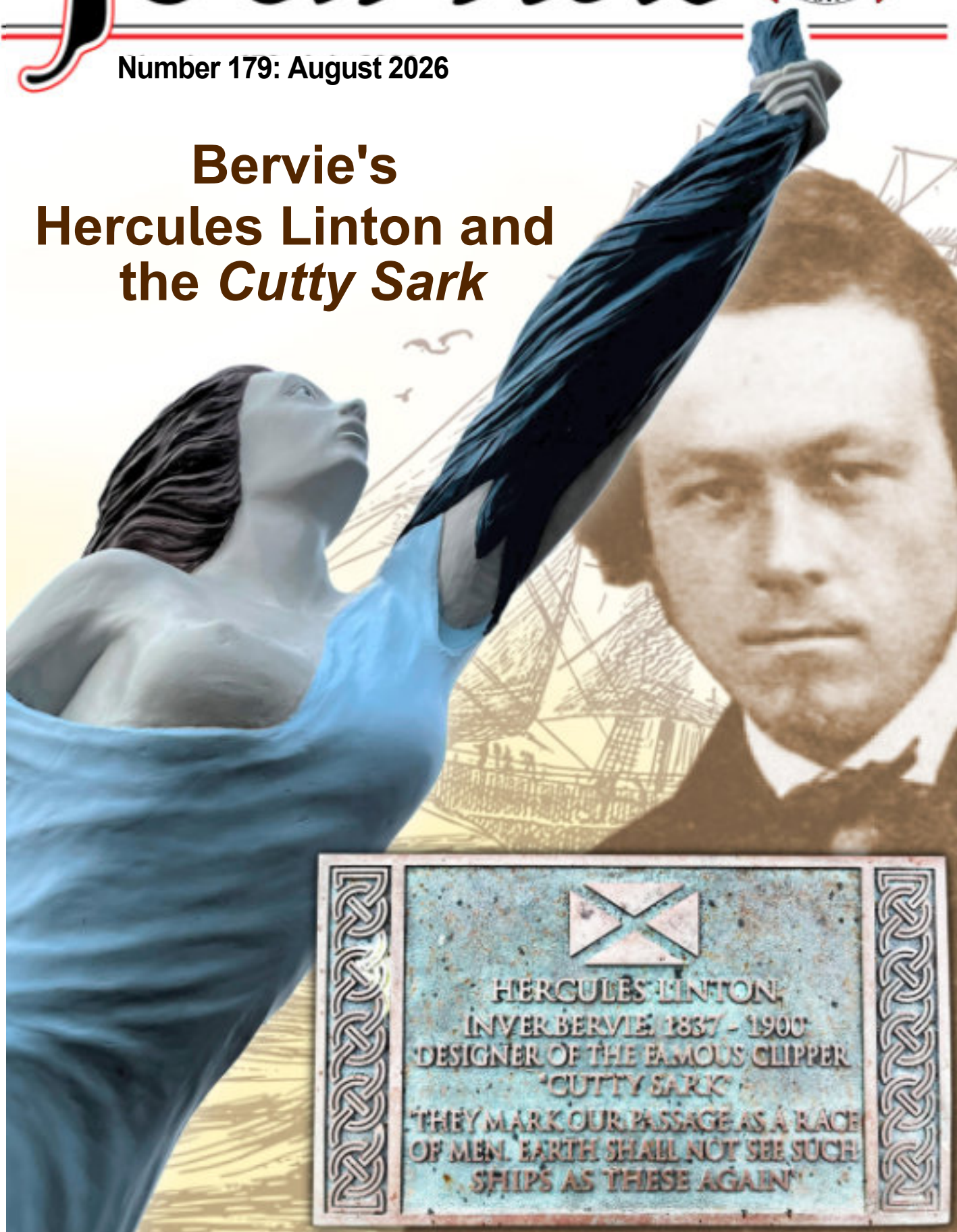


Bervie's Hercules Linton and the *Cutty Sark*



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CONTENTS

<i>Editorial</i>	2
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ARTICLES

HERCULES LINTON: DESIGNER, SHIPBUILDER AND ANTIQUARIAN	3
THE FLASHLIGHT CONCERT PARTY	4
GEORGE MATHIESON M.A., GOD'S CHREST-I-AN	5
FINDING PATRICK CUSHNIE	9
FAMILY TREE ANALYZER: FINDING HIDDEN DEPTHS IN FAMILY TREES	12
IN(S)CHING BACK TO MY ROOTS	14
HAWKERS AND HARLERS, PART 2: THE HARLER SUCCESSION	15
AN EXTRAORDINARY COINCIDENCE: DISNEY ALEXANDER AND FAMILY	17
TAKING ON A LEGEND: THE ALEXANDERS VERSUS NED KELLY	19
ANCESTOR CHART	22
VISITING ABERDEEN CITY AND ABERDEENSHIRE ARCHIVES	24

SOCIETY MEETINGS AND REPORTS

ABERDEEN MEETINGS	25
<i>Graeme Nicol: Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen</i>	25
<i>Dee Hoole: Blackmail and Banishment – Aberdeen Crime in the 1840s</i>	26
<i>Hugh Falconer: Music-Making in Aberdeenshire in the 1960s–70s</i>	28
MORAY/BANFF GROUP	28
GLASGOW GROUP	29
<i>Members' Day Meeting: On the Move (Rural Exodus, Part 2)</i>	29
SOUTHERN ONTARIO GROUP	30
<i>Members' Day Meeting: Discovery Calls and Brick Walls</i>	30
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND GROUP	31
<i>Dale Fogarty & Heather Mackay: Family Life and Illegitimacy in N-E Scotland</i>	31
LIBRARY REPORT	32

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

<i>Time for Turra!</i>	34
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NEWS AND INFORMATION

<i>Fraserburgh Heritage Centre</i>	34
<i>New Search Elements in the British Newspaper Archive</i>	36
<i>Graham Robertson's Mystery Object</i>	36
<i>Centre News: Meet Helen Strachan, our New Chair</i>	36
<i>Student Volunteers and Aberdeen University Internship Programme</i>	37
<i>ANESFHS: Minutes of the 2026 Annual General Meeting</i>	38
<i>ANESFHS Accounts for 2025</i>	42
<i>Investigating Polish and Italian Experience in Scotland</i>	43
<i>Graham Robertson's Mystery Object: Answer</i>	44

Editorial

Welcome to our August 2026 issue. We hope that you will enjoy reading it in the sun somewhere ... even if it is winter in your part of the world.

Delivery issues with the May journal: an apology

We were disappointed that it took the printed copies of the May journal longer than usual to reach you. We did deliver the text in plenty time to the printer and were able to post the digital version on the Society website at the start of the month. We send a final updated list of names for the address labels to our distributor on the first day of the month in which the journal is due. This is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for a copy, including those who join late in the previous month, gets the copies they are entitled to. This normally works fine with the printed journal arriving in the middle of its calendar month. However, delivery in May seems to be affected by the number of public holidays, both local and national, that fall in that month and this clearly delayed the arrival of your journal. It was literally out of our hands but we have made a note to aim to complete the May journal earlier next year to try to avoid these delays.

Seeking your views on typefaces

We have been doing some research into the guidelines on readability and are considering switching away from using Times New Roman, a traditional serif font, to adopting a sans serif font like Arial, which is what this Editorial section is using. The rest of the journal is set in Times New Roman. What are your preferences as a reader? You can tell us via journal@anesfhs.org.uk. And don't forget that is the same address to use if you want to get in contact with any of the authors about the stories in the journal. We look forward to hearing from you.

Tea clipper races

Our cover is a collage of images relating to the elegant tea clipper *Cutty Sark* and her designer, Hercules Linton. Tea was so popular in the 1800s that the new season's harvest in China was rushed to the UK to earn premium sales rates. There was particular kudos in landing the first batch. This resulted in some famous competition between the sailing ships bringing the precious cargo. In the great race of 1866, ten clipper ships left China together and the race was so close that the first two ships berthed in London within 30 minutes of each other. In 1872 the *Cutty Sark* was in competition with the *Thermopylae*, another ship with a local connection, having been built in Aberdeen. *Thermopylae* was also a fine vessel and had previously sailed from London to Melbourne in 60 days, earning praise from the *Melbourne Argus* as "a model of symmetry and beauty... conveying an idea of perfection". *Thermopylae* was the victor against *Cutty Sark* in the race from Shanghai to London, arriving a week ahead of *Cutty Sark*, which was delayed due to rudder damage. Sadly, although *Thermopylae* is fondly remembered in Aberdeen, her wreck lies in the sea off Lisbon, having been used for target practice by the Portuguese navy. You can find a memorial in Aberdeen harbour and more information by using the following link: <https://www.portofaberdeen.co.uk/the-great-clipper-race>.



The Editorial Team:

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

Cutty Sark memorial photos: Matthew Davidson

Cover design: Steve Edwards

ARTICLES

Hercules Linton: Designer, Shipbuilder and Antiquarian

The *Cutty Sark* tea clipper is one of the most iconic vessels of the sail years and its sleek lines are a regular feature of the annual London marathon. Its designer, Hercules Linton, was born in the wee village of Inverbervie (Bervie) in the old county of Kincardineshire on 1st January 1837. But, despite its famous role in the competition to bring tea swiftly to the United Kingdom, this sleek vessel, once one of the fastest merchant sailing vessels in the world, almost ruined her creator.

In 1855, Linton started work as an apprentice with the leading Aberdeen shipbuilders, Alexander Hall and Sons, eventually rising to a senior position. He then left Aberdeen to become a surveyor first with Lloyd's Register, then with the Underwriters Registry, both in Liverpool. In 1865, he married Marjory Anderson, a farmer's daughter from Kinghornie in Kinneff, a parish near Bervie. His address was given as Newcastle and their first daughter, Isabella, was born in England.

On returning to Scotland, Linton formed a partnership with William Scott in Dumbarton. Their firm, Scott & Linton, constructed nine ships, including *Cutty Sark*, their fifth and largest vessel. It was built in 1869 for shipping magnate John Willis & Son who continued to own the vessel until 1895.

Jock Willis drew up a contract between the two companies that required *Cutty Sark* be completed in six months by 30th July 1869. It was priced at £17 per ton with a maximum weight of 950 tons, a highly competitive price at the time. However, if the tonnage exceeded that maximum weight, there would be no extra payment. The vessel was built to Lloyd's A1 classification and became famous for its innovative design and complex construction. Willis had one of his experienced skippers, Captain George Moodie, oversee the build. Moodie was very particular regarding the construction and only accepted the best quality materials and workmanship. This naturally added to the cost, but may also be the reason why the *Cutty Sark* is still in existence today. Now located in Greenwich and open to the public, it is one of the most popular visitor attractions in London.

However, finishing the ship took longer than expected, and Scott & Linton ran out of money to complete it. All work in their yard was suspended in the first week of September 1869. Rather than apply for the company to be liquidated, the creditors met and decided to complete some or all of the outstanding contracts, following which a financial agreement was reached with the firm of William Denny & Bros to complete the ships. *Cutty Sark* was eventually launched on 22nd November 1869, nearly five months late. She then moved to Denny's yard to have masts installed and later, on 20th December, was towed down to Greenock to have her running rigging installed.

In the meantime, a second daughter, Marjory Anderson Linton, was born in Maryhill in 1868 and then, in October 1869, in the midst of the collapse of the business, Hercules Anderson Linton was born in Dumbarton in October 1869. Soon after, Linton was forced to hand over his house to the creditors. However, after everything was finished and final costs taken into account, the creditors were still owed money.



Hercules Linton

*Image: Royal Museums, Greenwich
Public Domain*



Photo: Matthew Davidson

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the circumstances, the family moved around over the next few years. The 1871 census shows them in Govan but they eventually settled in Montrose where a tenth and final child, a daughter, was born in December 1884. Sadly, his wife Marjory died in January 1885 which affected him deeply. By 1895, he had returned to live in Inverbervie where, in November, he was elected to the Town Council. He had also been appointed a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in November 1876.

On 15th May 1900 at the age of 64, Hercules Linton died due to heart trouble in the very same house he was born in. A memorial now stands proudly in the village, commemorating Inverbervie's famous son. This memorial is a full-scale carved timber replica of the *Cutty Sark* figurehead based on Linton's original drawings. It stands three metres tall with a black granite plaque engraved with the image of the ship. The figurehead depicts the young witch in Robert Burns' poem "Tam o' Shanter", grasping the tail of Tam's mare. In the Scots language, *cutty sark* means a short shirt or shift, but Linton in no way fell "short" in his desire and ability to create a world-class schooner.

Hercules Linton is buried in a modest grave in Inverbervie Parish Kirkyard. A Historic Scotland plaque was unveiled in 2015 to mark the 146th anniversary of *Cutty Sark*'s launch, and includes a stirring motto, "They mark our passage as a race of men. Earth shall not see such ships as these again".

Sources

Brettell, Robert E. (1969) *The Cutty Sark, Her Designer and Builder, Hercules Linton, 1836-1900*. W. Heffer & Sons, Cambridge, England.

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/maritime-history/commemorating-hercules-linton>

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/resources/bbaf/category/7/505>

Bobbie Jeal, Dalbeattie

—oOo—

The Flashlight Concert Party

My grandfather Colin Wilson (1887–1975) was a boilermaker with Hall Russell & Co. Ltd and subsequently qualified as an engineer. He was also a very fine singer and much in demand in Aberdeen. Engineering was his profession, but his leisure time was spent making music. He regularly sang during the intervals in the Picture Playhouse Cinema at 475 Union Street, accompanied by a Mrs Mitchell on the piano. I remember being told that she had two flats above the old premises of Boots the Chemist in Union Street where she used to take in lodgers, always actors and actresses, from His Majesty's Theatre and the Tivoli. She frequently had musical evenings there which my grandfather attended, perhaps more often than my grandmother would have liked.

In 1924 he had the opportunity to go to the United States of America to become involved in the growing movie industry there. His passport, dated 2nd May 1924, gives his occupation, not as engineer, but as "vocalist", and includes a visa for the United States dated 19th May 1924. This is probably the reason for his letter of recommendation from the Picture Playhouse Cinema, also dated 2nd May 1924, which states that "Mr Colin Wilson has been engaged here as chorus leader for some time. He is a good entertainer, and possesses a fine voice. I can thoroughly recommend him to anyone requiring a singer of ability".

My grandmother, however, put her foot down and refused to go to America.

As well as singing at cinemas and concerts my grandfather was a member of the Flashlight Concert Party, a group of six men and five women, vocalists with a piano and guitars. I have a professional photo of the group (no names on the back!) but thanks to an article in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of 14th January 1924, headed “Pick of the radio items” I also have the evening broadcast programme and therefore know the names of most of the group.



The Flashlight Concert Party. Photo: M. Mellis

My grandfather is standing on the far right, the two guitarists are father and son, Leonhard and Albert Aggasild, and the pianist is Lily Cressy. There are three other soloists apart from my grandfather – Molly Paterson, Alf Gunn and Frances Lawson. The remaining four members, two men and two women, are not specifically named and are presumably part of the chorus. I was particularly interested in the Aggasilds because Leonhard's son, Woldemar, and Colin Wilson's father, Charles, were both prisoners of war in Ruhleben, a civilian Prisoner of War camp in Germany during the First World War.

If you recognise anyone in the photo or any of the names, please get in touch and I'll send you a copy of the photograph. I'd also be interested to hear any stories about the group and the people involved.

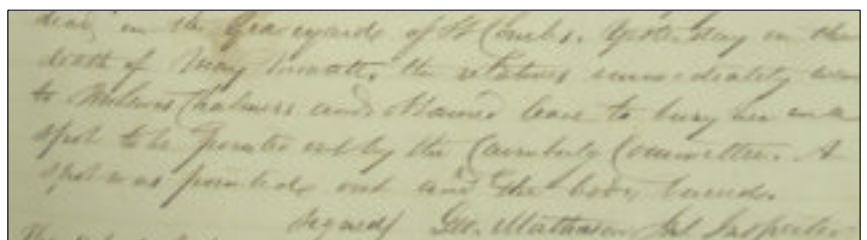
library@anesfhs.org.uk

Margie Mellis, Aberdeen

—oOo—

George Mathieson M.A., God's CHREST-I-AN

I recently wrote about the lonely grave of Blen May, an old blind woman who died of cholera in 1849 and was buried in the Cairnbulg bents.¹ My article includes excerpts from the Rathen



¹ Journal 177 (February 2026), pp. 3–5.

Parochial Board minutes of that time, written by George Mathieson who was clerk to the Board. But this was just one of the several positions Mr Mathieson held at various times in addition to being schoolmaster of Inverallochy.

He was born in 1819 in Waterside, Oyne, Aberdeenshire, son of John Mathieson and Mary Mortimer. John practised the trade of blacksmith and rented a small farm which, being of indifferent quality, provided him with only a meagre living. Realising his son's ability, however, he resolved to give him the best education his means would allow, and sent him at age four to a dame school run by middle-aged spinster Catherine Davidson. There, young George learned how to read and write, using mainly the Scriptures as textbooks and laying the foundations of his scripture knowledge by memorising the Shorter Catechism and parts of the Bible. A few years later he moved to the parish school of Oyne, where the schoolmaster, John Shand, M.A., soon realized that young George had the makings of a "lad o' pairts" and encouraged him to work towards a university education. Given the choice by his father of becoming a blacksmith or continuing his education, the young man had no problem choosing the latter course.

Rural boys of that time preparing for university entrance examinations generally spent the last few months of their parochial school education at a preparatory school. George attended one of these, the Old Aberdeen Grammar School, known as "The Barn" from its plain type of architecture. The Rector was the Revd Adam Mitchell, a classical scholar, who afterwards became minister of the parish of Inch. There, George won a bursary of £4 which, with some additional financial help from his father, was sufficient to support him to study at King's College, University of Aberdeen. The syllabus focused on the classics, Greek and Latin, in the first year but covered a range of subjects in later years, including natural philosophy, English literature and the evidences of Christianity. In 1836, with passes in all subjects and with distinction in mathematics, 17-year old George Mathieson was admitted to the degree of Master of Arts.

Soon after he graduated he accepted the position of assistant to the Revd John Clark, schoolmaster of Turriff, where he gained valuable experience in the art of teaching. Two years later he left the picturesque beauty of Turriff in Deveronside for a small school in the Glens of Foudland, a wild moorland district situated partly in the parish of Inch, partly in Culsamond. It had been founded a few years previously by local inhabitants who had felt the need to have their children educated without having to travel long distances to the parochial schools. Supported by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the school came with a small house, a garden, three acres of land "with keep for a cow", and an annual stipend of about £32. The 1841 Inch census lists him at the schoolhouse with his 15-year old sister Mary, who presumably helped with the farm. He remained there for about six years.

In late 1845 he was offered, and accepted, the position of schoolmaster in Inverallochy, one of the twin villages (the other being Cairnbulg) situated in Rathen parish on the sea coast just south of Fraserburgh. The young teacher adapted quickly to life in the fishing community, and was warmly accepted by the villagers because of his enthusiastic involvement in local activities and his willingness to learn as well as teach. A major obstacle facing him in his new position was the irregular attendance of many of his pupils. Many parents considered that learning beyond the 3Rs was useless unless it contributed to catching fish, an occupation that had been followed by their ancestors for centuries. Mr Mathieson, however, encouraged his pupils to seek less hazardous lifestyles, and achieved considerable success in guiding some to leave the villages and become successful in later life. Several of his pupils went on to university. He taught navigation to those who persisted in following a seafaring life with many eventually becoming certified as mates or captains of vessels in neighbouring ports.

Throughout his life George Mathieson was an active churchgoer. As a member of the Rathen Kirk Session he sought to maintain the wellbeing of the congregation, lending a helping

hand and doing any tasks that needed to be done. With only limited vocal talents himself he managed to impart the basics of singing to his pupils, and held weekly evening meetings in the school to practise hymn tunes. Indeed, through his efforts the village church choir became noted for its lively spirit and sweet-sounding voices.

But there was hardly time to establish himself in the village before it was faced with a major calamity. In late 1849, North-East Scotland was gripped by a severe cholera outbreak, part of the third global pandemic, which resulted in more than 50 deaths in the twin villages out of a combined population of about 900. The Parochial Board, which had the authority to look after the poor and deal with cases of distress and other emergencies, found a willing member in George Mathieson, and appointed him as Inspector of the Poor.



*Photo by courtesy of
David Rennie*

The villagers of Cairnbulg and Inverallochy had not been as attentive to their sanitary arrangements as they ought, with fetid cesspools poisoning the air and contaminating the water supplies. As a result, the contagion spread like wildfire. A surgeon, Dr Henry Jackson, was summoned from Aberdeen at a fee of £1 per day plus expenses, and later a sick nurse, Isabella Courage, at 10 shillings per week with travelling expenses (“coach in and out”), was brought in to attend to the afflicted. Mathieson closed the school and converted it into a temporary hospital, but he opted to remain at the schoolhouse with his housekeeper Charlotte Frater and he invited Dr Jackson to stay with him. The two men found their companionship agreeable and Mathieson willingly received instruction on how best to treat patients, knowledge that served him well during this and the later outbreak in 1866.

Not content simply to inspect and report, he actively involved himself in combatting the infection. He saw to it that every house was whitewashed with lime inside and out. He encouraged householders to remove the contaminated ash pits that sat in front of their houses, and on occasion he could be found cleaning out cesspools himself and disposing of the contaminated water. Each morning he went from house to house administering medicines prescribed by the doctor for the sick. He helped with household chores in the houses of the afflicted, and even took some children of stricken families into his own home, to be cared for by his housekeeper Charlotte. He watched over the sick, and even placed some of the dead in their coffins, seeing to it that they received a decent burial.

The Parochial Board minutes reveal that, on the morning of Monday, 15th October 1849, “Four orphan children of the late Andrew Ritchie (“Tie”) were found alone in the house, the floor covered with noxious matter, without a blanket to cover them, or fire to warm them, and without a friend to take care of them”. They were James, aged ten years, Andrew (8), John (6) and George Lee, who was one. Their father, mother Mary Masson, an aunt, a grandfather and both grandmothers had all died of cholera. Mr Mathieson helped transport the children to the temporary hospital, to be cared for by nurse Courage until a widow, Elisabeth Lawrance, was appointed as their guardian. He then became their teacher when the school reopened. In later life, George Lee Ritchie became the captain of the ship *Reigate* of London, and the Parochial Board minutes of 1884 record that he donated 100 guineas to the Board, through Mr Mathieson, as reimbursement of the outlay for his upbringing.

When the pestilence finally abated, the villagers did not forget the many services the teacher had performed for the community. As a token of esteem they presented him with a pair of globes – terrestrial and celestial – as well as a sextant, a quadrant, and a silver tea service. Annie Buchan, an old widow living in Inverallochy, appears to have summed up the veneration in which he was held. Many years later, when asked if she knew him, she replied,

“Eh foin dae I ken Maister Mathieson. We a’ ken him. We widnae like to see onything come owre Maister Mathieson for he’s juist God’s CHREST-I-AN.”

Cholera revisited the villages in 1866 and again Mr Mathieson rose to the challenge, providing invaluable assistance to Dr Macrae, the medical officer employed by the Board. On 23rd September, during his rounds of the houses, he is reported to have found a four-month old baby still suckling at the breast of her dead mother, Elizabeth Duthie. As the child's father, Andrew Buchan, was also dead from cholera, Mr Mathieson removed the baby and, with perseverance, succeeded in getting her to drink from a bottle until a nurse became available. The child, Jessie Jane Buchan, was raised by her grandparents, William and Ann Duthie, 21 Main Street, Inverallochy. She married a fisherman, Alexander Summers, and had five children of her own.

These stories and others relating the activities of Mr Mathieson during the epidemics have been adapted from the memoir written by his college friend Robert Wilson and published in 1911, 17 years after Mathieson's death². Mr Wilson credits old widow Annie Buchan for much of his information which, with the passing of years, appears to have sometimes become a little confused. For example, the medical officer employed during the 1849 epidemic was Dr Jackson, not Gordon as in the book. Dr Gordon was summoned during the 1866 epidemic. Mr Mathieson's housekeeper Charlotte, described as kindly and old, was only a year older than him. She died in 1897 aged 80, at 57 Beechgrove Terrace in Aberdeen. Jessie Jane Buchan was born on 25th March 1866, the year of the second cholera outbreak and not, as Mr Wilson records, in 1849. Death registration records show that both her parents died in the cholera hospital on 23rd September, with Mr Mathieson being the informant for each, although not present at the death of the mother, Elizabeth. Perhaps he was preoccupied in attending to the needs of the baby at the time. These inconsistencies with official records may cast doubt on the accuracy of the memoir and some of the events described may even be apocryphal, but they do not detract in any meaningful way from the depiction of George Mathieson as a tireless and selfless individual.



*George Mathieson's
grave in Nellfield Cemetery
Photos: Jim Campbell.*

When the second epidemic abated, the villagers again expressed their gratitude by presenting him with a gold watch and an arm chair. In accepting the gifts, however, he commented that he hoped there was much more time for useful work to be done before he sought the rest of an easy chair. He was granted 20 more active years before his health began to fail, at which point, in 1890, he left Inverallochy to settle in Aberdeen city, becoming an elder of Holburn Parish Church, then located at Holburn Junction, and immersing himself in the church activities. Soon after his arrival, the church relocated to Ashley Park in what was then the western suburbs. In 1893 the foundation stone of what became Holburn West Church was laid and the building was opened for

worship on 26th October 1894. When the church first opened it had no spire, but the congregation soon raised sufficient funds to build one. In his memoir, Robert Wilson quotes the Revd Dr J. McClymont, pastor of Holburn Parish Church, as saying, “In his declining years unfortunately [Mr Mathieson] was in rather straitened circumstances owing, I believe, to the financial obligations which he undertook with characteristic generosity in connection

² Wilson, Robert, late schoolmaster of Deer (1911) *George Mathieson, M.A., Schoolmaster of Inverallochy (God's CHREST-I-AN)*. Aberdeen, Taylor and Henderson. With grateful thanks to Ms Lesley Jennings for a copy of this book.

with the balance of a debt on a public building”. It seems likely that the “public building” was the church.

While the closeness of the University and its academic stimulation appealed to him, he did not care much for big city life, greatly preferring the countryside and going for long walks out of the city along the River Dee. In the spring of 1891 he visited his nephew, the Revd George Mathieson Park, minister of Deskford, at the manse near Cullen, and spent such happy days there enjoying long walks in the beautiful Banff countryside that he returned for a short visit the following spring. But later in 1892 he suffered the first of two strokes, the second of which carried him off in 1894. He died in his home at 40 Great Western Road and was buried in nearby Nellfield Cemetery. His grave is marked by a wall plaque inscribed, “In memoriam. George Mathieson, schoolmaster, Inverallochy, born 7th May 1819 died 24th May 1894. A good man and a true friend.” A simple tribute to a simple man, yet one that only hints at the impact of a life spent almost entirely in the service of others.

Jim Campbell, Port Hope, Ontario

—oOo—

Cholera Epidemics and Their Impact

Cholera epidemics swept through Scotland in recurrent waves in 1832, 1849 and the 1860s. Symptoms included sickness, diarrhoea, and sweating. Some accounts say that there were 3,000 deaths in Glasgow alone in the first epidemic due to overcrowded and insanitary conditions. As Jim has illustrated, the North-East communities were not exempt, often as the result of trading vessels landing with infection on board.

Joe McLeod gives some touching examples of the impact on a small community in the section on “Cholera, 1866” in his book on Burnbanks, the tiny village to the south of Aberdeen. The *Dundee Courier* for 6th October 1866 summarised the deaths of at least half a dozen inhabitants and stated that “a nurse has been obtained from the town here, as no person could be got in the village to enter the affected houses”. Joe describes how bodies were dealt with: “A rapid burial was required to prevent the disease spreading, with the bodies being treated with pitch and quicklime. The pitch was a rudimentary sealing of contaminated bodies and the lime ensured rapid decomposition”³.

Journal team

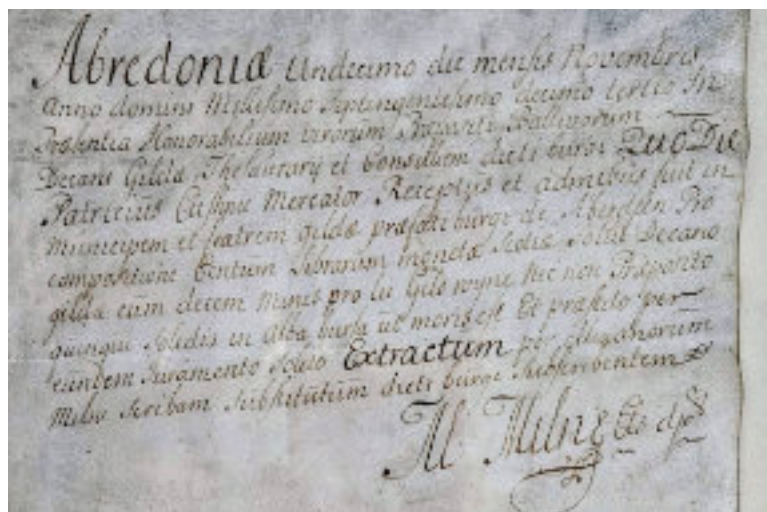
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Finding Patrick Cushnie

We love it when our readers pose us a challenge and Gavin Service certainly did that when he asked us to put out a call for local descendants of Patrick Cushnie, a merchant who was made a burgess (councillor) of Aberdeen in 1713. It has proved an interesting quest, a bit like a *Who Do You Think You Are?* investigation in reverse. We know the ancestor but how did his family line develop and are there still members in the North-East?

Let’s start with the document itself.

The parchment, inscribed in Latin, sets out the conditions for Patrick to join the council. We checked with two of our expert Latinists, Graham Robertson, our Mystery Quiz guru, who



³ McLeod, Joe (2021) *Burnbanks Village*. Amberley Publishing, Stroud. pp.108–10.

is a retired teacher of classics and Nicola Mills, diocesan archivist for the Episcopal Church in the North-East of Scotland, who is also a Latin translator.

At Aberdeen, the eleventh day of the month of November in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and thirteen In the presence of the honourable men, the Provost, Bailies, Dean of Guild, Treasurer and Councillors of the said burgh On which day Patrick Cushnie, merchant, was received and admitted as a burgess and guild-brother of the foresaid burgh of Aberdeen For composition [payment] of One hundred pounds of Scots money paid to the Dean of Guild with ten “minis” for [or in lieu of] the guild wine Also to the Provost five shillings in a white purse as is the custom And the customary oath having been taken by him. Extracted by Alexander Milne clerk substitute of the said burgh, signed

Al. Milne Clerk depute

While the gist is clear there were a couple of phrases that puzzled even our experts. As Graham noted: “The tricky word is *minis*. It's not pounds, shillings, pence or even merks. Is he trying to say ‘with ten fewer’ i.e. 90? But would the payment for guild wine be as much as that? I can't seem to find any other contemporary burgess ticket to compare”. Nicola couldn't provide a better definition either. Graham translated “*alba bursa*” literally as a “white purse”, and the text does say this is the custom, which sounds rather charming. However, Nicola has pointed out that it may in fact be the Latin translation of a legal term *blancheferme* which was used in older Scots to refer to “a small or nominal quit rent paid in money or otherwise”⁴ Nicola told us that, “According to the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* it derives from Old French: ‘*blanche ferme* white rent, rent paid in silver’”.

The parchment was apparently Patrick's own copy of his matriculation as a burgess and the Town Council would have had a similar record. It looks as if Patrick may have been following in his father's footsteps. A glance on Scotland's People shows us an Aberdeen baptismal record for Patrick Cushnie in February 1689, born to Alexander Cushnie, Burgess and Maltman, and Margaret Baxter, his spouse. The family was well-connected as the godfathers were Patrick Gelly, late Dean of Guild, and Patrick Divie (Davie), late Baillie. Patrick appears to be the oldest child and only boy, with four sisters, Margaret, Jean, Elisabeth and Janet following in rapid succession.



David Fleming and Sally Low examine the Cushnie documents.

Photo: E. Petrie

Patrick Cushnie, Merchant in Aberdeen, and Margaret Chalmers were married in Aberdeen in September 1716 by Mr Melvill “in his chamber” after paying £2 Scots. Whether this quiet wedding resulted in children is not clear. It appears that Margaret died within the next year or two since, in September 1719, Patrick Cushnie, merchant in Aberdeen (if this is the same individual), married Isobel Boyes, the daughter of John Boyes a shipmaster. A fellow merchant, Andrew Jaffery, and Isobel's father were the witnesses who stood as cautioners (or guarantors) for the pair. Patrick and Isobel had at least four children: Patrick (born January 1721), John (born 1723), Alexander (born 1725) and another son called John in 1728, suggesting that the earlier son John had died in the interim.

This all appears to tie in nicely with the information in the Will of Patrick Cushnie, merchant in Aberdeen, who died in April 1745. His sons Alexander and John Cushnie acted as his Executors. At the time of his death, Patrick had around £100 in cash and other monies due to him, including an account with Murdoch Ross and Arthur Simpson, two merchants in Tain, which was only settled in an Eik (addition) in 1752. Unfortunately for us family historians, the Will gives Patrick's widow's name as Elizabeth Mitchell and confirms her right to one half the value of the household furnishings and goods “by virtue of her Contract of Marriage”. Scotland's

⁴ Robinson, Mairi (Ed.) (1985), *The Concise Scots Dictionary*. Aberdeen University Press: Aberdeen.

People shows no likely marriage record but it may be that Patrick was twice-widowed before marrying Elizabeth. One other fly in the genealogical ointment is that the Will specifies “Peter Cushnie Eldest son and heir of the said Defunct”, rather than a son called Patrick as we might have hoped. In some families Peter/Patrick were interchangeable names in the family, just as Janet/Jessie are.

Scotland's People is no help as all the Peter Cushnies it records are born after 1745. There is a 1799 Will for a Peter Cushnie, Merchant in Aberdeen, who leaves a bequest for his “brother German” (i.e. half brother?), John Cushnie, “late Shipmaster in Aberdeen”. Tantalisingly he asks to be buried beside his parents and wife but does not give their names and the Society's MI database doesn't contain a likely candidate for the gravestone inscription he specifies in the Will.

So, we may have the correct family, but it is quite possible that there were cousins with a similar set of family names. There is, for example, an earlier baptismal record for a Patrick Cushnie born to Patrick Cushnie and Agnis Clerk in Aberdeen in 1628 and a baptismal record for Alexander Cushnie, born to Alexander Cushnie in Peterculter in 1657 who may be linked to a particularly interesting family line in Stonehaven at a similar period. Amongst a wonderful collection of artefacts in St James's Episcopal Church in Stonehaven there is a bible, printed in 1708, which belonged to George Straton who was instrumental in the establishment of that church. This bible records the July 1743 marriage between Patrick Cushnie and Anne Straton and lists five children born to them: Thomas (born 1744); Peter (born 1746); Alexander (born 1748); Anna (born 1749) and a second Peter (born 1752). Scotland's People tells us that the witnesses at Peter's baptism were Alexander Cushnie and George Straton, both merchants in Stonehaven and it seems likely that they were the child's grandfathers.

Scotland's People records that in 1721 Alexander Cushnie had a son baptised Patrick in Dunnottar parish so this Stonehaven line is perhaps different from that of the Aberdeen burgess. The family remained in Stonehaven and in June 1775, in what looks like the next generation, Patrick Cushnie, a writer (lawyer) in Stonehaven, married Elizabeth Straton, “daughter of Thomas Straton, Merchant, Jamaica”. It is likely that Thomas Straton Cushnie (born 1776), Anna (born 1778), Peter (born 1779) and Alexander (born 1782) (all recorded in Dunnottar) were all children of this couple.

Scotland's People has Wills for John Cushnie, merchant in Montrose (1776); Patrick Cushnie, merchant in Stonehaven, parish of Fetteresso (1783); Patrick Cushnie, Mains of Dunnottar (1795); Alexander Cushnie of the town of Stonehaven (1798).

David Fleming, of St James's, has prepared family trees for George Straton and the family of his daughter Ann Straton and her husband Patrick Cushnie (1721–81) and these can be viewed on the church's website. One interesting connection is that Patrick and Ann's daughter Anne/Anna (1749–1817), married a second cousin of William Burness, the father of Robert Burns. Anne Straton passed the bible to her cousin's son, another Patrick Cushnie (1779–1869), who was Episcopal minister in Montrose from 1780 to 1847.

The Straton tree shows that George Straton and his wife, had eight children. The notes in the bible indicate that many of the sons went to Jamaica in the 1740s to work with their uncle, Thomas Straton. Perhaps Jamaica seemed a safer place than Scotland in the 1740s. Thomas (born 1704 in Stonehaven), and other family members are commemorated on a table stone in Dunnottar kirkyard (stone 87). Andrew Jervise, the antiquarian, gave the details of the inscription:

To the memory of Alexander Straton, late merchant in Stonehive: he died the 7th day of May 1743, aged 67 years. And of Christian Robertson, his spouse, a virtuous wife, an affectionate mother, and benevolent friend; she died the 20th day of Oct. 1763, aged 83 years. Also of Thomas Straton, Esq., their son, who died in Jamaica, May 1777,

aged 73 years, with a most unblemished character, esteemed by all his connections. He acquired a genteel fortune, which he left to his surviving sisters. Here lies interred Patrick Cushnie, who died 23d of May 1790, aged 38. Also Elizabeth Straton, his spouse, who died the 24th of November 1792, in the 36th year of her age. And their son, the Rev. Patrick Cushnie, M.A., incumbent of St Mary's, Montrose, who died 10th June 1869, in the 90th year of his age, and 69th of his ministry.

So, we have two interesting family lines who may well be connected, given the similar names passed down in each case. Alas we are no nearer to finding a living connection although St James's Church did have a visit in 2018 from some American Cushnies who seem likely to have descended from the Jamaican settlers.

The question of how the parchment migrated to New Zealand also remains unsolved. However Gavin Service has discovered an obituary for a James Cushnie, who died in 1917 in the Southland area of New Zealand⁵. He had worked as a threshing mill operative and farmer and, along with his wife Annie McKay, had at least two sons, George and James and three daughters, all named in the obituary. He appears to have been born in Peterculter in March 1837 (to George Cushnie and Mary Massie). He emigrated as a young man in 1860, arriving in Port Chalmers, New Zealand on the *Storm Cloud*. This could well be the missing link despite there being another James Cushnie (born around 1838) who is recorded entering Staten Island in 1877 (<https://www.statueofliberty.org>.) Perhaps our readers can come up with new information. Over to you!

Sources

St James Episcopal Church website and archive <https://www.stjames-stonehaven.org.uk>
<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz> for a searchable archive of the *Southland Times*.

Elaine Petrie, Falkirk

—oOo—

Family Tree Analyzer: Finding Hidden Depths in Family Trees

I've been interested in family history since meeting numerous previously-unknown relatives at my grandfather's funeral in 1981. I was a teenager and did a small tree back then based on speaking to several relatives at the wake. Afterwards a great-aunt heard of my interest in family history and was determined I should know about my mum's side as well as my dad's. However, that burst of interest in the early 80s gave way to other pursuits, mainly an early interest in computers.

Fast forward to my grandmother's death in 2003 and, when I visited the grave to photograph the inscription for my dad, I was struck by the level of detail on the stone. Not only my grandparents, but my great-grandparents and my 2g-grandparents were all listed on the one stone.

That rekindled my interest and I started building my tree. My research was super-charged by access to the amazing records at Scotland's People, and so I was able, within the space of three weeks, to fill out all 32 of my 3g-grandparents, all of whom, with one English exception, lived out their lives in North-East Scotland. With so many North-East Scotland ancestors I joined this society and have been a member for many years. I lost interest in family history for a time when my mother died but my enthusiasm was rekindled in December last year when I retired and started volunteering at the Research Centre in King Street.

In the early days I found the process of searching for records and checking if I'd entered everything correctly somewhat tedious. I was regularly finding I'd made mistakes that could have derailed my efforts so, as I worked in computing, I decided to create a program to help me double check the data I'd entered. At first, it just helped me search the old International

⁵ <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/ST19170426.2.19?query=cushnie&snippet=true>

Genealogical Index (IGI) records at FamilySearch, but it has grown into a more and more useful tool. In the early 2010s, contact with a DNA cousin meant I had someone else to test the program and make suggestions for improvements.

Around that time, I got involved with the Lost Cousins website and helped the founder Peter Calver set up his new forum. With help from some enthusiastic forum members and from Tim Nicholls, the other forum administrator, the program really started to take shape with a massive number of additional features. Most of the features in FTAnalyzer today are thanks to these individuals. Because of their help, you can use FTAnalyzer completely free of charge; it is my gift to the genealogical community for all the help I've received over the years.

So, what is FTAnalyzer and why might you want to use it? Well, to put it simply, FTAnalyzer does a deep analysis of your tree. At the simplest level it allows you to see errors you may not have realised existed (similar in nature to the costly "Pro Tools" on Ancestry or the checking tools in programs like Family Tree Maker and others). The difference is that it performs a far more extensive check and offers additional features such as being able to export a wide range of reports to Excel.

For example, the Research Suggestions tab shows what research you have done for a census. By picking UK census records, the colour report will show you a list of people with status information of whether you've already found them in the census records for the period they are likely to be alive in.

You can select Ancestry from a drop-down menu at the top of the Analyzer page and, if you are signed into Ancestry at the time, double-clicking on one of the coloured boxes will open an Ancestry search form for that census year in your browser. It will automatically fill out the search form with the person's details and get Ancestry to perform the search. This saves you hours of filling out search forms and supercharges your ability to find records.

Now I know you may be thinking, hmm that sounds great, but I don't want a program changing my tree; I've spent too much time on it to have a program change something. Well, never fear! One of the core design principles of FTAnalyzer is that it only ever looks at a copy of your data. YOU decide if a search result is correct, YOU decide if you want to add that data to your tree. FTAnalyzer will NEVER change data in your tree; it only makes suggestions for you to assess.

Other features include being able to plot your ancestors' locations on a map, and viewing lists of locations, occupations, surnames etc. as different ways of looking at your data to see how you can improve it. You can export a cut-down, privatised version of your tree specifically designed for loading to DNA sites, with the minimal data needed for someone to easily match with your tree. This saves you the effort of removing your private notes and creating a separate tree for DNA sites. There is also a duplicate-checking feature, a suggested way of narrowing down search dates for births, deaths and marriages, the ability to automatically load ancestors you've found on a census up to the Lost Cousins website, and many other features.



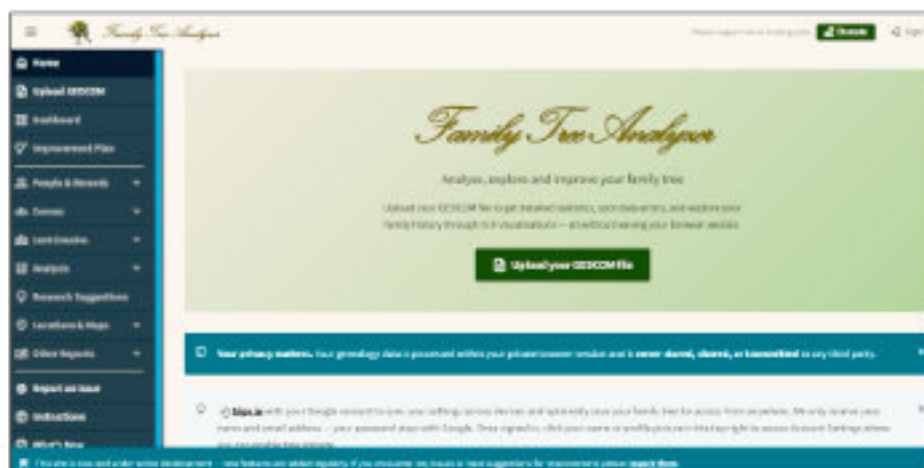
The program is constantly evolving and new features being added. Recently, within the Society, it was requested that an option be designed to allow members to export a pre-formatted ancestor chart directly via an email. This would save members a lot of time and avoid the need to fill out a separate chart.

So how do you get hold of the program to try it out for yourself? It's available on Microsoft Store. Just click on the Microsoft Store icon on your device (or type Microsoft

Store in the search bar) which will take you to the store page for your country. Then search for FTAnalyzer which should take you to a product page as in the image shown above. Then “get” or “Install” and you are good to go.

Alternatively, you can visit <https://ftanalyzer.com/releases> and download it from GitHub. Once you have installed it, you click the file menu and load a GEDCOM file of your tree. (<https://ftanalyzer.com/Documentation> shows how to create a GEDCOM file from your family history program if you are unsure how).

As of July 2026, a new web version has been created and is available to test. Go to: <https://app.ftanalyzer.com>. It's constantly being updated at present and doesn't do as much as the desktop app but it does work on tablets, phones and Macs. It's designed to be more visual and friendly for inexperienced researchers, as it needs no installation.



You upload your GEDCOM and follow the instructions it gives.

The program will load your file and report any errors it finds on the initial load – these are typically things like invalid or incomplete dates – it is a common mistake for instance for people to use a confusing date format like 1/6/26 which could be 1st June 2026 or 6th January 2026 or 1st June 1826. Since family history spans many centuries we must avoid giving years as only 2 digit years and be clear what date we mean.

It can be very satisfying to clean up these errors in your tree then export a new GEDCOM file and see a clean bill of health. After that, you can move onto exploring location lists or occupation lists. With all of these lists, double-clicking an item (e.g. the occupation "Agricultural Labourer") will show you every person in your tree who shares that same value.

There's a lot to explore and the app has a thriving users' community on Facebook with over 3,000 users worldwide and over 5,000 users of the program. So why not join them for FREE and see what you can find hidden in your tree?

Alexander Bisset, Developer of FTAnalyzer

—oOo—

In(s)ching back to my Roots

I always knew that my father came from Aberdeen and his family had later moved to Stonehaven, possibly during the time he was a PoW in Singapore during WWII. However, he died in 1961, a month before my seventh birthday, so I never got to speak to him about his close family or his ancestors.

1961 was, of course, long before the arrival of the internet and, in fact, we didn't even have a phone until about ten years later. My mother didn't keep in touch with the Aberdeen family, so it wasn't until recently that I started to find out more about them when I got into family history research. Names of villages and towns that I knew nothing about would pop up and kept recurring. They were unfamiliar until last year, that is, when my daughter and her husband bought the Station Hotel in Inch, 27 miles north west of Aberdeen.

I did some research before the family moved up and, of course, my husband and I visit

regularly, so I've had plenty opportunity to recognise placenames that were familiar to me from the documents I had researched: Rayne, Methlick, Auchterless and Gartly, to name a few.

I've now taken a closer look at my family tree and am shocked to see how close some of my antecedents actually lived to Inch. No wonder I feel that the area is my spiritual home! I am now looking into the following and would be keen to hear from other members who may share some family with me:

Alexander Cooper, my 2g-grandfather, born 21st April, 1805, in Auchnavaid, Old Deer and died 27th August 1894 in New Deer.

Jane Murray, born in 1827 in Grange and died in Moss-side. She married John Buchan.

Samuel Anderson, born 12th July 1793, in Udney and died 31st January 1858, Upper Kirkgate, St Nicholas, Aberdeen.

James Cooper, born 18th December 1886, in Mill of Dumbreck. He married Margaret Beaton Marshall, 1848–89.

James Norrie, born mid-1700s in Methlick. He married Janet Rankine.

Jane Farquharson, born 1851 in Gartly.

John Ingram, born 1801 in Gartly, who married Hannah Craigen (born 8th September 1809) on 12th November 1842 in Clatt. He died on 23rd January 1881, in Leslie.

Robert Copland was born 23rd August 1770 in Oyne and died in Keig, Alford.

Alexander Leslie (or Lesly), born 22nd April 1753 in Oyne and died 8th April, 1824, also in Oyne.

These folk all lived within 25 miles of Inch, and indeed Alexander Leslie spent his whole life just three miles away from where my daughter now lives.

Is it "fate" that brought her – and thus me – to this beautiful region of Scotland? I don't know the answer to that, but I do know that my frequent visits to the area now are going to allow me to deepen my family research activities and I hope to discover some new family close by. And now my husband and I hope to move up to Inch in the near future.

journal@anesfhs.org.uk

Bobbie Jeal, Dalbeattie... and soon, Inch

—oOo—

Hawkers and Harlers, Part 2: The Harler Succession

In Scotland, a "harler" is a mason who is occupied as a wall pebble-dasher or roughcaster. But the Harlers of this article had their origin in England. Possible explanations for the name range from a flax worker in Somerset to a native of some small place, like Harle in Northumberland. It could even have a German origin. Harler or Härle are thought to have originated as nicknames for "someone with bristly hair".

Peter Williamson (abt 1833–1915), opened a china shop at 11 Main Street, Nether Buckie, Banffshire in 1885⁶. His lack of education and refinement did not appear to have been drawbacks, for it transpired that the man who didn't like to be known as a hawker had a real talent for making money! The Williamsons did well from the shop in Buckpool, but Peter was sure he could do even better in the town centre of Buckie. So he and his wife, Jane Shearer, moved to 18 High Street, with a new china shop opening at 16a, in June 1900. As expected, business was good, but the additional workload took an increasing toll on Peter's health. Something had to go, so the Main Street premises were offered for sale in 1910. Perhaps because it wasn't in a central location, nothing came from an advertisement in *The Scotsman* newspaper. No further attempts were made to sell, and it was decided to retain

⁶ See West, Stuart. "Peter Williamson: From Hawker to Merchant", *Journal* 178 (May 2026), pp. 16–18.



Drifters in Buckie Harbour

their original shop after all, with daughter Charlotte in charge.

Charlotte Williamson, born 6th January 1873 in Portsoy, Banffshire, was living at 11 Main Street when she married David Campbell Dickson Harler on 26th August 1896, at the Palace Hotel in Elgin. David, a merchant seaman – who may have been married before – was born in March 1864 in Greenwich, Kent, the son of Thomas Harler, a shoemaker in nearby Woolwich, and his wife, Susanna Dickson, who were both deceased. The marriage certificate lists Charlotte's mother's

maiden surname as Wheeler – but this was probably due to the Registrar mishearing "Shearer". A daughter, Charlotte Jane, was born on 23rd August 1898, but died in infancy. When he heard that a second child was imminent, David just "upped anchor" and returned home to England! The pregnant Charlotte then moved in with her parents at 18 High Street, where her daughter Esther Caroline Harler was born in February 1901. The young mother and baby daughter soon moved back to Main Street.

When Peter Williamson died on 25th July 1915, aged 82, he left Charlotte and Esther in full charge. They began by re-opening the shop in October and, in May 1918 sold the properties at 35 and 37 Main Street for £280. At the same time, young Esther had purchased two properties, across the road and right next to Buckpool Harbour: numbers 2 (William Robertson's chemist shop) and 4.

4 Main Street was let, in 1918–19, to my widowed grandmother, Christina Ann Anderson West (1871–1945), together with her sons Jack (born 1893) a joiner; Manson (born 1895), a cabinetmaker, and my father (who moved "up-the-brae" to St. Peter's Terrace after his marriage on 3rd November 1921); Alec (1897), a baker; Harold (1899), a cooper (who emigrated to Australia in 1924), and only daughter Isabella or Bee (1901). Son Jim (born in 1896), was a solicitor in a law practice with Alexander Hutchison in Cluny Square until December 1924, when the partnership was dissolved. They each continued to operate independently in the Cluny House offices. Jim had married his neighbour and landlady Esther Harler on 29th August 1923, and they had two daughters. But the marriage was soon to break up, prompting my uncle to emigrate to Canada in October 1927. His brother Jack had already made the journey to Saskatchewan just seven months earlier, so he may have joined him there. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find out anything about their lives in Canada.

Charlotte Harler proved to be as enterprising as her father, and eventually opened a third china shop, at 72 East Church Street, Buckie. Interestingly, this had formerly been Peter McLaren's grocery, where my maternal uncle, Stuart Hepburn (1896–1916), worked prior to enlisting in the Gordon Highlanders. Sadly he died in France during World War I. In February 1925, Charlotte complained to the Town Council that Main Street was too narrow for the amount of traffic using it. Four years later, the following properties in the street were all up for sale: the houses at 5, 7 and 9; the shop at 11; 2, which had been a chemist shop and (from 1922) a sub-post office; and the house at 4.

In late 1932, large-scale demolition and clearance began of most of Bridgend, the area between Main Street and the Buckie Burn – which was nicknamed "the Hairy Corner" for some reason unknown! Altogether, 16 houses and five shops were bulldozed. Incidentally, "bridge" is somewhat of a misnomer, as the shallow Buckie Burn was merely culverted, letting the water flow under the road without the necessity of an expensive raised crossing. The nearby pier of Buckpool Harbour bears the following inscription, "Erected by the Board of Fisheries, Edinburgh, and Robert Gordon, Esq., Letterfourie. Begun 1855; finished 1857.

Engineers, D. & T. Stevenson. Resident engineer, William Middlemas. Contractor, Alexander Stuart”. The engineers were David and Thomas Stevenson, who specialised in building lighthouses, and were the uncle and father of the renowned novelist and travel writer Robert Louis Stevenson. Sadly, the harbour became increasingly prone to silting and this, together with the opening of the much larger Cluny Harbour in Easter Buckie in 1880–81, hastened the decline of the smaller refuge. It became virtually unused, and in the 1970s most of it was filled with rocks and rubble then levelled off with topsoil and transformed into a small park.

There was a “grand clearance sale” at 72 East Church Street in late February 1933. The building of a new housing scheme, east of High Street, had commenced in 1930, and my grandmother was soon to move to much better accommodation at 15 Linn Crescent. She latterly suffered from diabetes, died in Seafield Hospital on 22nd June 1945, aged 74, and was interred at Myrus Cemetery, Macduff. Her divorced daughter-in-law, Esther, had sold 2–4 Main Street in October 1937. When her Charlotte died on 11th February 1946, the obituary in the *Banffshire Advertiser* read:

The death took place at her home in Main Street, Buckpool, of Mrs Charlotte Harler, who carried on a business as a china merchant for 40 years, in East Church Street, High Street and Main Street. Her father, Mr Williamson, was a china merchant and horse dealer, and formerly had the shop in Main Street. Her daughter Esther and two grand-daughters, both on the staff of Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, survive her. She was 73 and a devoted member of the North Church.

The following May, the properties at 72–74 East Church Street were sold. The house and shop in High Street had likely been sold earlier. Although probably inevitable, it is disappointing to see how much has changed in Main Street. After Bridgend had been largely cleared, modernisers turned their attention to nearby properties. Today the former site of 1–3 is a vacant plot of land at the rear of the Star Inn; 5 was replaced by the gable end of a new house in a south-leading lane; 7 and 9–11 were completely rebuilt as two residences. The developers seemed to have been superstitious, since 13 doesn’t exist anymore! Across the road, there is only grass where 2–6 once stood.

Thankfully, the rest of Main Street is generally well preserved. The quaintly-named Prawn Cottage at number 30 is worth mentioning. For many years it was regularly used as a base by “Ingin Johnnies”, French onion sellers, who had some affinity with our hawkers. Until the 1960s, they used to come from the Roscoff area of Brittany to Scotland in the autumn, travelling on bicycles and selling their pink onions from door to door. A major change to the area was the loss of the railway line, which used to run parallel to the road. This had been part of the Moray Coast route until it was axed on 6th May 1968. Buckpool Station had already closed, on 7th March 1960. Four miles to the west, the line’s 139 year-old bridge, which spanned the River Spey at Garmouth, collapsed on 14th December 2025. It had been used by walkers and cyclists after trains stopped running.

Stuart West, Aberdeen

—oOo—

An Extraordinary Coincidence: Disney Alexander and Family

My grandparents must have met my future mother-in-law before I did! Now that may not sound all that remarkable until you hear the story.

My maternal grandparents were both born in the 1880s in the Aberdeen area and married there in 1911. Their only child, my mother Audrey, was born in Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire in 1923. Sadly, Audrey’s father died when she was 14. She and her mother moved back to Aberdeen in 1938 but her mother died when Audrey was only 19. Audrey was an early member of the ANESFHS and spent many hours researching Old Parish Records before the

age of computers. She passed away, aged 61, in 1985.

Some years later I continued family history research from where she had left off. I found that, fortunately, my maternal grandfather rejoiced in the name of Disney Leith Alexander and not something harder to trace like John Smith. My mother had told me that her father had served an apprenticeship as a cabinet maker, and she believed he had worked on an organ in Galashiels in the Scottish Borders.

As a young girl, my mother had moved with her parents to Edinburgh where Disney worked as a commercial traveller. I found the family address in a Trades Directory which corresponded with the house number shown in a family photograph. From Edinburgh they later moved to Broughty Ferry. From a newspaper obituary, I learned he was well known in the district as a traveller for Macfarlane, Lang & Co, biscuit manufacturers, and he was also regarded as a fine golfer.



Photo: L. McCartney

Recently I decided to try to investigate where Disney had lived between 1911 and 1923. I have several photographs of him in khaki, and war records show that he served as a QMS (Quartermaster) in the East Africa Campaign in 1918. Among the photo collection is one of my grandmother taken by Jed Murray, a photographer in Hawick. A mention of Hawick at this time seemed very strange since, in 1971, I moved from Aberdeen to Peebles after College and met my husband, who was born and brought up in Hawick.

In researching Disney Alexander, I recently looked up Rateable Value Records and sure enough Disney appears both in 1916 and 1917 living in Hawick. Imagine my amazement when I found my husband's grandfather and his family were living in the same tenement building! In 1916 my future mother-in-law would have been 7 years old. Fortunately, my husband's family name was Pettigrew and

not something like Scott which is much more common in Hawick, and this left little doubt that our two grandfathers shared the same close entry in Hawick.

But why were my grandparents in Hawick? Further research provided a likely explanation. Disney's brother-in-law, Thomas was an organ builder all his life and was born in Newcastleton, a village 20 miles from Hawick (and coincidentally only a few miles from where I have lived for over 40 years). It seems likely that Thomas had been sent to work in Aberdeen where he met Disney's sister. Although Thomas was based in Aberdeen after his marriage, organ builders frequently travelled for work. Being seven years older than Disney, it is quite possible that the two men worked together once Disney completed his apprenticeship, perhaps explaining my family's presence in Hawick during those years.

Perhaps my mother's story about her father working on an organ in Galashiels was correct as Hawick is only 18 miles away. However, she never knew that her parents had lived in Hawick or that my mother-in-law had lived in the same tenement!

Who could possibly have predicted that a connection between our two families would emerge more than a



Disney Alexander and siblings.

Photo: L. McCartney

century later?

My husband was brought up in Hawick but we have lived in Langholm for over 40 years. In another coincidence, when my husband told his parents that we were moving to Langholm his father, drawing on his pipe said “Weel, that wiz where ma fither wiz born”. It turns out he has many distant cousins here, but that is a different story!

Lesley McCartney, née Dale, Langholm

A Note on Tenements

In the US we associate the word tenement as a place where poor people lived, like a slum. I would expect here we would call it an apartment or if side by side a town house. But I don't know what you guys would call it. There is a tenement museum recently opened in New York City which shows how people lived in those places (<https://www.tenement.org>).

Barbara Bodden, California

Ed.: Rows of side-by-side houses in Scottish cities are called “terraces”, whatever the actual street name may be. Tenement flats in the cities can often be quite grand apartments, depending on the date when they were built and the area in which they are located. They are common in Edinburgh and Glasgow and the key is a shared entrance doorway and apartments on different storeys, all opening off a shared staircase. During the overcrowded periods in the old town of Edinburgh and in the Gorbals in the east end of Glasgow they had some of the negative connotations that Barbara hints at. The Italian term for this style of accommodation, palazzo, has much more positive connotations!

—oOo—

Taking on a Legend: the Alexanders versus Ned Kelly

It is perhaps the most iconic scene in Australian history. On 28th June 1880 at Glenrowan in the colony of Victoria, the police had Ned Kelly and his gang surrounded in a local inn. Reinforcements brought their numbers to 46, plus five Aboriginal trackers, so a quiet confidence spread among them that the accompanying media men would have a scoop to report.

And then, suddenly at dawn, a noise from behind alerted them that somebody was moving towards them. In the murky light, they could just make out a large, mysterious, well-armed figure who then opened fire. The Aboriginal people have an ancient legend about the bunyip, a fearsome creature that lurks in rivers or lakes ready for any passing prey. One of the trackers initially wondered if he was now looking at just such a creature. One of the policemen was sure “it was Old Nick himself”, while an onlooking journalist spoke afterwards of how the sinister arrival looked like the ghost of Hamlet's father.

We now know that it was Ned Kelly himself, clad in crude but effective home-made armour. Once the initial shock had passed, the police fired at the creature but their bullets just bounced off him. Kelly had been wounded earlier, and he was now suffering, as the impact of the bullets made him stagger. However, his adversaries only saw something invincible and sinister which was out to destroy them. Then suddenly a clear-headed individual noticed that their fearsome opponent's legs were exposed, and alerted his colleagues. It all changed, Kelly was quickly brought down, and his trial and execution would follow before the end of the year. His legend of course lives on.

A century later, in August 1980, I took the first tentative steps in my own family-history research and began with my English Midlands paternal line. However, my mother was a proud daughter of North-East Scotland and provided an



Image by J.W. Curtis;
State Library of Victoria.
Public Domain.

excellent supply of names and details. She told me of her father and grandfather, both wonderful characters. Then came a piece of genealogical gold dust: “Grandfather George had an older brother called James who emigrated to Australia. He was one of the policemen involved in the shoot-out and capture of Ned Kelly.” I can still recall my jolt of excitement until she added a punchline: “It was James who shouted out to his comrades that they should shoot at his legs”. This should have been the crowning glory of the legend, but I suddenly felt deflated. I had been in no doubt about the veracity of the story while James was involved as an ordinary foot soldier, but the moment he became the central hero it roused a deep suspicion on my part.

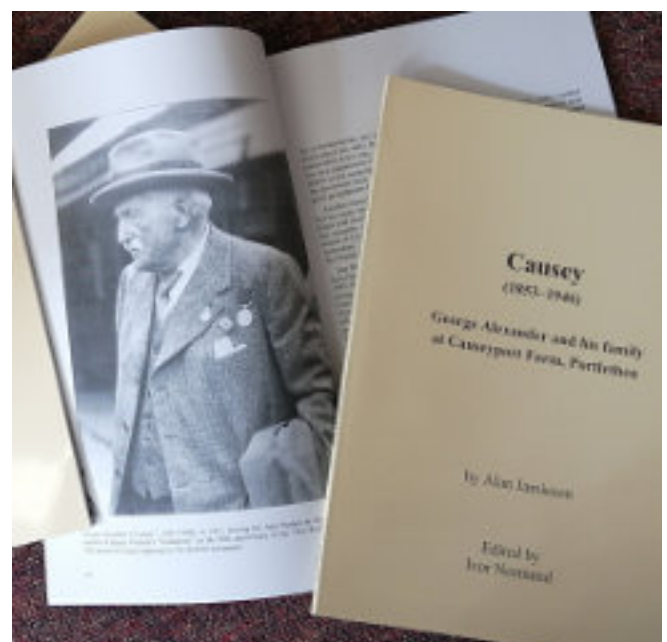
She went on to say that because of his involvement he feared recrimination from the Kelly Gang and found it hard to settle. He therefore returned to farming and did not stay in a single place for too long. A few years later, while spending a night sleeping under a threshing machine, he caught the pneumonia which killed him. This tragedy gave the tale a poignant melodrama but the doubts remained. It all seemed a bit too dramatic. Would the outlaws really pursue individual policemen?

I was not sure where to turn for information. This was pre-Internet, so I did what we used to do in those ancient times: I wrote a letter to the Australian High Commission in London. The reply wished me well but said they had no list of the names of the individual policemen involved.

I wrote in turn to various institutions in Victoria, namely the State Library, the Public Record Office and finally the Police Historical Unit. That last sentence sounds so very casual and matter-of-fact, but it actually took me seven years to find my answer. In mitigation, I was working full-time and my hobby often had to take a back seat. In the end, the fateful letter arrived and confirmed that James Alexander had never been in the Victoria Police. I read it with more of a wistful shrug than real sadness as I had already concluded from other research that James had been firmly established in New South Wales and was probably never in Kelly country.

I think most families have a legend of sorts somewhere. However, my mother had introduced me to a fascinating family line. Her maiden surname was Alexander, which I inherited as a first name. They were established in the parish of Bourtie by the time the Kirk Session records began in the late 17th century. Our branch then moved to Banchory-Devenick, settling in the parish of Portlethen. The family has attracted many researchers: Alan Jamieson (my mother’s cousin), won the Society’s Bruce Henderson Award in 2003 for his *Causey (1853–1946): George Alexander and his family at Causeyport Farm, Portlethen*, as did Ian MacDonald (my 6th cousin, once removed) in 2009 for *The Alexanders of Bourtie 1696–1886*. I am in regular touch with other family researchers. The icing on the cake was a 2020 appearance of a Valentine card on Antiques Roadshow, made in 1795 supposedly by James Alexander (my 3g-grandfather) for his future wife Mary Duncan.

It was Alan Jamieson’s account of Causey, my great-grandfather, whom he memorably described as “a big fish in a small sea”, which brought that intriguing character to my notice. My mother read it and praised its accuracy while laughing at the memories it invoked. George Alexander lived at Causeyport Farm, Portlethen, hence his nickname of Causey



Auld Causey and Alan Jamieson's prizewinning memoir.

(locally pronounced “Cassie”), and he bestrode his world with vigour, whether telling an anecdote, singing in the local hall, or starring in amateur dramatics.

His character is well illustrated by the following tale. On 25th August 1881 at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, Queen Victoria inspected the Volunteers (a prototype of the Territorial Army). 40,000 men lined up on parade, with an estimated crowd of 300,000 looking on from the nearby Craggs. The Queen arrived at 4 o’clock but unfortunately an unrelenting downpour began at lunchtime and lasted several hours. The media were full of praise for the stoicism of the participants and royalty, and the “Wet Review” passed into legend.

On 26th April 1923, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon married Albert, Duke of York, later George VI. At Holyrood Palace that year, a Wet Review veterans’ reunion was taking place, and it was decided that she should be introduced to Causey, the oldest surviving veteran. She complimented him on how well he looked for his age. His reply was: “And you are a gey bonny lass yourself, and if I were a bit younger I would fancy courting you myself.” Her reaction, or indeed of my great-grandmother, is not recorded, but no offence seems to have been taken. The *Bulletin* newspaper noted the incident with the magnificent headline “North-East man wasna feart”. It is one of those stories that make you feel proud while also having a nervous chuckle.

Suddenly it became clear to me how the family’s Ned Kelly legend must have originated. Causey was a lad of 11 when his big brother James went to Australia. Some years later, Causey argued with his father about the latter’s habit of sending money to help James out. When James died of tuberculosis (rather than the pneumonia of legend), Causey was only 34. It struck me that this natural storyteller might have invented a harmless tale to build up the reputation of his once-idolised big brother.

Having spent seven years fruitlessly pursuing a legend might make me a bit cross. Not so; it is better to journey hopefully than to arrive, and the search was fun. I am descended from the Alexanders of Bourtie, and I believe that our family’s researchers would not have learned this but for the reminiscences of Causey. Our Bourtrie antecedent, James Alexander, believed to be the sender of the Valentine, died in 1849 before statutory registration. Without Causey, we would not have been able to confirm the Bourtie link. In a family-history sense, Causey led us astray but he balanced the ledger.

But there is disappointment. At a family gathering in 2002, my Uncle John greeted my conclusion about the Ned Kelly legend in thoughtful silence. “And that is what your research found?” He paused. “Well, what was the point of that?” Perhaps he was right. Instead of vigorously pursuing and bringing down a family legend, I might have been better to take my cue from the conclusion of the wonderful film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, when the editor was similarly underwhelmed by the truth. As he put it: “No, sir. This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend”.

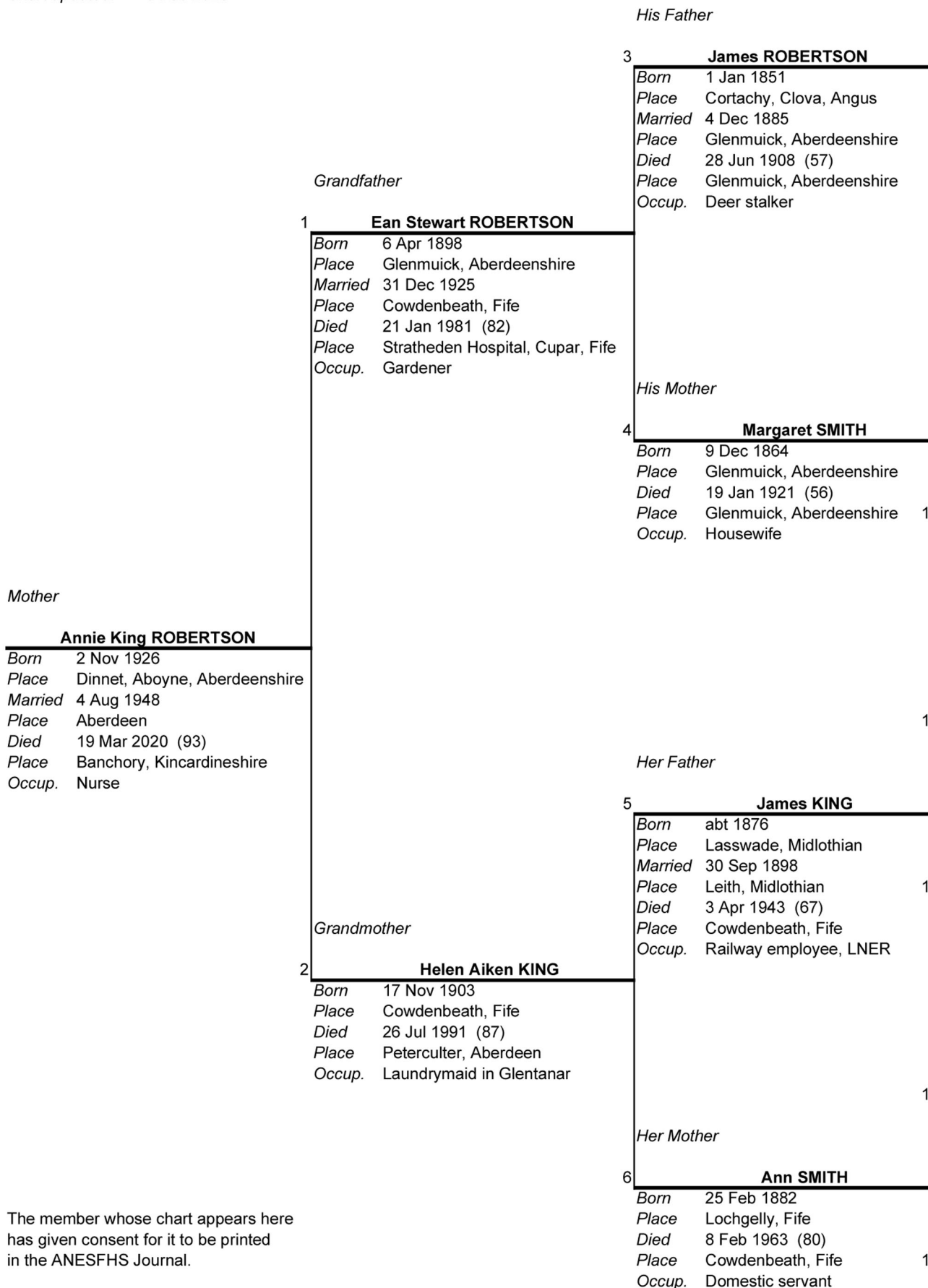
So, here’s my revised version. My great-great-uncle James Alexander went to Australia and, while there, he served with the police and was there when they captured Ned Kelly. In fact, it was only thanks to his quick-thinking advice that the outlaw was captured. There. Sorted. An unblemished hero with a happy ending.



George Alexander and his wife Anne Paterson Ritchie in 1895. Photo: Estate of A. Jamieson

Ancestor Chart

Member No.: **22873**
Chart updated: 9 Feb 2026



The member whose chart appears here
has given consent for it to be printed
in the ANESFHS Journal.

Form designed by:
Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS,
158–164 King Street,
Aberdeen AB24 5BD.

		15	James ROBERTSON	
			<i>Born</i> 9 Apr 1790	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar, ABD
			<i>Married</i> 4 Nov 1820	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar
			<i>Died</i> 1837 (47)	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar
				<i>Occup.</i> Gamekeeper/whisky smuggler
7	James ROBERTSON (reputed)	16	Elisabeth GORDON	
	<i>Born</i> 24 Dec 1820		<i>Born</i> abt 1785	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar
	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar, ABD		<i>Died</i> 10 Mar 1857 (72)	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar
	<i>Married</i> [never m. Betsy GORDON]			<i>Occup.</i> Housewife
	<i>Place</i>	17	John GORDON	
	<i>Died</i> 4 Aug 1884 (63)		<i>Born</i> 18 Nov 1789	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire
	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar, ABD		<i>Married</i> 1 Mar 1819	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire
	<i>Occup.</i> Carpenter		<i>Died</i> 3 Mar 1875 (85)	<i>Place</i> Cortachy, Clova, Angus
8	Bett (Betsy) GORDON	18	Jane STEWART	
	<i>Born</i> 6 May 1826		<i>Born</i> 15 Aug 1789	<i>Place</i> Ballater, Aberdeenshire
	<i>Place</i> Ballater, Aberdeenshire		<i>Died</i> 27 Apr 1871 (81)	<i>Place</i> Cortachy, Clova, Angus
	<i>Died</i> 24 Nov 1878 (52)			<i>Occup.</i> Farmer's wife
	<i>Place</i> Airlie, Angus	19	John SMITH	
	<i>Occup.</i> Handloom weaver		<i>Born</i> 17 Sep 1815	<i>Place</i> Tomintoul, Kirkmichael, BNF
9	John SMITH ("Dalloch")		<i>Married</i> 10 Nov 1842	<i>Place</i> Tomintoul
	<i>Born</i> 3 Oct 1842		<i>Died</i> 13 Jan 1898 (82)	<i>Place</i> Tomintoul
	<i>Place</i> Tomintoul, Kirkmichael, BNF	20	Isobel GRANT	
	<i>Married</i> 15 Dec 1865		<i>Born</i> abt 1818	<i>Place</i> Tomintoul, Kirkmichael, BNF
	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire		<i>Died</i> 23 May 1854 (36)	<i>Place</i> Tomintoul
	<i>Died</i> 26 Jan 1928 (85)			<i>Occup.</i>
	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire	21	Louis or Lewis LEYS	
	<i>Occup.</i> Labourer		<i>Born</i> abt 1801	<i>Place</i> Ruthie, Banffshire
0	Mary LEYS		<i>Married</i> 18 Aug 1825	<i>Place</i> Crathie, Braemar
	<i>Born</i> abt 1846		<i>Died</i> abt 1863	<i>Place</i>
	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire			<i>Occup.</i> Farmer of 4 acres
	<i>Died</i> 14 Mar 1888 (42)	22	Margaret SYMON	
	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire		<i>Born</i> abt 1804	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Tullich & Glengairn
	<i>Occup.</i> Domestic servant		<i>Died</i> 4 Jun 1891 (87)	<i>Place</i> Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire
				<i>Occup.</i> Domestic servant
		23	Thomas KING	
			<i>Born</i> 25 Jul 1809	<i>Place</i> Newton, Midlothian
			<i>Married</i> 2 Jan 1837	<i>Place</i> Inveresk & Musselburgh, MDL
			<i>Died</i> 29 Jul 1866 (57)	<i>Place</i> Fordel, Dalgety, Fife
				<i>Occup.</i> Collier
1	Thomas KING	24	Grace SCOTT	
	<i>Born</i> 1847		<i>Born</i> 1814	<i>Place</i> Inveresk, Midlothian
	<i>Place</i> Inveresk, Midlothian		<i>Died</i> 21 Aug 1880 (66)	<i>Place</i> Lasswade, Midlothian
	<i>Married</i> 16 Mar 1869			<i>Occup.</i>
	<i>Place</i> Newbattle, Midlothian	25	Alexander KING	
	<i>Died</i> 3 Oct 1913 (66)		<i>Born</i> 26 Nov 1815	<i>Place</i> Dalziel, Lanarkshire
	<i>Place</i> Cowdenbeath, Fife		<i>Married</i> 9 Jan 1839	<i>Place</i> Inveresk & Musselburgh, MDL
	<i>Occup.</i> Colliery engine-keeper		<i>Died</i> 2 Dec 1875 (60)	<i>Place</i> Calberry colliery, Inveresk
2	Elizabeth KING			<i>Occup.</i> Miner/coal-hewer
	<i>Born</i> 1846	26	Ellen or Helen AITKEN	
	<i>Place</i> Inveresk, Midlothian		<i>Born</i> 1 Jun 1817	<i>Place</i> Leith South, Midlothian
	<i>Died</i> Abt 1901 (55?)		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>
	<i>Place</i> Fife, Scotland			<i>Occup.</i>
	<i>Occup.</i> Factory hand	27	James SMITH (MARTIN)	
			<i>Born</i> 1820	<i>Place</i> Coleraine, Ireland
			<i>Married</i> 1852	<i>Place</i> Coleraine, Co. Londonderry
			<i>Died</i> 9 Apr 1890 (70)	<i>Place</i> Lochore, Ballingry, Fife
				<i>Occup.</i> Filler at ironworks
3	David SMITH	28	Elizabeth SMITH	
	<i>Born</i> 5 Aug 1855		<i>Born</i> 22 Nov 1836	<i>Place</i> Co. Down, Ireland
	<i>Place</i> Anderston, Glasgow		<i>Died</i> 26 Feb 1897 (60)	<i>Place</i> Ballingry, Fife
	<i>Married</i> 12 Apr 1878			<i>Occup.</i>
	<i>Place</i> Lochgelly, Auchterderran, Fife	29	Michael VALE	
	<i>Died</i>		<i>Born</i> 1829	<i>Place</i> Co. Waterford, Ireland
	<i>Place</i>		<i>Married</i> 24 Nov 1852	<i>Place</i> Dunfermline, Fife
	<i>Occup.</i> Coalminer		<i>Died</i> 22 May 1883 (54)	<i>Place</i> Lochgelly, Fife
4	Mary VAILLE or VALE			<i>Occup.</i> Drawer in iron/stone mine
	<i>Born</i> 5 Oct 1857	30	Ann NASMYTH	
	<i>Place</i> Auchterderran, Fife		<i>Born</i> 9 Mar 1839	<i>Place</i> Carrington, Midlothian
	<i>Died</i> 8 Apr 1929 (71)		<i>Died</i> 1 Jun 1928 (89)	<i>Place</i> Lochgelly, Fife
	<i>Place</i> Cowdenbeath, Fife			<i>Occup.</i>
	<i>Occup.</i> Pithead worker			

Visiting Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives



I recently had my first research visit to the Archives and, for those who have not been before, here is my experience.

The visit was easy to arrange. You email them noting which records you wish to review and when you would like to visit. There are two sessions a day, 9.30–12.30 and 13.30–16.30, Tuesdays through to Fridays.

I had some specific references, which I was able to include in my email request, but the Archivists gave helpful guidance as to what records were available. A lot of the Aberdeen City records were destroyed during the Second World War, but more Aberdeenshire documents escaped this fate.

They email you with a date to attend. When you arrive at the Aberdeen Council building on Broad Street, you report to reception and are then escorted to the Archives on the top floor. Being accompanied was very welcome as the building feels like a rabbit warren. You are also escorted to the front door at the end of the session.

Each session is three hours long, which seems like a lot of time. However, even with specific references, some of the records and account books I was looking at had hundreds of pages, covering many decades, so reviewing them took longer than I expected and the session passed very quickly. Some of the records have been digitised and there is a computer for public use to access them. Hard copy records such as the council minute books are placed on large cushions to protect them.

I hope you will find what you are looking for but you may also find out other information as a bonus. For example, as I browsed the records, I discovered that the Town clerk and the person maintaining street clocks in Stonehaven received the same annual wage for over 20 years of £2 and £2: 2 shillings respectively. However, the dung collectors were paid £1: 8 shillings and 8 pence per month. It just goes to show, “where there’s muck there’s brass.”

I was daunted by going to the Archives but it was a worthwhile experience. Staff were helpful and answered all the questions I had as a newcomer to the Archive. If you have a research topic, that may have sources in the Archives, I encourage you to make that visit. For more details, go to: <https://sites.aberdeencity.gov.uk/AAGM/plan-your-visit/archives>.

Gillian Marriner, Aberdeen

DOORS OPEN DAYS 2026 *If you visit Aberdeen on 5th September, you will have a wonderful opportunity to pop in, without an appointment, to see the Archives' facilities in the Town House, Broad Street, Aberdeen. They are participating in the annual Doors Open Day, which makes culturally-significant spaces open to the general public. As a bonus ... the Archives are running a family- and local history Fair with stalls representing family history societies, including ourselves and SAFHS. Opening times are 10.00–16.30. Our Research Centre will also be open as part of the Doors Open Day programme. Go to <https://www.doorsopendays.org.uk> for more details. Do please encourage friends and relatives to drop in.*

SOCIETY MEETINGS AND REPORTS

Aberdeen Meetings

Graeme Nicol: Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen

21st March 2026

The talk I gave, as Ex-Deacon Convener, traced the history and civic significance of the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen by examining the evolution of their meeting places and using these buildings as a lens through which to understand the Trades' shifting role in the city's political, economic, and social life. I believe that the Trades' story is not merely architectural or ceremonial but deeply entwined with Aberdeen's long struggle over representation, reform, and the responsibilities of civic community.



Aberdeen Trades Hall

Photo: G Nicol

The story began with the establishment of the First Trinity Hall, a site whose early history reflected the intersection of royal authority, religious presence, and urban development. In 1197, King William the Lion established a residence at the south end of Shiprow to oversee a burgh that had become a valuable source of royal revenue. After his death, the property passed to the Trinitarian Friars, who occupied it for nearly three and a half centuries until the Reformation swept away Catholic institutions in 1560. The buildings then lay derelict until 1631, when Dr William Guild – minister, philanthropist, and later Principal of King's College – purchased the site from the Crown and gifted it to the Seven Incorporated Trades. His condition was that the craftsmen restore the decayed structures and use them as a unified headquarters, strengthening their collective influence within the burgh.

This unification was the culmination of a centuries-long struggle between the Burgesses of Trade and the Burgesses of Guild. Since the 13th century, craftsmen had fought for economic protection and civic representation against the merchants who dominated the Town Council. The turning point came in 1587 with the “Common Indenture”, often described as Aberdeen's Magna Carta. This agreement recognised the office of Deacon Convener, established a formal mechanism for resolving disputes between merchants and craftsmen, protected the trading privileges of the crafts, and gave the Trades a unified civic voice. Their motto, *Vis Unita Fortior* (“Strength United is Stronger”), encapsulated this new solidarity.

Guild membership carried a moral as well as practical purpose. It sought to instil compassion, fairness, and social responsibility in the craftsmen, values symbolised by the stone lintel bearing Sir William Guild's arms and the biblical injunction from Proverbs 19:17: “He that hath pitieth the poor lendeth to the Lord”. This lintel, moved to each successive Hall, served as a reminder that the Incorporations were not merely economic bodies but early forms of friendly societies. They provided social insurance, supported widows and orphans, and invested in land and property with the belief that the prosperity of the city and its trades were mutually dependent.

The Victorian era marked a period of transformation. The arrival of the railway in the 1840s required the Trades to vacate their historic Shiprow site. Rather than resisting industrial progress, they embraced it, constructing a grand new Trinity Hall on Union Street in 1847. The railway connected Aberdeen to the wider nation, enhancing the reputation of its craftsmen and contributing to a period of prosperity fuelled by feu duties. These revenues supported pensions, civic improvements, and the Trades' School, which educated around



Detail from the
Hammermen Window
Photo: G. Nicol

130 pupils annually until the 1872 Education Act. Yet even the imposing six-storey Union Street Hall eventually proved inadequate, prompting major expansions in the 1890s before the world wars halted further development.

A new chapter opened in the 1960s. In 1964, the Trades commissioned a modern headquarters on Holburn Street, selecting the young architectural firm Mackie Ramsay Taylor through competition. Completed in 1967, the Third Trinity Hall remains one of only two operational Trades Houses in Scotland and the only one built in the 20th century. Its construction signalled the Trades' determination to remain relevant, embracing modern design and technology while continuing their historic civic role.

The talk then addressed a significant omission in earlier histories, particularly Bain's 1887 account: the Trades' involvement in political reform. Far from being passive observers, they were active participants in the movement to democratise Aberdeen's governance. The Aberdeen Riot of 1785, widely reported even in London, revealed the city's reformist undercurrents. Joseph Hume M.P.'s gift of a gold-tooled volume confirmed the Trades' engagement in the campaign for Burgh Reform between 1793 and 1821. The 1835 Commissioners' Report, a thousand-page investigation into Scotland's municipal corporations, exposed the inequities of Aberdeen's self-electing council – a "closed corporation" dominated by merchant elites. The Trades denounced this as a feudal relic, and their efforts contributed to the Scottish Reform Act of 1832 and the Burgh Reform Act of 1833, which introduced elected councils accountable to ratepayers.

The long-standing friction between merchants and craftsmen was finally resolved with the Abolition of Exclusive Privileges Act of 1846. While this ended the Trades' commercial monopolies, it preserved their corporate identity and rights, enabling them to evolve from regulators of trade into custodians of heritage and civic life.

The talk concluded by emphasising that the legacy of the Seven Incorporated Trades lay not only in their buildings but in their enduring commitment to service, community, and the moral responsibilities of craftsmanship. From medieval guilds to modern philanthropy, their history reflects the belief that a city is built as much on shared duty as on stone and timber.

Graeme Nicol, Aberdeen

Many thanks to Graeme Nicol for providing this summary of his talk. A full history of the Guilds is available in Nicol, G., Sutherland, A. & Donaldson G.L. (2025) *The Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen: A History of Helping a City and its People*. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press). ISBN 978-1-85752-153-5 (Paperback), ISBN 978-1-85752-152-8 (Hardback).

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Dee Hoole: Blackmail and Banishment – Aberdeen Crime in the 1840s

20th April 2026

Dee Hoole made a welcome return to the Society for our April meeting and entertained us most divertingly with more stories of the darker side of life in Aberdeen in the 1840s. The presentation focused on three intriguing cases: a fire-raising incident, serial blackmail by a local con-artist, and the shipwreck of convict transport vessels.

The first case was that of Harris and Alithia Rosenberg, who were accused of wilful fire-raising at their fur shop in 1842. Dee noted the unusual fact that, while they were in prison awaiting trial, the couple's request for a modified diet due to their Jewish faith was denied

by the Aberdeen Prison Board. They unsuccessfully requested unleavened bread as it was during the Passover period. The prison diet was prescribed by law but the prison surgeon, Mr Williamson, made them a special allowance of tea instead. They were a colourful pair. Harris was an immigrant from Prussia, and before moving to Aberdeen, had settled first in York, where he was a licensed hawkers of fancy goods. Alithia Barnett was his second wife and she also had a previous marriage. Her first husband had proved to be a bigamist and she had taken to the stage as an actress and singer to support herself.

On the night of the fire, Harris Rosenberg had proved unusually difficult to rouse and had shown no haste to get to the shop premises when he was alerted to the fire. He claimed he had turned off the gas when he sent the shop staff home early but a hole was found in the gas pipe and a knife and rags lay suspiciously close by. There was also no fire damage on the floor or skirting boards, just on the walls where some feather boas were smouldering. Deliberate fire raising was a crime punishable by death, due to the risk to life of innocent neighbours, so things looked bad for the Rosenbergs when architects gave evidence that they thought the fire had been started deliberately. Suspicions were also heightened by the fact that the Rosenbergs had taken out a particularly large insurance policy the year before. The jury reached a majority guilty verdict but urged leniency as the couple were strangers to the city and of a previously good character. Harris was sentenced to three years transportation to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) where he served his time in a road building gang. Alithia served two years in Perth Prison. It turned out they were fortunate in this sentence as information came to light afterwards that their premises in Thirsk had previously suffered a similar fire.

In the second case, also from 1842, John Ledingham, a 17-year-old clerk (born in Aberlour), was tried for blackmailing at least three Aberdeen citizens while using false aliases. His pattern was to demand small amounts of money initially but to threaten to increase demands if not paid. Handwriting experts were able to compare samples of Ledingham's writing with the extortion letters and he was convicted and sentenced to seven years' transportation. Unfortunately for John Ledingham, he lost his life when the *Waterloo*, the transport ship on which he was despatched, was wrecked in a storm at Table Bay, South Africa, with 148 of the 219 convicts drowning.

Dee explained that the condition of the transport ships themselves was often poor and that the arrangements for looking after the prisoners were very basic. The captain had supervision of the crew and a ship's surgeon was in charge of the resources for the prisoners and could sell off anything that wasn't used at the end of the voyage. She recounted the example of the loss, in 1833, of the *Amphitrite* convict transport ship which was carrying 108 female convicts, 12 children, and 16 crewmen. 19 of the women were Scots of whom two were from Aberdeen. The vessel, an old ship which had previously required repairs, sank in a storm in the English Channel after the captain refused help. The wreck resulted in the deaths of all on board except for three crew members.

The voyage to Australia took approximately three months and very few individuals ever returned to Britain. Dee has identified only ten Scotswomen who were able to return after serving their sentences. Generally speaking, transportation was reserved for repeat offenders but most of those sentenced were poor with low skills levels and the authorities were glad to be able literally to ship the problem off somewhere else. Skilled individuals such as engineers or accountants tended to do rather well in the new land. Options for women were more restricted. Most went to Hobart and were given work as washerwomen and, since there were more men than women in the colony, marriage was encouraged. It was therefore highly unlikely that a woman would be able to earn enough to pay for a return fare.

Once again, we were very grateful to Dee for shedding light on the darker corners of our heritage and bringing to life the conditions in which many women lived during the 1840s in Aberdeen.

Hugh Falconer: Music-Making in Aberdeenshire in the 1960s–70s

16th May 2026

We followed the pattern established in 2025 by rounding off our Aberdeen talks programme with a musical topic. It proved to be a real nostalgia-fest for members and sent us all off cheerily with newly-remembered tunes humming in our ears.

Hugh Falconer has written on a range of topics, including aspects of his own family history, but he is exceptionally well-placed to tell us about popular music-making in the North-East. He is the author of *Aberdeen and North-East Bands Through The Decades*. This book covers the local bands of the period but also touches on fashions and attitudes as well as telling us about the musicians who made up the bands, often migrating from one band to another as line-ups changed. He has also chronicled some of this material in his occasional blog, Scotbeat which you can find at <https://scotbeat.wordpress.com>.



Importantly, Hugh himself was directly involved in the whole scene, as a performer, a presenter and a promoter. A keen bass-player, his first job after leaving Aberdeen Academy in 1969 was with Decca Recording Studios where he worked with many contemporary recording stars, the Moody Blues being perhaps the best known. After that he turned his hand to activities as diverse as flying for the RAF and creating artisan ceramics at Aberdeen Craft Pottery. But all this while there was music. He played in a variety of line-ups and went on to work with local Aberdeen radio station Northbeat.

His talk gave us an excellent chronological guide to the kind of music that was available first of all to our grandparents in the 1910s and 20s and brought us up to more modern times. One very successful figure was George Elrick (1903–99), the “Smiling Voice of Radio” who was born in Aberdeen. He worked as a musician but was best known as the host of the BBC radio music request programme, *Housewives' Choice* (1946–67). He was also the vocalist on Henry Hall's well-known recording “A Nice Cup of Tea”. To hear the man himself go to https://youtu.be/_cenviiBmvA?si=6aayidEoTmBFZ_dg.

Throughout it all, the Beach Ballroom was an important venue. Bands who had residencies there were iconic local heroes. But there were up-and-coming visitors: yes, indeed, the Beatles did play the Beach Ballroom in 1963 shortly before they released “Please Please Me”. Albert Bonici, who booked them, ran LCB Agency from Little Cross House on South College Street in Elgin and brought many well-known bands to the North-East. There were also Beat Contests for aspiring bands. Alan “Fluff” Freeman, well-known as a Radio One presenter, was one of the contest hosts and the prize was £50 and a trophy.

The list of bands covered was seemingly endless and the names, once familiar, are now forgotten by many. However there were a few “ooohs” and “aaahs” from the audience as they were mentioned. There was a special shout out for Hugh's own band, Another Camel which once supported Manfred Mann. The other special moment was a shout out for our own Helen Strachan's husband Malcolm, another working musician who featured in the talk. The talk was a wonderful cocktail of memories and sound clips. There's a lot more detail in Hugh's book, which is readily available on Amazon. He was an engaging speaker and we hope he will return next season to tell us about the Clipper Ship adventures of his sailmaker ancestor James Mackland who roamed the seven seas from 1881 to 1892.

Journal team

—oOo—

Moray/Banff Group

At our previous Zoom meeting, held in March, we had enjoyed “DNA Matters, Part 1” so,

having held our April meeting in Elgin Library, we looked forward to enjoying “DNA Matters, Part 2” in May via Zoom.

George Jamieson gave us a fascinating talk entitled “My Brickwalls – asking Y-DNA”. He told us the story of his 20 years of climbing the wrong tree and how much was then achieved using the different types of DNA testing to aid his family history research and demolish at least two brick walls. DNA tests were able to uncover the true story that public records concealed.

This was followed by Doug’s tale about “The Parents of Isabella Wood – My hope that DNA might help break down a 40-year-old brick wall”. He explained how DNA testing has opened up a whole new way of solving genealogical brick walls but that it can also bring along the disconcerting information that we have been chasing the wrong line in our family tree, meaning that we have to go back and start again at the faulty point. Either way, it has added an extra twist to our always-fascinating efforts on the trail of our roots!

June turned out to be a busy month. Our final official meeting of the current session was held on the usual first Saturday of the month in Elgin Library. Every chair was occupied in the new Activities Room as we undertook to learn more about the Ancestry and Findmypast websites. Both have a huge amount of useful information on a vast range of genealogical topics but to get the best out of them it helps to look at what resources they hold and how best to access these. Both websites are obviously invaluable for research in England and Wales and other countries but, while they are no match for Scotland’s People for Scottish research, they do hold a great deal of useful information for those with Scottish roots, so it is worth taking time to get to know how they can be used.

We took a last-minute decision to fit in an extra Zoom meeting on 20th June to avoid having a long gap between Zoom meetings from May to probably October. This was our fiftieth Zoom meeting so a cause for some celebration. We were inevitably a smaller group than usual but we had an enjoyable afternoon chatting together and thinking about “What is the most important thing I have learnt from these Zoom meetings?” Answers ranged from having learnt so much about how to improve our research to the firm friendships which had been made across our worldwide membership.

To round it all off, 19 of us within reach of Elgin gathered at Threaplands Garden Centre on 27th June for an excellent afternoon tea. While most of us meet up at our Library meetings it was nevertheless a lovely occasion to simply sit and chat while enjoying the plates of good food.

With a break from meetings in July and August we look forward to meeting up with you all again in the Autumn. In the meantime, enjoy the summer with hopefully more of this lovely weather.

moray.banff@anesfhs.org.uk

Mary Evans, Elgin

—oOo—

Glasgow Group

Members' Day Meeting: On the Move (Rural Exodus, Part 2)

30th May 2026

Following on from Gavin Bell’s excellent zoom presentation on 31st January, the theme of our in person meet-up on 30th May was to share experiences of ancestors moving about. We heard of the family whose peregrinations covered a very compact area of the city of Aberdeen. Each flitting meant a step up and prompted us to consider and discuss how and why.

Gone are the days of the fluttering candle and quill pen and our next contribution explored the merit and pitfalls of AI. Using ChatGPT it is possible to generate a slick and informative presentation of inputted data with helpful suggestions from the bot about what to try next. While the caveat is: “rubbish in = rubbish out”, the general consensus was this is definitely worth a punt.

After WW1, landowners began selling off their farms to the tenant occupiers which may explain why some ancestors stayed in one place. But as work dictates location, opportunities in the railways and shipyards often directed change of place. The east coast cities of Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh attracted many skilled workers to relocate for employment in the jute industry, weaving and the manufacture of rubber.

For others, the lure was the promise of a better life in a new land. Despite families dispersing globally, many of us still link up and value our distant relatives, geographically and genetically. An interesting aspect of change is that one family member often trail-blazed with other brothers and sisters following once the “pioneer” had established a foothold, whether that was from a rural setting to the city or from country to country.

Sometimes there’s the unexpected, an example being where a father, a tailor, from rural Banffshire moved into Aberdeen to improve his lot, but one of his sons returned to farming life in Gamrie. *Plus ça change?*

For those sea-faring families involved in the merchant service, change of location seemed easy. One member shared the tale of an ancestor who deserted his wife and family here to make a new life in New Zealand. It was easy for him to remarry with ready excuses for not having documentation, but his abandoned first wife in Blighty had a five year wait before the church permitted her to remarry.

The richness of meeting in person is conviviality. We are with our ain folk who enjoy the same hobby. In the real world and family life our intriguing stories are often met with a polite lack of interest, but when we are together the chat is fascinating.

Graham’s Quiz was again original and thought provoking. Along the lines of “Ask the Family” and “Whose House is This?”, the challenge was to use our detective skills to interrogate an eclectic group of artefacts and documents. Together they opened a window to the past. The quiz highlighted the value of collaboration with like-minded people. Being in the same room, knowledge was shared and ideas bounced about like wildfire. As well as being great fun, there is no doubt everyone came away with fresh knowledge that throws more light on their own family in the past. As historians we value documents, DNA and oral information but can sometimes overlook the physical items which can tell us so much. Every day is a school day.

The next meeting of our Glasgow Group is on Saturday 31st October 2026. Our spooky topic is “They tried to bury me”. It’s an opportunity to share your most shameful ancestor, the one they hoped would disappear in the mists of time or labelled “We dinna talk about him”.

How did you come across the dastardly one? Did something fire up your inner Arthur Conan Doyle or were you on another tack and the horrible truth unravelled before you like a rotting mummy? Please note this will be an in-person-only meeting so we would kindly request you email your intention to attend (or not) to glasgow@anesfhs.org.uk so that we can ensure sufficient chairs and refreshments.

Kate Clark, Glasgow

—oOo—

Southern Ontario Group

Members' Day Meeting: Discovery Calls and Brick Walls

25th April 2026

At the last minute, Yvonne McEwan’s online talk on “Blood Brothers and Sisters: Scotland’s Relationship with Canada’s Indigenous Peoples” was cancelled due to a family emergency. We hope she will speak on this topic at a later date. Luckily, 22 eager genealogists tuned in

to discuss their exciting discoveries and family tree brick walls. We started the presentation with our three co-hosts, David Joiner, Susan Brouwer and Rod Coates, who touched on some of their favourite family-history stories.

Rod started with a fascinating tale of discovery due to some diligent family members saving old documents. There was a journal with copies of letters (over 100 from 1813–22) kept by Dr Alexander Smith of Macduff whose brother James Smith had emigrated to New Brunswick. Included in the trove was an ancestor's holographic will from 1794. Rod was fortunate to borrow these documents for several years from a distant cousin to peruse, scan and catalogue at leisure.

One of Susan's biggest brick walls was partially broken down with a Y-DNA test taken by her brother. She had only got so far with her McPhersons in Aberdeen, and the Y-DNA test revealed they were actually "hidden McGregors". This discovery led Susan to review her own DNA matches in a new light and look for DNA matches who had McGregors in their family trees. She has been building out floating tree branches with these match lines and has connected more than one. She plans to keep going with this research methodology in hopes of connecting them all to a single person one day.

David talked about seeing an image of an ancestor's pedigree chart at FamilySearch. He noticed the original chart had been created by the Sackett Family Association and also that this society had a website. He was able to contact them and join the Association, resulting in extending that branch of his family tree from seven to 14 generations! Through this, David also found a surprise connection to Nancy Reagan and the author of "A Visit from St Nicholas" ["'Twas the night before Xmas..."]. He advised always checking the sources of your sources.

We then opened up the virtual floor to those attending the meeting. Participants helped each other consider resources to connect DNA matches, track down rare surnames, or pick DNA tests. Members offered many resource suggestions such as the SAFHS pre-1841 populations list, city archives, the British Newspaper Archives, cemetery record transcriptions, ship passenger and crew lists, and military records.

We had an excellent discussion with great camaraderie and teamwork. The meeting concluded by reviewing our upcoming meeting topics. Our theme for 26th September is still to be determined, but on 14th November our presenter Lorna Kinnaird will address "The Caledonian Asylum Petition Applications".

ontario@anesfhs.org.uk

Susan Brouwer

co-organizing with Rod Coates and David Joiner

—oOo—

Australia and New Zealand Group

Dale Fogarty & Heather Mackay: Family Life and Illegitimacy in N-E Scotland

6th June 2026

This online meeting had 34 attendees from around the world. Dale Fogarty and her sister Heather Mackay presented a genealogical research case study examining illegitimacy in North-East Scotland through the lens of the Angus and Forbes families. The research began as an attempt to trace their 2g-grandparents, James Angus (b. 1836) and Jane Forbes (b. 1836).

First, Dale explained about the incidence of illegitimate births amongst agricultural labourers in Aberdeenshire. Between 1858–73, 9% or more of Scottish births were illegitimate, with rates in Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray counties double the Scottish average at 14–16%. Illegitimate births were most common in rural areas and concentrated amongst the labouring classes: women employed on farms, factory workers, domestic servants, and

needleworkers. The farm servant system in North-East Scotland involved young males and females (aged 10-14) leaving home to work on neighbouring farms on six- or 12-month contracts, creating a highly mobile workforce.

Scotland's distinctive "irregular marriages", or marriages by habit and repute, were based on mutual consent rather than religious ceremony so there are not necessarily records available. Of the records that exist, church registers used terms like "natural", "base-born", or "reputed" to indicate illegitimacy, though recording of illegitimacy was inconsistent. In civil registration (1855-1918), "illegitimate" appeared in the first column, a custom discontinued from 1919. Children could be registered under mother's maiden name, father's surname if paternity was acknowledged, or both names if parents signed together. Dale flagged that even if paternity was not acknowledged a child might be given their father's name as a middle name.

In the course of outlining their research process, we followed the location of these children through censuses and found them in a variety of relatives' homes, including with paternal grandparents. That seemed unusual as the common assumption is that illegitimate children would live with their maternal grandparents while their parents were out working on other people's farms.

Some successful research strategies were to: research collateral connections; cross reference multiple census years to show family patterns; use FreeCen to decipher handwritten census details; examine nearby households on census records, and use maps to locate the farms.

A chance decision to research Margaret Inkson, who married into their Angus line, gave Dale and Heather a helpful key to understanding the family structure. Margaret lived to 104 years old, becoming Aberdeenshire's oldest inhabitant and generating numerous newspaper articles celebrating her longevity. These newspaper articles outlined the family relationships and extended family. The story of their research journey was fascinating and we hope that Dale and Heather will publish it, thereby giving us even more helpful details.

September Meeting Topic

This is a "Save the Date" notice and a head's up to do some research before our September meeting. Our topic will be "Famous or Infamous Scots" and the meeting will take place on Saturday 5th September at 4:00 pm AEST (Brisbane time). Please bring along information about your own famous or infamous Scots family members and share your findings with us all. Get thinking now ... there's still time!

Robin Price, Brisbane

—oOo—

Library Report

Here are the latest additions to the Society Library, with thanks to the two authors for their donations:

Aberdeen's Railways: History and Development by Keith G. Jones. (Great North of Scotland Railway Association, 2026)

This publication is a collaboration between the Great North of Scotland Railway Association and the Caledonian Railway Association, and is the first fully comprehensive and illustrated history of the Granite City's railways. It covers the history and development of the different railways serving Aberdeen, their stations, motive power, signalling, hotels associated with the railway, and freight operations. It contains some wonderful photographs, both archival and more recent, not just of the trains, but of the people involved. It will be an indispensable book for anyone interested in trains and railways, but it has a wider appeal too. I was particularly interested in the historical background which is well illustrated with original photographs, adverts, maps and plans. This book brought back many memories too, in particular of the harbour railway. This freight railway started at Guild Street and went to the Electricity Works at Millburn Street in one direction and to the Gas Works at Cotton Street in the other, with connections along all the quays. There are still some traces of this railway on

Blaikie's quay. Some of the later photos from the 1950s and 60s show trains moving along Guild Street and the foot of Market Street, surrounded by people, cars and bicycles going about their daily business. The trains did go fairly slowly as I remember! This is definitely a book for anyone interested in the history and development of the City of Aberdeen.

Copies can be ordered by post from GNSRA, Logie Shannoch, Drumrossie, Inch, AB52 6LJ, with a cheque for £21 made payable to GNSRA, or by email to sales@gnsra.org.uk giving your name, address and telephone number, and paying by bank transfer of £21 to Gt North of Scotland Railway Association, sort code 80-09-68, account number 00369687. Please put your surname as the reference.

Robert Wallen has written many books on the Garmouth and Kingston area of Moray and has donated four to the Society Library:

Garmouth and Kingston: a Brief History (Democritus, 2023)

Robert begins with an overview of Moray, its geology and topography, the evidence of occupation in prehistory and the excursions of the Romans into Moray, but his main focus is on the two villages of Garmouth and Kingston and the part they played in the political, social, technical and economic developments in Scotland, and beyond. It's an absorbing and very well-researched history of that particular area of Speyside. The second half of the book concentrates on two interconnected families, the Spences and the Geddies, who were significant in the development of the two villages in the 19th century.

The book is beautifully presented and contains many wonderful illustrations, some of which are copies of lantern slides taken by the author's great-grandfather in 1893. There are photos of the people who lived in Garmouth. There are also maps and plans of the area, including material from the National Records of Scotland and from Moray Council.

Mapping the Moray Coast (Democritus, 2019)

This attractive book consists of illustrations of fifty maps covering the Moray Coast region from the 1584 version based on Ptolemy's map to the 1947 version of the Geographia map, all with explanations, showing what these maps reveal about changing landscapes and society.

The Marches between Urquhart and Garmouth (Democritus, 2022)

The author analyses an 18th century map that shows the boundary between the landed estates of the Earl of Fife and the Duke of Gordon, and explains what it shows about landownership and changes in the topography.

Moray and Slavery (Democritus, 2024).

This is an overview of Moray connections to the transatlantic slave trade and the plantations of the Caribbean.

Robert's other titles include:

Robert and Mary Douglas and their Family (£15). The story of a Victorian working class family in Garmouth, and the lives that their 15 children lived.

Highways and Byways (£15). The story of the development of roads, streets, paths and tracks in and near Garmouth and Kingston.

The Fochabers and Garmouth Railway (£15). The history of a railway planned to come to Garmouth in the 1860s, and of the railway that was built in the 1880s.

The People of Bogincur (£15). An account of one of the poorer parts of Garmouth and the people who lived there in the 19th century.

Essil (£15). A history of Essil Farm and the area around it.

The Garmouth Water Tower and the Street Fountains (£10). The history of the development of the piped water supply developed in the late 19th century.

These books are sure to be of interest to anyone whose family comes from the area. The books are available in the Garmouth & Kingston Community Hub, who receive all profits from the sales. The Hub is owned by and run by the local Community Association in the centre of Garmouth and is next to the main bus stop on High Street, and is open 11–1.30 every weekday and 2–4 on Saturdays and Sundays. It houses a small exhibition on local history and sells copies of books about the local area as well as local honey and homemade jam, amongst other things. Coffee, tea, soft drinks and snacks are available for visitors in exchange for a small donation. Indoor and outdoor seating is available. A good place to visit if you're in the area. Books are also available direct from Robert (robert.wallen@hotmail.co.uk).

library@anesfhs.org.uk

Margie Mellis, Aberdeen

—oOo—

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Time for Turra!

I was wondering if Turriff had ever been a featured parish in the journal? My interest in this Parish is because of my father and his ancestors who bore the name of Mann. From my researches many generations were born, married, died and were buried in Turriff. They were all shoemakers.

My paternal grandfather, who died before I was born, left Scotland and settled in Newcastle upon Tyne. He taught “cobbling” to the young residents of what, in those days, was known as the “deaf and dumb school” so they would have a trade to earn their living.

My father left home in the 1930s and moved south to London where he met my mother. I was their only child but we travelled up to Newcastle many times to see family. In later life I actually managed to go up to Turriff and find the grave where some of my relatives are buried. I was there only for a day as we drove up and back with friends of ours from Dundee where we were all staying for Hogmanay. I thought Turriff was a lovely little town but it is unlikely I'll be returning although you never know.

Vivienne Evans, nee Mann

Ed.: Many thanks for the query, Vivienne. Sadly, Turriff is not one of our Featured Parishes. Indeed, the journal search facility only throws up three references to Turriff despite its famous association with the Turra Coo and the farmworkers' strike so I do think it would be a good parish to include. Is anyone out there willing to submit material for a Turriff featured parish? Our trusty library and research teams can help build up a bibliography if someone is willing to summarise the history of the town. Any takers?

—oOo—

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Ed.: We are introducing a new occasional series where we provide information about other local heritage organisations whose collections may be of interest to family historians with roots in the North-East. If you are travelling round this summer, you may want to check out some of the many local heritage centres. If you want to recommend one, do get in touch.

journal@anesfhs.org.uk

Fraserburgh Heritage Centre

Fraserburgh Heritage Centre opened in 1998 in what was originally a barrel store and later the foundry for an international engineering company during WW2. The Centre displayed and stored documents and artefacts pertaining to the social, economic and cultural development of the town in a secure



environment. It was once described as a “perfect exemplar of a community-run museum”. The Centre's chief aim was to keep the past alive for future generations in as many ways as possible. It featured regularly-updated exhibitions and offered local groups space to display their stories.

Having survived restricted opening in 2021, post-Covid, we had exciting plans for returning to full opening in the 2022 season. It was therefore all the more shocking, when disaster struck in November 2021 and Storm Arwen blew the roof off. We had an “Emergency Plan” on paper but it was completely redundant due to the severity of the damage and restrictions on access to the building. Aberdeenshire Council, who own the property, took possession immediately to survey the damage, and volunteers were only allowed limited access at times



Before (left) and after (middle and right) pictures of the Fraserburgh Heritage Centre, showing the damage caused by Storm Arwen. Photos: Fraserburgh Heritage Centre

when Council officers were present. This prevented us from rescuing items that then deteriorated further due to daily exposure to adverse weather. The priority was to return all items on loan, then to relocate the items that could be moved to a secure covered area. A public request for tarpaulins met a great response but violent winds tugged at the tarpaulins, rendering them ineffective.

When access permitted, objects that could be moved were taken to safety and laid out to dry in the South Church Hall. The problem of storing these items was resolved thanks to outstanding help from Gray & Adams, who not only provided a specially-adapted container but also provided forklifts and vehicles to move the larger items to storage. We are also grateful to David Stephen for storage, to the Walking Football players who helped to shift items and to David Maltby for transport. Tesco provided trolleys to help shift items in volume. A JustGiving fund was started to rebuild the destroyed displays. This is still open as we finally approach restoration work.

Once the Council demolition contractors started, the enormity of exactly what was lost became very discouraging. Most of the original displays had been damaged beyond repair apart from the replica harbour, cooperage and boatbuilding areas and the research library and audiovisual room. Work to get the new roof on was slow and now, after four-and-a-half years, we recently acquired access to the entry area. Other casualties were the Beach Train and Carriage which, though well secured under a wooden structure and tarpaulins, had to be moved to safety due to extended exposure to the weathers – again we are thankful to Gray & Adams who have stored it and the container of artefacts. The storage sites are inspected every month.

The two containers left in situ, one an archival store and the other a workshop, seemed secure on first inspection but they have deteriorated. Once again Gray & Adams came to the rescue by providing two new storage facilities. Unfortunately this meant emptying the two originals and repacking, no mean feat. All unforeseen extra work.

There was a beautiful wooden floor entry corridor and while we hoped it could be saved, extended exposure to further storms destroyed this as well. Thanks to Gray & Adams, this has now been totally relaid. Our main visitor entrance door and the reception emergency exit door were both damaged, making security a problem. A successful bid for a Banff & Buchan Area Grant allowed the installation of new doors but it has further delayed our entry to begin work on the actual displays. We made a successful bid to Just Transition for a grant to install

solar panels and these are now on site ready for installation.

While there is now some light at the end of the tunnel, the restoration has still a long way to go. The stored items have to be brought back on site and only then will we know what has survived and can be displayed again. It has been a long haul! Please follow the progress on our Facebook page, which is updated regularly.

<https://www.fraserburghheritage.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/FraserburghHeritageCentre>

<https://justgiving.com/campaign/fraserburghheritagecentre>

heritage@fraserburghheritage.com

Fraserburgh Heritage Centre

—oOo—

New Search Elements in the British Newspaper Archive

There is a helpful video just out which shows how to use some new features on the British Newspaper Archive, one of the most useful tools for fleshing out stories on your family tree. We can't do better than simply share the publicity blurb: "Take a guided tour of the upgraded British Newspaper Archive with Chris Brake and discover how smarter search, Workspaces, and Collections can help turn discoveries into connected research. Learn practical tips and see how the new experience supports family history research from first search to lasting story". To access the video, search on YouTube or use the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Fx2yltrmc>

—oOo—

Graham Robertson's Mystery Object



We nearly didn't have "mush room" left for this intriguing object.

So there, we have given you a good clue. What would your ancestor have used this beautifully-turned wooden object for?

And will it be coming back into fashion?

As ever, you will find the answer later on in the journal.

—oOo—

Centre News: Meet Helen Strachan, our New Chair

We have a new Chairperson! Helen Strachan was elected Chair at the Trustee Meeting on 1st June. She follows Bert Lawrie who stepped down at the May AGM, having completed three years in the hot seat. We are delighted that Helen has agreed to take over and this profile, compiled by our student intern, Campbell Mackay, will give you some idea of why we are so pleased.

Resilient, caring, and quietly creative, Helen has always taken on challenges without making a fuss, whether that meant climbing Kilimanjaro or completing charity skydives, both of which reflect a steady commitment to supporting causes that matter to her such as MND, and Cancer Research charities.



A former pupil of Aberdeen Academy, her early ambition to study music, fuelled by years of playing piano and trumpet, led to playing for the Scottish National Youth Orchestra. Completion of a two-year medical secretary qualification laid the foundation for a career that progressed through business management roles in several NHS specialties and culminated in the position of Regional Manager for the five North of Scotland Health

Boards. During the course of her NHS career, Helen also completed two Masters Degrees by distance learning with the Robert Gordon University. On leaving the NHS, she took up a role as the Occupational Health Manager for the world-wide Wood Group Organisation. Her work in introducing a full Occupational Health Service to the organisation led to the achievement of a much coveted “Extraordinary HR Initiative” award, a core category at the prestigious cHeRries Awards, an annual cross-Scotland event that celebrates top-tier human resources, training, and recruitment.

Helen joined ANESFHS in 2020, and has served as a Trustee since 2024. Her involvement with the Society grew naturally from a long-standing interest in family history. That passion, combined with her professional background in administration and Health Services management, have shaped the responsibilities she has undertaken within the Society. Her portfolio of responsibilities includes data protection, the management, indexing and reproduction of ancestor charts, and support for archiving processes.

She began by assisting with collating and indexing the Ancestor Charts, a task which had fallen into abeyance. Having established and trained a team and set up new procedures for checking and indexing that precious data, she has gradually become involved in the wider strategic planning and development of the Society. We have been fortunate to have in her someone with the skills and expertise to guide us through the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR), an area of work that can be daunting for voluntary organisations such as our own. Helen has also been a lead player in ensuring our wider policies and procedures are up-to-date and fit for purpose and we are delighted that she has agreed to take on the role of Chair of the Society.

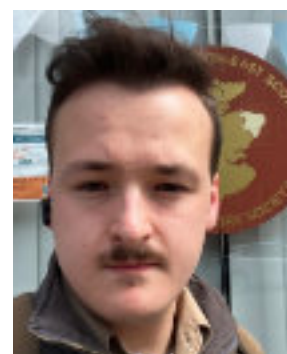
Ill-health may have forced her to retire from the professional world but it has not dented her enthusiasm and willingness to roll up her sleeves and get results. In addition to her voluntary work, she enjoys a close family life with her husband Malcolm, their children, grandchildren and friends, and continues to spend her time on the interests that have always grounded her: outdoor pursuits, research, gardening, and reading history or crime fiction.

Campbell Mackay, Aberdeen

—oOo—

Student Volunteers and Aberdeen University Internship Programme

This spring we have hosted four students in different volunteering roles within the Research Centre. It has been a positive experience for us and we are keen to pick up some fresh ideas about social media and digital presentation along the way. We hope it has been a constructive and rewarding experience for the students and that some of the work they have done with us will find its way into the journal or other Society productions. It can be a challenge, both for the students and ourselves to balance their volunteering role with us with the competing commitments of study, part-time work and life generally.



One new step for us was to take part in Aberdeen University Careers departments internship programme. They funded a 70-hour placement for Campbell Mackay, a senior honours history student, to join us as a temporary Publication and Events Assistant. Campbell has drawn up our Aberdeen talks programme for the new 2026–27 season and contributed to other activities, including preparing the profile on Helen.

Campbell posted this account of his work on social media: “My time as an intern at the Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society has been an amazing experience. It has allowed me to further develop my skills as an academic historian while giving me a broader, in-depth understanding of the organisational, research, and journalling skills I will need in the future. It’s also given me a real taste of the rich history the North-East has to offer. I’m immensely grateful

for this opportunity and for the chance to work with such a brilliant team.”

We are pleased that Campbell hopes to remain in Aberdeen after graduation, having applied to do a Masters degree with the University and, if so, he promises he will still be popping in to volunteer. Thank you again to Campbell and all our other students. We wish you success in your studies and future roles.

Elaine Petrie, Intern Project Co-ordinator

—oOo—

ANESFHS: Minutes of the 2026 Annual General Meeting

Saturday 16th May 2026

Trustees in Attendance: Elaine Petrie (Vice-Chair), Ronald Leith (Secretary), Barbara Lamb, Ivor Normand, Susan Freer, Helen Strachan (Minutes)

Quorum: In addition to the Trustees, 43 households attended the meeting online by Zoom and 31 people attended in person.

1. Welcome and Introduction of Trustees

Elaine Petrie, Acting Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming those members attending in person and by Zoom, and introduced the Trustees.

2. Apologies

Apologies, including those submitted in advance of the meeting, were received from Bert Lawrie, Sheila Symons, Gail Robertson, Sandy Dennison, Sheena Clark, Anne Burgess and Liz Foubister

3. Minutes of the Previous AGM

The previous AGM was held on 17th May 2025. Minutes appeared in Journal 175 (August 2025, pages 28–31). The minutes were also available to members to view on the Society website ahead of this AGM.

4. Matters Arising from previous AGM

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes of previous AGM

There being no matter arising, the Minutes of the previous meeting were accordingly approved.

Proposed: Kate Duncan

Seconded: Barbara Lamb

6. Chair's Report

2025–26 had been another busy year with lots going on and lots more in the planning stages. The Research Centre had been busy. It can be difficult to know how many folk to expect: some sessions start with no visitors and within 10 minutes you have 5 or 6 people come in, needing assistance or direction. For our many volunteers this is the challenge as well as a joy when they are able to assist the visitor to open up new lines of research and find ancestors they didn't know they had. Many of our visitors start by using online platforms which have developed immeasurably over the last few years. The downside is that our volunteers often have to help them “unpick” their findings due to inaccuracies.

This had also been a busy year for the Memorial Inscriptions (MI) team who had just published their first new “start-to-finish” booklet for Monquhitter and St Luke's, Cuminstown. They expect to follow quickly with publications for kirkyards in the Cruden Bay area, which we hope will be published in the late Autumn. They have also begun work on Inverbervie, Garvock and St Cyrus kirkyards in Kincardineshire. After this, they plan to do work in the Huntly area. Each publication has its own challenges and this had been a good

“learning curve” for the team. There are over 15 people involved in the MI Team and we owe a special thank you to Moira Lawson, the lead on the MI group, with Kirsteen Morrison, as her main aide.

We were particularly pleased by the number of new Centre volunteers who came forward over the last year, allowing us to build up the Front of House Team. Another pleasing trend was the growing number of student volunteers who expressed interest in joining us for a placement period. We enjoyed working with them and hope that it is a two-way exchange and that we will benefit from their expertise in podcasting and video editing in due course.

Our Research Service has been re-organised under the co-ordination of Gillian Mariner. This had been a helpful process and had clarified what our priorities are in this area. Our focus is on serving our membership as we are a member-led and managed organisation. We are often approached by non-members for support with research but we can only undertake work on behalf of members. However, since most of the queries take a minimum of two hours' work (£24), the Trustees had agreed that the Research Team could offer new enquirers a £24 initial fee with a one-year digital membership included (the current digital membership fee being £18). The Board hoped that this introductory offer would get folk hooked when they see the range of resources open to them as a member.

The Trustees hoped existing members would be heartened to know that, because of the robust state of our finances, the other fees would remain at the existing rates for another year.

A large part of the work of the Board in the last two sessions had been spent updating policies and procedures to meet changing legislation and the needs of the Society. We never forget that the organisation is about people and the joy of sharing research but clear, accessible procedures help us all to work effectively. Bert was particularly pleased that our commitment to working in teams in all our departments, rather than having one person bear the burden on their own, was gradually bearing fruit. One of our plans for later in the year would be to have a training session with volunteers to make sure these are all shared and well-understood.



*Retiring Chair,
Bert Lawrie*

Bert's term as chairman had come to an end, although he intended to continue to remain on the Board to work with the current Trustees on the ongoing management and development of our Family History Centre. He expressed his pleasure in having had the opportunity to take a lead in supporting and developing the work of Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society.

The report was noted and there were no questions arising.

7. Secretary's Report

The number of new members for 2025 was 350 (the figure for 2024 was 300). Ronald reminded members about the graph he shared at the 2025 AGM which showed a projected decline in future years. He pointed out that calibrating the graph differently by reducing the space between the years, made the rate of decline less steep and therefore less alarming.

Ronald said, that despite this declining trend, he sensed a lot of enthusiasm in the Society. From its very beginning, the Society had been fortunate in having two stalwart members, Sheila Spiers and Margaret Brown, who dedicated themselves to the recording of the MIs of North-East Scotland. They were succeeded by Gavin Bell, and now we had able successors, who recently delighted us with their first publication, the MIs of Monquhitter.

So what did the future hold? Ronald noted that, looking forward to 2028/2029, the Society will be 50 years old, and he hoped we might be awarded a Civic Reception to commemorate that event. He showed us a ledger containing the membership details for the early years of the Society. It was one of five volumes and listed the first 75 founder members, in alphabetical order, of the Society. Only six of the founder members are still members: Ronald and his wife, Ken Nisbet, David Smith, Catherine Taylor and Caroline Watt, from Pennan, who was a student

member at the time she joined. Ronald hoped that these five members would all be able to manage to attend a Civic Reception, and hoped to see those attending this AGM there too. He ended his report by saying that he also looked forward to the Society's Christmas Meeting in 2028, which should also be a joyful event.

8. Centre Manager's Report

Elaine explained that the Centre Manager's Report had been incorporated within the Chair's Report this year, to avoid duplication. Barbara Lamb expressed her sincere thanks to all the volunteers who support the Research Centre throughout the year.

9. Financial Report

The Financial Report for 2025–26 was read by Moira Lawrence, on behalf of Sheila Symons. There had been a small reduction in overall income for 2025. The slight drop in membership numbers was reflected in the drop in subscription income, down by £3,000. Gift Aid on the subscriptions also dropped by £1,000. The funds held by the Society increased slightly over the year but the interest received was down by £1,400 due to lower interest rates. General donations continued to provide support to the Society, remaining at the 2024 level. Publication sales were £1,900 lower than in 2024 and Research income also showed a slight decrease.

Although other income showed a drop of £4,600, this was because of two one-off receipts in 2024. These were a £4,000 compensation payment from our previous insurance broker, and a £1,000 back-dated payment for royalties from Publishers' Licensing Services (PLS). PLS are an umbrella service which works with publishers and the copyright licensing agencies to collect and distribute royalties for publications which are consulted through institutions such as libraries and universities. Annual income from these royalties had been around £900.

A legacy of £11,000 was received during 2025, which bolstered the total income received to £83,700. The 100 club continued to generate income.

On the expenditure side, total running costs decreased, with reductions in most categories of expenditure. The most significant drop was in building repairs, which were £3,200 lower. The cost of printing and distributing the Journal remain the highest category of expenditure. Insurance and utilities were also a major cost.

Sundry expenditure showed a reduction compared to 2024. However, this was largely due to reclassifying some expenditure, and a small change in how some expenditure was accounted for. Sundry expenditure included costs such as refuse collection, intruder and fire alarms service, cleaning and various small general expense items.

A copy of the signed, audited Accounts had been made available on the Society's Website for members to review in advance of the meeting. Copies of the key sections were also made available on the day.

Victor Morgan asked whether the Accounts had been audited and signed by an external examiner. Elaine Petrie confirmed that they were audited by Azets, Chartered Accountants. Victor also asked if the text could be enlarged for next year as he found it difficult to read the print-outs that had been distributed. Other members supported this request and Elaine agreed, on behalf of the Society, to ensure the request was actioned. Action: Elaine Petrie

There being no further questions, the financial report for 2025/2026 was adopted.

Proposed: Sally Low

Seconded: Alexander Bisset

10. Election of Trustees

According to our Constitution (clause 58), members of the Board of Trustees are elected to serve for three years, after which they retire but are eligible to stand for re-election.

During the past year, three Trustees, John Corall, Sheona MacDonald and Bob Strowger stepped down from the Board. Members recorded their thanks for their contribution to the Society

during their time in office.

Ivor Normand and Ronald Leith ended their three-year term in 2026 and, having indicated willingness to continue as Trustees, were duly re-elected.

Proposed: Sheona MacDonald Seconded: David Fleming

11. Ratification of Co-opted Trustees

Moira Lawrence and Kirsteen Morrison were co-opted as Trustees on 23rd March 2026.

The Board had exercised its Constitutional powers (under clause 57) to make these appointments and bring our Trustee numbers to 10, with 5 vacancies. Under clauses 59 and 60, these appointees now retired from office as co-opted Board Members but were willing to stand as elected members. Elaine asked that their election as Trustees now be approved by the membership.

Proposed: Dianne Tuckett Seconded: Elaine Innes

12. AOCB

Members had been invited in advance of the meeting to submit any items of competent business for discussion by the membership. Nine questions were submitted by one individual. The Board of Trustees had given these questions careful consideration and had decided that they were operational matters and did not fall within the category of competent business. The Chair explained that Trustees would respond in writing and wished to devote the meeting to involving members in a more strategic issue, to explore their suggestions on what the Society could do to increase its membership.

The individual said he was extremely dissatisfied with this approach. He took the opportunity to criticise Board members and their management of the Society, and made inappropriate and unacceptable allegations about one of the Trustees in their absence. A number of members present expressed their displeasure at this and were keen to move the discussion onto the strategic issues.

The Chair reaffirmed the commitment of the Trustees to provide the individual with a full written response to the questions raised after the AGM, and to share this with the membership as a whole. Members supported this approach and asked for a deadline by which this would be completed. It was agreed that the response would be sent out no later than 30th June 2026. Action: Board.

Discussion then moved onto the subject of how to increase our membership. A number of suggestions were made by members. It was agreed that strategies should take account of the Society's international membership and our local area groups. The suggestions from members included:

- Additional “Doors Open” events. These have proved a successful way of attracting new members in the past.
- Training days for Volunteers.
- Improved advertising of the Society and what it can offer.
- Update the Society's website (this would provide opportunities for different sources of income).
- Membership Gift Vouchers.
- Member-led recruitment of new members.

These suggestions will be discussed at the next meeting of the Trustees, on 1st June 2026 and the outcomes of the discussion and decisions made will be communicated to members through the Minutes and the Newsletter.

Elaine closed the meeting by thanking all members present for attending and for their input to the discussion.

Ronald Leith proposed a vote of thanks to the Vice-Chair.

ANESFHS Accounts for 2025

ABERDEEN & NORTH EAST SCOTLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

(A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds General Fund £	100 Club £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Incoming resources from generated funds -					
Voluntary income -					
Covenants and gift aid		6,859	-	6,859	7,815
Donations		3,967	-	3,967	3,728
Courses income		-	-	-	-
Legacy income		11,000	-	11,000	-
Annual fees		-	1,125	1,125	1,153
Investment income -					
Interest received		4,405	-	4,405	5,821
Incoming resources from charitable activities -					
Subscriptions		48,791	-	48,791	51,861
Publication sales		3,908	-	3,908	5,820
Research and queries		1,561	-	1,561	1,839
Other incoming resources-					
Other income		2,054	-	2,054	6,623
		<u>£82,545</u>	<u>£1,125</u>	<u>£83,670</u>	<u>£84,660</u>
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Charitable activities					
Direct charitable expenditure		58,805	518	59,323	62,738
Depreciation		5,314	-	5,314	6,031
		<u>£64,119</u>	<u>£518</u>	<u>£64,637</u>	<u>£68,769</u>
Net (outgoing) / incoming resources		18,426	607	19,033	15,891
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		<u>410,905</u>	<u>8,371</u>	<u>419,276</u>	<u>403,385</u>
Total funds carried forward		<u>£429,331</u>	<u>£8,978</u>	<u>£438,309</u>	<u>£419,276</u>

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

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

3. TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED – CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

GENERAL FUND

	Direct Charitable Expenditure £	Depn £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Publication cost of sales	1,750	-	1,750	2,069
Stock value write off	-	-	-	(2,000)
Society journal	13,822	-	13,822	14,150
Postages and journal distribution	7,581	-	7,581	7,453
Stationery and office supplies	1,501	-	1,501	1,181
Insurance, heat, light and telephone	11,389	-	11,389	11,680
Rent	6,000	-	6,000	6,000
Rates	3,160	-	3,160	3,313
Meeting expenses	1,577	-	1,577	1,912
Conference and course expenses	-	-	-	29
Affiliation fees and subscriptions	2,852	-	2,852	2,040
Advertising	36	-	36	28
Internet and IT expenses	1,115	-	1,115	1,088
Accountancy fee	1,450	-	1,450	1,400
Bank and credit card charges	1,412	-	1,412	1,501
Sundry expenses	4,219	-	4,219	6,184
Building and library repairs	941	-	941	4,147
Depreciation	-	5,314	5,314	6,031
	<u>£58,805</u>	<u>£5,314</u>	<u>£64,119</u>	<u>£68,206</u>
100 CLUB				
Prizes etc	518	-	518	563
	<u>£518</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£518</u>	<u>£563</u>

—oOo—

Investigating Polish and Italian Experience in Scotland

I am a PhD historian at the University of Strathclyde conducting a project about the lives of Polish and Italian immigrants to Scotland and their children. The full title of the project is “Polish and Italian Migration to Scotland, 1950-2020: A Longitudinal Comparison of Immigrant Community Patterns and Experiences”. I am keen to gather responses from areas I may not be able to reach from my base in central Glasgow and hope your Society can help spread the word. This work will allow stories to be told that are often overlooked in traditional histories in Scotland and it will create a new archive of the Polish and Italian communities in Scotland. It is a fun opportunity for people to get involved with history preservation. Please follow the QR code to find out more.



b.harris@strath.ac.uk

Benjamin Harris

Graham Robertson's Mystery Object: Answer



This is a very fine darning mushroom. When your knitted socks or jumpers wear out or develop moth holes, you pop them over this tool so that it stretches out the fabric and gives you a firm surface over which to do your darning. Much easier than putting the sock over your hand, when you risk stabbing yourself repeatedly with the needle!

—oO0—

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chair: Helen Strachan

Vice-Chair: Elaine Petrie

Secretary: Ronald Leith

Finance Reporting/Membership: Sheila Symons

Ordinary members:

Susan Freer

Moira Lawrence

Ivor Normand

Barbara Lamb

Kirsteen Morrison

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UKGDPR	Helen.Strachan@dataprotection.anesfhs.org.uk	
Website / IT	Dave Anderson	webmaster@anesfhs.org.uk



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GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

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

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Tel. 01561 361500

Journal Submissions

Submissions to the Journal are always welcome. Please do not embed images in your text document, but email them as separate attachments to journal@anesfhs.org.uk.

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

The next Journal will be published in **November 2026**. Last date for submissions is **10th October 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, as is a small number of footnotes.

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 (png, jpg or tif).

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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For all information on publications and how to order, see <https://anesfhs.org.uk>, “Publications” tab.

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Centre opening hours

Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

Saturday morning by appointment: please telephone

ANESFHS Family History Centre closures 2026-27

Closed on local holidays: 20th April, 4th May, 13th July and 28th September 2026

Closing at 4:00pm Friday 18th December 2026; re-opening at 10:00am Monday, 5th January 2027

See website for further details

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