

Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society

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Membership Details

New members pay the annual rate, and their subscription runs for exactly one year from the date on which they join. Further details are available on our **website**. Membership of the Society entitles you to receive the quarterly Journal. There is a discount of £3.00 for e-members who opt to download the Journal digitally instead of receiving printed copies.

Family membership is available for two named persons at one address. Please nominate one surname for registration purposes.

The 2018 subscription rates are (**deduct £3** if opting for digital copies of the Journal):

Ordinary membership: £21.00

Family membership: £27.00

Payment

You can pay online at our website (PayPal: account or cards), by post (credit/debit card or cheque), by Direct Debit, by Internet Banking or in person at our shop. Members who are UK taxpayers may sign a *Gift Aid* declaration (forms supplied on request) and so increase the value to the Society of their contributions by 20%.



Internet Banking:

Bank: Clydesdale Bank plc, St Nicholas Branch, 62 Union Street, Aberdeen AB10 1WD

Account name: ABDN & NTH EAST SCOT FAMILY HISTORY SOC

Account number: 90100648

Sort code: 82-40-00

IBAN: GB92CLYD82400090100648

BIC/SWIFT: CLYDGB21250

Include your membership number in the payment reference, and also e-mail renewals@anesfhs.org.uk so that we know you've paid!

Direct Debit: e-mail renewals@anesfhs.org.uk for details.

Cheque: GBP (Sterling) only. Pay: Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS.

Website: You have to register first (see below). Then select "The Society / Members / Renew my membership" from the menu. All payments are processed by PayPal. If you don't have a PayPal account, be sure to select "*Check out as guest*" when PayPal asks you to log in.

As website renewals are processed automatically, renewing via the website greatly assists our hard-pressed volunteers. Thank you.

ANESFHS website and Members' Forum

In order to get the most from your Society membership, you should register on our new website. Go to www.anesfhs.org.uk and click on the Register link at the top right of the screen. For further assistance, please visit www.anesfhs.org.uk/how-to-register

Once you have registered, you can access our growing list of very useful members-only features:

- All our Journals from 1979 onwards
- Monumental Inscription look-ups for many North-East Scottish graveyards
- A Members' Forum for exchange of ideas, assistance with "brick walls", and much else.

Data Protection Act, 1998

Members' details are stored on computer for administration and research purposes only, and will not be given, lent or sold to any third party. We require only your name and address – other details are optional.

Occasionally, the Society may contact a selection of members to inform them of, or seek volunteer assistance at, some event that may be of interest to them. If you have supplied an e-mail address, then this contact may be by e-mail. Should you not wish to be contacted in this way, please inform the Society in writing.

Journal of the Aberdeen and North-East Scotland Family History Society

Issue 148, August 2018

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Message from the Editor

We hope you enjoy this issue of the Journal. Submissions are always welcome, whether they're articles, photographs, reports, relevant book reviews, family-history events or news snippets, Letters to the Editor, other feedback on previous Journal content, or anything else of interest. We are delighted to have a "Feature Parish" article in this issue, on Bourtie in Aberdeenshire, and to announce that the next issue will include an in-depth feature on the Moray parish of Duffus. If you would like to research and write about a North-East parish for the Journal, please get in touch. We're always glad to hear from you.

Society Reports, News and Information

Members' Meetings

Neil Fraser, "From Aboyne to Australia via Inverurie"

17th March 2018

Neil works for Historic Environment Scotland (HES), an Edinburgh-based charity dedicated to the advancement of heritage, culture, education and the environment. It has around 1,200 volunteers and employees, and huge stocks of manuscripts, photographs and drawings relating to archaeology, buildings and architecture, maritime, industrial and social life. Neil's talk focused on the types of materials which can be used in conjunction with genealogical resources to bring life to family-history research.

He described the subsidiary bodies which store these resources, and the particular scope of each. *The Engine Shed* in Stirling is responsible for building conservation. *Canmore* has historic and modern photographs and drawings of Scotland's places, including buildings, industrial and archaeological sites in addition to street scenes and aerial views of cities, towns, villages and landscapes. SCRAN has digitised archives from throughout Scotland. The National Collection of Aerial Photographs (NCAP) has much World War II material from Britain and Europe; and the National Library of Scotland (NLS) has many resources.

Neil's well-illustrated talk began with an aerial view, from *Canmore*, of ANESFHS's meeting place in Skene Terrace, so that we could see how the area has changed over the years. Next, he showed an excerpt from Groom's Gazetteer which first criticised and then complimented Aberdeen for its beauty, comparing it favourably with London and Paris!

Some slides illustrated notable events of the late 19th and 20th centuries, such as the 400th anniversary of Aberdeen University, the bomb damage sustained in WWII in parts of the city, the Olympic Games of 1936 in Berlin, and the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. Often, the interest in these pictures for family historians lies in the incidentals, for example the clothing worn by the participants, the cars or tram lines in foreground or background, or the art and propaganda in a poster. SCRAN also has much art-related material, from reproductions of Salvador Dalí to the pop-art photographs by David Bailey.

Neil showed Aberdeen's development and increasing urbanisation and industrialisation through maps from post-1745 (Roy), 1789, 1828 and 1865–7. Road maps show the development of turnpike roads in the 19th century. Many of these maps have great detail: for example, some rocks on one map of the Fraserburgh area were pointed out, to be followed later in the talk by a slide of Buffalo Bill and his circus colleagues on those same rocks in 1904. Larger county or country maps focused on coastal areas and shipping, revealing the greater importance that sea communications had over roads.

There were slides of a fishing boat being launched at Buckie, and of the famous clipper *Thermopylae*, and a newsreel illustration of the opening of the Queen Elizabeth Bridge over the Dee. Neil showed no agriculture-themed slides, but there are certainly many available through HES and its subsidiaries.

The value of documents was illustrated by a slide of a "Housewife's Diploma" from 1915, awarded to Kathleen Millicent Dickie by the Edinburgh Domestic Science School. All the courses she attended, from cookery to millinery, were noted, with the marks gained: a total

of 3,079 out of 4,000. Sadly, for such a good student, further research in this instance showed that Kathleen never married, and presumably never became a housewife.

There were photographs of people at leisure, for example a water-polo team in 1970s kit and hairstyles, and the crowd attending a football match. Neil showed pictures of a “pierrot” performance at Aberdeen Beach and pointed out their social-history value. Football matches were a purely male entertainment, with flat caps or Brylcreem in evidence, but no hats. On the other hand, the audience at the Beach performance wore hats, while some performers were “blacked up”. Beach holiday photographs showed how people used to dress for the seaside, often with suits, or alternatively sou’westers.

Posters for the local theatres were shown; one advertised a tour by Laurel and Hardy, and another listed the acts in a 1940 show at the Tivoli. A 1930s photo of a Torry cinema had a motor car in the foreground, while the caption highlighted the luxurious seats. Cinema’s popularity was shown by a picture of the queue for the Regent in Justice Mill Lane.

Politics featured too, with a letter advising how to treat the suffragettes (“turn a hose on them!”), or another giving reasons why women should not have the vote – this particular letter was written by a woman. These came from newspapers, a valuable source of information and illustration to genealogists. An example of a 19th-century broadsheet provided the gory details of a murder case, when Margaret Davidson was executed for the murder of her husband, and her body was given to the medical school for dissection.

Often it is the incidental information that is most interesting, for example the fishing boat in the background, or the fact the librarian does not appear in the staff photo of Aberdeen City Library, although the janitor and the bookbinder do. The importance of captions was stressed for the information they give.

Aerial photos taken by German pilots of Burghead and Aberdeen had areas of potential interest to German bomber pilots highlighted, and a photo of Auschwitz had smoke rising.

The growing importance and popularity of audio and video recordings was noted, where memories are captured and the differences in speech between old and young illustrated.

Neil finished by telling us how to access these valuable sources. SCRAN has a subscription service but can be accessed free of charge through the library. The other services are free. HES will provide information free for individual research but will charge for publication purposes. NLS charges for copies of maps.

Here are some of the contact details given on the publicity leaflets:

www.historicenvironment.scot

www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk

www.britainfromabove.org.uk

www.scran.ac.uk

www.canmore.org.uk

www.nls.uk

jmbyth1@btinternet.com

Janet M Byth

No. 2882

Out-of-Area Help

Due to the increase in technology since this service started, it has been decided to bring it to a close. Very many thanks to all those members who have helped with it. Your services have been much appreciated. If you need help with your research, do contact us here at King Street.

Jim Fiddes, “The Rise of the Granite Industry in the North-East”

21st April 2018

Jim (ANESFHS no. 1049) was Faculty Librarian at RGU’s Gray’s School of Art and Scott Sutherland School of Architecture until he retired in 2008. He was a founder member of Aberdeen Town and County History Society, and co-founder and chairman of Skene Heritage Society. He is the author of two books: *Brodiach to Bervie: A History of Skene and Westhill* (2012) and *The Granite Men* (to be published in 2019).

His well-illustrated presentation was based on the research for his forthcoming book. He covered the history of the quarrying of granite and its use in monumental yards and in building. There were many quarries in the North-East, e.g. Corrennie, Cambus o’ May, Peterhead, Paradise Hill in Kemnay, and Rubislaw, with some still in use. Granite was used in some early buildings. Craigievar Castle was built of pink granite from field and surface stones. Monymusk Priory had sandstone round the windows, but the rest is granite; and St Machar Cathedral is largely of granite.

James Elmslie (1683–1764) is reputed to have started the granite industry in Aberdeen. A stonecutter, he opened a quarry in 1730 in Loanhead in the Rosemount area. At that time, many houses in the town were made of wood, and there were two major fires in the 1730s and 1740s. The council wanted houses to be built of stone, so granite started to be used instead. It was of Loanhead granite that Robert Gordon’s Hospital (now College) was built in 1731, the Royal Infirmary at Woolmanhill in 1741 and the Chapel of Ease at Gilcomston. Marischal Street, built in the 1760s–80s, has Loanhead granite for the first part of the street, and the rest is Rubislaw granite. The Loanhead quarry’s legacy can still be seen, with some buildings in Hamilton Place and elsewhere experiencing subsidence.

From the 1760s onwards, the use of North-East granite spread beyond Aberdeen. London streets were being paved with granite. It was used in civil engineering for docks, the Bell Rock Lighthouse and the bridge over the Thames at Southwark, designed by Scotsman John Rennie, a civil engineer. Transport of large, heavy blocks of granite was a problem in these early years: most ships’ captains didn’t want to carry such a dangerous cargo.

Aberdeen was surrounded by quarries. Improvements in transport, with the building of the Aberdeen Canal, turnpike roads and the introduction of railways, made a huge difference to the growth of the granite industry.

A key development was the building of Union Street, especially Union Bridge, which opened in 1805. This showed what granite could do but also enabled the city to expand westwards. In 1740, the council had decided to open the quarry at Rubislaw; but it was not a success, so it was closed in the belief that there was no good stone to be had there, and it was sold. It was reopened in the 1780s and eventually taken over by John Gibb, another civil engineer. From 1830 onwards, he introduced machinery and pumping so that quarrying could go down into the rock. Blacksmiths played an important part in repairing machinery and sharpening tools. In the mid-19th century, it could take up to a year to saw up granite blocks.

John Fyfe (1830–1903) took over his father’s business at Kemnay Quarry. He is famous for the invention of the Blondin cableway, named after Charles Blondin, a French tightrope-walker. It lifted blocks of granite from the bottom of the quarry to the surface,

conveying them along steel wire ropes suspended across the quarry. He got the idea from seeing a postman using a cable across the River Dee to deliver mail to Abergeldie Castle on the other side. As the workforce for the quarry increased, housing had to be provided for the workers, who had a reputation for being rough and heavy drinkers.

In 1883, the Admiralty chose Peterhead to build a harbour of refuge, which required stone to build the breakwater. The local Peterhead Prison supplied the workforce to quarry the granite, which was then transported by train to the harbour. Granite from the quarries was also used to build the prison. The quarries closed in 1956 and the prison in 2013.

The granite-polishing trade and the growth of the monumental yards in Aberdeen owes a debt to Alexander MacDonald. From the 1830s onwards, he introduced mechanisation using steam-powered machinery to dress and polish the granite, which revolutionised the industry. One later polishing machine was called Jenny Lind after the Swedish opera singer. Polished granite columns from MacDonald's yard were supplied to the British Museum, St George's Hall in Liverpool, and Covent Garden and Fishmongers' Hall in London. The statue of the 5th Duke of Gordon, which now stands in Aberdeen's Golden Square, was reputed to be the first granite statue to be produced since the time of the Pharaohs. A famous monument from MacDonald's Yard was Prince Albert and Queen Victoria's sarcophagus in the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore. It was carved from a flawless block of Cairngall granite weighing 33 tons.

Aberdeen's granite industry in the 19th century had a flourishing export trade with the USA. The Lick Monument, a memorial to James Lick, Californian benefactor and native of Fredericksburg, Pennsylvania, was of Peterhead granite. The industry also exported granite workers to America. Some of them stayed on and put up a statue to Robert Burns in Barre, Vermont.

Regarding the claim that the Aberdeen Town House was to have been built of sandstone instead of granite until there was a public outcry, our speaker had found no evidence for this story. However, when Victoria Bridge was to be constructed, the council and their chief engineer wanted to build in iron (derided as a brander bridge), and this did create public outrage. Architects and wealthy men in the city forced the council to build it in granite – "a bridge worthy of the Granite City".

Jim rounded off his talk with examples of which granites have been used in public buildings and monuments locally and further afield. Tillycorthie fountain in Hazlehead Park was originally in the New Market in the city, then moved to Tillycorthie House and from there to the park. Haughton fountain in Alford is made from four types of granite, and Crathie Kirk pulpit from 15. The humble Saltoun Arms in Frederick Street used three different granites, including two columns of polished Rubislaw granite. The granite pillars representing examples from different quarries, on show in the Art Gallery, will still be seen when the refurbishment is completed. The statue of King Edward VII was carved by James Philip, a humble granite worker in Arthur Taylor's yard in Jute Street. He was also responsible for carving part of the Edith Cavell monument just off Trafalgar Square in London, part of the Titanic Monument in Liverpool, and the Inverurie War Memorial.

Glasgow Group Report

12th May 2018

The theme for this year's "Members' Day" was identifying and extracting information from old photographs. Members brought a good selection showing people, places and events, all of which underwent scrutiny. Some problems were solved;



some mysteries remain. The meeting ended with a quiz involving the identification of some objects our ancestors would have used in their homes and workplaces. Over tea and coffee, we also enjoyed cupcakes and beautifully decorated biscuits that were kindly supplied by members.



The group will meet again on 6th October, when the theme will be "From Aberdeenshire to Australia: Historic Environment Scotland's image sound and video collections". As always, our meetings are open to all, and you are very welcome. See the Diary page.

Graham Robertson No. 11685

—oOo—

Moray/Banff Group Report

We worked hard during our April meeting as we wrestled with old handwriting. There was a wide range of documents provided, covering dates from the 1600s onwards and challenging us with different handwriting styles.

May found us looking at Irish records and resources, which are becoming increasingly accessible online. A lengthy list of useful websites gave us something to explore, though a technical hitch meant that we could not make the most of it during the meeting.



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or call Alison Smith on 01261 833574

After two meetings when we ourselves were working, it was a real treat, in our June meeting, to sit back and enjoy a fascinating talk by Scott Reid, Moray's Local Heritage Officer, who guided us through examples of the wonderful records available in the Moray Archives, building on the talk given by James Nock last year. We are familiar with parish registers and censuses but are not always aware of the much wider range of resources, often stretching back several centuries, which can add otherwise unknown background and personal information about our ancestors.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 1st September, when we will be having one of our ever-popular "bring along a brick wall" sessions!

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Mary Evans

No. 1975

—oOo—

Publications List Update

Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS

Revised prices for these Monumental Inscriptions booklets:

AA088 Hillhead Cemetery (Portknockie) MI – two-part set	£9.00	240gms
AA087 Leochel-Cushnie MI (Kirkyards of Leochel St Marnoch, Cushnie St Giles and Leochel-Cushnie)	£3.60	110gms
AA089 Lumphanan MI (Kirkyards of St Finnan's and Stothert)	£3.00	90gms
AA186 Tarves MI	£3.60	110gms

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Jean Shirer

No. 14

—oOo—

GDPR Update

Further to our "Alert Brief" in Journal 147 (May 2018), in line with recent legislation on Data Protection, we have now scrutinised and tightened up our systems where necessary. A comprehensive and clear statement of our Privacy Policy is in place and is available in full on our website (see under "The Society", "Documents", "Privacy Policy"). This policy refers to website use but applies equally across all Society functions.

Some changes to note: for memberships that have lapsed, personal details will be retained in archive for a shorter period of three years (to allow renewal with the same membership number) unless specific instructions have been given to close the account. If a lapsed member should wish to renew after more than three years, then a new number will be allocated, as their previous details will have been discarded.

Ancestor Charts have presented us with problems in terms of how they are shared. Charts often include details of living people (member, spouse, parents etc.). Such information needs to be redacted before Ancestor Charts can be shared with other members, so access will be limited meantime.

The data we hold is yours, and you have a right to expect us to manage it safely and to maintain security. If you have any concerns or comments, do get in touch with me directly (below), or with our Centre manager (*shopdesk@anesfhs.org.uk*), or with the Society via our general address (*enquiries@anesfhs.org.uk*). Happy reading!

treasurer@anesfhs.org.uk

J Maria Cameron

No. 9680

Granite Roots Update: Closure for Refurbishment

In February 2017, the Society launched our Granite Roots campaign to raise money for improvements to our Research Centre on King Street. We have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of donations and wish to thank you all for your contributions. We are now shifting from the campaign stage into the “rolling-up-our-sleeves” construction phase.

The money we received will mean we will have a new server with up-to-date software for researchers; a fully accessible toilet; a new tea/coffee area; redecoration and new carpeting throughout. We are also improving the lighting in the research rooms and are introducing some moveable tables so that we can offer training facilities on site for new members interested in researching their Grampian family roots. These updates would not have happened without the generous donations we received through the Granite Roots Appeal.

To carry out the refurbishments that we have planned, it will be necessary for us to close for a two-week period. The Research Centre will be closed from **Friday, 19th October until Sunday, 4th November 2018** inclusive. November is also our 40th anniversary of the Society, and the refurbishment will keep us in good order for the next 40 years. We will reopen at 10am on 5th November, and we apologise in advance for any inconvenience or disappointment that this King Street closure may cause.

We know that this might be when some of you were planning a visit to our Centre, so we wanted to give you as much advance notice as possible. For our members who were planning a visit during this time, please contact us at graniteroots@anesfhs.org.uk to discuss what assistance we may be able to provide before and during that period.

graniteroots@anesfhs.org.uk

Granite Roots Committee, July 2018

—oOo—

Events in 2018

ANESFHS will have a stall at these events coming up in the rest of this year:

1st September: Braemar Gathering (Highland Games, massed pipe bands, royalty etc.)

8th September: “Doors Open Day”, Town House, Aberdeen

27th October, 9:45am–4:30pm, Civic Centre, Motherwell: Local and Family-History Show (Lanarkshire FHS)

28th October, 10am: Book fair, Hilton Treetops Hotel, Springfield Road, Aberdeen.

Help isn't required with the bookstall at any of these events; but, as always, we'd love to see you there anyway.

jean.shirer@anesfhs.org.uk

Jean Shirer

No. 14

—oOo—

Library Report

Two long-standing members of the Library team have retired this year. Isobel Noble, the first to go, was one of the stalwarts of the Society and had been a volunteer for about 30 years. Among her many responsibilities, Isobel organised the journals we receive from other Family History Societies.

And just recently, Edna Cromarty let us know that she felt it was time to step down as a volunteer. Edna had been a Library volunteer for more than 25 years and was head of the team. She's helped it develop from a small collection of books to the large reference library we have today, and her expertise and knowledge of the books will be greatly missed. I've learnt a lot from working with her, and have enjoyed our discussions and conversations together.

We wish both Edna and Isobel well. We'll all miss them.

Many thanks to three of our members who have donated the following books:

- The first is *Alexander the Corrector*, by Julia Keay. It gives a fascinating insight into the troubled life of Aberdeen-born Alexander Cruden (1699–1770) whose Concordance to the Bible has never been superseded.
- A copy of *The Strichen Educational Trust: A History of the Trust*, privately printed in 1908 to mark the reunion of the Gordon bursars, will be of real interest to anyone who has ancestors in Strichen or whose ancestor might have received a Gordon bursary.
- Another useful and interesting book is *A Descriptive Guide to Aberdeen*, published in 1900. It includes a short statistical account of the City of Aberdeen, by the medical officer of health, which is particularly interesting.

We've also bought several new books by Dr David Dobson. David is an authority on the Scottish origins of American colonists, and also publishes books on people who lived in Scotland in the 1600s and 1700s, as well as books on the ships, shipmasters, merchants, whalers and mariners involved in maritime trade. He uses lesser-known and less easily accessible sources to produce lists of names with short biographical details. We routinely buy his books, and the latest we have are *People of Fife, 1600–1799*; *People of the Leeward Islands, 1620–1860*; *Scottish Trade with Colonial Charleston, 1683–1783*; and *Scottish Jacobites of 1715*.

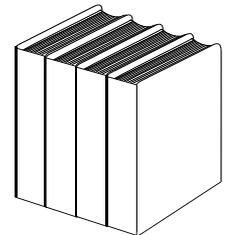
library@anesfhs.org.uk

Margie Mellis

No. 2090

von Leslie – Schottischer Adel in Deutschland und Österreich (Scottish Nobility in Germany and Austria), by journalist Rainer Bunz

We have received a press release about this new German-language book which documents the 17th-century immigration and later settling-down of Leslie family members in German-speaking areas of Europe.



The immigration of Scottish mercenaries, traders and merchants to Germany and Austria during the turbulent 17th century remains a largely forgotten chapter. This book offers an overview of the continental baronial branches of the Leslie family in the Palatinate, Central Hesse, North Württemberg, Estonia, the electorate of Hanover, and Prussia.

With its wealth of historical and genealogical information, it will be a valuable source for all interested in the history of Leslies and of Scottish communities abroad. It contains illustrations, detailed notes, a bibliography and a register of persons.

Norderstedt: BoD – Books on Demand, July 2018, 256pp, paperback, ISBN 978-3-7528-3420-8. €19,99 in Germany; also available in the UK, USA, Canada and Australia.

100 Club News

The 100 Club gives our members the opportunity to win a cash prize while also supporting the Society's work. All you need is a UK bank account, wherever you live. The fee for each number held is £12 per annum and is payable annually, in May, by banker's order.

The payout is always 50 per cent of the income, and there are four prizes in the monthly draw (1st 20 per cent, 2nd 15 per cent, 3rd 10 per cent and 4th 5 per cent of the income). **You must be a current member of the Society.** If you decide not to renew your membership, please **also cancel** your standing order for the 100 Club.

The draw takes place monthly, and cheques are posted to winners immediately. Winners are also announced in the Journal. For further details, please see the current Information Booklet on our website. If you'd like to join, then please e-mail me (below).

	1 st prize		Mem.	2 nd prize		Mem.	3 rd prize		Mem.	4 th prize		Mem.
	No.	(£24·40)	No.	No.	(£18·30)	No.	No.	(£12·20)	No.	No.	(£6·10)	No.
Feb	59	Patrick Boyne	8988	51	George Westmore	2711	82	Richard Field	935	92	Teresa Shewell	4883
Mar	90	Norman McPherson	3986	4	Maureen Taylor	1553	48	Alex Smith	2880	80	Jim Illingworth	2542
Apr	124	Jeanette Terry	14978	38	Elizabeth Allan	10763	97	Elaine Paterson	20837	9	Marjory Edward	4196
		(£23·40)			(£17·55)			(£11·70)			(£5·85)	
May	54	Kathleen Duncan	5023	95	Margaret Vieira	3106	72	Fiona Gaskell	17588	73	William Low	484
Jun	84	June Melvin	834	98	James Illingworth	2542	135	Jenny Henderson	20080	73	William Low	484
Jul	127	Ruth McGill	14585	122	Elizabeth Foubister	6129	1	Alison Milne	21388	55	Richard Field	935

100club@anesfhs.org.uk

Teresa Shewell No. 4883

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

Clan Davidson Association AGM

This year, we will hold the Clan AGM/Gathering from 28th to 30th September at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel on Aberdeen Beach Boulevard. On the afternoon of Saturday 29th, our Clan Genealogist, Nick Hide (no. 16941; *nickhide@msn.com*; tel. 020 8445 2787), will give a talk on Davidson history and connections in North-East Scotland which could be of interest to Davidsons, any of whom would be welcome to attend.

In attendance this year, we will also have the Clan Chief, Grant Davidson, and his wife all the way from Auckland. Thank you for letting us publicise this event in the Journal.

irene_grant@blueyonder.co.uk

Irene Grant No. 4098

Memorabilia from relatives, and what to do with everything

I'm feeling overwhelmed, as I'm clearing out my mother's things – there are so many pictures, memories, bits of this and that (she saved everything!). I started scanning things into the computer, but it's a lot of work, and I'm not sure anyone would be interested anyway (other than me). Just wondering if you have suggestions about what to do with everything? Museums don't necessarily want things, but I hate to throw things away. (I'm in Madison, Wisconsin, USA.)

d.mcallan@sbcglobal.net

DeAnn McAllan No. 19205

Oh, I think that we've all had that overwhelming feeling that comes from "stuff" and what best to do with it!

Are there any other cousins in the family who are also interested in maybe helping out with the scanning/storage part? Perhaps there's no-one interested right now, but maybe in the future? Any chance of a family reunion, where you could go over all the pictures and bits, and that might spark someone else's interest in helping out with archiving it all?

I think it helps if you start viewing yourself as the custodian of the family archives. Then you're the caretaker of the items until it's time to pass them along (and, trust me, there will be a cousin out there somewhere who will be so grateful that you saved everything!).

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Susan Freer No. 17329

More on "Slaves to the Turks"

Further to Stella Pedersen's reply (Journal 147, p. 14), I'd recommend for further reading *White Gold* by Giles Milton (Hodder & Stoughton, 2004, 0-340-79469-0). It is a gripping read based on original letters, manuscripts and accounts by padres and ambassadors who tried to obtain the release of these white slaves.

Closer to home, even in Aberdeen a child could disappear into "indentured servitude" – slavery by a posh title. Read *Indian Peter* by Douglas Skelton (2004/2005, 1-84596-032-7), an Aberdeen loon who got caught and survived to return.

Reading these made me realise the paucity of my history education in a good Scottish school in the 1950s and also helped me to understand the complexity of the world in the 18th and 19th centuries as countries fought for dominion over others and established their "rights" to grab poorer yet often more civilised states, all underpinned by the great driving spirit of freedom of enterprise ... well, that's one way of describing it!

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Elizabeth Jordan No. 18139

Logan/Lobban Project: Progress

The Logan/Lobban project we described in Journal 147 (pp. 14–15) has now progressed: I recently registered with the Guild of One-Name Studies, and that has allowed me to create a project website, which anyone interested may browse: <https://lobban.one-name.net/>.

There used to be a good website with Lobban data at <http://lobban.co.uk> – but, when I try that link, it redirects to a commercial products page with a completely different URL. So, I suppose the Lobban site expired. If anyone is aware of it, or has any idea who created the original website, I would love to be in touch with the creator.

clobban@guam.net

Chris Lobban No. 21652

Queries

- 148/1 *WINTON / FORBES*: James Winton Forbes was b. 15 Dec 1888 to Annie Forbes in Banff. By court order of 10 Oct 1890, his name was changed to James Winton. He joined the Highland Light Infantry (HLI) sometime in 1913 at Rutherglen, was KiA on 11 Jul 1914 in Belgium, and is buried in a mass grave. His name is on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres. James was the grandson of Jesse Forbes of Banff.
- Seeking someone (for a reasonable fee, or a donation to ANESFHS) to search newspapers in the Glasgow area looking for a death notice and/or obituary for James. Dates could be 11 Jul 1914 to Sep 1914.
- lindon@montanasky.us* Don Slaybaugh No. 16112
- 148/2 *KELLAS / MANN / MacKENZIE*:
- /a My 3g-gm Mary Mackenzie Kellas (b. 23 Mar 1822, Banff; d. May 1900) m. Peter Alexander Mann (1812–98), 4 Jun 1843, Banff. At the 1851 census, they lived in Old Machar parish. I have not been able to verify Mary's parents' names – but her father was possibly John Kellas of Aberdeenshire (b. 18 Mar 1792; d. 16 Nov 1859). Mother's family name was likely MacKenzie.
- /b Seeking any more info. on John Kellas above: his parents' names, any family stories, employment etc. Please contact me if you have any knowledge of this family.
- mpgudgel@gmail.com* Mary Gudgel No. 21685
- 148/3 *DUNCAN / SANGSTER*: William Duncan m. Marion Sangster, 29 Nov 1817 (OPR Slains and Cruden). I have info. after that on the descent to myself, but am seeking b./bapt. details for them both, which should give their parents. There are several possibilities, but I need to winkle out the correct ones. I would appreciate any help.
- sandra.gronbech@gmail.com* David Duncan No. 3852

Instructions for Queries

Queries are accepted from paid-up Society members free of charge. Non-members should donate £1.00 per query (or postage stamps). Up to four queries per person will be accepted per calendar year. The parts of a multi-part query count as separate queries. Each query will show the submitter's name, e-mail address and membership number. The query service is intended for ancestor research and *not* as a finding service for recent or living relatives. We will omit parts of a query which we consider too recent, or which have no North-East Scottish content.

If you have asked the Society for research, you'll receive an answer eventually. Please don't duplicate requests by asking for research on the same question as a Journal query.

Please send Journal queries separately from other correspondence, with your name and membership number on each request. If you resubmit or update an old query, ***please annotate it accordingly*** so that we don't waste time typing and editing duplicates.

In each Journal, we include all the queries that are ready. Queries received close to our publication date will appear in the following Journal.

E-mail queries, with membership number, should be sent to: ***queries@anesfhs.org.uk***

148/4 *WALLACE / GRANT / WALKER*: The *Elgin Courant* of 18 May 1855 carries an announcement of the m. of James Wallace to Isabella Grant Walker on 27 Apr 1855 in Glasgow. Why can't I find the statutory m. register entry? Isabella Grant was b.c. 1820 in Aberdeen, and m. John Walker there in 1843. John d., and in 1851 Isabella was a lodging-house keeper off Union Street. She certainly then moved to Glasgow; naming herself Isabella Wallace, she registered the b. of a son John and a dau. Ann Smith Wallace there. Her 2nd husband also d., and Isabella returned to Aberdeen before 1871. Were they really married – and what was the Elgin connection?

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Geoffrey Mann

No. 3934

148/5 *SIMPSON / BUCHAN*: Seeking early 1800s siblings or other info. on my 2g-gm Margaret Simpson, bapt. 25 Apr 1807 in Ellon. She was d/o Adam Simpson and Anne Buchan, m. 15 Nov 1800 in Culsalmond parish (Anne from Fergie parish). Margaret “eloped” with Irishman James *McEWEN*, apparently against her parents’ religious wishes, and the couple show up in the 1840s in Canada (my gt-gm Agnes b. there), then moved south to Wisconsin, USA in the early 1850s. With ANESFHS help, I found possible bro^s of Margaret (George 1803, James 1805, John 1810) by an Adam Simpson, but we could not confirm that the mother was Anne Buchan. And no record of what became of Adam and Anne. Any leads much appreciated.

pasacksteder@wisc.edu

Paulette Sacksteder

No. 21155

148/6 *RAMSAY*: My 4g-gf John Ramsay (b.c. 1791 Scotland) m. Elizabeth (*McLEAN?*); chn b. London: Robert 1816 (my 3g-gf), Elizabeth 1819/20, James 1821, William 1827/8. John (builder; ex-tailor) d. 1873; wife d. 1867; both bur. Highgate, London. Son William m. (1) Mary *HUBBARD*; four chn (incl. Eliza Alice, who m. William *SHARP* and then emig. to Australia). After Mary d., he m. (2) Charlotte *PATIENT*. With her, he had six more chn and moved to Devon.

John Ramsay’s Scottish origins elude me. Only these notices in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sat. 31 Jul 1897, p. 1), which both said “Dawlish and Stonehaven (Scotland) papers please copy”, showed that the family had come from Stonehaven:

RAMSAY.—January 24, 1897, at his residence Lammas Park House, Dawlish, South Devon, William Ramsay, aged 70, youngest son of the late John and Elizabeth Ramsay, of 1 Barnsbury-road, Islington, London, N., formerly of Stonehaven, Scotland. Also September 30 1856, Mary, his beloved wife, aged 29, sister of James Harrison Hubbard, late of Newcastle, NSW, mother of Mrs. J. E. Whitehead, Mrs Delbridge, Mr W. J. Ramsay and Mrs W. H. Sharp, Islington, Redfern, Sydney.

RAMSAY.—June 24, 1897, at her residence, 1 Barnsbury-road, Islington, London N., aged 78, Elizabeth, only daughter of the late John and Elizabeth Ramsay (formerly of Stonehaven, Scotland). Her goodness to her brother William’s children endeared her to all. “To live in the hearts of those we love is not to die.” Inserted by her niece, Mrs W. H. Sharp, Islington, Redfern, Sydney, NSW.

Scotland’s People shows several John Ramsays b./bapt. around 1790–1, but none near Stonehaven. Nor did the family seem to follow any naming pattern. There are Ramsays in Stonehaven in 1841; but how can I prove my family’s tie to Stonehaven?

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Teri Comans

No. 22100

Diary

1st September 2018

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

Bring along a brick wall

2:00pm, Elgin Library, Cooper Park, Elgin

8th September 2018

ANESFHS Edinburgh Group Meeting

Members' Day

Theme TBA – see website and forthcoming e-Newsletter

2pm, Royal Scots Club, 29 Abercromby Place

15th September 2018

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

Canon Alexander Galloway – The Renaissance Mannie fae Inverurie [postponed from 2017]

Prof. Ray McAleese

2:30pm, Unitarian Church, Skene Terrace

6th October 2018

ANESFHS Glasgow Group Meeting

From Aberdeenshire to Australia: HES's image, sound and video collections

Neil Fraser, Historic Environment Scotland

2pm, Renfield Saint Stephen's Church Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow

6th October 2018

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

Family-history software

2:00pm, Elgin Library, Cooper Park, Elgin

13th October 2018

ANESFHS Midlands Group Meeting

midlands@anesfhs.org.uk / 01564 770335

2:00pm at a member's house

20th October 2018

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

The Aberdeen Suffragettes

Prof. Sarah Pedersen

2:30pm, Unitarian Church, Skene Terrace

27th October 2018

Local and Family-History Fair

9:30am to 4:30pm

Concert Hall, Motherwell (Lanarkshire FHS)

ANESFHS will have a stall

3rd November 2018

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

"Lest we forget": War memorials

Sir Alistair Irwin

2:00pm, Elgin Library, Cooper Park, Elgin

10th November 2018

ANESFHS Edinburgh Group Meeting

Scottish research resources before 1800

Chris Paton, genealogist/blogger

2pm, Royal Scots Club, 29 Abercromby Place

17th November 2018

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

TBA – see website and next Journal

2:30pm, Unitarian Church, Skene Terrace

17th November 2018

ANESFHS Glasgow Group Meeting

Rural and farming life

Duncan Dornan

2pm, Renfield Saint Stephen's Church Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow

1st December 2018

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

Christmas Social

2:00pm, Elgin Library, Cooper Park, Elgin

8th December 2018

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

Christmas Social

Meet other members and families

2:00pm, 136 King Street

Holiday closure, 158–164 King Street:

Closing at 1pm, Sat. 22nd December 2018;

reopening at 10am, Friday 4th January 2019

5th January 2019

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

Bring along a brick wall

2pm–4pm, Activities Room, Elgin Library

19th January 2019

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

Beginners' meeting

2:30pm, Unitarian Church, Skene Terrace

19th January 2019

ANESFHS Edinburgh Group Meeting

Fashion through the lens: dating old

photographs

Valerie Reilly

2pm, Royal Scots Club, 29 Abercromby Place

2nd February 2019

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

Family mementos

2pm–4pm, Activities Room, Elgin Library

Articles

Young Twins' Great War Service

In October 2018, it will be 100 years since my great-uncle was killed in action. He was my grandfather's twin; and this article tells their stories, as much as evidence supports.

Alexander ("Sandy") Garden Strachan Blake and Charles Farquharson Blake were born on 9th September 1899 to Margaret (née Johnston) and James Blake, butcher, of 66 Rosemount Place, Aberdeen. The boys appear in the 1901 census, with six older siblings and both parents, at 8 Loanhead Terrace, Aberdeen. The 1911 census records them, now aged 11 with occupation "school", still at that address.

Around this time, both joined the 1st City of Aberdeen (Grammar School) Scout Group. They attended Mile End Public School and subsequently Robert Gordon's College (RGC). Their mother died on 26th February 1916. Both subsequently entered military service, though here their paths diverge, with Sandy joining the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in 1917 and Charles the 41st Training Reserve Bn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. Neither left the war unscathed. At 18, Sandy was shot down while piloting a Sopwith Camel. He was wounded, captured, and held until December 1918. Shortly after the twins' 19th birthday, Charles had been killed in action while serving with the 12th Bn Royal Scots (12th RS).



Sandy (Charles below)



RGC documents Sandy's and Charles's attendance from the 1910–11 session. Charles had many absences: 11 days in his first year, 26 days in the 1911–12 first quarter (missing some exams), and numerous absences in the 1913–14 first two quarters. He left school entirely on 6th March 1914. If he often suffered illness, this notion remains unproven.

Charles's life after leaving school is known only in summary. The *Aberdeen Evening Express* of 19th December 1918 reported that Charles, "Previous to joining the colours, was an apprenticed engineer with Messrs McKinnon and Co., Spring-Garden", though when he joined the company or how long he worked there is unknown. His Attestation Form and other enlistment records were evidently among the "Burnt Documents" lost in 1940, but the Scottish National War Memorial shows his service numbers in the 41st TR Bn (23554), the Highland Light Infantry (57444) and the 12th RS (59110). It does not mention previous service with the 17th RS, documented on his Service Medal and Award Roll entry, but does say that Private Blake was "Killed in Action F&F [France and Flanders] 1/10/1918". The 12th RS's War Diary entry of that same date confirms fighting in which Charles likely died, but does not mention him by name:

At 6:15am the advance on LEDEGHEM began & by 7:15am the village was captured and our line pushed out along the light railway about 500 yards beyond. In this advance very considerable [small arms] fire & shell fire was met with but the line never wavered and all ranks carried out the attack in the finest form. ... About 10am ... our right flank became

entirely exposed & came under heavy enfilade fire from over the WULFDAMBEEK. At the same time the Bn on our left was forced by heavy opposition in front to readjust their line. ... we withdrew to the village. Twice again, in conjunction with the bn. on our left, our line was pushed forward, but owing to casualties caused by the murderous fire in front & on the right &, in view of the fact that it was by this time clear that the Div on the right would not be able to get forward, it finally had to be drawn back to the line of the railway with outposts along the village street. ... About 1pm the bn (which was now only 200 strong) was reinforced by the 11th RS & another attempt was made to push the line forward but in vain & the two bns held on to the readjusted line till about 4:40pm when under orders of Lt Col. SMYTH the 11th RS took over the whole line and the 12th RS were withdrawn about 300 yds behind. ... Up to about 4pm a post was maintained by LEDEGHEM church at the S. end of the village, but by then, the enemy having got on to the position with T.M.s & most of the men having become casualties, the post was given up & only the northern part of the village held.

Charles's remains are interred in Belgium in Dadizeele New British Cemetery (plot 1, row D, grave 13) along with others from the 12th RS killed the same day. Their interment in Dadizeele supports their likely demise during the fighting near Ledegem, as dead from nearby smaller burial grounds were brought to Dadizeele after the war for reburial.

In contrast, my grandfather Sandy's early life seems well documented. He attended RGC for four years, then Aberdeen Grammar School for the 1915–16 school year. Active in Scouting, his name appears periodically in Aberdeen newspaper articles. His military service records and personal records of his service survive. These support a summarised chronological record of his war service (for abbreviations, see "Sources" below):

1917

26 July – Sandy signed Attestation papers, was examined and was assigned to the Army Reserve. [TNA1]

7 Aug – Sandy applied to an officer cadet unit. His father signed, as did H. F. Morland Simpson, MA LLD JP, rector of Aberdeen Grammar School, attesting to Sandy's having "attained a standard of education suitable for commissioned rank". [TNA1]

17 Sept – Sandy's application for admission to RFC Cadet Wing notes: "South Farnborough forthwith from Halton Park". [TNA1]

18 Sept – Assigned to 5 Officer Cadet Wing (OCW). [TNA2]

26 Sept – Reassigned to 2 OCW. [TNA2]

17 Oct – Declared medically "Fit as Pilot". [TNA1]

30 Oct – Recommended for training as a Scout Squadron Pilot. [TTC]



1918

21 Feb – Reassigned to 36 Training Squadron at RFC Montrose. [TNA2]

1 Mar – First training flight in Avro #D138. (Sandy's logbook documents 83 flights between 2nd March and 30th June; they are not individually recorded here.)

2 Mar – Passes Elementary Training Squadron Ground Gunnery on Vickers Machine Gun, and (8th March) on Lewis Machine Gun. [TTC]

1 Apr – Commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant (Provisional) in the Royal Air Force. [TNA1]

4 Apr – First solo flight. [LB]

6 Apr – Passes Higher Training Squadron Ground Gunnery on Vickers Machine Gun, and (12th April) on Lewis Machine Gun. [TTC]

27 Apr – Assigned to 18 Training Squadron, Turnberry [TNA2]

25 May – Graduated Higher Training Squadron Flying on Sopwith Scout [TTC]

26 May – Qualified for service [FS Form 291 RAF (Officers) Graduation Certificate #14315]; Confirmation of promotion to 2Lt. [TNA2]

2 Jul – Reporting for Overseas [FS Form 29 Air Ministry]

6 Jul – First flight as member of “209 Squadron, 22 Wing, France”. [LB]

7–9 Jul – Two flights daily; then 11, 13, 15 Jul – one flight daily. [LB]

16 Jul – Two flights. [LB]

25 Jul – shot down near Geluvelde, Belgium, while piloting Sopwith Camel 40 # D.9621; wounded; captured by Germans [Forum World War]. Taken to nearby hospital. [PN]

Aside: 2Lt A. G. S. Blake was shot down by Lt Ludwig “Lutz” Beckmann, Jasta 56 – his fifth “kill”, making him an ace. Jasta 56 pilots were flying Fokker D.VIIs in July 1918, a more powerful aircraft than the Sopwith Camel, so better at altitude, in pursuit and in dives. The torque of the Camel’s rotary engine made it manoeuvrable, but it also required skill and experience to master. Sandy had 28 flight hours in a Sopwith Camel when he was shot down; he likely had yet to master the Camel. Skilled or not, he was fortunate: the “average life of a pilot at the front was forty-eight hours in the air ...”. [Springs]

30 Jul – Leaves hospital with a machine-gun bullet still in his foot. [PN]

1 Aug to 23 Oct – Travels as PoW by circuitous route: Ghent, Stamburgh, Hanover, Heidelberg, Karlsruhe, Landshut, Ingolstadt, Nuremberg, Bamberg, Haale, to Pillau, Prussia. [PN; Pillau no longer exists; the location is north-east of Gdańsk, Poland]

13 Dec – Repatriation. [TNA2]

20 Feb 1919 – Release from Active Service. [TNA2]

On 1st March 1919, Sandy emigrated to the USA. He appears in the 1920 US census as a clerk on a sugar plantation in Hawaii. In March 1925, an envelope just large enough to include the British War Medal and Victory Medal for service during the Great War arrived at PO Box 3440, Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands. Sandy later became an accountant, married Dorothy Moffat Johnston (no relation to Margaret Johnston) on 15th August 1928 in Honolulu, and fathered one child, my mother. My grandfather died in Honolulu on 28th January 1971 with Lt Beckmann’s bullet still in his foot.

My grandfather’s early life was far easier to research than my great-uncle’s. Granted, there are still gaps in both lives for future research(!), but at least I knew my grandfather and have some sense of him. Of Charles’s personality, we know only that the Aberdeen *Evening Express* of 19th December 1918 described him as a “young man of a bright and cheery disposition; he was very popular and much liked” and that his gravestone inscription reads: “Brief, Bright, Glorious”. His letters home have not survived, and his memorial plaque and medals are lost. Fortunately, his photograph appeared in the Aberdeen War Memorial Supplement *People’s Journal*, 26th September 1925, so at least we have a picture of the soldier he became.



For their assistance in research which ultimately led to this article, I wish to thank:

- Pat Black, Anne Park and Ivor Normand, all ANESFHS
- Tom Cumming, Robert Gordon's College Archives
- Ken Nisbet, Scottish Genealogy Society.

Sources

Ancestry: www.ancestry.com

Commonwealth War Grave Commission: www.cwgc.org

Forum World War: <https://tinyurl.com/ybbwwa3w>

LB: Army Book 425 Pilot's Flying Log Book for 2Lt A. G. S. Blake; personal files

Scotland's People: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Springs, E. W., *Letters from a War Bird: The World War I Letters of Elliott White Springs*, ed.

David K. Vaughan (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012)

PN: personal notes made by 2Lt A. G. S. Blake during WW1; personal files

TNA1: WO 339/125441 C622091, The National Archives

TNA2: AIR/76/42, The National Archives

TTC: RFC Training Transfer Card for 2Lt A. G. S. Blake; personal files

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Andy Bowers

No. 20518

—oOo—

Pre-Reformation People: Aberdeenshire Clerics

In the years around 1560, the Reformation in Scotland was a traumatic time for everyone, from the monarchy to the poorest parishioner – but one side-effect remains important for family historians. This was the destruction of church records.

When the unrest developed into attacks on idols in churches, the mob did not stop at idols. Any aspect of the former religious regime was seen as a valid target for retribution, and church records held in an office were simply part of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic power that had held sway for centuries.

Like many modern revolutions, it began in a small way, with ordinary people noting how objectionable some church practices were. For many years, a common feature had been the sale of indulgences, i.e. certificates purporting to absolve you from past sins when you passed through the pearly gates of heaven. It was effectively a piece of flummery to raise money for the church. Introduced to help finance some crusades to the Holy Land, it (like income tax later) continued long after its claimed “temporary” use for a specific purpose.

Then there was the financial chicanery over the income from churches. A priest could be granted the position of chaplain to a church without ever visiting the place. Such appointments allowed the priest to appoint another priest as his locum, naturally at a lower salary, so that the “official” incumbent could go about other business and collect an extra income. Such appointments were often expanded to the extent that a priest could be the incumbent of half a dozen charges, collecting his income from all of them and never appearing in person. Even worse, the Crown or major powers in society could persuade the church to appoint chosen friends and relatives to major positions in the Scottish Church: heads of abbeys, monasteries and the like. In one case, a six-year-old son of the king was made abbot of St Andrews.

Add to that the reforming zeal coming from Europe with Martin Luther and John Calvin, and its effect on the young priest John Knox, and it built up to an explosive climax.

Starting from a riot in Perth, the chaos spread throughout the realm, and the churches were basically sacked as centres of Catholic corruption.

As a result, practically no parish church records survive from before the Reformation. The Reformed church took over the religious life with a new zeal, and instituted the system of parish registers of baptisms and marriages, with a nod to deaths as an interesting extra. Many churches failed to establish church registers for many years, thus we have a patchwork of start dates for Old Parochial Registers (OPRs).

So, how do we track down pre-Reformation people and their relationships? The answer is: not easily. It is fairly easy to find records of the existence of individuals, but few are recorded with a family link attached. Some surviving estate records, such as those of the abbey of Coupar Angus, show leases being passed to relatives; but this is uncommon.

Whom are we likely to find in the available records? Landowners, clergy and the nobility are the most common, as landed families kept their own records in muniment rooms, and the state kept records showing the transfer of parcels of land from one person to another, such as a land charter dated 1469 which was recently received by Caithness Archives – the earliest dated document they now hold.

Apart from preserved state archives, there remains a massive archive in Rome, that of the Roman Catholic Church – and naturally documents relating to Scotland pre-Reformation are stored in that archive. Historians have been using this source for many decades, and some have gone to the trouble of transcribing the Scottish ones. The Scottish Record Society and the Scottish History Society have done their best to include such transcriptions in their dedicated publishing programme.

Using a range of publications which render the documents into English from the original Latin, I propose to show you examples of what may be found for Aberdeenshire.

In *The Apostolic Camera and Scottish Benefices, 1418–1488* (St Andrews University, 1934), the late Annie Cameron transcribed many financial documents concerning regular payments made from Scottish churches to the Vatican. In some cases, an exchange of benefices is shown. A benefice is a church whose income goes primarily to the local priest (i.e. he benefits from his post).

One example concerns the parish church of Peterculter (written as “Petircontir”), where the perpetual vicar, Robert Keith, in 1471 arranges a swap of parishes with Richard Cady (written as “Cadi”) of the parish church of Conveth (Laurencekirk).

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In 1437, John Stewart paid annates to the Vatican for the canonry and prebends of Banchory. Annates were a year's revenue of the post, which were paid to the pope when first taking on such an appointment. Hugh Kennedy paid annates for the canonry and prebend of Turriff (written "Turray") in 1438.

Earlier, in 1426, Robert de Pasleto (i.e. Paisley) agreed to pay the annates of the Priory of Monymusk, the post being void by the death of Richard de Doueri (or Doneri). There are connections to this event, such as a Supplication to Rome in 1424 by Robert de Kylqwnqwar (Kilconquhar, Fife), asking to be provided to the elective conventual priory of Monymusk "detained unlawfully occupied by a certain Richard de Dwery for more than four years", void by the death of David de Kynnard (Kinnaird), the last possessor. A note says that in 1427 the deceased Richard de Doueri was regarded as the rightful possessor and Robert de Kilconquhar the intruder! A day later, the record states as a correction that it should be Andrew de Kynnard, not David.

As if that was not enough, a supplication in 1427 from Robert de Pasleto (Paisley) asks to be provided to the priory of Mennimousk (Monymusk), void by the death of Richard de Daneri, as a certain Robert de Gylqwongwhar, alleged canon, has detained it for nine months or more.

These guys pulled no punches over winning benefices (and Monymusk was worth £40 per annum in old sterling at that time), so cash was the real target, not religious honours.

The squabbling went on for years, with more contenders for the priory: Robert de Kilconkar had been prior for two years when he asked the pope for backing against Robert de Pasleto. The following year, Robert de Kylconcar is described as having died at Rome, and John de Tulach, canon professed of Scone, and a kinsman of James, King of Scots, asks the pope for this post. Another supplication says that Robert de Pasleto obtained possession, but Robert de Kylconcar "impeded him from taking up the fruits", i.e. stopped him getting his hands on the income, so Pasleto asks the pope to confirm him as prior.

Another supplication in 1430 states that John de Thulach was provided to the priory – but, before he could take up the post, the pope promoted him to the abbey of Inchaffrey, thus Monymusk became void again. Now William de Cupro (Cupar), canon of St Andrews, asks to be provided to Monymusk. In the same year, John de Tulach has died, Pasleto is in Rome, and William de Crannach, canon of Scone, ask for the post. He gets it, we know, for later that year he pays the annates of the priory through the bishop of Brechin.

Such a to-do, but this is what makes such records possible: the intrigue, infighting, and trying to wangle a well-paying position!

An important point to note about clergymen in the 15th century: mostly they are given a

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

first name, then a description of where they are from: Cupar, Kilconquhar, Paisley, Kinnaird, Tulloch (near Dingwall) and Crannach (Banffshire).

The Diocese of Aberdeen was very wide-ranging, so that the two-volume *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis (Register of the Bishopric of Aberdeen)* (Spalding Club, 1845) includes hundreds of names of residents of North-East Scotland. The geographical coverage is all of the former Aberdeenshire, plus parts of what later was Banffshire, and parts of what later became Kincardineshire.

The text is in Latin, but there are excellent indices of people and places, making it easy for you to identify documents indicating where a possible ancestor may have lived. Individual documents are not dated except in Latin within the text, but the list of documents at the start of each volume (under the title Tabula) gives a year date for each document.

There are two volumes of early Vatican records worth accessing: *Papal Letters to Scotland, of Clement VII of Avignon, 1378–1394*, edited by Charles Burns (Scottish History Society, 1976), and *Papal Letters to Scotland, of Benedict XIII of Avignon, 1394–1419* (Scottish History Society, 1976). The vast majority of the entries are business letters of clergy corresponding with the pope, but some are dispensations to men hoping to be priests, absolving them of defects such as being the son of a priest and an unmarried woman. The odd one is a dispensation to marry despite being distantly related.

The most interesting and useful aspect of these volumes is that the clergy are named in full, with their normal surname. For example:

25 May 1392. To Laurence Trayl, rector of the parish church of Monymusk. Whereas Laurence, through his proxy, John Triht (or Triche), clerk, has freely resigned the parish church of Kilmany, St Andrews diocese, and Alexander Trayl in person has freely resigned the parish church of Munimosk, both into the hands of Giovanni, Cardinal priest of S. Anastasia, in order to effect an exchange of benefices. Wherefore the pope confers on Laurence the parish church of Monymusk, vacant by this resignation. In 1379 Alexander Trayl had been appointed to the parish church of Monymusk, vacant by the free resignation of Walter Trayl, treasurer of Glasgow.

All these exchanges, and all having the surname Trayl, suggest they are closely related.

gordon@kinhelp.co.uk

Gordon Johnson

No. 546

—oOo—

Record of Ancestors Chart: DNA Notes

I'm glad to be this Journal's "centrefold", having submitted my Record of Ancestors chart to the Society a few years ago. Since then, our family's Y-DNA test has determined that our McPhersons were really "hidden MacGregors", so my brick wall of my 3g-grandfather Alexander McPherson, birth and death dates/places unknown, might have had a father, grandfather or great-grandfather with the surname of Mc/MacGregor at one time.

I'd felt discouraged at having a roadblock every way that I turned researching Alexander McPherson. I have a copy of his 1829 marriage record to Agnes Catto in Aberdeen, but I know nothing more about him. In frustration, I turned to DNA. I asked my brother James McPherson to take a Y-DNA test (which only traces back the direct male line, and can go very far back) and an autosomal DNA test, which is DNA matches from all sides of the family and usually gives more recent matches (+/- 200 years).

Record of Ancestors

Membership No: **20475**
 Name **Susan Brouwer**
 Date **26 Jul 2018**
 e-mail **sasbrouwer@rogers.com**

Your Father's Father

3 **Thomas Adamson McPherson**

Born 4 Jul 1888
Place Aberdeen
Married 5 Oct 1912
Place St Catharines, Ontario
Died 22 Feb 1953
Place Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Occup. Railway foreman; iron-moulder; tool + die-maker; milkman

Your Father

1 **James Alexander McPherson**

Born 23 Nov 1920
Place Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Married 11 Jul 1941
Place Hamilton, Ontario
Died 3 Apr 1995
Place Hamilton, Ontario
Occup. Steel worker

Your Father's Mother

4 **Helen Elizabeth Pirie**

Born 6 Oct 1885
Place Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
Died 25 Sep 1974
Place Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Occup. Domestic servant

You

Susan McPherson

Born
Place Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Married 7 Jul 1984
Place Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Occup. Illustrator;
 library assistant

Your Mother's Father

5 **William Eaves**

Born 22 Jul 1884
Place Bolton, Lancs, England
Married 2 Sep 1910
Place Bolton, Lancashire
Died 26 Oct 1956
Place Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Occup. Cottonmill worker;
 Westinghouse employee

Your Mother

2 **Olive Eaves**

Born 4 Jul 1920
Place Hamilton, Ontario
Died 29 Mar 2000
Place Hamilton, Ontario
Occup. Homemaker; Avon

Your Mother's Mother

6 **Amelia Vickers**

Born 27 Nov 1888
Place Bolton, Lancs, England
Died 25 Jan 1985
Place Dundas, Hamilton, Ontario
Occup. Caretaker; midwife;
 shop worker;
 cottonmill worker

To all Society members:

If you have found new information since you first sent in your chart - or especially if you have *never* sent a chart in! - then please send in your latest version, with extension sheets as required. Don't worry about gaps, but try to fill in as many names, dates and places as you can.

Please send your chart to charts@anesfhs.org.uk, or by post to Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS, 158-164 King Street, Aberdeen AB24 5BD.

		15	James Leighton McPherson	Alexr McPh. / A. Catto
			<i>Born</i> 3 Oct 1834	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen
			<i>Married</i> 22 Jul 1857	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen
			<i>Died</i> 21 Feb 1915	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen
				<i>Occup.</i> Merchant seaman/dock lab'r
7	James Leighton McPherson	16	Jessie/Janet McKay	Murdoch M.L. or E. Elliot
	<i>Born</i> 17 Dec 1865		<i>Born</i> 17 Feb 1834	<i>Place</i> Barbados, West Indies
	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen		<i>Died</i> 19 Sep 1912	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen
	<i>Married</i> 21 Apr 1886			<i>Occup.</i> Millworker
	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen	17	John Tait	Andrew T. / Helen Mair
	<i>Died</i> 28 Aug 1936		<i>Born</i> 8 Sep 1844	<i>Place</i> Cairnbulg, Aberdeenshire
	<i>Place</i> Hamilton, Ontario, Canada		<i>Married</i> [1866: Georgina Foster]	<i>Place</i>
	<i>Occup.</i> Iron moulder		<i>Died</i> 11 Jul 1888	<i>Place</i> Peterhead, Aberdeenshire
8	Eliza Ann Tait Buchan	18	Euphemia Keith Buchan	David B. / Eliz. Buchan
	<i>Born</i> 2 Nov 1866 [illegit.]		<i>Born</i> 28 Aug 1841	<i>Place</i> Peterhead, ABD
	<i>Place</i> Peterhead, Aberdeenshire		<i>Died</i> 28 May 1888	<i>Place</i> Monifieth, Angus
	<i>Died</i> 3 Mar 1939			<i>Occup.</i> House servant
	<i>Place</i> Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	19	William Pirie	Wm P. / Eliz. Balloch
	<i>Occup.</i> Millworker		<i>Born</i> 6 Jul 1825	<i>Place</i> Forgue, Aberdeenshire
			<i>Married</i> 16 Jul 1853	<i>Place</i> Forgue, Aberdeenshire
			<i>Died</i> 3 Apr 1904	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen
				<i>Occup.</i> Labourer/crofter
9	Alexander Pirie	20	Jane/Jean Chapman	Adam C. / Helen Thomson
	<i>Born</i> 17 Aug 1856		<i>Born</i> 6 May 1830	<i>Place</i> Auchterless, ABD
	<i>Place</i> Auchterless, ABD		<i>Died</i> 10 Jan 1892	<i>Place</i> Inch, Aberdeenshire
	<i>Married</i> 30 Nov 1876			<i>Occup.</i> Farmer's daughter
	<i>Place</i> Inverurie, Aberdeenshire	21	Charles Massie	John M. / Ann Spence
	<i>Died</i> 18 Dec 1945		<i>Born</i> 1 Jan 1829	<i>Place</i> Turriff, Aberdeenshire
	<i>Place</i> Oyne, Aberdeenshire		<i>Married</i> [not to each other]	<i>Place</i>
	<i>Occup.</i> Mill labourer; railway carter		<i>Died</i> 12 May 1910	<i>Place</i> Fordyce, Banffshire
10	Margaret Mitchell Massie	22	Elspet Mathieson	Wm M. / Isabel Wisely
	<i>Born</i> 10 Apr 1852? [illegit.]		<i>Born</i> 14 Jan 1827	<i>Place</i> Culsalmond, ABD
	<i>Place</i> Boyndie, Banffshire		<i>Died</i> about 1853	<i>Place</i> Scotland
	<i>Died</i> 27 Sep 1923			<i>Occup.</i> House servant
	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen	23	William Eaves	Richard E. / Mary Nollard
	<i>Occup.</i> Domestic servant		<i>Born</i> 16 Mar 1822	<i>Place</i> Samlesbury, Lancashire
			<i>Married</i> 20 Apr 1845	<i>Place</i> Preston, Lancashire
			<i>Died</i> Oct 1884	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
				<i>Occup.</i> Mechanic/machine maker
11	William Eaves	24	Betsy Ward	Wm W. / Nancy or Ann
	<i>Born</i> Jan 1854		<i>Born</i> 1820	<i>Place</i> Preston, Lancashire
	<i>Place</i> Preston, Lancs, England		<i>Died</i> Jul 1887	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
	<i>Married</i> 18 Feb 1882			<i>Occup.</i> Cotton winder
	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire	25	James Dean	Benj. D. / Mgt Hughes
	<i>Died</i> 12 Nov 1924		<i>Born</i> 3 Oct 1827	<i>Place</i> Chester, Cheshire, England
	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire		<i>Married</i> 1851	<i>Place</i> Newcastle-u-Lyme, Staffs
	<i>Occup.</i> Cotton operative spinner		<i>Died</i> after 1881	<i>Place</i>
12	Margaret Alice Dean	26	Ann Smallshaw	Robt S. / Eliz. Spilsbury
	<i>Born</i> 1861		<i>Born</i> about 1832	<i>Place</i> Staffordshire, England
	<i>Place</i> Birkenhead, Cheshire		<i>Died</i> after 1881	<i>Place</i>
	<i>Died</i> 17 Feb 1916			<i>Occup.</i> House servant
	<i>Place</i> Preston, Lancashire	27	Munro or Knowles [Y-DNA]	
	<i>Occup.</i> Card mill hand in cotton mill		<i>Born</i>	<i>Place</i>
			<i>Married</i>	<i>Place</i>
			<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>
				<i>Occup.</i>
13	Joseph William Vickers	28	Ann Jane Vickers	? / Ann V.
	<i>Born</i> 8 Sep 1858 [illegit.]		<i>Born</i> Dec 1837	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
	<i>Place</i> Little Bolton, Lancashire		<i>Died</i> 25 Feb 1900	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
	<i>Married</i> 1 Jan 1878			<i>Occup.</i> Cottonmill worker
	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire	29	William Hamer	James H. / Mary Pilling
	<i>Died</i> 3 Jul 1915		<i>Born</i> 9 Oct 1825	<i>Place</i> Tottington, Lancashire
	<i>Place</i> Wentworth, Hamilton, Ont.		<i>Married</i> 2 Dec 1849	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
	<i>Occup.</i> Millw'kr; tanner; greengrocer		<i>Died</i> Jan 1897	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
14	Mary Ann Hamer	30	Martha Flitcroft	John F. / Betsy Harwood
	<i>Born</i> 1860		<i>Born</i> 1829	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
	<i>Place</i> Rumworth, Lancashire		<i>Died</i> Apr 1901	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire
	<i>Died</i> 5 Sep 1894			<i>Occup.</i>
	<i>Place</i> Bolton, Lancashire			
	<i>Occup.</i> Cottonmill worker			

Was I ever surprised to find out with the Y test that we were really “hidden MacGregors”? I knew nothing of that clan – but, after reading a bit about their history, I understand why that clan has so many name variations. In fact, our closest Y-DNA match is a Murray (another hidden MacGregor), followed by some McGregors (including the clan chief), a Campbell, and various other surnames. Because of proscription, the Clan Gregor project at FT-DNA has a larger variety of surnames than any other surname project.

I was so interested in the results that I asked a male cousin on my mother’s English side to test for Y-DNA results as well. We had a lot of illegitimacy in that branch of the tree, and I thought it might help. Our closest match there was a Munro, followed by four Knowles. Our Munro match had ancestors who hailed from Ross-shire, Scotland – and, sure enough, I found a Munro from Ross-shire living three minutes’ walk from my 2g-grandmother in Bolton, Lancashire. I have not added him to the family tree yet, but he is my #1 suspect!

I still have no dates or places for my Alexander McPherson’s birth or death, but at least I have a clue, which in genealogy is better than nothing!

On my original handwritten chart, ancestor #17 was “James” Tait – but this now reads *John Tait* (1844–88). He was the father of my great-grandmother Eliza Ann Tait Buchan, and left her mother Euphemia Keith Buchan pregnant to go and marry Georgina Foster. Luckily, through my own autosomal DNA testing, I have a confirmed relationship to John and Georgina’s children. For that fact alone, I love DNA!

John and Euphemia actually had two children together (the first died at two weeks old), and they were in the Kirk Session records. The weird thing is that Euphemia did not go to the Sheriff Court in Aberdeen until 11 years later to get John’s name added to Eliza Ann’s birth record. I found that really strange.

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Mrs Margaret Penny, Aberdonian in the Canadian Arctic

2018 is a centenary for several historic commemorations. Jenni Murray’s book (2017; see References on p. 26 below) includes chapters on suffragists/suffragettes and how their actions helped more women to have the right to vote. These women were educated and often from influential families, but behind them were many ordinary women who stretched the boundaries of the then expected female roles.

One such was Margaret Penny (née Irvine, 1812–91), wife of Captain William Penny (1808/9–1892). Originally from Peterhead, William became a well-respected Aberdeen whaler fisherman – innovative, daring and a leading light in the formation of the Aberdeen Arctic Company. They married on 4th February 1840 in Marischal Street, Aberdeen. As his wife, Margaret met and hosted in their Ferryhill home other captains and their wives, as well as the few Esquimaux who came to Scotland on William’s returning ships. (“Esquimaux” was the name by which the Pennys knew their Arctic native friends and colleagues.) She travelled with him to England, where she met Tookoolikoo (also known as Tackitrow or Annie), the then famous Esquimaux woman who was presented to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at Windsor Palace (1853–4). Margaret later recorded in her diaries what great pleasure she had in hosting Tackitrow aboard the *Lady Franklin* in Cumberland Sound on 21st August 1857.

This article is largely based on the seminal book (see below) by Prof. W. Gillies Ross, whaling expert. Aberdonian quine Elizabeth Cowie, a descendant of William Penny, knowing of my interest in strong women, lent me her family copy – and it opened up a whole new world to me. My own Aberdonian maternal roots, Howitts, are in farming and mason carter stock, but I was ignorant of the lead that the North-East took in exploring new territories and claiming rights in unsurveyed fishing grounds. I focus on Margaret and the journals she wrote to demonstrate how a douce Victorian matron (45/46 years old at the time), mother of five, with an established role within Aberdeen society, became a valued member of an epic whaling voyage and is thought to be the first European woman to have overwintered in the Arctic.

Leaving behind their three daughters aged 8, 10 and 15 years, Margaret accompanied her son William jnr, then aged 12, on his maiden voyage on the *Lady Franklin* with his father, William snr, captain and commander of this ship and the *Sophia*. They left Aberdeen around 30th June 1857. Margaret had no specific role on board ship, as the crew were responsible for all cooking/mending/cleaning tasks as well as fishing duties. Her journals reveal the routines, the excitement when quarry was sighted, the skills and cohesion of the crews, the vicissitudes of the weather, the long working hours to achieve a common purpose, the celebrations at New Year and nights of singing and dancing. In short, they “fill in the blanks” that ships’ logs cannot dwell on.

Ross, based on his own whaling experiences and on the captain’s logbooks and Margaret’s diaries, shows her as insightful, determined, courageous, curious and eager to learn, able to take charge of the ship when necessary, and relating well with crew at all levels and with other captains and Esquimaux men, women and children. Her Christian faith shines through without sentimentality or excessive recruiting zeal, although she did support the Moravian Missionary brother in his task on this journey. The Moravian church did much to bring Christianity and improve the indigenous populations’ well-being. From 11pm on Saturday evening, the ship was cleared, and at 11:30 the flag was hoisted to indicate the Sabbath – a period kept free of work except for emergencies. Each Sunday, a Divine Service was held on board in the evening, when 20 to 30 Esquimaux attended and were treated to cups of tea afterwards. At midnight, regular duties recommenced.

Margaret’s interactions with Esquimaux women are detailed and reveal her as striking up positive relationships despite cultural and language differences. A symbiotic relationship developed where both sides gave and got as situations demanded and suited them.

She mentions the various gifts of food received: ½ dozen eggs, a northern diver, whale meat, deer tongue, birds. The women helped her to make warm winter garments and inducted her into the warmth and comfort of their snow homes. She in turn ensured that the women, elderly men and young children were kept in food in the worst weather while their men were engaged in Penny’s fishing expeditions and setting up two new land bases needed to aid further exploration in new waters. They took her to the hillsides to gather crowberries and blueberries to allay scurvy, and they taught her that mactak (raw whale skin) should be nibbled regularly. This she also demanded of the crew – and she stood over them, with the result that only a few isolated cases of scurvy, one being the ship’s cooper, occurred during this voyage despite its length in largely wintry conditions.

Her appreciation of the hardiness and strong work ethic in the crew is evident throughout. Left behind for a fortnight with just a skeleton crew when the captain and men were

chasing the whales and seals, she wrote with warmth about their return. Crew were more than mere workmates on these long sailing voyages: she mentions the 2nd mate playing the accordion for their singing and dancing, and writes: “some of the airs they sing are very pretty”. Esquimaux also enjoyed these sessions; and the doctor (surgeon Erskine Grant) sang well, and Mr Warmow, the pastor, occasionally gave them an Esquimaux hymn.

Captain Penny was known as a leading innovator and keen to adopt steam power for whaling ships; but other members of the Aberdeen Arctic Company, which he had helped set up, were reluctant to invest in them. As a result, he had to thole being towed in under steam power by a “generous rival” when becalmed in a dangerous situation.

On 25th July 1858, the *Lady Franklin* and the *Sophia* weighed anchor and set off on the 2,000-mile journey home to Aberdeen. They arrived on 22nd August as “full ships”, i.e. after a successful hunting trip, with blubber and whalebone. The *Aberdeen Journal* of 25th August 1858 records the Aberdeen Arctic Company shareholders’ satisfaction and their appreciation for the particular role of Mrs Penny, who “by intercourse with the Natives and others, was of great service to the expedition”. They presented her with a silver three-piece teaset which is now in the City of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections.

No doubt she was able to use this gift in their retirement home at 22 Springbank Terrace. But, nothing daunted, in 1863 Margaret returned with her husband to the Davis Strait – a remarkable woman stepping outside the normal constraints of Victorian middle age. Their son, William jnr, did not follow a

career at sea but instead set off to the East and the tea trade to establish himself in another adventurous setting. He and his mother corresponded until her death.

Captain William Penny’s later career was somewhat chequered, but his exploratory voyages left a lasting legacy in the naming of three key Arctic places on the world map – Penny Point on Baffin Island, Penny Strait between Devon Island and Bathurst Island, and the Penny Ice cap, a glacier at Anyuittuq, thought to be the birthplace of the last Ice Age. The artist Stephen Pearce, who at Lady Franklin’s request painted a composite of the Arctic Council of naval greats (now in the National Portrait Gallery in London), had William Penny sit for him in 1852. This portrait, commissioned by Lady Franklin in recognition of William’s searches for her missing husband, now hangs in the Arbuthnot Museum in Peterhead – a fitting reward for all the endeavours of a lad from Peterhead.

References

- Murray, Jenni, *A History of Britain in 21 Women* (Oneworld Publications, 2017; and AudioCD).
 Ross, W. Gillies, *This Distant and Unsurveyed Country: A Woman’s Winter at Baffin Island 1857–58* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).



Capt. William Penny (image courtesy of Aberdeenshire Museums Service)

Education in Strichen, Aberdeenshire

Towards the end of the 19th century, Strichen School had a period of remarkable success in the academic field. Boys, mainly, would go to university with bursaries, win prizes there, graduate, and move into a different world from their farming origins. England and Empire were well served by these expatriate Scots; austerity in their early lives may have inured them to hardship in developing countries. That they habitually transcended the gulf between worker and professional says much for their school.

When a monastery had been built at Deer in the dark ages of the sixth century AD, it implied the dawn of enlightenment, though another 1,000 years would pass before it matured. In 1219, the Earl of Buchan replaced it with a new Cistercian abbey. At the Reformation, John Knox forced its closure; only ruins remain.

Along the road is Aikey Brae, site of the notorious fair. Always on a Sunday, it upset the pious, and, as focus for travelling people, it was seen as less than respectable.

The University of Aberdeen (1495), centre of learning for the North-East, serves ordinary people irrespective of wealth or class. In 1496, education for upper-class boys became compulsory, ensuring literacy in future lawmakers and administrators. Tutors or family themselves, or early schools (Aberdeen Grammar from 1257), would be involved. Few must have attended university, but Scotland had four such institutions when England – much bigger – had only two.

Scottish education began with Church schools in the Middle Ages; after the Reformation, they were run by the parish. Catholics, excluded from university, had to study abroad (e.g. Patrick Gordon of Auchleuchries). By the mid-17th century, every parish had a school funded by the local landowner. In the 18th century, the Scottish Enlightenment was an outpouring of intellectual and scientific knowledge by academics, probably the zenith of Scottish educational supremacy.

Strichen, formerly Mormond, became a planned village in 1764 during the Agricultural Revolution, when landowners modernised their land and property. By distancing the village from his residence, the owner would deter village riff-raff from hanging around the Big House. These villages are still recognisable by their wide, open streets. Strichen House was built in 1820 by the Frasers.

Marischal College records graduates from Strichen starting with Thomas Fraser in 1627; between then and 1860, 35 boys went to Aberdeen University.

The first headmaster was William Law in 1679. A minor entry refers to a new school in 1688. Much later, it was described as austere and primitive: one room only, a long passage with desks on either side; walls of stone; no ceiling, only joists; a peat neuk, one per boy per day (or a load per annum).

James Nicol of Strichen was no uneducated farm labourer. Though receiving only basic schooling, he was well-read and intelligent, author of pamphlets with views advanced for his time, and a prolific writer of ballads. He had been in the USA; a cooper to trade, he ran a shop in Strichen. He died in 1840, leaving £400 to endow a school. In 1852, Nicol's Free School opened in North Street with 25 pupils. To gain the post, Miss Watkins, the sole teacher, had an oral examination lasting nine hours. She remained for the life of the school, receiving £14 annually plus a house.

Belle Stevens, who ran a girls' school in Water Street, contributed and transferred her pupils; numbers increased to 60. In 1889, they amalgamated with the parish school.

Alongside the church in West Street, and near to Nicol's School, was the Episcopal School (1877–1928). As a minority group, maintaining numbers was important; a dedicated school was probably the best way to do this.

Strichen Higher Grade Secondary School dated from 1883. A substantial building, it could accommodate 262 pupils. At ground level, there were four classrooms, science lab and technical/domestic room; the first floor had three classrooms separated by glass partitions which could be moved aside to make a large hall. The lab had teak worktops, water, gas and electricity, and weighing scales in glass cupboards. In the technical room, a quotation on the wall announced "I too will something make and joy in the making" (Bridges), hopefully inspiring students.

Initially, boys only were accepted. Girls attended the Town Hall – as did I for Class 3, about 60 years later (1941). Three nursery groups existed, so the village was well served.

An early schoolmaster, John Gordon, served for 60 years from 1800. His brother George (farmer at Auchmacleedie) donated John's money and his own to Nicol's Trust and founded the Gordon Bursaries. Awarded by competition, they were still available when the school was downgraded. I won a bursary about 1949, although, with a professional parent, I hardly deserved it.

The first *Statistical Account*, in 1793, describes the master's house – two storeys and eight acres, given by the landowner (in North Street?). In the 1842 account, the master (Gordon) has been in post for 39 years, but his house is taken back by the Fraser dynasty. Now his home is above the school. Where these properties were situated is not recorded.

Long before state grants, bursaries were a feature of Scottish universities, allowing clever youngsters into tertiary education. To win a place in the University Bursary Competition reflected well on teachers, school and recipient, so it was an immensely important element of the senior years.

Lewis Beaton was an early head; he moved on, becoming minister at Carnwath. The Ogilvie family from Rothiemay, near Huntly, produced a number of exceptional teachers. William (1821–77), at Strichen for 10 years, went on to be head of Morrison's Academy, Crieff. Alex (1830–1904) was at Strichen before assuming headship of Gordon's College, Aberdeen. James Clark, MA, was head from 1871 to 1881. These men must have been outstanding, and Strichen was lucky to have them; the notion that a post far from the city meant professional suicide obviously didn't arise.

Benjamin Skinner, MA 1893, was a highly successful head, still remembered in my time; a strict disciplinarian who stuck to the rules even out of school hours. His approach bore results, but I doubt if teachers today would get away with it. Late in his career, he was awarded the OBE – a rare event in rural schools, but clearly revealing his reputation.

His successor, Lewis Gavin, was a pleasant man but no disciplinarian. I doubt if he had any secretarial help, so he was overcome by administration and had little time for teaching. In his era, expenditure was always restricted, so professionals often did work that today would be delegated. A classicist by training, he took us for senior Latin. Although the upper classes were small, I doubt if he knew his pupils well enough to support and advise.

The following are some of Strichen's success stories:

George M. Angus (father a pharmacist in Strichen): born 1875; MA Hons 1896, BL Hons 1899; joined a legal firm in Aberdeen

Lewis Beddie: MA 1888 (Aberdeen); MB, CM 1892 (Edinburgh)

William Beddie: MA 1876; MB, CM 1880

John Cook: first bursar; MA Hons; Indian Civil Service – Principal of Government College, Bangalore (now a university)

Alex P. Cranna (Bogensourie Farm): bursary 1906, MA 1910; manager, Cheviot Rubber, Dutch East Indies

James Davidson (1840–1917): MA 1861, MB 1864; Brigade surgeon, Lt-Col.; Bombay, Abyssinia, Afghanistan

William Duncan (b. 1849, Lodge, Glasslaw): seventh bursar (1868); MA, MB, CM Edinburgh (1879)

Peter Giles (“the Jewel in Strichen's Crown”): studied at Aberdeen and Cambridge; Master of Emmanuel College; vice-chancellor of University. LLD Aberdeen. No record of father; but at Ardlaw, Tyrie, P. Giles is recorded – eventually became farm griever.

John Gray: First Royal Exhibition, Royal School of Mines 1875; examiner in London Patent Office

Hugh Henderson: MA double hons (1872); rector, Lanark Grammar School

William Murison (Water Street, Strichen): MA Hons 1884; multiple prizes, Cambridge; Senior English Teacher, Aberdeen Grammar School

Henry Russell: bursar 1882; edited *Alma Mater*; prize in English; 1888 to USA

George Sim (1878–1930): first bursar; MA 1st class, Aberdeen; BA Oxon; Indian Civil Service; Financial Commissioner of Indian Railways; Companion of Order of Indian Empire; Order of Star of India; deputy chairman of Vickers Armstrong

John Stewart (1882–1948, North of Scotland Bank, Strichen): Bursar; MA; Indian Civil Service 1904; Professor of Burmese, School of Oriental Studies

James Willox (New Leeds): army schoolmaster at Rawalpindi, India.

Could any other small rural school surpass these results?

For any academic study, a library is important; Strichen was fortunate in having the Anderson and Woodman Institute in Water Street, donated by these two well-known local families, opening in 1923.

To consistently succeed, pupils must be motivated and confident of their abilities; parents must support child and school; teachers must ensure application to the problem of the moment and avoid destructive criticism. But the kingpin must be the head teacher, from



Peter Giles of Cambridge: from country loon to dreaming spires

whom flows the whole ethos and ambition of the establishment. Strichen was fortunate in having heads of highest ability, and to them should go the credit for the school's success.

Modern society shows how difficult it is to fulfil these ideals. In an affluent world where children have little respect for rank, or fear of punishment, teachers struggle to maintain order or to teach a class of reluctant children. The result, a decreasing ability to read, write or count – a disaster for the child, community and country, a worry for politicians and the reason for exams becoming less testing.

When the SNP took over, the assumption was that locals would manage Scottish interests better than Westminster; I doubt if this has been demonstrated. Figures for achievement reveal falling standards; teachers have lost control of unruly pupils; in any dispute, parents support their offspring, impairing resolution. Alleged inappropriate behaviour by teachers is likely to lead to legal intervention – disaster for any career. We read of failing schools down south, taken over by an enthusiast, and then blossoming, supporting my contention that the head is the key figure. This does not seem to happen in Scotland. Teachers are bitter about low pay and overwork; now shortages of staff make their lot even less attractive. The impression is of a dynamic in the south not matched here.

As competition becomes more intense, I fear English students may win university places at the expense of Scots; when countries separate, inevitably one will outperform the other.

Over time, Strichen School's status and numbers declined until it became scarcely viable. Yet it continued to produce students of medicine: from 1949 to 1965, seven former pupils qualified at Aberdeen. I had just finished 3rd year when we became the first class to attend Fraserburgh Academy. Despite gloomy forecasts, the Strichen contingent was well able to keep up. I won the Dux medal and gained admission to Aberdeen Medical School.

So, what goes on in Strichen now? The "Old School" has been demolished. The "New School", refurbished, is the only one, with pupils aged from five to 11. There are 120 pupils, six teachers, a nursery and a head teacher. As a four-year-old in 1938, I would ride my pedal car to North Street to watch the school being built.



Secondary schooling is about six miles away at Mintlaw, a large school in a village that originally was little more than a crossroads.

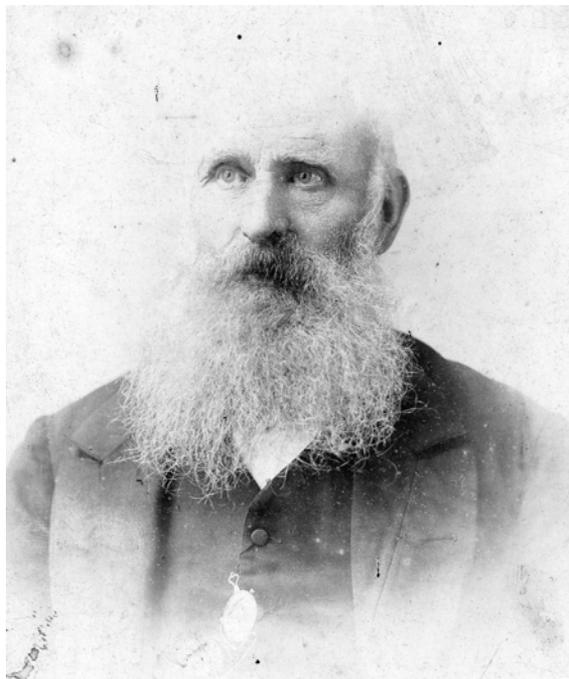
Strichen in my childhood was buzzing with activity. Could the village have needed three banks, two pharmacies, three bakeries, two butchers, two tailors, two shoe shops and two or three dairies? Local farmers came in to shop on Saturdays. Business then must have had minimal turnover and marginal profit. Now, one supermarket remains. The car is to blame; families will drive to Fraserburgh shops to stock up, leaving the village empty. Who could have foreseen that the advent of personal transport and increasing affluence could destroy so much that was attractive about village life?

Never Believe Yer Ain Grannie (Part 2)

Part 1 appeared in the previous Journal.

Married at last

Next, John Watson, son of William Watson and Jessie Geddes (whose gravestone is in Portsoy old cemetery), came on the scene. True to form, Helen Duff fell pregnant in the autumn of 1868. Before the bump became too obvious, they married on 27th February 1869 at Banff Castle; he was 32, she was 34. They are my great-grandparents. Perhaps he made an honest woman of her, or perhaps her elderly parents advised her that enough was enough – but John Watson moved into 19 Carmelite Street, where their first three children were born. He was taking on two elderly parents-in-law and three stepchildren, including the weakly one who died a year later. The family later moved to 12 Bridge Street in Banff, where my grandfather William and two others were born. John Watson



was a carter for Wordie & Co. They lived opposite the company's stables – it's said he loved animals, which presumably included the horses as well as “doves, pets and things”. John died in 1903 in a daughter's family home at 3 Water Path, Banff.

By this time, their family had grown up and mostly moved away. My grandfather William Watson and his brother-in-law Jimmy Legge, husband of Mina Watson, served bakers' apprenticeships in Glasgow, the former staying there to have his own bakery eventually in Govan, the latter returning to found the Seafeld Bakery in Banff, then known as Leggie's and still in business today. William's sisters, Jessie and Nell, married Willie McMunagle and Jim Leslie respectively. One oddity to mention is that, for a time, vaccination details were recorded in the birth registers. In the case of Jannetta Geddes McMunagle Leslie, born 28th March 1908, there is this note: “Conscientious objection as per Statutory Declaration dated 24 Nov 1909”, then overwritten in red ink: “Vaccination per Certificate dated 29 Sep 1917”. This appeared only in the original register in Banff Register Office and not in the copy held in Edinburgh, and seems to stem from the 1907 Vaccination Act, which enabled conscientious objection without penalty if certain conditions were adhered to. I know nothing more about why the family took this course of action.

Meanwhile, Helen Duff soldiered steadfastly on until her death at 3 High Shore in Banff (known as Silversmith House) in 1920 at the good age of 85, only a stone's throw from where she was born and lived her life – the 1911 census shows that she was there then.

Helen Duff: the character and storyteller

There may have been steadfast soldiering – but it clearly wasn't in Helen's character to go quietly, judging by the confusion she left behind.

First, her daughter Mrs Jemima Legge (Mina Watson, the baker's wife) gave Helen Duff's parents as “John” Duff (Grain Merchant, deceased) and “Helen Duff” (deceased, née —) on the death registration. This is completely fanciful: neither name tallies with the actual facts, nor indeed with her parents, who were correctly recorded when Helen Duff married.

Why? There never was a John Duff merchant, grain or otherwise, in Banff – but a grain merchant was grander than a humble gardener turned agricultural labourer, and a bit more in line with Helen Duff's assertion that she came from gentry, indeed the highest of high gentry – as I will come to soon.

Well, my cousin told me that the eldest sister (Janet Geddes Watson) believed herself to be illegitimate (in reality, she wasn't), and such was her shame that she ripped out and destroyed the damning evidence in the Watson family bible. James Henderson Boyd told me that it was the Boyd family bible that had a page torn out and "some names scraped away, scraped very deeply, almost through the page", so maybe it was Jane Towler who was so scandalised. I have my grandfather William Watson's family bible – a grand specimen of embossed leather, gold leaf and brass locks. But no pages are torn out, and the eight "family register" pages betwixt Old and New Testaments are untouched and empty. It is also utterly dateless, so I cannot even tell when it was published, nor whether there existed an older version. Mina Watson's real motives for lying so comprehensively on her mother's death certificate must remain a mystery but were probably influenced by my story in the next section.



The other mystery is that my uncle recalled Helen living in turreted attic rooms, and as a youngster he used to visit her by climbing up the exterior wall by way of the overhanging turret. The trouble is that this refers to No. 1 High Shore – the Merchant House of 1645, which does have attic windows – whereas No. 3 is the perhaps more famous Silversmith House, which doesn't. My uncle was born in 1900, so it's impossible to say whether she was first at No. 1 then moved into No. 3. It's difficult to imagine even a 10-year-old being that daring – a 15-year-old may be another matter. Another unreliable family story? Yet there is some credence. His father was known in Banff as "Monkey Watson" because he would clamber all over the harbour through the ships' rigging, never setting foot on board. It's said he only ever fell once – fortunately straight into the water. Poignantly, he died in 1953 aged 79 when he fell off his roof while checking a leaking chimney. "Meadowbank" was a substantial villa in Ibrox, three storeys high, so it was a long way down.

Whichever building in Banff it was, Helen lived on the top floor, where, so the story goes, she used a snare attached to her big toe to catch pigeons on the window sill. Her daughter Mina used to bring broth down from Leggie's every Sunday. And every so often, the old lady would have her hair washed at the bakery, where she would stick her head in the oven to dry it off – although I suspect it was more likely she simply sat in front of the ovens as they cooled down after a good night of baking the bread, rolls and pies.

Helen Duff was by all accounts an outspoken lady of strong opinions – which brings me to my final stories about her. It's perfectly obvious that she came from the poorest of origins. Yet she was educated – there are one or two signatures in the registers where she signs her name in perfect copperplate writing. And she sure could spin a yarn. You now have to imagine her in her old age in one of the oldest and most respected buildings in Banff, with

some 20 grandchildren either milling around or occasionally visiting from such faraway places as Glasgow. Who never sat around their grandmother as young children, listening agog to stories of days long ago? And believing every detail?

Braco and Hatton connections – oh! and Queen Victoria too

This is why our family (a) were due millions from this mysterious Alexander Adamson from Argentina, and (b) were due even more millions and a good chunk of Scotland because grannie was the sole heiress to the entire estate of the Duke of Fife over at Duff House, and (c) were related to Queen Victoria. My uncle knew this, my mother knew this, practically every cousin knew this as well, and much effort over decades was spent trying to substantiate it. I recall my parents in the 1960s spending days in the British Library researching the Duffs and Macduffs – I have their notes. Our “official” family tree has grannie as Helen Duff of Braco and of Hatton. That’s because she was the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Fife, he already having had 36 children by six wives. In the way of things, Helen became the sole heiress to the Duke of Fife’s vast estate, and was thus entitled to claim it all, but meantime she romantically eloped to marry the Duke of Fife’s coachman (unnamed), and they had three sons (William, Alexander and John), Helen Duff subsequently marrying my great-grandfather John Watson. This son Alexander started out as Alexander Duff, the Duke of Fife’s grandson, but in the telling became Alexander Adamson, worth millions. We were related to Queen Victoria because Helen Duff’s mother was actually Louise, the Princess Royal, who perforce had married Alexander William George Duff, 6th Duke of Fife, to avoid the scandal of Helen’s birth. I might add that my mother just so happens to be a Louise, her brother just so happens to be John, and their cousin was of course John Adamson. Helen Duff’s real father was indeed named Alexander Duff, but – rather than a grand Duke – he was a journeyman cooper. The son William might have been a real reference to the weakly William Henry Grant Henderson.

You may scoff, but when your own grannie is a grand storyteller, wouldn’t you as a 10-year-old believe it hook, line and sinker? Why, even my cousin’s dog was named Braco in honour of his mistress’s royal antecedents. The claim of 36 children, I am sure, actually comes from *The Book of the Duffs* (A. & H. Tayler), published in 1914, which confirms that one of the Duffs had 36 children: in Chapter XVI, “Duffs of Hatton”, the leading ancestor Patrick Duff of Craigston (c. 1655–1731) had 13 children by his first wife and 23 by his second. The Taylers comment that “this Duff would appear to be responsible for about half of those of the name now existing in the north”. The names Alexander and Helen are common in the Duff family, so finding such occurrences in my family tree isn’t significant. However, in 1688, there was a sasine to Patrick Duff in Braco; in 1691, he was factor for the Duke of Gordon; in 1705, he bought Craigston from the Duke of Gordon; and in 1709, he bought Hatton from Meldrum of Hatton. His eldest child became Alexander Duff of Hatton, and this is the origin of the Hatton line of descent. He had a daughter, Helen Duff, who lived in his town house in Banff. I suggest that my Helen Duff had read that book, giving rise to her claim to be of Braco and of Hatton.

The Braco line is the Earl of Fife / Duke of Fife line, and is the one connected to royalty. Patrick Duff of Craigston is not the Braco line, despite the sasine mentioned above. The earldom went down the true male line, eventually to the Duke of Fife, Alexander William George Duff, who in 1889 married Louise, Princess Royal, daughter of King Edward VII and granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Their only son was stillborn in 1890, followed by two daughters. To ensure that the Duke’s titles and all that went with them would stay in

the “right” place, Queen Victoria introduced by a “special reminder” on 24th April 1900 inheritance by a female. And indeed, their eldest daughter Alexandra (born 17th May 1891) became the Duchess of Fife on the Duke’s death on 29th January 1912.

There was inevitably controversy concerning this change in heirship. When the daughter became 2nd Duchess of Fife under the “special reminder” edict, many male claimants came forward worldwide to dispute that inheritance and to claim that they were entitled under the male-inheritance rules. Indeed, there was at least one substantive claimant to the one remaining male primogeniture title – the Irish title of Earl Fife. But the aforesaid “special reminder” put paid to the man’s claim, never mind any disputes about the male descent. All this was given wide coverage in the newspapers of the day, especially those read in Banff by our Helen Duff. So, I conclude that Helen Duff, as a literate storyteller, combined the threads from *The Book of the Duffs* and the stushie over the inheritance of Duke of Fife’s title to “explain” the presence of John Duff and Jane Towler and their families, neatly gliding over her true humble and none-too-glorious past, transforming it into a romantic fairytale of elopement, royalty and unclaimed treasure immeasurable.

Such fictional embroidery won’t have been unique, hence the title of this article. It only underlines the absolute necessity of going back to original documents, and even then not to take them at face value. I’ll end with another story, close to home, that exemplifies this.

Cautionary postscript

My grandparents William Watson and Louisa Bottomley married in 1897 and had two children, all in Govan. My uncle John “Jack” Watson was born in 1900, and my mother Louisa “Wattie” Watson in 1910 – a big but unexceptional gap. I viewed the 1911 census soon after it became available, so imagine my shock when I saw for my grandmother: married 15 years (*sic* – actually 13); *four* children born alive, two still living. Yet, having checked birth and death registers between 1897 and 1911, I couldn’t find any record under any combination of circumstances. I was at the GRO in Edinburgh at the time, and I was hugely grateful to the archivist who took such an interest (might there be mis-indexing?) and who spent nearly all day going through the actual registers, widening the search without success. We had to conclude that the two children were stillborn – yet never a word ever reached me or my cousin about such a family tragedy. I can understand that – but why then would my grandparents put it in the census when it was simply unnecessary?

And it’s hard to accept that this was enumerator error. My grandmother’s surname is not common in Glasgow, her parents having arrived from Bradford in 1861; Louisa was not born until 1872. Another option was two children born pre-marriage; but the widening circle of register-checking still returned nothing. Louisa could have been sent to Bradford away from scandal – but that need didn’t apply to her sister, Clara, who was 19 when she had Harry Bottomley in 1881, or to her eventual sister-in-law, Cornelia Mathers Campbell, who was 17 when she had Robina Bottomley nine months before marriage and was well on the way to her second child before marrying the father. Unfortunately, the 1921 census (to be released in 2021) didn’t have the “fertility question” of the 1911 census, so this surprise is a mystery I may never be able to resolve: is the census correct or incorrect?

This article is based entirely on original documents concerning the family, and on family lore as told to me. But my interpretation in the context of the “real world” is mine alone – and I hope I haven’t made any howlers!

Feature Parish: Bourtie

The parish of Bourtie lies about 18 miles north-west of Aberdeen. It is in the Garioch district, a former Regality, anciently the lands of the Earls of Mar, who held the title Lord of the Garioch. The parish no longer exists in its original form, having been merged with Meldrum in 1940. It is now in the Mid-Formartine ward of Aberdeenshire.

To the north, Bourtie's border with Oldmeldrum parish is the Meadow Burn, which, further west, becomes the Lochter Burn. Today's A947 road gives a rough notion of the eastern edge. The southern edge has no clear topographical boundary, though the minor road running below the Lawel Hill gives an indication. The B9170 from Oldmeldrum to Inverurie is the main road running through the parish, with minor roads from it serving the farms.



Looking from Bourtie over to Bennachie

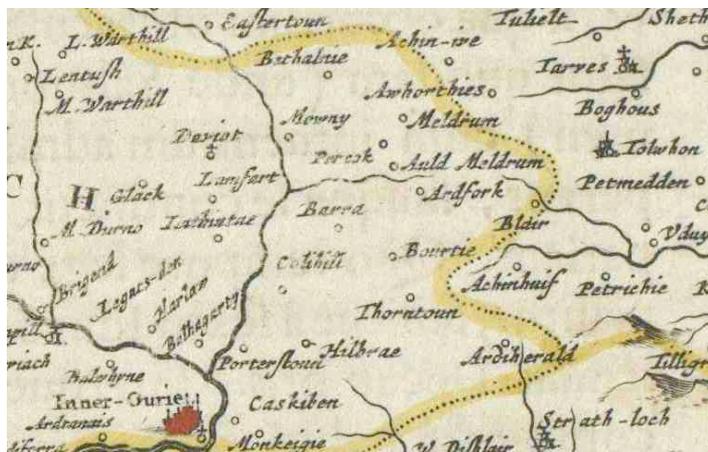
The Hill of Barra (193 metres) and Lawel Hill (236m) merge at the parish's eastern side as Kingoodie Hill. Much of the farmland is therefore quite high, and it is not unusual for the folk of Bourtie to be snowed in. In early times, the valleys contained a great deal of bog fed by run-off from the hills. On today's maps, it is clear that the old burns have been straightened to act as drainage ditches, yet still there is a good deal of water about. The parish is wholly agricultural – a scattering of estates and their farms with no village or pub, though there was a school (closed in 1952). Kirkton of Bourtie, a tiny hamlet, lies roughly at the centre, at map reference NJ804249.

The land has been lived on since ancient times. There is a notable standing-stone circle near Kirkton of Bourtie and another at Sheldon; the Hill of Barra is topped by an Iron Age hill-fort, sometimes called Cummins Camp; and by the Meadow Burn is the Bruce Field – the spot where, in 1308, Robert the Bruce routed an army led by the Earl of Buchan and his brother Sir John Mowbray.

Early accounts

The area is shown in Blaeu's Atlas from 1654. He identifies Bourtie, Barra, Ardfork, Blair, Colihill, Thorntoun and Hilbrae. All these names can still be found today.

Roy's Military Survey of 1747–55 gives the earliest clear illustration of the parish. His map shows it as a collection of fermtouns each with patches of land cultivated, apparently in runrig, close to the dwellings. A road from Aberdeen runs to Old Meldrum, but no roads are shown within the parish. The only signs of enclosure, including some tree-planting, appear to be at Barra, at the area later known as North Mains and, in a fairly indistinct way, at Thornton. Meldrum, though, has a clear field pattern around it.



Barra and surrounds by Blaeu, 1654

Good descriptions of the parish in past times are given in the three *Statistical Accounts*. Thomas Shepherd wrote five pages in the 1790s; James Bisset had ten pages in 1842; and Kenneth Macmillan provided three pages in 1954.

Notions of the parish's size vary. In 1795, it was “about 4 English miles in length, and 2 in breadth, and it contains about 4000 acres”, while in 1842 it “extends from west to east 5 miles; in average breadth nearly 2; and contains probably 9 square miles” (i.e. 5,760 acres). Groome's Gazetteer of the 1890s had it as 5,693 acres.



A snapshot from Roy's map, 1747–55, showing cultivation and enclosure (© British Library Board)

Shepherd's figure perhaps reflected the state of use of the land in the 1790s. For example, he recorded the enclosed land as being only 600 acres. New farming practices were evidently only just taking root. A few fir plantations were starting to yield their crop for felling; cattle management had improved, and by way of new husbandry he quoted 50 acres of turnip and 250 of sown grass – a fraction of what was to come.

Several tenants were still yoking ten oxen to the plough (though not the *twal owsen* used in some places). Roads had improved to some extent: when he had come to the parish in 1744, it boasted only two carts, compared to 60 in 1795. Things would have been moved by pack-horse or by sled, if not on people's backs. That being said, the parish was hardly isolated, and its people would have benefited from the many weekly markets that had been established around the country in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Those close by were at Kinkell and Keithhall, as well as burgh markets at Inverurie and Old Meldrum.

Bisset's account of 1842 suggested that around 3,600 acres were in cultivation, including plantations of fir and larch, with the arable land mostly worked in the seven-shift style of rotation: “after grass two successive grain crops; third year, turnips or potatoes; fourth year, grain crop sown down with grass seeds; fifth, sixth and seventh years, grass crops”. Some 300–400 acres had been brought into cultivation in the preceding ten years, and the process was continuing (with another 600–700 acres still achievable by his reckoning). Nineteen-year leases (the typical improving lease) were then the norm. Bisset thought much could still be done to further improve the land, and he reckoned the roads still to be worse than in any other parish of the district.

Ownership and population

Marian Youngblood's book *Bourtie Kirk – 800 Years* (1995) provides a great amount of invaluable research into the history of the parish and its people. It draws heavily on Davidson's 1878 history of *Inverurie and the Earldom of the Garioch*.

Barra Castle may have pre-16th-century or even 13th-century origins. The earliest families then were the Kyngs and the Blakhalls. In the late 17th century when things become more clearly documented, the two principal landowners, and heritors for the kirk, were Sir John Reid of Barra, an Aberdeen banker and holder of a Nova Scotia baronetcy, and Mr Robert Simpson of Thornton. Barra has always been the principal estate of the parish.

In the 1696 Poll Book, the various estates and their owners were listed as:

Barra – Sir John Reid
 Blaire and Kingudie – Margrat and Elizabeth Seaton
 Old Bourtie – Alexander and John Anderson
 Thorntoune, Lawellsyde and Pittgavenie – Robert Sympsone
 Blockhouse – John Panton
 Colliehill – John Forbes.

Nearly 150 years later, the pattern had changed somewhat, and from the 1842 *Statistical Account* we learn that the landowners, all non-resident, were: Mr Ramsay of Barra; Mr Leith Lumsden of Leithfield; Mr Duguid of Bourtie and Collyhill; Mr Mackenzie (of Glack), Thornton; and Mr Ross of Arnage (part of Bourtie).

At Barra, Sir John Reid was followed by his son, Sir Alexander, a man notoriously tight with his money, who was the cause of great delays in improving the kirk. Sir Alexander died in 1750, and Barra was then sold to John Ramsay. It remained in the hands of Ramsay descendants, though latterly not the direct male line, until 2007.

By 1762, the main landowners were John Ramsay, Robert Simpson the younger, Patrick Anderson at Old Bourtie and John Leith of Blair. These families were responsible for a good deal of housebuilding in the second half of the 18th century. According to Thomas Shepherd in the first *Statistical Account*, in 1744 only two houses had had stone chimneys – Barra Castle and the manse. Presumably everyone else lived in thatched turf and fieldstone houses with either “hinging lums” or holes in the roof for the smoke to escape.

In 1753, the Leiths built the House of Kingoodie (now gone) to replace the old House of Blair (which had been where Greystone now is). It was later renamed Leithfield, and eventually became the property of the Lumsdens through marriage into the Leith family, remaining in their hands until 1877. In 1754, Bourtie House was built by Patrick Anderson, and Thornton House by the Simpsons. (The *Chronicle of the Nineteenth Century* (1901) records for 1816: “Death of Mr Alexander Simpson of Collyhill – Bequest of his estate to Gordon’s Hospital”.) Then the Barra estate updated its farms and, by 1794, had built “seven neat and commodious homes ... upon different farms within the estate”.

In 1773, Thornton passed to John Niven, an absentee landowner. Roderick McKenzie of Glack later acquired it from him. Collyhill passed to the Andersons in 1816; then around 1826 both Collyhill and Old Bourtie became property of Peter Duguid of Auchlounies.

The parish saw long continuity of ownership at Barra and not much change at Kingoodie and Old Bourtie. Alexander Reid may have been a stultifying presence for a time, but there is evidence of improvements at Barra under the Ramsays in the late 18th century; and Peter Duguid was known to be a keen improver of farming practice.

People of the parish

The Horse Tax of 1797 names most of the farmers and is a fine way of getting a feel for relative success. The larger and more prosperous farms tended to run more horses. It lists 36 people, with their total numbers of horses, then the number eligible for the tax.

32nd
HORSE TAX, per 37 Geo. III. Cap. 108.

Date of Affidavit.	Masters and Mistresses Names and Designations.	Actual N ^o . of Horses.	Horses liable to Duty for Nine Months.		DUTY. L. s. d.	s. per Cent. p ^r . 37 Geo. III.
			Horses not liable.	Horses liable.		
	Bourtie Parish Dist ^r over	16	13	3	1 9 3	5 10
Septem. 2	Mr Lumsden Barra	1	1		0 1	1 10
	John Reid Maens of d ^r	3	3		6 9	1 10
	Mr Smith Kirkcaldy	2	2		4 6	1 10
	Mr Philip Westergaard	3	2	1	4 6	1 10
	Mr Strachan Leith	4	3	1	6 9	1 10

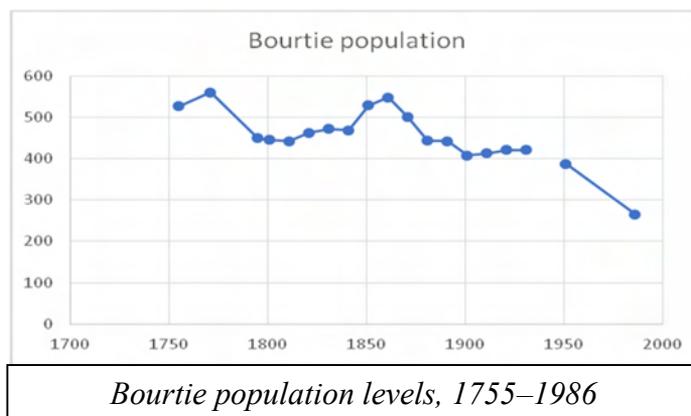
Part of the Horse Tax assessment for Bourtie, 1797–8 (National Archives of Scotland)

Some further insight into tenants' lives can be gained from testamentary documents left by the landowners. The inventory for John Ramsay of Barra in 1833, listing the rents for 11 tenants at Barra, showed him to have been a substantial investor in the Oldmeldrum turnpike and to have had a stake in the New Udny turnpike. Better roads meant easier access to markets, improved opportunities for tenants and, eventually, increased rents.

Bourtie population, 1755–1986

The Poll Tax of 1696 mentioned 291 people, but many other inhabitants were children or were otherwise ineligible to be counted. From various full counts and censuses available, we can obtain this graph.

The pattern fluctuated around the mid-400s, but with two peaks in population almost a century apart (560 in 1771; 548 in 1861), before a sharp decline in the later 20th century. Despite the modest variation between 1750 and 1950, there was at times concern over numbers: Thomas Shepherd thought the decline between 1771 and 1795 was due to “the monopoly of farms and the scarcity of moss”. This seems to



show that agricultural improvement and land drainage was already well under way and had led to some consolidation of holdings. In his 1842 entry for the *Statistical Account*, the Rev. James Bisset thought there had been a decline since 1775 owing to the increased size of farms. (In fact, the population was rising at the time he was writing.)

Despite these comments, the 1861 peak seems to show that the agricultural revolution and improvements in nutrition and housing had allowed fewer (larger) farms to support more people. In fact, the process of farm improvement with its clearing of the land, digging ditches, building walls, liming and ploughing of increasing acreages required more people than in the earlier days of subsistence farming. The continuing decline after 1861, we may speculate, was the consequence of the next wave of agricultural improvement brought about by increasing mechanisation in all the formerly labour-intensive processes. This, however, was sufficiently modest for the Rev. Kenneth Macmillan to be able to say in 1954 that “there has been no great displacement of population over the last 150 years. Any movement has been largely local, being for the most part between neighbouring parishes.” Since then, continuing mechanisation and consolidation of farm businesses, perhaps together with easier transportation for individuals (who could work in the parish without necessarily living there), have allowed numbers to decline to the 1980s level.

It would be interesting to have an accurate count of present-day inhabitants of Bourtie's original parish boundaries to see whether the conversion of farm buildings to modern dwellings, unconnected to agriculture, is pushing numbers up again.

Barra Castle

The Castle and the Barra estate have always been principal properties of Bourtie. Its charm and modest scale have gained the Castle a fair amount of attention. Barra appears in Blaeu's Atlas of 1654, though without the honour of “Castle”, and was not named in Roy's Military Map, so was hardly recognised as a place of much warlike significance. Its scale and setting, in an open flat area, are essentially those of a fortified dwelling.

Nicholas Bogdan (1947–2002), one of its recent inhabitants and an authority on Scottish castles, has left a good account of the building's history. He notes that the term "castle" first appears in records in 1615 as the "fortalicium de B" and that there are date stones for 1614 and 1618 with monograms for George Seton, Chancellor of the Diocese of Aberdeen (and kinsman of the 1st Earl of Dunfermline), who became owner of Barra in 1599. Seton is credited with the initial construction of today's building, but Bogdan is convinced there was an earlier building on the site and that elements from it are incorporated and still identifiable. He believes the earlier building may have been destroyed around 1594 in a dispute between the Blackhalls, who owned it then, and the Earl of Errol.



Barra Castle – front elevation



Barra Castle – side elevation

The Castle is Grade A-listed. Stylistically, it is consistent with late 16th- and early 17th-century Scottish tower-house architecture. The principal structure is a complex L-shape, but a north wing, consistent with the older parts, was added in 1753, turning it into a U. A wall and door have been built across this to create an enclosed courtyard at what now serves as the front.

A fine array of photographs of both interior and exterior is on the website of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). Aerial views are also available from sources such as Google Maps.

People of the Castle

It is said that Barra was once in the hands of the Comyn family and may have passed to the Kyngs in the 13th century. Blakhalls were prominent in the Garioch from the 15th century and held the curious hereditary title of Coroner and Forester of the Garioch. They may have owned Barra at that time, though no records link them specifically to it, despite being well documented by Morison, including a possibly unsafe early genealogy. In 1505 (when feuing had just been properly initiated), a James King was said to be "of Bourtie".

The earliest record linking anyone to Barra is in 1452, in the turbulent times of James II, when a Great Seal entry for William Blakhall mentions a William King as a portioner. In 1547–8, William Blakhall and John King are described as portioners in Barra "in half of all the lands of Barroch, Westirhous, Fillaw, Eschinheid, Furd-ailhous, a sixth part of Petgowny, half of the Mill of Bourtie, and a third part of Meikle and Little Finnersie" – these being Barra and various of its farms.

The Blackhalls and Kings were alienated from their Barra holdings in the 1590s when James VI and his Octavians were seeking new sources of funds and when the king was in any case displeased with both families over their Presbyterian sympathies. A 1590 entry

in the Great Seal shows the King portion being made over by the king to Sir John Sandelands for service. However, there is no further sign of Sandelands involvement.

George Seton acquired Barra in 1599 (at which point it became a free barony) and began construction at the Castle. He was the elder son from the second marriage of William Seton of Meldrum to Margaret Innes. He was vicar of nearby Bethelny and followed his uncle in becoming Chancellor of the Diocese of Aberdeen. George died in 1630. His younger brother James, of Pitmedden from 1619, was described as “portioner of Barra” in 1598 when he acquired other lands at Bourtie (presumably not including the Castle).

In 1627, William Seton of Meldrum, George’s nephew, was served heir to him in Barra (no mention of James). In 1630, William disposed the estate of Barra to his half-cousin Alexander Seton of Pitmedden. This consolidated the estate under the Pitmeddens. It passed to Alexander’s son, John of Pitmedden (“Bonnie John”, a casualty of the Civil War), and then to his son, James of Pitmedden, a naval officer who died of wounds in 1667. These Setons were Royalists, loyal to the Stuart cause. The family fortunes declined in consequence, and in 1657 James sold the estate and Castle to James Reid, an Aberdeen advocate. The Reids, though primarily Aberdeen- and Edinburgh-based, held the Castle for another century.

In 1672, James was followed by his son John, who gained a Nova Scotia baronetcy in 1706. Sir John was succeeded in 1723 by his son Sir Alexander, the notably parsimonious heritor at Bourtie Kirk. At Alexander’s death in 1750, he was succeeded by his third son, Sir James, who in 1754 sold Barra to John Ramsay of Laithers & Melross, a Baltic trader.

John Ramsay lived at Barra Castle until 1766, when he moved to nearby Straloch, which he remodelled in Georgian style. His son Alexander died, and daughter Mary inherited. She married John Innes, an advocate from Aberdeen, who then took the Ramsay name on the death of John Ramsay in 1778. Details of this early complexity are set out, to an extent, in inscriptions on the family memorial at the kirkyard of Newmachar and at the Episcopal kirkyard of Oldmeldrum. Barra then passed to their son John Ramsay and then to his son John. This fourth John married Leonora Sophie Bond, who died aged just 24, and their daughter Mary inherited.

Castle tenants

Since the Ramsays were at Straloch from 1766, the Castle became used as a farmhouse for South Mains until 1909. The earliest tenants have not been traced, but the Farm Horse Tax of 1797–8 has a Mr Lumsden at Barra. Lumsdens were prominent in the area and eventually married into the Leiths to become lairds of Leith Hall.

The next known was George Alexander (1767–1839), who came to the Castle and South Mains around 1810. Alexanders had been on the Barra estate farms from at least 1696, when a Patrick Alexander and his wife, at Fallaw, were taxed sixpence. George and his son, George (1805–88), remained at the Castle for half a century until after 1861, when George junior moved his family to South Balnoon in Banffshire.

Census searches have thrown up subsequent inhabitants (though possibly not all). In 1871, William Innes from Boharm was there, though William was simply employed as farm manager. Similarly, in 1881, James Muirden from New Deer was there as farm overseer, but by 1891 and again in 1901 John Kiloh from Old Deer was there as the farmer.

Recent Ramsays

The Castle was restored after 1909 by Mary Ramsay, daughter of John and Leonora, and wife of barrister Francis Irvine of Drum. This time there was no preservation of the Ramsay name, and it passed to their son Quentin Irvine, who married Dorothy Burnett of Leys. Quentin committed suicide in 1941. Dorothy continued to live at Barra, with help from her son Francis. On Dorothy's death in 1982, the Castle passed to her daughter Mhairi, who then lived there until her death in 2007. However, her son, Nicholas Bogdan, predeceased her in 2002, and the Ramsay-line tenure ended in 2008 with the sale of the Castle to local farmer Gordon Stephen.

Bourtie Kirk

The church is listed category A. Less showy than the Castle, today's building dates from 1806 and replaced a turf-roofed affair. It is an exceptionally rare structure (see cover; only one other like it is known), almost a cube with a pyramidal roof. Though under threat of being declared redundant, it is still used twice each month, and is rightly treasured. The church features an unusual triple-stepped pulpit, and houses a number of artefacts from earlier times including effigies of a knight and his lady from the 14th century.

There is evidence of a church on the site from at least 1190. The church even has a Pictish symbol stone built into its south wall (and there is another at the nearby steadings).

Bourtie in the 17th century had been Episcopalian. Only when James Gordon was installed in 1709 did the Established Church take root. Gordon was firmly on the side of the current orthodoxy. He started the registers and supported the Hanoverian monarchy – so much so that, when the Jacobites swept through in 1715–16, he was arrested and imprisoned for a month at Aberdeen. Gordon, though, was a rising man and was translated to Alford in 1717. After he left, there was over



Knight and lady from the 14th century

a year until John Duncan took up the post; but he died in 1719. After more delay, Archibald Napier was appointed and arrived to find no kirk session and only one church elder. However, by 1722 Napier too had gone, and it was not until 1723 that George Gordon took up the ministry and provided 20 years of continuity. That was a period of relative calm in historical terms, described by William Davidson as: "There was nothing stirring anywhere; and the people of Bourtie were as lethargic as their neighbours".

The Kirk was of course central to community life at the time. It was the focus for spiritual matters and of children's education; and, through the Kirk Session, it acted as the local law in everyday matters and personal affairs. In the early days, this could be a rough form of justice. William Davidson describes how, in James Gordon's day, even communion could be used as a time for judgement. He says: "picture for yourselves the Communicants coming forward for their tokens. As each approached, the lynx-eye of the Minister or of the elders is cast upon him, and if there be any weak point in his character he is liable to have it unsparingly exposed and himself refused."

Old Parish Records

Births/baptisms: 1709–1819; 1820–54 (some 1,782 records). Marriages: 1709–1819; 1826–54 (626 in total). Deaths/burials: only 32 records, 1852–4. Bourtie Kirkyard monumental inscriptions, published by ANESFHS, compensate to some extent.

Other parish places

The number of dwellings has never been large, around 80–90 in total, but some are sufficiently distinguished to have been listed, as well as the Castle and the Kirk:

Bourtie House, category A

Garden Cottage, Bourtie House, category B

Old Manse of Bourtie, category B

Mains of Thornton, category B.

Bourtie House, in the west of the parish, was built around 1758 by Peter Anderson, then became the home of the Duguid family until 1953. It is the most handsome property in the parish, described by architects who recently did work to it as a “pocket” laird’s house.



Bourtie House (<https://www.rias.org.uk>)

The Old Manse is a fine 18th-century Georgian property sitting above the kirk in over four acres, including a walled garden. First built in 1744, and extended in 1780, it was sold in 1942 after the parish merger, and today is a six-bedroom private house.

Mains of Thornton remains a working place – an organic monitor farm. The house was built around 1754 and is unusually high. It has resisted prettifying for sale to any Aberdeen commuter.

There is a complete description of every property and artefact in the parish on “Scotland’s Places”. This is taken from the Ordnance Survey Name Books of 1865–71, but can readily be matched to the parish today. Much has been updated, but most remains.

Modern Bourtie

In 1986 when the BBC launched its Domesday Reloaded project, a comment that was posted, and still appears on the website, said:

Bourtie is a thriving community whose farmers organise an annual dance – the Bourtie Farmers’ – in November, and farmers’ wives meet every month in the church hall for activities like flower bulb shows and homemade jam and cake displays.

Well, some diversification is now evident. North Mains of Barra houses Hoodles Playbarn, with a café and playspace for children; the castle has a farm shop and a berry farm and now hosts weddings. There are a few holiday cottages, and even some on AirBnB. Property has been developed. Airyhillock has become several houses (fancifully termed Airyhillock Manor), as have the steadings by the kirk and others at Backhill of Thornton. Bourtie today is less than 40 minutes from Aberdeen, so it is a commutable spot. Mostly, though, the traditional farms survive.

Famous folk of Bourtie

The parish has not been a hothouse for fame, and *Famous Sons of Meldrum and Bourtie* contains no-one from Bourtie. However, there were some distinguished ministers:

- James Gordon, minister 1709–17, became Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1734.
- Dr James Bisset, minister 1826–72, also became Moderator in 1862.
- William Leslie “Bourtie” Davidson, minister 1873–96, then became Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Aberdeen.

Apologia

Some of this material has appeared in *The Alexanders of Bourtie, 1696–1886* (2012); but Ian Macdonald also wrote that, and the Society owns the copyright, so please think of this as well-mannered recycling.

Relevant ANESFHS publications

- AA114 The Kirkyard of Bourtie & Old Meldrum Episcopal MIs
- AA169 The Kirkyard of Oldmeldrum MIs
- AA081 Oldmeldrum (1891 extension) MIs
- AA167 The Kirkyard of Newmachar MIs
- AA347 The People of Daviot, Bethelnie & Bourtie (Poll Book) 1696
- AA516 The Alexanders of Bourtie, 1696–1886: a family-history journey (incl. 1851 census analysis)
- AA565 Melvin Family Story, 1750–1900s: Ellon, Bourtie & Keithhall
- LP035 Meldrum and Bourtie Heritage Society (2006), *Famous Sons of Meldrum and Bourtie*
- LT067 Marian Youngblood (1995), *Bourtie Kirk – 800 Years* (Inverurie: Cleopas Publications)

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