

Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society

Journal No. 167 • August 2023



The Emigrants statue by Gerald Laing, in Couper Park, Helmsdale, Sutherland (photograph by Sally Low, no. 1441). This Journal contains reports of the talks delivered at “Haste Ye Back”, the 33rd SAFHS Annual Conference, hosted online by ANESFHS on 22nd April 2023.

Membership Details

New members pay the annual rate, and your subscription runs for exactly one year from the date on which you join. Further details are available on our **website**. Membership of the Society entitles you to receive the quarterly Journal. There is a discount 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.

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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.

General Data Protection Regulations, 2018

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

We may occasionally send e-mails to Society members only, concerning Society membership, appeals for volunteer help or promotional information, using the e-mail address you have provided. You may choose to unsubscribe from these e-mails. For further details of data protection, please contact the Society in writing.

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

Issue 167, August 2023

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Society Reports, News and Information

Meet the Gang! Profile: Rob Ritchie

Many of you, volunteers and other members alike, will be wondering who Robin Ritchie is! Rob is neither a Centre helper nor even a member of the Society, but I have to tell you that without his help and expertise the Society would find itself in difficulties.

Rob is our go-to IT guru in the Family History Centre at King Street. He is happy to come in whenever we have computer issues, and he works quickly and quietly to solve the problem in minutes. Many people doing their research at one computer may not even realise that Rob is sitting at the next screen, ironing out difficulties.

Sometimes the most important things seem to happen by chance. Rob's mum is friendly with our chairman Bert Lawrie's wife Lesley; and Bert and Rob got chatting. When Rob mentioned he was very involved with IT, Bert was quick to spot an opportunity! Rob confesses that he has little or no interest in family history, but he enjoys the technical side of computer research.



Chance also played an important part in Rob's career path. Born and raised in Aberdeen, Rob completed a year at the city's Robert Gordon University studying biochemistry before realising that this was not what he wanted as a career. He then transferred to Glasgow University, where he spent two years studying mechanical engineering. He spent one summer holiday working for the Prudential Insurance Company, where he found himself helping out with their IT system. That was the turning point – he was hooked!

After two years working for the Pru, he got a job with NTL, the cable TV company, where the IT was eventually outsourced to IBM. From there he moved to JP Morgan and worked all over the world for them for 11 years. When I asked him where he'd worked, I realised it might have been easier to ask where he *hadn't* worked. He started off in Glasgow and returned in 2016 to Aberdeen via Moscow, Cape Town, Saudi Arabia and other places.

Later in 2016, his mother had the first of two strokes, and Rob realised that he was needed at home. He decided to take a sort of "early retirement" – and, because IT is an area of constant change, Rob spends a lot of time keeping up with new developments. He enjoys the work he does at ANESFHS, and he is very much on the same wavelength as Dave Anderson, who oversees our complete IT system remotely from home in Nairn.

When not solving our technical problems, Rob enjoys working in his allotment. With a sedentary job involving a lot of time hunched over a computer, he finds it a refreshing and necessary change to get out in the fresh Aberdeen air(!) and undertake hard physical graft.

The Society is very grateful to Bert for getting Rob involved. Rob is always willing to pop in at short notice, and hasn't yet met a problem he can't fix. We hope he will stay around to help us combat our computer issues. I know that many of these are often self-inflicted – not all of us are techy-minded – but Rob is too tactful and polite to mention that!

Editorial

We on the Journal Team love hearing from members about your researches, discoveries, contacts, experiences in Society meetings, feedback on items in previous Journals ... anything, really, that's relevant to North-East Scottish family history!

Sometimes, a story may develop a bit differently from a Journal Article or a Letter to the Editor. We are pleased to introduce a new section, "Members' Stories", presenting the (work-in-progress?) results of some initial conversations that grew in several directions.

The Journal Queries section was very popular for years but has been in abeyance for some time, possibly superseded by social media and by the popularity of live Q&A sessions in our Members' Meetings, whether in person, or online via Zoom, or a hybrid of the two. The Journal is still very much the forum that reaches the greatest number of Society members (i.e. all, if they actually read it!). So, why not send in your "brick wall" query? Unidentified photographs, emigration dead ends, missing gravestones, family "black sheep" ... the list is endless. You may be amazed what ANESFHS members know.

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Ivor Normand

No. 4161

—oOo—

Kathy Diez (1950–2023)

It was with real sadness that we heard recently of the death of Kathy Diez (no. 8917). She had been a long-term volunteer in our Centre, where I used to work with her on Friday mornings several years ago, often with her son Jamie along to help.

Once, talking about where we had grown up, Kathy said she'd lived on Aberdeen harbour front, looking out on all the ships at anchor. I mentioned that a girl in my class at school, Andrea McKay (known to our Centre volunteers as Andrea Grant; obituary, Journal 156, August 2020), had lived in that area, and I asked if Kathy had come across her. "I should think so. That's my sister!" I have never known sisters who looked less alike!

Kathy was brought up on Regent's Quay and went to Aberdeen High School for Girls. On leaving school she went to London, where she worked in the Civil Service. She married in 1973 in Aberdeen, but it didn't last; and her son was from a later relationship.

Kathy had not had an easy life, but worked hard to support herself and Jamie. She brought a meticulous attention to detail to her research for others. I thank Rosalyn Kinnear for further information on Kathy's life and long Society service. Kathy did a lot of research into her McKay surname, and helped in our Centre for perhaps 30 years before leaving due to ill health (pre-Covid). She used to help Rosalyn with Research queries, and later helped Joyce Irvine with queries, mainly at the Registrar's office but also online while still working in our Centre for over 10 years. It was Kathy who assembled all the 1911 census information at the Registrar and then passed it to the group of volunteers who transcribed and indexed it into the format we have in the Centre today.

Her health was not good, and it had been quite some time since she was able to come in regularly, but she will be missed by those of us who remember her with affection. Our sympathy goes out to Jamie and to other members of her family.

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Liz Foubister

No. 6129

Research Centre Report

Attendance has been a little sporadic for the past couple of months due in part to the vagaries of the weather and the holiday season. On the one hand, some of our regulars have been away on holiday, and on the other there are more visitors appearing from Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada.

Our pool of volunteers has expanded, and there has been time for them to become familiar with the Centre and our ways of working. Shadowing some of the more experienced volunteers is really helpful in adding to their knowledge.

We have had students around the Centre over the holidays: some doing work concerned with their course, and others helping members with research. It is enjoyable and helpful for us to have a young eye questioning what we do and how we do it.

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Barbara Lamb (Centre Manager)

No. 20206

—oOo—

“Banffshire Fowk” Conference, 7th October 2023 in Cullen

Banffshire Field Club has released the programme for this conference, to be held at the Seafield Arms Hotel in Cullen. See www.banffshirefieldclub.com for a link to the booking page. The fee of £15 includes welcome refreshments and lunch. Publicity has already generated keen interest. As capacity is limited, early booking is advised.

09:30 Registration and coffee

10:00 Welcome and Introduction

Andrew Simpson, HM Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire

10:15 Keynote speaker 1

“The Banffshire Diaspora” – Professor Marjory Harper

11:00 Coffee

11:30 Short papers 1

“Cabrach Lives” – Jonathan Christie

“Bracoden War Memorial” – Lorraine Butler

12:30 Lunch (included)

13:30 Short papers 2

“Catholics in Banffshire” – Professor Peter Reid

“Keith People” – Ron Smith / Janice Meldrum

14:30 Keynote speaker 2

“Discovering your Banffshire Roots” – Mary Evans



We have received a few enquiries as to whether the conference will be made available online. It is the first event of this type to be arranged by the organising committee, and all our efforts will be devoted to ensuring that it runs smoothly. At present, unfortunately, we don't have the resources to open it up to online participants. If it proves a success, we hope to hold similar events in the future and will look at online delivery as an option.

bfc.1880@gmail.com

Alison Smith

No. 7779

Members' Meetings

Monthly meetings in Aberdeen will resume on 16th September; see Diary page, and updates on the Society's website. Our venue is the same, but has now been renamed: Fountainhall (formerly Rubislaw) Church Centre. Everyone is always welcome.

Dee Hoole, "Prostitution and Delinquency in Aberdeen"

20th May 2023

Our latest hybrid meeting in Aberdeen explored the highly intriguing topic of the darker side of life in the city.

Dee Hoole, originally from Yorkshire and now resident near Turriff, is an Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of History at the University of Aberdeen. She completed a doctorate on children in asylum "care" and has developed her research interests to examine the experiences of the marginalised and destitute. Her topics include the records maintained by the School of Anatomy of bodies taken for dissection through the Aberdeen Funerary and the fate of the poor, especially young women and children, with no means of support. This was a time when few women could be employed in a profession and most were dependent on the goodwill of family for their maintenance. For orphans and the destitute, the path into prostitution or theft may often have seemed unavoidable. Most of us are familiar with this only through works of fiction such as *Oliver Twist* or *Les Misérables*, but Dee's talk gave names and sometimes faces to some of our Aberdonian predecessors who faced the hardest of times. It was noticeable that the room grew hushed and quiet as Dee unfolded the circumstances and experiences of more and more individual cases.

The talk principally covered the period of the 1840s–1860s. The 1840s was a time of deprivation due to high food costs, poor harvests, the failure of the potato crop and increasing movement of people away from the countryside to settle in towns. The population of Aberdeen city had doubled since 1800, and the network of narrow lanes and courts, especially round the slum area of Guestrow, was home to many families whose young folk experienced instability and neglect. The outcome was that unemployment and a resultant engagement in petty crime became the learned behaviour or norm for so many that begging and youth crime were seen as major social problems in the 1840s.

The Town Council strove to find solutions beyond prison and transportation. Some more enlightened individuals, namely Sheriff William Watson, supported by local benefactor Alexander Thomson, believed that young people in particular should be given the chance to develop vocational skills, and that if they were fed, washed and constructively employed during the day, they would have less incentive to turn to petty theft and other crimes as part of street gangs. The first of the so-called Industrial Schools took in 20 children – and, while it was non-residential and not compulsory, most children returned voluntarily, sometimes taking food home in the evenings to pass to their siblings. The practical activities included net-making, tailoring, knitting, shoe-making and repair and picking oakum. This last activity was a common example of Victorian hard labour and consisted of untwisting old rope to separate the fibres, which were then sold back to boat owners for squeezing between the seams of the wooden deck planks as caulking to make the deck watertight. By 1851 there were four such schools catering for 300 children in the Guestrow, Gallowgate and Schoolhill areas.

The aim was to reduce the number of young people being jailed, since it was recognised that prison was effectively a training ground for felons. And it was a cost-effective solution, as a mere £5 per year could maintain a child in an industrial school, but it took £20 per year to look after a prisoner.

We learned about the gangs of “young pilferers” managed by an older individual, just like the troops managed by Fagin and the Artful Dodger. Dee was able to provide an astonishing amount of detail about individuals such as George Brown of Peacock’s Close, “a notorious trainer of young thieves”, and about the “flash houses” where stolen goods were fenced or reset. Certain names crop up regularly in the court records, and so we met a series of individuals, including one Margaret Reid, who had 30 charges against her in relation to running a gang of boy thieves; and members of the luckless Phemister family, including David Phemister, who were recruited into these gangs. If you have ever wondered why so many court reports from this period deal with the theft of what seem like trivial items of clothing, such as shawls or handkerchiefs, it’s not because your ancestor was feeling chilly – these could be pawned to raise cash. This led to a crime of “child stripping” whereby gangs stole toys and clothes from children in the street.

Teenage prostitution was not uncommon for destitute young women; and this was seen by the authorities as undesirable but not illegal, since the age of consent was set at 12. Theft was regarded as a much more serious matter, but a “working girl” who found herself imprisoned for theft might soon have her fine paid off by the brothel-keeper for whom she worked. Apparently the number of Aberdeen brothels rose from 36 to 107 in five years, and in 1855 there were 490 named women recorded as prostitutes. Dee shared some tips on how to identify some of these in the census records in places like Peacock Close, the Lower Denburn and Great Row, where houses with “lodgers” might often be found.

The Aberdeen Female Penitentiary was set up in order to rehabilitate young women and eventually enable them to find jobs as house servants. Some, however, were repeatedly imprisoned both in Aberdeen and Perth, where they were sometimes photographed; and many were transported. Some had even sadder stories, including the example of one girl in the 1840s who by the age of 14 had received 12 sentences for misdemeanours and subsequently threw herself into the harbour.

It was a sobering insight into the realities of life for those who found themselves bereft of resources, but it was expertly set out by Dr Hoole, and greatly enriched our picture of life for ordinary folk in Aberdeen in the mid- to later 19th century. It was heartening to know that the industrial schools were regarded as a successful model and that the author William Thackeray was one of the great and good who came to visit. He was moved to tears by the children singing and by one “little man” reading Thackeray’s own poem “in an innocent voice and a strong Scotch accent of course”. The author is reported to have given the matron money to buy potatoes for the children.

Dee Hoole’s scholarly, measured and understated but authoritative setting-out of these forgotten facts was equally moving. She has been a speaker at the *Granite Noir* events in Aberdeen – and, if you get the chance to hear her speak, definitely take it up.

Sources

National Records of Scotland: Aberdeen Prison Records: HH21/66.

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives:

Ref.: 23/2 – 1855, List of Prostitutes/Brothels & Public Houses;

Ref.: DD2397, Guard Book of Alexander Thomson c. 1840s/1850s;
Ref.: POL/AC/6/6, Return of Prisoners [ex Perth Prison] 1869–1938.

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Journal Team

—oOo—

Glasgow Group Report

Members' Day: "Photographs"

13th May 2023

We had issued an open invitation to members of the Glasgow & West of Scotland FHS to join our Glasgow Group's annual Members' Day. We were concerned that we might have been overwhelmed by their numbers, but hopeful also that ours would be boosted. We were joined by one or two new faces and by many familiar Glasgow Group members who had not met in person since before the pandemic. There were sufficient members present to justify the organisational effort, but more are always welcome.

Our theme was built on the hybrid presentation Kate Clark had given us in October 2022 on "Cartomania". Several members brought along old photos, and other members brought wonderful reference books and advice to help them narrow down the dates. Kate is giving her talk again at our Society's Aberdeen meeting on 16th September – it's good to share.

Graham Robertson brought in a puzzling collection of artifacts for our fun quiz. I admire the enterprise and skills of the artisans who had manufactured these tools for very specific applications. The market for many of these objects must have been limited. As usual, we struggled to identify many of them, and we were grateful for the half-marks granted generously by our quizmaster.

Members sat in a circle; we introduced ourselves and described our research brick walls. Members made various suggestions of sources and research methods. Family-history research can often be a solo activity, so it was interesting to learn about the successes and achievements of other researchers.

There was a "bring and buy" or "bring and take" table for unwanted books. I was pleased to help one member to renew her membership via logging in to the Society's website.

We enjoyed being together again for the social contact as much as the exchange of ideas and knowledge. It was a good afternoon well spent.

(report by Murray Archer, No. 7770)

Our next meeting will also be **in-person only**, on Saturday 30th September. The topic is "**Ancestors Behaving Badly: the sad, the mad and the just plain bad**". Rather than have a formal speaker, this meeting will be again more along the lines of a participative Members' Day. To help you focus on your criminal ancestor, a worksheet is available on request from *glasgow@anesfhs.org.uk*. We look forward to hearing from you.



glasgow@anesfhs.org.uk

Buzzy Garden (No. 12916) and Ivor Normand (No. 4161)

—oOo—

Southern Ontario Group Report

Phil Astley, “Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives”

29th April 2023

With over 60 people registered for this online event, we were eager to hear what the archives hold in store for us. After introductions, Phil Astley began by explaining the two Aberdeen buildings owned by the Archives, what they hold, and where they are located.

Approximately 50% of the collection is City records, while the other 50% is Shire records. The collection includes Valuation Rolls, Poor Relief records, school records, harbour records, Grampian Police records, militia records, property tax rolls, burial records, business collections (legal firms and retail firms), church records, and much else.

Phil also mentioned Archive services like the sale of books, acquisitions, and limited family-history research (for a fee).

Surprisingly, records started in the 1100s, with the civic archives – the Aberdeen Burgh registers – going from 1398 to 1511 in eight unbroken volumes. Phil told how there was lots of trading in the 1400s between Aberdeen and the Highlands, Scandinavia and the Baltic region, so these books have information relating to trade as well as to local events like plague. Along with text details are illustrations such as trademarks used by bakers in the 1400s. These marks were pressed into the bread to ensure it was unadulterated. These very important volumes are now recognized and protected by UNESCO.

The Archives also hold information about the 1597 witchcraft paranoia that swept the land, along with a list of 37 people who were executed and their confessions.

One early mention of Canada came from 1601 when the ship *William* sailed from Aberdeen to “New Found Land” and then on to Portugal before returning to Aberdeen.

Phil then discussed records listed on the Archives’ website that would be of most interest to family historians today. For example, he showed us how to work through the website menu to find a parish map. Of interest to [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) users is the knowledge that several of these records will be available on their website in 2024. These records include schoolmasters’ notes and Poor Relief records. Phil explained how the schoolmasters’ notes might be of interest to those overseas, as it was often noted why a child left school, including emigration, and to which location the child moved.

Next came the criminal records that include photos, crimes, sentences and often where convicts were transported and on what ship. There is also an 1855 register of prostitutes in Aberdeen (over 500!), and a register of returned convicts (amazingly, some returned from “Down Under”!). Phil also has a blog at Our Criminal Ancestors where he shares portraits of criminals: <https://ourcriminalancestors.org/2020/05/portraits-of-the-criminal-past/>.

Phil had two nice short stories to convey as well. One story was related to a photo of a four-year-old orphaned girl from Peterhead who was adopted by an overseas aunt in 1912. The archives had a photo of her and a brief story, but they didn’t know how she made out once she moved away. They decided to post the information on social media – and, lo and behold, her daughter and granddaughters were found. These relatives eventually made a trip back to the area to see where it all began for this little sweetheart.

The other story had a Canadian connection. The Archives have a folder that contains photos and information for 100 men from Newfoundland who came to Aberdeenshire

during the Second World War to help fell trees for lumber. Apparently they got along well with the local girls, as several marriages came about shortly afterwards.

All in all, it was a very pleasant and informative meeting, with lots of questions and chatting afterwards. We thank Phil for his excellent and well-organized presentation.

Details of our online meetings later in 2023 are on the Society's website. Next up, on 30th September, we look forward to hearing from genealogist Christine Woodcock about "Early Scottish Settlers in Ontario".

ontario@anesfhs.org.uk

Susan Brouwer No. 20475
co-organizing with Rod Coates (No. 18349) and David Joiner (No. 16651)

—oOo—

BACS/FPS/Giro Customer Payments

There was a customer recently whose payment was returned to them because they had used our old bank-account details.

If you pay by BACS, FPS or Giro, please note that the Society's bank-account details have changed. The new account details are on the Journal inside front cover, starting with the last issue (Journal 166, May 2023).

Existing direct debits are successfully collected by us, but we have received no FPS or Giro membership renewal payments since the changeover to the new bank account. Perhaps customers are paying into the old account, and the bank returns their money, but they are not checking their bank statements?

Please note: card payments can only be made in person at our Centre or online via PayPal. You cannot ring us and pay over the phone, and nor can you e-mail your card details to us.

membership@anesfhs.org.uk

Sheila Symons No. 13157

—oOo—

English GRO: Digital Birth and Death Records Now Available

Summary of Chris Paton's <https://scottishgenes.blogspot.com> item on 6th July 2023.

Thanks go to Buzzy Garden (no. 12916) for drawing our attention to it.

Access is now available to digitised images of some historic English and Welsh birth and death records for just **£2.50 each** (same as via <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk> for Northern Irish equivalents). The records available are for **English and Welsh births, 1837–1923** (i.e. 100 years ago), and **English and Welsh deaths, 1837–1887**.

The GRO website has some important qualifications about the digital images (JPEGs) available. Not all records are available to view as digital images; however, the record you are searching for may be available as a PDF or certificate.

When you start an application on the GRO site, you will be asked if you wish to order a certificate, PDF or digital image. For a digital image, a link takes you to the indexes at https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/indexes_search.asp, and you proceed from there. Payment is by Mastercard, Visa or Maestro only.

(with thanks to @WillsmanOneName on Twitter)

“Haste Ye Back” Conference Papers, 22nd April 2023

Journal 166 carried a summary report on the 33rd annual SAFHS Conference, which was hosted online by ANESFHS from our King Street premises. As promised, here are more detailed reports of the talks given at this Conference.

Marjory Harper, “Emigrant homecomings: stories of return migration”

Professor Marjory Harper is a leading authority on the Scottish diaspora and has explored the reasons for Scots leaving their homeland, or returning home, and their success or otherwise in their chosen destinations. There is growing interest now in those who emigrated and subsequently returned. Marjory gave an excellent thematic analysis of the reasons underpinning decisions to return, along with a series of case histories that exemplified the different impulses behind these return journeys.

She began with those with mobile careers whose aim in working abroad was to send or bring their income to invest at home. Many public buildings and handsome family villas are testimony to the success of individuals, with Andrew Carnegie the best-known example. Others came home to further their career, gaining high office or promoted posts because of their experience overseas. One striking example was Donald Smith, who rose to the top in the Hudson’s Bay Company and subsequently became Lord Strathcona and Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, making many charitable bequests in Canada and Scotland and earning the title of “Canada’s Andrew Carnegie”.

Many more returned because of family circumstances such as caring for ailing parents. Official policies and institutions sometimes unwittingly acted as facilitators of return. The best example was the way cheap fares to Australia and New Zealand made some see their “emigration” as a trial period – the £10 fare being a small loss if they decided to return.

In her research, Marjory has made excellent use of personal testimony. Her talk gave some moving illustrations of the anxieties felt by those leaving Scotland, and of the difficulties returners experienced while trying to resettle in their homeland. Homesickness figured powerfully in the testimony of Ena Macdonald, who spoke of the almost physical wrench of leaving a small close-knit community: “And I can still remember, I think everybody in the village came down to say cheerio to me, when – just going out the gate there, and I looked behind and my father was running after the car. Oh, I nearly just said ‘Stop, I’m not going’ ...”

By contrast, some individuals were able to commute seasonally between jobs, for example fishing in the Great Lakes in North America in the summer and spending the winters in the Western Isles of Scotland. As a result, the Scottish community culture was enriched by the stories of those who were comfortable working abroad and returning seasonally. As Murdo Maciver recalled, the global, cosmopolitan links to the Isle of Lewis of his youth influenced his own decision to settle in Canada:

“It was a great place to grow up. Everybody knew one another and our house was the centre of the village and there was ceilidhs there every night from Monday to Saturday. And I heard all the stories from Canada, Australia, South America, Falklands, South Africa. And a lot of the people that was there had gone back from Canada in the early 1930s because of the Depression. And some of them had gone back in the First World War and was gassed in France, so they didn’t bother coming back to Canada. So the stories were fantastic. And I think that’s maybe why I’m here today in Canada.”

Many who spent time in the New World felt their return to Scotland to be like a step backward in time. Norman Macrae said: “When we left the States, as many of the others who left these shores and went to the States, we had done reasonably well: we had a car, we had all modern conveniences, but when we came back to Lewis here, outside Stornoway there was no electricity, there was no running water and of course the house we went to, it didn’t have electricity or an inside toilet even.”

In modern times, heritage tourism has provided for temporary homecomings – either actually inspired by an old home, or perhaps more often notionally based on an idea of Scotland as a quaint or romantic destination, or as the scene of tragic forced eviction. Marjory suggested that these partial or distorted images of Scotland represent a challenge for family historians. In effect, some “genealogical pilgrimages” depend on time-warps and invented ancestral narratives that risk focusing disproportionately on an image of the emigrant as a victim.

Thorough family-history research can provide a richer, more fully worked-out narrative that celebrates the values of Scotland as a homeland and also the strengths, adaptability and resourcefulness of the travellers and the challenges they met.

Jackson Armstrong, “Mobility and migration in the early medieval town records of Aberdeen”

Aberdeen is particularly fortunate to have a set of medieval city records covering the period 1398–1511. These Council registers are essentially the records of the courts that regulated trade and civil matters, and cover topics such as elections of officials, the setting and gathering of taxes, and arrangements for the leasing of properties. These eight leather-bound volumes are kept in the Town House Charter Room in Aberdeen. In 2013, they were inscribed on the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register in recognition of their historical significance, as shown by their scope and continuity. The combined registers, consisting of more than 5,000 pages, are more extensive than those that have survived for the rest of Scotland as a whole.

Interestingly for us, they give an insight into links with other trading ports in Europe and the movements of traders and vessels between Aberdeen and ports such as Oslo, Bruges, Rostock and Danzig (Gdańsk). Northern Scotland, far from being peripheral, was closely connected to ideas and influences from Europe through a network of trading links.

These records also give family historians an insight into medieval Scotland, with precious information on family names, the history of names and naming practices. Many names in the record reinforce the idea of international links – names such as Hans Lubeck, Andrew of Bruges, Claes the Dutchman and John of Ghent. Closer to home, Forbes, Gordon, Anderson and Menzies are among the most frequently occurring names in the records. We can sometimes see the development of surnames: an individual can be variously recorded as *Andreas filius Alani* or *Andreas Alansone* (Andrew Allanson). There are some fine examples of “tee-names”, such as references in 1401 to *Mergarete valde pulcra*, that is Beautiful Margaret Waldie or Bonny Meg. Another unusual one is John “Out with the Sword” from Deer. Alas, women are often recorded simply as the wife of someone.

But how might we access this resource? Jackson had exciting news for us. Since 2019, a series of projects have been in place to create a digital version of the text. This began with digital photographs of the volumes’ contents and the manual transcription of 1.5 million

words. The resulting digital resource is found at Aberdeen Registers Online (ARO). The transcription of text based on the digital photographs uses standard approaches such as XML files and internationally recognised text-coding standards, making the documents machine-readable. In short, we can access them at www.abdn.ac.uk/aro for free.

The project team wanted the resource to be searchable and browsable, and developed a series of student-led projects to make it accessible. Thus you can search, for example, for family surnames at Search Aberdeen Registers: <https://sar.abdn.ac.uk/>. At the foot of <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/riiss/projects/aberdeen-registers-online-213.php>, the menu option “Search Aberdeen Registers ...” has a link to a useful “How to Search” guide.

In 2021, Jackson and his colleague William Hepburn sought creative approaches to disseminating the information in the records. A collaboration with games designers resulted in the game *Strange Sickness*, which draws on events from 1500 when a ship from Danzig docked in Aberdeen with travellers who soon exhibited symptoms of the plague. The Council arranged for them to be quarantined for 15 days. The game can be viewed at Strangesickness.com, with helpful historical context based on the details in the burgh records viewable at <https://strangesickness.com/historians-commentary/>.

Tom McKean, “Truth, experience, knowledge”

Tom McKean is Director of the University of Aberdeen’s Elphinstone Institute, a centre for folklore and anthropological studies with a remit to promote North-East culture.

Tom’s talk explored the nature of truth in personal accounts and the ways that different viewpoints (those of the storyteller, their listeners, their family members) may overlap and may not necessarily be identical. This has important implications for us as we consider the family stories we inherit and who tells them to us. As Tom put it, “Who we are depends on who we know, when and how we know them, and the contextual physical and temporal frameworks in which we encounter them”.

He illustrated his talk with examples drawn from the lives of two notable North-East repositories of folk tradition, Willie Mathieson and Stanley Robertson.

Willie Mathieson (1879–1958) was a great collector and author of songs. He was known to Gavin Greig and was subsequently consulted by other scholarly collectors such as James Madison Carpenter and Hamish Henderson – but few in his family or immediate community realised he was a performer. He can be heard talking with Hamish Henderson on the website Tobar an Dualchais: <https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/person/464>.

Stanley Robertson (1940–2009), by contrast, became widely known and well regarded as a ballad singer and author who was born into a settled travelling family. He was closely related to other celebrated performers such as Jeannie Robertson (his aunt) and Lizzie Higgins (his cousin).

He grew gradually into his status as a cornerstone of tradition and custodian of the heritage of travelling people. Interviews with Stanley’s family revealed that his children, who varied significantly in age, all had slightly different perspectives and understandings of their father’s interests. For the oldest children, born when Stanley was in his twenties, he was a piper but not a singer or authority on traveller ways. The younger ones grew up with a stronger sense of the importance and significance of traveller culture to him.

These points are important in the family-history context, especially when we listen to or record the stories of our relatives. Put another way, when you interview somebody aged 20 about an experience that happened to them at age 10, versus talking to someone aged 70 thinking about their experiences at age 10, you will get a very different approach, and you need to bear this in mind.

Nicolas Le Bigre, “Settling in and creating home in North-East Scotland”

Nick Le Bigre is a Teaching Fellow at the Elphinstone Institute, working in the disciplines of ethnology and folklore. These studies provide lots of fruitful crossover with family-history research, particularly in their focus on how people try to make sense of the life and circumstances around them. Born to Breton parents in the USA, he regards himself as French-American, and has lived in various places. He came to Scotland in 2010 intending to stay for a year! He is thus well placed to reflect on how migrants conceptualise what they mean by “home”, since often they may not have a long-term plan in mind.

Nick has focused on the experiences of those who have come to Scotland from other places. Among other activities, he runs a Polish–Scottish song group and has recently worked with Syrian refugees. He reminded us that the descendants of those who have come here will one day want to know what records we have of their ancestors first arriving here. How can we document the history for future researchers? The stories of people today become the histories of tomorrow.

Nick reminded us that it can often be difficult for new residents to form friendships with “native” families. Sadly, many forms of racism can be found in Scotland. However, the census returns show that Aberdeen is one of the most diverse places in Scotland. In the 2011 census, around 16% of the city’s 223,000 population were born outside the UK. Of these, more than 6,000 were born in Poland, and more than 3,000 were Nigerian by birth.

Scotland Census 2011: Population of Aberdeen: 223,000

187,000 (c. 84%) born in the UK

167,000 born in Scotland

18,000 born in England

2,000 born in Wales or N. Ireland

36,000 (c. 16%) born outside the UK

6,400 born in Poland

3,350 born in Nigeria

2,800 born in India

1,500 born in Germany

1,350 born in the USA

1,000 born in France

When people settle in a new area, “home” is essentially an abstract concept as opposed to a geographic place. Home exists in memories and a sense of emotional connectedness. Sometimes there are obstacles to settling in and creating “home”. Your original home may no longer exist. Once again, we were able to listen to powerful first-hand testimony: “The homeland that I grew up in, both the old Soviet Union as well as East Germany: that doesn’t exist any more. There is nothing to remind me of. Everything that there is, is just my memories.” Small, apparently trivial things like the type of curtains, traditional foods and pictures with sentimental associations were all powerful symbols in helping people to invoke a sense of him. Now, think about the artefacts your parents or grandparents chose to cherish as heirlooms.

Nick had some specific thoughts for family-history societies to reflect on. He reminded us that, from its beginnings, Scotland has been shaped by people coming from elsewhere –

and we are their descendants. Future visitors to family-history centres will want to know how their ancestors came to Scotland, what opportunities they created and what challenges they faced. How can family-history societies be more proactive in illustrating the experiences of Scotland's immigrants and their current and future descendants?

This was a thought-provoking talk that illustrated yet again the power of first-hand accounts – and was yet another reminder that we should be trying to record experiences of our older relatives and neighbours while we have the opportunity.

Alasdair Macdonald, “Using Y-DNA for genealogy”

Alasdair is a teaching fellow at the University of Strathclyde, linked to their Institute for Genealogical Studies. He administers a number of DNA-related projects with a particular interest in surnames.

He began by summarising the development of DNA-testing and its applications to family history and ethnographic research. Work began in 1999–2000 when Bryan Sykes pioneered the Oxford Ancestors study and, along with Catherine Irven, published “Surname studies and the Y chromosome” in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*. Ancestry only introduced its DNA services in 2012.

We only get a small amount of inherited DNA from our remote ancestors (approximately 12% from an individual great-grandparent, for example). However, Y-DNA provides a continuous link for males just as mitochondrial DNA does for females, as this contribution stays stable between generations and does not recombine in each new conception.

This has led to some interesting work in matching paper or documented family-tree results with genetic, DNA-based trees. Recent studies have shown direct links between modern Scots and Pictish or at least early medieval remains. Another case that received a lot of publicity was the testing of hair supposed to belong to the composer Ludwig van Beethoven ([https://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdfExtended/S0960-9822\(23\)00181-1](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdfExtended/S0960-9822(23)00181-1)).

Y-DNA can be sorted into “family” groups and allocated haplotype code names. The most common European male marker is R1B. While Y-DNA is substantially stable, small mutations can occur over the generations, and these mutated versions can help identify a sort of timeline and different family sub-groups. They can identify which branch of a line an individual belongs to and can create a descendant tree and date the branches. There are different tools to support this, such as FT-DNA's Big Y time tree, which shows branches.

There is a lot of technical jargon; and you will encounter the term SNP (often pronounced “snip”), which stands for single nucleotide polymorphism and is the most common type of genetic variation. STR (short tandem repeat) is the type of analysis used in the tests that most people start off with. It measures the number of times a small sequence of DNA protein letters is repeated at a location on the Y chromosome. SNPs are stable STRs (often called “strings”) that change more readily over the generations. Alasdair reminded us that a DNA sample belongs to the donor, not to the person who pays for the test, and that we should be a little wary of how much information we share with strangers – but he stressed the value of collaboration through reputable networks to work with others looking for the same names to help confirm or rule out lines of enquiry.

He then explored some examples from his own family tree as he looked for information about his great-grandfather who was illegitimate, starting with finding census results for 11 men in the same area with the same name as the putative father. By connecting with

some of their descendants identified through Y-DNA matches, he established a link with a researcher called Alphonse Macdonald from Surinam in South America, with whom he now knows he has a shared ancestor.

In conclusion, Alasdair's tips were not to search in isolation. Results are best evaluated in context, so join your kit to a project group, especially those on Family Tree DNA. Test what you can afford. Investing in a higher-level test can be genealogically profitable, although there is no guarantee that you will find a full match. Finally, do reach out and recruit family members to take additional tests. This can greatly enhance your results.

Alasdair provided a list of resources to set us on our way:

The Strathclyde Institute for Genealogical Studies (SIGS):

<https://www.engage.strath.ac.uk/event/1007>

FutureLearn courses:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/genetic-genealogy-researching-your-family-tree-using-dna>

Pictish DNA link:

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.08.01.502257v1.full>

Tracing Your Ancestors Using DNA, by Graham S. Holton (ISBN 9781526733092).

Ken Nisbet, “War Brides”

Ken's talk got off to an entertaining start by reminding us that Lydia Bennet from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was a sort of War Bride insofar as she eloped with George Wickham, who was in the militia in the wake of the Napoleonic wars of 1790–1816. Only during wars could local militia forces be called on to serve outside their own county.

A “war bride” could simply be any woman who marries any soldier – but Ken prefers to classify war brides as any woman who marries a serviceman from another nation, including what might be called “Cold War war brides” who married American servicemen based at Edzell in Angus or at Scotland's nuclear submarine bases.

In the past, women who were attached to service personnel were often viewed as “loose women” – a view that dates from early impressions of camp-followers. In fact, the women who accompanied service personnel frequently performed a necessary support function, such as providing nursing or laundry services. But that wasn't always the public view. In the pre-Jacobite period, the Kirk Session at Kingussie recorded that “a great many dissolute and unmarried women from different parts of the kingdom commonly follow the soldiers at the barracks of Ruthven and are sheltered in some houses in the parish, where they and the soldiers have frequent meetings, and very often upon the Lord's Day to the great scandal of religion”.

Arguably the most famous war bride was Juana María de los Dolores de León Smith, better known as Lady Smith (1798–1872), the wife of General Sir Harry Smith. In 1812, as an orphan with a younger sister to support, she found her home in the Spanish town of Badajoz besieged by British and Portuguese troops. She was rescued by Captain Harry Smith of the 95th Rifles, and married him a few days later. She subsequently accompanied him on his campaigns, which earned her the respect and admiration of the British soldiers. Harry was subsequently knighted and became governor and High Commissioner of the Cape Colony (South Africa). Various towns were named Ladysmith in her honour.

As ever, Ken gave us lots of detailed examples from Scotland's People and local newspapers showing the marriages and subsequent events that befell a range of young Scotswomen and their overseas bridegrooms. Some could be traced through passenger lists and through US and other immigration lists as they emigrated.

The presence of the Canadian Forestry Corps in Scotland in 1916–1919 resulted in a significant number of marriages across different parts of Scotland from the Borders to the Black Isle. Australian, Canadian and New Zealand National Archives for each country will give you access to the records of their service personnel, providing an opportunity to follow up those servicemen whose marriages you find on Scotland's People.

Some stayed in Scotland and had long and happy marriages, evidenced by anniversary celebrations noted in newspapers. Sometimes a trusting girl would travel to her husband's home country to be married – but not all unions had a happy outcome. Newspapers also yielded information about divorces, or tales of errant husbands who went “home” to prepare the way for their new bride and never returned.

The *Aberdeen Press & Journal* and other newspapers, shortly after the Second World War, began to flag up concerns. “This is most emphatically a matter on which no chances should be taken. Inquiries now, from official sources, may save serious regrets later.” In one example, a legal marriage in Scotland was deemed illegal in Canada, as the couple were minors under Canadian law and would have required parental consent to marry.

Ken reminded us that in the Second World War the bridegrooms were not just from the USA and Canada, and gave interesting examples where Scotswomen married Norwegians or Poles. As ever, he had some helpful suggestions for good sources to use.

Canadian War Brides:

<http://www.canadianwarbrides.com/>

<http://ww1warbrides.blogspot.com/> (First World War)

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/canadian-war-brides> (Government of Canada)

Australian War Memorial:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/war-brides#:~:text=More%20than%2013%2C000%20Australian%20soldiers,soldiers%20were%20hospitalised%20in%20England>

Alison Spring, “Sailing to Philadelphia, or: where did my Scots ancestors go?”

Alison Spring – the “Frugal Genealogist” – rounded off the Conference with an excellent demonstration of how to use various records to bring to life stories of emigrants and, sometimes, returners. Alison provided a very comprehensive guide to her sources and approaches which is too long to print here (e-mail safhs2023@anesfhs.org.uk to request a copy). Throughout her talk, she gave tips on how to use a range of resources to identify possible emigrants. These included census returns, Poor Relief applications, Kirk Session records, estate papers, gravestones, probate records, newspapers and DNA matches.

When Alison drew a blank on UK 1891 census entries for a family she found present in the 1881 Scottish census, she eventually found them in the Canadian census via Ancestry. Alternatively, FamilySearch or FreeCen offer free access to census records.

Another example from the 1881 census showed a couple with a married daughter and grandchildren staying with them. Newfoundland was given as one child's birthplace. A search through Poor Relief records yielded information about the daughter, who turned out to be married to a "fish dealer" from Newfoundland.

A different Poor Relief record listed an application from a woman whose husband was "now in America". A search in American immigration and census records showed the errant husband living happily with a different wife – and cross-checks of all his other birth and family information confirmed his identity.

Kirk Session records may briefly indicate that a family has "gone to America". Migration often took place in stages, with individuals moving from the Highlands or islands first to Scottish cities, then later emigrating. The excellent Poor Relief records for Glasgow can document applications for support for those who had recently relocated in the city.

Family letters can also shed light on immigration stories. Daniel McArthur (Alison's great-grandfather) was a blacksmith who temporarily relocated to America to work in the steel mills in Pittsburgh. She has a copy of a letter he submitted to the UK government in 1940, when, aged 65 and resident once again in Scotland, he was trying to secure pension support. He listed all his places of work and said he "went through the States and met many of the banished from this unfortunate island. Returned from the land of hard work & thunder and lightning, to Govan."

She gave an example of a landowner who returned to Scotland from Jamaica, reminding us to check the very helpful site maintained by the Centre for the Study of the Legacy of British Slavery (at UCL). This site listed the plantations and the numbers of enslaved persons for which this landowner received compensation.

Estate papers of landowners in Scotland can provide much useful information, especially in rental accounts, or perhaps in passenger lists. A helpful site in this context is that of the Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild – and it's always worth going back to re-check collections, as new papers are always being added or newly transcribed.

Alison gave a splendid example of a highly informative gravestone inscription (for the family of George Forbes of Coupar Angus, whose son George "after a distinguished career at the University of Edinburgh was appointed to the chair of Moral Philosophy in McGill University Montreal"). She found a record for this George in the 1871 Canadian census.

To round off, she had some intriguing stories drawn from newspapers. One particularly lively story concerned Duncan Paul, who, after his first marriage broke up, established a new relationship. His new partner and their child emigrated to Australia in advance of him as he waited for the appropriate papers to come through. Tired of waiting, he stowed away on a vessel bound for Australia. After five days without food, he surrendered himself – and, in a kindly gesture, the captain let him work his passage. The story has a happy ending as, on his arrival in Australia, his wife Ivy was on the quayside there to meet him. This solved a conundrum for Alison, as he had adopted his new wife's surname, thus explaining why he had proved elusive in the public records.

It was a helpful reminder that you should always keep an open mind and consult as many records as you can. Remember to consult your older relatives now and be alert for clues that may suggest your missing relative has emigrated.

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

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES Year ended 31 December 2022

	Unrestricted Funds General	Funds 100 Club	Total Funds 2022	Total Funds 2021
Notes	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Incoming resources from generated funds:				
Voluntary income:				
Covenants and Gift Aid	6,370	–	6,370	7,923
Donations	3,138	–	3,138	2,731
Legacy income	10,500	–	10,500	10,500
Annual fees	-24	1,212	1,212	1,451
Investment income:				
Interest received	1,251	–	1,251	311
Incoming resources from charitable activities:				
Subscriptions	55,522	–	55,522	53,390
Publication sales	7,230	–	7,230	8,051
Research and queries	1,519	–	1,519	1,872
Other incoming resources:				
Other income	139	–	139	2,601
	£75,145	£1,212	£76,357	£88,830
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Charitable activities				
Direct charitable expenditure	57,346	611	57,957	49,425
Depreciation	6,414	–	6,414	8,027
	£63,760	£611	£64,371	£57,452
Net (outgoing) / incoming resources	11,385	601	11,986	31,378
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	364,404	6,562	370,966	339,588
Total funds carried forward	£375,789	£7,163	£382,952	£370,966

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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

Year ended 31 December 2022

3. TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED – CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES GENERAL FUND

	Direct Charitable Expenditure	Depr't'n	Total 2022	Total 2021
	£	£	£	£
Publication cost of sales	2,813	–	2,813	3,043
Printing Society Journal	13,760	–	13,760	10,646
Postages and Journal distribution	8,553	–	8,553	7,034
Stationery and office supplies	888	–	888	832
Insurance, heat, light and telephone	6,647	–	6,647	5,080
Rent	6,000	–	6,000	5,900
Rates	2,775	–	2,775	3,179
Meeting expenses	1,838	–	1,838	1,361
Affiliation fees and subscriptions	1,929	–	1,929	2,227
Internet and IT expenses	1,116	–	1,116	623
Accountancy fee	1,100	–	1,100	1,025
Bank and credit-card charges	1,822	–	1,822	1,640
Sundry expenses	6,874	–	6,874	3,466
Building and library repairs	1,231	–	1,231	2,665
Depreciation	–	6,414	6,414	8,027
	£57,346	£6,414	£63,760	£56,748

100 CLUB

Building and library repairs
Prizes etc.

	–	–	–	–
	611	–	611	704
	£611	£ –	£611	£704

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ANESFHS Annual General Meeting, 20th May 2023: Reports

The Society's AGM, postponed from 18th March (shortage of volunteer help to prepare accounts), took place in the Rubislaw Church Centre and was quorate, attended by 25 members in person and by 30 others online. The Chairman noted apologies received.

Chairman's report

Ivor Normand reported on Members' Meetings restarting at this new Aberdeen venue, on our other Groups' hybrid and in-person meetings continuing largely successfully, and on ANESFHS hosting the 33rd annual SAFHS Conference online from King Street. Much help has been unstintingly given by many, in particular Elaine Petrie, Dave Anderson and Rob Ritchie. After a hiatus in late 2022, the Journal has resumed quarterly publication.

Vice-Chairman's report

The Chairman read out a report from Bert Lawrie, who sent sincere apologies for missing the AGM due to a sudden engagement that couldn't be changed.

It has been a very busy year, mainly chasing repairs to our buildings. There have been many other positives, but attention to ongoing repairs has consumed a great deal of time.

1. Repairs to the roof above 158–164 have finally been completed after many months of effort and delays. The severe water-penetration problems should now be over.
2. A sour smell in the basement and kitchen was eventually traced to a tenant in a flat in 156 (above our 158) keeping pouring fatty liquid down the drain, eventually blocking the communal downpipe. The situation was resolved and will, we hope, not recur.
3. We installed videoconferencing facilities in 164 and have used these for Committee as well as conference events. We also have the option to run our own training events, with up to 10 participants at King Street as well as others attending via Zoom or Teams.
4. Now that visitor numbers to King Street are back up, volunteers are sometimes working with two visitors at once. We hope volunteer and visitor numbers will keep increasing.
5. Bert is working with two volunteers to develop user guides / handy hints for visitors and new volunteers. Others are also keen to develop similar guides. Visitors will thus be helped to improve their research skills and to optimise their time at our Centre.

Secretary's report

Ronald Leith reported that members usually want to know if the Society has enough money and how many members we have. The accounts show we are in a healthy state.

The Covid pandemic has had a definite impact on numbers of new members. In 2019 we welcomed 402 new members. This fell to 265 (2020) and 268 (2021), then increased slightly to 286 (2022), so we hope this continues – 113 in 2023 up to AGM date.

Exact number of members are tricky because new membership renewals are now counted one year exactly from the date of joining. There are still many whose renewals are due at the end of the year. The accounts show 2,685 memberships, but this includes 234 family memberships which really count as two, giving 2,919 – perhaps around 3,000 in total.

Many thanks go to Sheila Symons, Membership Secretary, who meticulously keeps the membership register up to date. The position of Membership Secretary was recently appointed to the Board of Trustees in perpetuity, i.e. the holder doesn't need to be re-elected. This ensures continuity for this important position.

Financial report for 2022

Pat Black read out the Finance Team's report. The accounts show a slight downward trend but overall little difference from 2021. Despite low numbers of visitors, members were not slow to donate occasional extra funds in support of the Society, which was very encouraging. Thanks also go to W. Lockhart Marshall, owner of our property at 156 King Street, who reduced our rent for a few months.

Overall, the Society is in a sound financial position with a net annual surplus of £12,000.

The incoming resources for 2022 were £76,000, down £12,000 on 2021 when we had received a generous legacy of £10,000. Publications sales of £7,000 continue to show the decline experienced in the last few years and are now only 25% of the level in 2016.

Expenditure for 2022 is £7,000 higher, mainly relating to heat and light, improvements to the back office and a necessary upgrade to the burglar and fire-alarm systems. Although the cost of the Society Journals appears £3,000 greater, it is in fact a slight reduction on earlier years, as only three journals were printed during 2021.

Although there is no Treasurer in post, the Finance Team have managed despite the sad loss of Bill Rodger, a former banker who was very helpful and not slow to tackle the bank if dissatisfied with their service. Losing Paul Webster was another huge blow. He was meticulous to a fault when it came to cashing up, and was a pleasure to know.

We desperately need a member in the Aberdeen area to volunteer to take on the role of Treasurer, and we will always welcome others to join the team.

Thanks go to all members of the Finance Team for their work during the year, especially to Andy Horne for preparing accounts, and to Jane Cameron for overseeing, and to Graeme Reid and his team at Azets, our auditors. Copies of accounts were available at the meeting, can be posted out to enquirers, and are on the Society's website when you log in.

Centre Manager's report

The Chairman read out Barbara Lamb's report. Our Centre has been very lucky to avoid any outbreaks of Covid, and attendance has been slowly but surely picking up. People may have been saving up all their brick walls and are now coming in to seek help with knocking them down. Lapsed members are rejoining alongside new members, foreign visitors are on the increase, and the Centre is buzzing.

We are still coming to terms with the loss of Paul Webster, who was a mainstay of the Society and had been since he retired. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the library was amazing, and he was the go-to person for information on where to find specific details.

Staffing the Centre has become quite a problem since Paul's death, and we are always looking for volunteers for half-day shifts to provide assistance to those who need it. We are very lucky in Aberdeen to have a Centre that is open five days a week, 10am to 4pm. If any member feels they would like to know more about helping out, please contact us.

Barbara sent apologies for her absence, and thanked all the volunteers who have been with us throughout the past few years and have helped out over and above their usual shifts.

Volunteer report

John Urie reported on the multitude of tasks that he performs (largely from home) for the Society, and reiterated others' appeals for members to consider volunteering. It was

acknowledged that, because we are all volunteers with limited time, we aren't always good at following up when members do enquire or offer to help.

Board of Trustees (“the Committee”)

Gavin Bell and Stuart Petrie have retired from the Society's Committee, and Nick Reid has resigned because of other time pressures, though all are continuing to work in their respective areas of volunteering for ANESFHS. They were thanked for their long and ongoing service to the Society.

Stephen Reid (no. 22261) had recently been co-opted to the Society's Committee, and the AGM voted to ratify his appointment. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman had each served three years, and it would be for the next Committee meeting to appoint new holders of each post. [This took place on 22nd June: Bert Lawrie becomes Chairman; Stephen Reid becomes Vice-Chairman.]

The outgoing Chairman closed the AGM. A brief break was followed by a guest speaker's talk; see report in this Journal issue.

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Online Family-History Course: Service in the Great War

The Society's popular courses on family-history research, tutored by Ken Nisbet, will next cover “**Researching your relatives' service in the Great War**”.

Dates: Thursdays, 12th October to 16th November 2023, 7pm to 9pm UK time, live online via Zoom (no recordings). A comprehensive handout of resources and websites will follow after each class.

Prices: £46, or £42 concessionary.

Week 1: Researching Great War British Soldiers

Week 2: Researching Royal Naval Service and Royal Flying Corps/Royal Air Force personnel

Week 3: Researching women's service in the Great War

Week 4: Researching Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and American Soldiers of the Great War

Week 5: Volunteering, Conscription, Tribunals and Objectors

Week 6: Researching the Home Front

Ken Nisbet, as well as being an experienced family-history lecturer, also has a passion for researching the Great War. He is Chairman of the South Scotland Branch of the Western Front Association, and he has researched over 400 family members who served during the Great War, of whom over 100 died during their military service. He has travelled to many of the Great War battlefields over a number of years.

This course is open to non-members as well as to Society members, several of whom have already signed up. To register your interest, please contact us at the e-mail address below. A few weeks before the course begins, we'll contact you about payment; and, when payment has been received, Ken will send you the Zoom link for the course.

syllabus@anesfhs.org.uk

Ivor Normand
and Irene McCafferty

No. 4161
No. 6462

FATHER'S SIDE

Record of Ancestors

Membership No. **11310**
Name **Alexander A. McKENZIE III**
Address **Sarasota, Florida, USA**

Date **16 June 2023**
e-mail **amckenzie3@yahoo.com**

Great-great-grandparents

F15 **Colin McKENZIE**

Born 1775-77
Place Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire
Married 15 Dec 1811
Place Glenmuick, ABD
Died 27 Feb 1886 ("88")
Place Crathie, Aberdeenshire
Occup. Miller

Great-grandfather

F7 **John McKENZIE**

Born 5 Dec 1818
Place Crathie, Aberdeenshire
Married 9 Oct 1845
Place Braemar, Aberdeenshire
Died 23 Apr 1886 (67)
Place Constable, NY, USA
Occup. Miller

F16 **Janet GRANT**

Born 4 Jun 1794
Place Tomnivarar, Monaltrie,
Crathie & Braemar, ABD
Died 2 Feb 1875
Place Crathie, Aberdeenshire
Occup.

Grandfather

F3

Charles McHardy (Richard) McKENZIE

Born 25 Jan 1868
Place Burke, NY, USA
Married 30 Dec 1907
Place Upper Troy, NY, USA
Died 13 Aug 1915 (47)
Place Prescott, Ontario, Canada
Occup. Schoolteacher (mathematics)

Great-great-grandparents

F17 **William MacQUEEN**

Born 30 Jan 1791
Place Milltown, Ardclach, Nairnshire
Married 1 Sep 1820
Place Crathie, Aberdeenshire
Died 10 Jan 1861 (69)
Place Braemar, Aberdeenshire
Occup. Schoolmaster in Braemar

Great-grandmother

F8 **Anne MacQUEEN**

Born 24 Feb 1823
Place Braemar, Aberdeenshire
Died 28 Aug 1883 (60)
Place Constable, NY, USA
Occup.

F18 **Henrietta LESLIE**

Born 25 Dec 1798
Place Milltown of Ferness, Nairnshire
Died 25 Jan 1836 (37)
Place Braemar, Aberdeenshire
Occup.

Form designed by:
Aberdeen & North-East Scotland
Family History Society
158-164 King Street
ABERDEEN
AB24 5BD

Great-great-great-grandparents		F63	Born	Place
			Married	Place
			Died	Place
F31	Petter McKENZIE			Occup.
	Born 1744	F64	Born	Place
	Place		Died	Place
	Married 20 Dec 1774			Occup.
	Place Crathie & Braemar, ABD	F65	Born	Place
	Died 1786 (42?)		Married	Place
	Place		Died	Place
	Occup.			Occup.
F32	Janet McGREGOR (McARA)	F66	Born	Place
	Born		Died	Place
	Place			Occup.
	Died	F67	Born	Place
	Place		Married	Place
	Occup.		Died	Place
F33	Alexander GRANT	F68	Born	Place
	Born Abt 1759 [Crathie MI #115]		Died	Place
	Place Tomnivarar, by Crathie			Occup.
	Married 4 Aug 1792	F69	Don. BROWN	
	Place Crathie, Aberdeenshire		Born	Place
	Died Jul 1843 [Crathie MI #115]		Died	Place
	Place			Occup.
	Occup.	F70	Born	Place
F34	Isabel (Elizabeth) BROWN		Died	Place
	Born 8 Dec 1774			Occup.
	Place Midtown Micras,	F71	Dougald MacQUEEN John MacQ. / Isabella ROSE	
	Crathie & Braemar, ABD		Born 12 Apr 1712	Place
	Died Jun 1852 [Crathie MI #115]		Married	Place
	Place		Died	Place
	Occup.			Occup.
F35	John MacQUEEN	F72	Jane GOLLAN	
	Born 19 Mar 1749		Born	Place
	Place Belivat, Ardclach, Nairnshire		Died	Place
	Married 4 Dec 1777			Occup.
	Place	F73	Born	Place
	Died Nov 1829 (80)		Married	Place
	Place Drummore, Cawdor, NAI		Died	Place
	Occup.			Occup.
F36	Jane ALEXANDER	F74	Born	Place
	Born		Died	Place
	Place			Occup.
	Died 4 May 1820	F75	Born	Place
	Place Drummore, Cawdor, Nairnshire		Married	Place
	Occup.		Died	Place
F37	Alexander LESLIE	F76	Born	Place
	Born		Died	Place
	Place Ardclach, Nairnshire			Occup.
	Married	F77	Hugh ROSE	
	Place Ardclach, Nairnshire		Born	Place
	Died		Married	Place
	Place		Died	Place
	Occup.			Occup.
F38	Anne ROSE	F78	Anna ROSS (or McGILLAVARY?)	
	Born 4 Feb 1764		Born	Place
	Place Auldearn, Nairnshire		Died	Place
	Died			Occup.
	Place		Born	Place
	Occup.		Died	Place
				Occup.

Library Report

Most of us will be familiar with ScotlandsPeople, the official Scottish government website for family-history research. It provides access to the Scottish birth, death, marriage and census records, Catholic parish registers, Coats of Arms, Valuation Rolls, wills and testaments, and much more.

The Old Parish Registers (OPRs) comprise the records of births and baptisms, banns and marriages, and deaths and burials kept by individual parishes of the Established Church (Church of Scotland) before the introduction of civil registration in 1855.

In addition to the records of the Church of Scotland, ScotlandsPeople also has access to the Roman Catholic parish registers, and to some other Scottish Presbyterian churches. What you won't find on ScotlandsPeople, however, are the records of the Episcopal Church, as they are less easy to get hold of.

On his website, *Scottish Episcopal Church History* (<https://www.episcopalhistory.org>), the Very Reverend Gerald Stranraer-Mull, Dean Emeritus of the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney, explains that at the Reformation in 1560 many people in Scotland chose to remain Episcopalians, and over 100 years later the majority of the country was still Episcopalian. The old ways continued in many places, he says: for example, "in Buchan, in the north-east, the Scottish quality of thrawn-ness came to the fore and people would not be told by King or Government which church they should be part of".

Although the Episcopal church records are not available on ScotlandsPeople, you may be able to trace your Episcopalian ancestors through resources held by ANESFHS. We've always been very fortunate in our Society in having so many committed volunteers, and from the foundation of the Society in 1978 our volunteers began transcribing records held in archives, libraries, churches and repositories throughout North-East Scotland. At that time the World Wide Web, forerunner of the Internet as we know it today, hadn't been invented, and searching for something online was very much in the future.

So, those transcriptions were an extremely valuable resource for family-history research. And they still are, because, as we keep telling people, not everything is available online, and many resources are still in paper form only. One of our most prolific transcribers was Archie Strath Maxwell, and we have in our library his transcriptions of baptisms and proclamations from Episcopal churches in Aberdeen and the North-East. These are especially valuable because the records are not easy to get hold of, some may no longer exist, and they are not available online, nor available on ScotlandsPeople.

If you can't find your ancestor in the OPRs, it might be because they never registered the event, or the records for that parish at that time might have been lost or damaged, but it's worth checking our holdings of transcriptions of the Episcopal records, just in case one of your thrawn North-East ancestors was an Episcopalian. You can find these transcriptions in our Parish/Church Registers section. The list is too long to print here, but includes records from, in Aberdeen, St Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral, St Paul's Chapel, St John's, and Trinity Episcopal Chapel, as well as Episcopal congregations in Lonmay, Longside, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Old Deer, Inverurie, Turriff, Banff, Oldmeldrum, Drumlithie, among others. Dates vary. If you can't visit the Library, e-mail library@anesfhs.org.uk and we'll do our best to help you.

National Library of Scotland: Virtual Reading Room

And another pointed out by Buzzy, this time from the NLS blog, 14th July 2023. Summary:

The NLS has now introduced its Virtual Reading Room – a new way to view the collections. Whether you are a scholar, a learner or just a little curious, the VRR allows you to immerse yourself in the Library's collections anywhere, without the hassle and cost of travel. You can view items online in real time, no matter where you are in the world.

We use special cameras to capture images of collection items. These images can be presented on a large screen or shared on Zoom or Microsoft Teams. We have two camera set-ups: our ceiling visualiser and our desktop visualiser. Our desktop visualiser is suitable for collection items that are smaller than A3, like letters, books and pamphlets. Our ceiling visualiser is more suitable for larger items like maps and newspapers.

We have supported a wide range of people during our pilot – from visitors who had had travel problems and wanted to check their family tree, to an international production company who used the visualiser to find out if a map of the Mediterranean was suitable as set dressing. In another visit, a reader who has been researching roads for 20 years could finally see a key 17th-century account of roads.

You will need to join the Library (<https://www.nls.uk/guides/how-to-join/>) to use the Virtual Reading Room – and joining is free. You will also need a PC or a large tablet with a good Internet connection – phones often do not display the image very well. We would then set up a Zoom or Microsoft Teams call.

Requests to view items can be made through <https://auth.nls.uk/contact/ask-a-question/>, giving details of what material you would like to see and when you would like to use the service. We would also need to know if you are unable to visit the reading rooms due to disability, long-term health conditions, or caring responsibilities. Please contact us at least a week in advance so that we have time to organise the material.

We will then assess if the collection item is suitable for viewing. Some items that are too large, fragile or restricted by data protection or copyright may not be able to be viewed.

Library staff offer support and go through the material under your direction. We can zoom in and out, or move the item to focus on a particular area. We will even try to decipher any difficult-to-read handwriting with you!

The sessions last one hour, but follow-up sessions can be booked if needed. During the session, you are welcome to ask questions or to discuss the material or take notes. We will ask you not to take screenshots or recordings. The service is available Monday to Friday from 9:30am to 12 noon and from 2pm to 4:30pm, subject to staff availability.

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Indexing Record of Ancestors Charts

Have you ever taken the opportunity to look at the Ancestor Chart Index on the Society's website? Did you know that there are currently more than 200,000 entries giving ancestral surname and B/M/D location references for all charts in our library that have ever been submitted by members? Each entry is referenced by membership number only. Here is a short example of what you can expect to see:

Number	Surname	Locations
16803	ROBERTS	ANGLESEY : DUNNICHEN : CARMYLLIE : ALEXANDRIA, DUMBARTON : ST ANDREWS : GLASGOW : LINLITHGOW
17297	ROBERTS	ST EARTH, CORNWALL
18627	ROBERTS	CANADA : PADIHAM, LANCS : BURNLEY, LANCS : WARBOYS, HUNTINGTON : WALES
4068	ROBERTSDOTTIR	SHETLAND
2219	ROBERTSHAW	BRADFORD
3	ROBERTSON	CH.OF GARIOCH : INSCH : KEIG : MONTGARRIE : CUSHNIE : STRICHEN : ALFORD : METHLICK : ABERDEEN : CULSALMOND : FYVIE : RHYNIE : TULLYNESSLE : RAYNE
8	ROBERTSON	LEYS OF AUCHMACOY : LOGIE BUCHAN
14	ROBERTSON	LONGSIDE : NEW PITSLIGO : CRIMOND : FOVERAN
20	ROBERTSON	ESSLEMONT : ELLON

The entire index has been created over many years by volunteer members. Last year, I volunteered to support the continuation of the project. Of course, there is always more to do – and right now the Society is looking to create a team to progress this important work and to clear the backlog of unindexed charts. Would you like to volunteer? The work is not onerous – and, in comparison to some indexing projects, it is quite straightforward, as the example above illustrates. I have found that the most challenging part of the job can be deciphering some of the handwriting. You can index one page or 100 pages, it's entirely up to you. Never done any indexing before? That's OK; help is at hand.

Whatever time you can offer, a little or a lot, anything you can do will be very much appreciated. So, why not join me, and we can work together to grow the Ancestor Chart Index and ensure that these historically valuable records become part of the permanent legacy in the Society's library – a legacy that can help family historians now and in the future to discover our ancestors. Please register your interest at charts@anesfhs.org.uk. Indexing can equally well be done by our overseas members.

Meantime, you will find the Ancestor Chart Index by logging on to the website, selecting "Services" from the header menu, then "Downloads" from the dropdown menu, and selecting the "AncChartIndex.Zip" option. Download the index, and click to open the file. Select the first letter of the surname you are looking for, and enjoy browsing the entries. Go on, take a look! You might just find a clue to help with your family-history research.

If you do identify a chart of possible interest, you can request a digital image (up to 10 at a time) by e-mailing charts@anesfhs.org.uk (c/o John Urie). For GDPR compliance, the member's own details will have been redacted. If a chart shows your ancestor, you can e-mail John, and if that chart belongs to a *current* member we can send them the requester's e-mail address (with permission) and leave it up to you and them to contact each other.

helen.strachan@anesfhs.org.uk

Helen Strachan No. 22873

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

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

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

Keithhall and Kinkell Memorial Inscriptions: Revised and Expanded

Kinkell in Aberdeenshire was an ancient parish but must have proved too small to support a minister, because in 1754 it was “suppressed” (to use the old terminology), part of its territory being ceded to the parish of Kintore, and the remainder being added to Keithhall. After the amalgamation of the parishes, burials continued around the ancient kirk of Kinkell and at Monykeggy (site of the original kirk of Keithhall). A new church for the combined parish was opened in 1771, but burials do not seem to have started at this new site until the 1880s – and, even then, the two older kirkyards continued in use.

There were two other burial places within the parish. At Kinmuck, there was a Meeting House and burial ground belonging to the Society of Friends (Quakers), and within the grounds of the estate of Keithhall (formerly Caskieben) is what we might call a “funeral grove” – an avenue of yew trees, interspersed with monuments to members of the family of the Earls of Kintore.

In 1984, ANESFHS published *The Kirkyard of Keithhall & Kinkell*, but that booklet covered just two out of the five burial sites – the ancient kirkyard of Kinkell and the new kirkyard of Keithhall. Versions of the inscriptions from Old Keithhall (Monykeggy) and from the Quaker Cemetery at Kinmuck were included among the “unpublished MIs” held at the library in our Research Centre in King Street; and member Helen Taylor more recently produced a revised version of Monykeggy.

For this new publication, Heather Mitchell and Gavin Bell have revisited all these sites, making corrections, noting additions to the original inscriptions, and adding the inscriptions from new stones. We have also recorded the inscriptions in the “funeral grove” – possibly just in time, as gales over the winter of 2022–23 have brought down many trees on the Keith Hall estate.

As ever, we found that the Victorian antiquarian Andrew Jervise had preceded us, at Kinkell, Kinmuck and Monykeggy. He only ever recorded a minority of stones (typically those commemorating what he called “men of mark” or “good and faithful servants”), but we have included his versions where they can fill any gaps.

The new booklet (catalogue number AA069) is now available, price £3.60.

mis@anesfhs.org.uk

Gavin Bell (MI Co-ordinator)

No. 4085

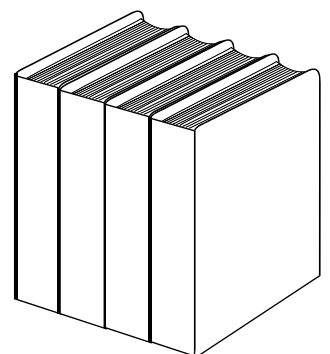
—oOo—

Book Reviews

Scottish Studio Photographers to 1914 and Workers in the Scottish Photographic Industry, compiled by D. Richard Torrance. Two volumes. ISSN 01439448, Scottish Record Society, 2011 (£40 + £5 UK p&p).

Many members will be aware of Richard Torrance’s handy A5 booklet, *Photographers in North-Eastern Scotland to 1914*, one of a series covering Scotland, published in 2001. Some are still available to view and/or purchase from ANESFHS, or from the publishers, the Scottish Genealogy Society (SGS).

But this 2011 major update is not a simple review; it comprises two comprehensive volumes filled with a treasure trove of information to help you date your old photographs.



The first volume comprises a preface, an introduction clearly explaining how the medium of photography developed, and a comprehensive chapter on sources and bibliography. The latter includes trade directories (by town and county), books and articles, dating and caring for photographs, and websites and newspapers (articles, adverts, obituaries); censuses up to 1901 were also explored. Then it launches into Scottish studio photographers and workers in the Scottish photographic industry with surnames A–L. The second volume covers surnames M–Z.

The list of photographers is pleasingly laid out in a clear typeface which is very easy to consult. The text of an entry may include another name in bold, which means it is easy to navigate to a separate entry for that person. (I tested this on photographers and allied workers in my own family tree, and was happy to learn new information.)

Occasionally, a name may simply give a census entry which provides date, address, occupation and even other residents. But typically there are several sources given. Some merit more biographical details: for example, George Washington Wilson and David Whyte each get a couple of pages.

Copies are available to view at the ANESFHS Family Research Centre in King Street, and from individual or institutional subscribers to the Scottish Record Society (e.g. Aberdeen University Library, and at the Scottish Genealogy Society in Edinburgh).

This work is thoroughly researched, and is a marvellous resource for those who wish to seriously sleuth their old photos.

buzzygarden99@gmail.com

Buzzy Garden No. 12916

Flora Johnston, *What You Call Free*, Ringwood Publishing, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-901514-96-4.

Ringwood Publishing is a small Glasgow-based concern that has specialised in bringing local, first-time authors to print; and a number of their titles have been the result of family historians generating a creative imagining of the lives of their forebears based on public records and family tradition. *What You Call Free* is not a family-history story as such, but it is a fascinating example of the powerful and moving echoes of the past that can be traced in Kirk Session records and other historic documents.

Flora Johnston has a degree in history from St Andrews University and has worked for the National Library of Scotland (NLS) and for the National Museum of Scotland (NMS), describing herself as “a writer and researcher of all things Scottish”. Much of her professional work involved preparing exhibitions and digital media, and she has published widely on education, architecture and religion, including a biography of St Cuthbert and a history of the Church on the Uists, North and South. “But always”, she says, “it’s the stories of the people which intrigue me the most. Writing fiction allows me to explore their lives in a different way.”





West Calder sackcloth gown and cutty stool (© National Museums Scotland)

In setting up an exhibition for the opening of NMS, she was fascinated by the sackcloth garment that penitents were meant to wear when being rebuked before the congregation of West Calder in the 1670s. In those Kirk Session records, she was able to find references in 1677 to Jonet Gothskirk, compelled to wear this shameful gown week after week for adultery with William Murdoch. Johnston has reimagined Jonet's story and interwoven it with that of Helen Alexander, who, with her husband James Currie, wrote memoirs of the Covenanting period, which appeared as *Passages in the Lives of Helen Alexander and James Currie*. As Johnston points out, it is exceptional to have a document from that period written by a woman, especially when that woman was not a member of the landed cohort of society. Yet she was involved at first hand in some of the most turbulent events in Scottish history. The two women did not meet in real life, but Johnston has interwoven their stories to interpret the events of 1687–88 and bring them to life for modern readers.

The nature of the role of women in the 17th century is vividly brought to life, and their comparative powerlessness is well demonstrated by the events surrounding Jonet. Each chapter starts with a direct transcription of the entries concerning her in the Kirk Session minutes: "Compeared Jonet Gothskirk, and in Sackcloth confessed before Session her sin of Adultery with William Murdoch, professing upon her knees her sorrow for the same. She was ordained the next Lord's Day to enter the place of public repentance, and to appear there in Sackcloth." She then appeared in church on Sunday 23rd October 1687, in the same sackcloth gown, in order to endure public rebuke before the congregation. For weeks she was relentlessly paraded in front of the congregation – and the Kirk Session entries are brutal in their formulaic repetition. Months later, she was accepted back into the Church and able to take communion again: "Sunday 26th February 1688. This day Jonet Gothskirk was received, having showed greater signs of the sense she had of her Adultery with William Murdoch, and declare in Sackcloth her sorrow and repentance for the same sin." Johnston did not find records mentioning an equivalent punishment for Murdoch, and imagines that he managed to elude the Session and made off to another parish. However, other Kirk Sessions records provide examples of enquiries directed to neighbouring parishes to pursue absconding miscreants.

In the meantime, we learn of Helen Alexander's highly principled commitment to the Covenanting movement and its resistance to the appointment of bishops by the Crown. She underwent a spell of imprisonment but nevertheless, knowing she risked further penalties, continued to shelter fugitive preachers such as James Renwick as they travelled to country holding open-air conventicles to preach. Helen wrote:

Before Mr Renwick was executed, I went and saw him in prison and I said to him "Ye will get the white robes", and he said "And palms in my hands". And when he was execute I went to the Greyfriars Yard, and I took him in my arms till his cloathes were taken off, and I helped to wind him [*wrap him in his winding sheet for burial*] before he was put in the coffin.

Renwick (1662–88, the youngest and last of the Covenanting martyrs) was born in Moniaive, Dumfriesshire and studied under Presbyterian theologians in the Netherlands, eventually returning to preach in Scotland, where he was noted for his zealous style. In

1684, he was involved in drawing up and spreading a declaration that described those in authority as “murdering beasts of prey”. In 1685, James II, a Catholic, ascended to the throne, and soon not only the Covenanting party were in revolt against the king, who was himself deposed in 1688. In the meantime, Renwick refused to give up open-air preaching and also refused to take an oath of allegiance to the king. A reward was offered for him – dead or alive – but his followers protected him until finally he was cornered in Edinburgh. Many of these events figure in Flora Johnston’s book. The captain of the guard is supposed to have commented on Renwick’s youth and slight figure, saying: “What, is this the boy Renwick that the nation hath been so much troubled with?”

The book is a clever fusion of history and fiction and is all the more remarkable not just because its two central characters actually existed but also because of Helen’s first-person account of Renwick’s last days. In due course, a memorial was erected in Greyfriars Kirkyard, dedicated not only to Renwick but also to others who sacrificed their lives to their religious principles. An inscription on the memorial estimates that from May 1661 to Renwick’s death in 1687 “were one way or other Murdered and Destroyed for the same cause about eighteen thousand”. The memorial was first erected in 1706 by Helen Alexander’s husband, James Currie, merchant in Pentland, confirming the family’s ongoing commitment to the Covenanting movement. It was renewed in 1771.

If you are interested in history, or if you have seen the memorial at Greyfriars and would like to know more about the events it marks, this is a good way in. And if you are looking for a way to blend fiction and family records, this might give you some inspiration.

Elaine.Petrie@anesfhs.org.uk

Elaine Petrie No. 22949

—oOo—

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

Maritime Coincidences

I already take your advice seriously (“Maritime Coincidences”, Journal 166, pp. 30–32, *Editors’ note*), much preferring to keep my feet on the ground and do sensible things from dry land, such as joining ANESFHS. The first Journal I received was No. 85 (November 2002), and I was impressed to see mention of a great-uncle in an article on “Boharm Roll of Honour, 1914–15” by Keith Mitchell.

James McKay (1881–1914) was an artificer engineer on HMS *Pathfinder*, the first ship to be sunk in the Great War, near the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth (it was a U-boat wot done it). My mother told me that James’s mother had a dream the previous night and woke up declaring: “Jim is swimming with the fishes ...”.

My connection to the *Titanic* is something I have been researching for several years, and learning about the SS *Waratah* (sometimes called the *Titanic* of the south) is more recent. In between, I found that a paternal relative, Lillian Garden, was on the last boat out of Singapore in 1942. It was torpedoed, and she died at sea.

So, no, I am not going to sea. Nor do I have a fixation on maritime disasters; I’m simply amazed at forebears who were brave enough to go over the oceans in wee boaties.

buzzygarden99@gmail.com

Buzzy Garden No. 12916

New Cousins Contacted via Journal

Thank you for printing my articles in Journals 165 and 166 – it's much appreciated. My story in Journal 165 about William Duncan, of Macduff and then Oklahoma, attracted some interest from cousins I didn't know I had.

William had many siblings, including the three sisters pictured here. Some descendants of William in America started a family Facebook group some years ago which is expanding rapidly. Through that group I was introduced to Jamie, a descendant of Isabella Duncan (whose daughter had also made the journey to Oklahoma in 1901). That branch of the family continues to grow in the USA.

Through my Journal stories, I was contacted by Anne, a descendant of Helen Duncan, who lives near Glasgow.

I travelled from Aberdeen to Glasgow and met three new cousins: Anne and Alison, both from the Glasgow area – and Jamie, on her first visit to Scotland from Oklahoma with her husband and children. Our afternoon together was surreal and fascinating. We had the photos of



our great-grandmothers there with us and couldn't quite believe we had this opportunity to meet as descendants of Annie, Helen and Isabella, who were born between 1850 and 1862. ANESFHS, Facebook and the Internet have brought us together – a small miracle!

soniapacker@btinternet.com

Sonia Packer No. 23123

Wisley–Wisely–Wiseley Surname Project

We live in the USA and are the volunteer administrators for the Wisley–Wisely–Wiseley surname project (<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/wiselywiseleywisley/about>) hosted by FamilyTreeDNA. We use Y-DNA to identify men who share a common patrilineal ancestor, and our main group thinks their ancestors are from the Aberdeen area.

We'd like to offer a few free Y-DNA tests to men of the Wisely/Wisley/Wiseley surname from the Aberdeen area if you can please help us locate male descendants. We will be happy to join your Society if necessary. We are trying to connect Wiselys from Scotland and the USA, which should help the genealogy for both of us! Thank you very much!

wisleyproject@gmail.com

Charles Wiseley and Lucy Nelson

Discover with me your ancestral roots in Aberdeen & NE Scotland!

Walk in your ancestors' footsteps, see sights they saw, breathe the air they breathed

I am a professional, qualified tourist guide, fully insured to drive and guide you



Elma McMenemy, Blue Badge Tourist Guide
Member of the Scottish Tourist Guides Association



www.elma.uk.com

guide@elma.uk.com

Diary

Some local-area Group are alternating between meetings held in person or online; other Groups offer “hybrid” meetings. Details are kept up to date on the Events pages of the Society’s website.

Note that our Aberdeen venue, formerly called the Rubislaw, has now been renamed the Fountainhall Church Centre.

2nd September 2023

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

Topic TBA – see website

2pm–4pm (online / in person: TBA)

9th September 2023

ANESFHS Edinburgh Group Meeting

(rescheduled from March):

Genetics, succession and family law

Prof. Gillian Black

2pm, Royal Scots Club, 29 Abercromby Place

(and online: hybrid meeting)

9th September 2023

21st Scottish Indexes Conference

Recorded talks; live Q&A; free to attend

7am–11pm www.scottishindexes.com

16th September 2023

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

Followed by a talk (rescheduled from Feb.):

Cartomania in NE Scotland: cartes de visite

Kate Clark

2pm–4pm, Fountainhall (formerly Rubislaw)

Church Centre, 1 Beaconsfield Pl., and online

23rd September 2023

ANESFHS London-area Group Meeting

TBA

12 noon, Church of Scotland hall, Russell St,

London (use side door on Crown Court)

30th September 2023

ANESFHS Glasgow Group Meeting

Ancestors Behaving Badly: the sad, the mad and the just plain bad

2pm, Renfield Saint Stephen’s Church Centre

260 Bath Street, Glasgow (in person only)

30th September 2023

ANESFHS Southern Ontario Group meeting

Early Scottish settlers in Ontario

Christine Woodcock

1pm–3pm EDT (UK time: 6pm–8pm)

Online: contact ontario@anesfhs.org.uk, or register via the Society’s website

7th October 2023

Banffshire Field Club Conference

Banffshire Fowk

Marjory Harper, Mary Evans and others

9:30am, Seafield Arms Hotel, Cullen

Contact bfc.1880@gmail.com; see Facebook

21st October 2023

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

Topic TBA – see website

2pm–4pm, Fountainhall (formerly Rubislaw)

Church Centre, 1 Beaconsfield Pl., and online

11th November 2023

ANESFHS Edinburgh Group Meeting

Using the NLS map collection

Paula Williams, National Library of Scotland

2pm, Royal Scots Club, 29 Abercromby Place

(and online: hybrid meeting)

18th November 2023

ANESFHS Aberdeen Meeting

Topic TBA – see website

2pm–4pm, Fountainhall (formerly Rubislaw)

Church Centre, 1 Beaconsfield Pl., and online

18th November 2023

ANESFHS London-area Group e-meeting

Topic TBA – see website

2pm–4pm, online; register via website

25th November 2023

ANESFHS Glasgow Group Meeting

The Scottish 1921 census

Ken Nisbet

2pm–4pm, **online only**; register via website

25th November 2023

ANESFHS Southern Ontario Group meeting

Presentation of archive materials with a Scottish/Ontario connection

Anne Williams, Archives of Ontario

1pm–3pm EDT (UK time: 6pm–8pm)

Online: contact ontario@anesfhs.org.uk, or register via the Society’s website

Holiday closure, 158–164 King Street:

Closing at 4pm, Fri. 22nd December 2023;

reopening at 10am, Wed. 3rd January 2024

6th January 2024

ANESFHS Moray/Banff Group Meeting

Topic TBA – see website

2pm–4pm, Activities Room, Elgin Library

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 ANESFHS membership, please **also cancel** your standing order for the 100 Club.

The draw takes place monthly, and **we now pay winners via online banking. We need to be kept up to date with any changes to 100 Club members' bank-account details.** Winners are also announced in the Journal. For further details, please see the current Information Booklet on our website.

	1 st prize No. (£19·15)		Mem. No.	2 nd prize No. (£14·36)		Mem. No.	3 rd prize No. (£9·58)		Mem. No.	4 th prize No. (£4·79)		Mem. No.
Mar	60	Doreen Florence	13880	74	William Munro	8229	122	Elizabeth Foubister	6129	118	Alison Kerr	1602
Apr	62	Patricia Black	18074	121	Margaret McDowall	18020	41	Angus Pelham Burn	19808	12	Elizabeth Jordan	18139
		(£18·40)			(£13·80)			(£9·20)			(£4·60)	
May	99	Teresa Shewell	4883	73	William Low	484	45	Catherine Kirkwood	14069	21	Ian Glendingning	12049
		(£18·60)			(£13·95)			(£9·30)			(£4·65)	
Jun	45	Catherine Kirkwood	14069	114	Debra Tomkinson	15015	5	Janet Taylor	20994	46	John Davidson	6455
Jul	120	Janet Brown	15008	96	Margaret McDowall	18020	103	Kathleen McLeish	17352	105	Raymond Mennie	11359

100club@anesfhs.org.uk

Jane Cameron No. 9680

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Members' Stories

This new section of the Journal is for reporting on stories from members with whom we have had conversations in Society meetings. We always like to hear your stories!

journal@anesfhs.org.uk

Journal Team

Mary Chalmers (Mrs James Pirie), Ballad Singer

James Madison Carpenter, Harvard ballad scholar, was mentioned in Elaine Petrie's talk to Aberdeen members on 18th March, "Hiding in Plain Sight" (report, Journal 166, pp. 5–7). Neatly coinciding with this came a great set of recollections from David Paterson (no. 6475) about his maternal great-grandmother Mary Pirie (née Chalmers, 1843–1932), who collected ballads and was visited by Carpenter in 1930 at her home, Kirkside farm, Banff.

The original material is lodged in the American Library of Congress, but a full list of Mary's contributions, including scanned copies of the typescripts, is available in the

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in London and through their website. We checked that website (<https://www.vwml.org/>), and there are 220 items listed for Mary Chalmers, also known as Mrs James Pirie, so it's a great contribution, even though many of these are short, bairn's rhymes of a few lines rather than multi-verse songs or big ballads. There are photocopies of Carpenter's typescripts for many though not all of them, and, sadly, no audio files – Carpenter was accustomed to record singers performing two verses of a song on his wax cylinder recording device. The digitised sound files are very poor quality but still a marvellous family resource to have when available. David has already acquired photocopies of some of his great-grandmother's contributions.

The website entry may not add a lot more to David's own knowledge of family lore, but it does provide an excellent summary:

Mary Chalmers / Mrs James Pirie / Mrs Pirie, Kirkside, Alvah, Banff, Scotland (1929–1932); Born 11 May 1843 at Cairnhill Farm, Alvah Banffshire; Died 03 January 1932 at Kirkside, district of Alvah, Banffshire.

James and Mary Pirie had seven children. Carpenter notes the name William Mathieson [*a local collector*] with several of Mrs Pirie's song texts. Mrs Pirie was aged 87 when Carpenter collected from her. She learnt songs from her mother, Jane Duguid, Loanhead, Alvah, and her aunt, Ellen Chalmers, Cairnhill, Alvah, Banff. Mrs Pirie had a great knowledge of wild flowers and the medicinal uses of plants.

David has passed photographs of Mary to the Elphinstone Institute in Aberdeen, and we are delighted to print a copy here.



David's caption for this: "Mary Chalmers, taken at her diamond wedding at Kirkside in 1930. I know of one person who attended it and was photographed with her great-grandmother then. She is my cousin Naomi, a.k.a. Netta McNab, maiden surname Pirie, now aged 97, frail but living by herself in Nemphlar near Lanark. We regularly talk on the phone about Banff and our childhood holidays at our grandparents."

A Pirie Family Tree Across Two Continents

David also responded to our request in Journal 165 for emigration stories. He says:

I charted the 1850s emigration of two Pirie sons from Craigiehillock farm, Alvah, Banffshire, who are part of my mother's family tree, and tracked the movements of one of them from Upper Canada (later Ontario) to Iowa in 1859. Once there, James Pirie, born 1819 and described as a blacksmith and farmer, was joined by his younger brother direct from Dunlugas smiddy. He trained as a blacksmith at Banff Foundry. We forget it was our training structure and standard of education which gave us the employment opportunities in trades needed by the Colonies for settlement. His father's blacksmith shop was at Bythestown, south-south-east of Tippetty.

William Edward Pirie was a grandson of William, the younger of the lads who left Alvah but from Dunlugas (near to Willie Matheson, ballad singer, by the way). William Edward Pirie kept a family tree for the emigrants, and we now have two linked trees – one I have constructed here in Scotland, and the one in Iowa. William Edward was in regular touch with a Scottish relative, George Pirie, blacksmith at Tippetty, Alvah. George used to send drawings to Ontario for design of ploughs strong enough to tackle stump-busting as the emigrants felled and burned off the forest from their concessions of 100 acres to make farms of them. They floated logs down river to mills.

The family subsequently scattered to Texas and Mississippi; and David has three current contacts on the American side. David's relative, William Lemmon (member no. 455), based in Inverurie, has a copy of the Alvah Pirie tree in the form of a scroll, with the Canadian/American components added. The family origins spread back to Boyndie and Fordyce. David suspects they are French in origin, having been either invited by the Ogilvies or taken in as refugees. William Lemmon and David Paterson are connected through the children of Mary Chalmers and James Pirie of Kirkside, Alvah, Banff (see "Mary Chalmers ... Ballad Singer", above).

David reports that the Pories, or at least the females of the line, are known for longevity: "My mother, Mary Chalmers Paterson, maiden surname Pirie, was almost 96. My wife Constance Margaret Pirie and her twin are 94 from a family tree originally located in Lonmay and Deer." David also shared a further coincidence from talking with a fellow Society member at a recent meeting. She was born in Huntly, and her Grant ancestor came from Drumbulg farm, Gartly, the next one up the hill from Tillyminnate farm, Gartly, which was leased by the Duke of Gordon to yet another James Pirie in 1832. This James was the ancestor of Constance's grandmother Mary Anne Pirie. Apparently one Pirie had married another one in Peterhead. David says: "I can't get away from them".

David, now 91, is based in Edinburgh and asks if anyone more skilled with computers would be able to help him to set out this emigration story in more detail.

Articles

Ancestry DNA: Aid to Using Test Results, 2023

- Link your family tree to “Your DNA” in DNA, Results and Summary, Settings.
- Set the DNA Test taker as the home person in DNA settings.
- Switch on the DNA symbol in your tree.

Then:

1. Go to DNA – DNA Matches (View all Matches).
2. Use Filters – Unviewed and Common Ancestors (Apply).
3. Click on a face icon or name. New page opens.
4. Scroll down. On left – Names of shared Common Ancestors are shown.
5. Add names to Notes and Save.
6. View Relationship (shown on left under common ancestor names). This opens a new window on ThruLines showing the DNA matches line of descent from your shared common ancestor.
7. Note your parental side and the DNA matches relationship to you.
8. Click on DNA matches face – main page returns.
9. Edit Relationship from previous page, and save.
10. Create Custom Groups for *Father or *Mother and Surnames.
11. Go to “Shared Matches” (on same page).
12. Add shared matches to Parent Group using the + on right and tick box on left.
13. Filter “Common Ancestors” to find more matches shared with you and the Match.
14. Refresh page often and View Profiles in Family view after adding new family.
15. Go to DNA, All Matches, Click Filters for “Unviewed and Common Ancestors”, add names to Notes and Save: View Relationship: Remember relationship, Click on Face to return, Edit Relationship: Add to Groups. View shared matches.
16. Complete all the known information before looking for unknown ancestors and/or missing family lines.
17. View ThruLines from self – up to Common Ancestor then down to the DNA Match.
18. Edit relationships – e.g. stepchild or single, not spouse or unlink rather than delete.
19. Add all Spouses, siblings and children with dates or Abt. Year.
20. Check for duplicates in Tree search – List of all people. Merge or delete if necessary. Add new info to person already in tree not as a new person.
21. Evaluate. Note connection and research for evidence before adding.
22. Use the List in ThruLines, scroll to bottom and open each one.
23. **Missing Line.** View the matches on that side of family with public trees.
24. The missing line will not be in any lines where there are common ancestors, so look for matches with no common ancestors who are not in any of the surname groups.
25. Select Public Trees. Look for DNA matches that have large trees, in the right location.
26. Use the Blue search button and enter location to narrow the field.
27. Look at the probable dates.
28. Search for more matches with similar names and places in other trees.
29. Switch on the DNA symbol in your tree. It will be shown only on direct lines.

30. Show all spouses in family view.

31. Use the LEEDS method first for adoptees and missing parent to establish shared parental match lines.

Ancestry DNA matches and trees can be viewed without a current subscription.

helen.dna@btinternet.com

Helen Taylor

No. 7363

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Record of Ancestors Chart: My Journey as a Genealogist

I grew up in a suburb of New York City. In the summer of 1962, when I was 21, a friend and I took a low-budget trip to Europe. We landed in London, bought a couple of very used bicycles for a few pounds, loaded the bikes on a train to Glasgow, and set off for the Highlands, camping or staying in youth hostels. I had heard that my 2g-grandfather had been a miller in Crathie, Aberdeenshire, occasionally grinding oats for the Royal Family at Balmoral. So, when we reached Aviemore, we left our bikes at Loch Morlich youth hostel and crossed the Cairngorms on foot, spending two nights at the youth hostel in Inverey, near Braemar. We spent a day at Crathie churchyard looking for McKenzie gravestones, but the few we found didn't fit the names and dates I was vaguely aware of. This was my first brush with ancestor-hunting.

A few years later, possibly inspired by my own trip, my parents made their only visit to Scotland. Armed with a bit more information than I had taken with me, they located the Mill of Inver where my 2g-grandfather had worked. They found his gravestone in the Foot of Gairn churchyard near Ballater, and the gravestone of another 2g-grandfather who was a schoolteacher in Braemar. During my working career, I went to Scotland a few more times, visiting the neighbourhoods where my relatives had lived and worked, but not gathering much new information.

I left the workforce in 1996 at the age of 55 under less than perfect circumstances. When she learned of my dis-employment, a distant cousin descended from John McKenzie, our great-grandfather, contacted me where I lived in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts, and invited me for a visit. John and his family had emigrated from Scotland to Canada, and several years later to northern New York state. My cousin lived in close proximity to the place where our John had entered the USA with his family and was also a miller. This cousin had the old family bible and had done a tremendous amount of research on our widespread family tree in North America. It was from her that I learned the importance of documentation of genealogy research – and she had done her research in the days before there was any online documentation. She gave me copies of all her research on the McKenzie line, and fired my interest in learning the facts about our Scottish ancestors.

In 2000, my family attended a worldwide Clan McKenzie gathering in Strathpeffer in northern Scotland. At a genealogy lecture there, I learned of the existence of ANESFHS, and became a member soon after.

I spent a few days at the Centre in 2005, viewing a lot of microfilms of OPRs, and learning about ScotlandsPeople and other online resources. In 2012, Elizabeth McLean, a Society volunteer, figured out that my ancestor Isabel/Isobel Brown was buried in Crathie kirkyard under the name Elizabeth – and that let me fill in some gaps. Among my father's possessions, my brother discovered the transcript of a letter written in 1916 providing information about the descendants of John MacQueen, born in 1681 – and that extended

the record of the MacQueen side of the family. After much more “tyaavin awa”, I published most of what I had learned in a two-part article in ANESFHS Journals 152 and 153 (2019) titled “Oats and Porridge”. I have learned little more since then, and fear I’ve gone about as far back as the OPRs can take me. There are fascinating hints, but no solid proof. But I can hope that someone, seeing my Scottish family tree in this issue, can provide a hint that allows me to extend the line of ancestors a little further into the past.

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Alexander Anderson McKenzie III No. 11310

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Identifying Relatives Who May Have Emigrated

In response to Sally Low’s talk, “Slavery and its impact on family history” (report, Journal 165, pp. 7–10), Ian Duncan (no. 23059) got in touch to say: “Based on my mother’s DNA, I appear to have a number of relatives in the Caribbean who I think almost certainly emigrated there in the 19th century. I was wondering how best to try to track them down.”

Sally offers some suggestions. First, try to find some more evidence. For example:

- Do any of them say born in “Caribbean” (hopefully more specific!) on a census form?
- Have you found mention of them in Kirk Session Records? Remember that these are free to access on Scotland’s People.
- Try searching the British Newspaper Archive. I found this very useful in my research – and, if you discover your ancestors were in Jamaica, there are good records. My family who went to Demerara are more difficult to find, as there were fewer publications.
- Look for any family stories which would pinpoint a location, or for situations where, for instance, someone suddenly turns up with lots of money.

Sally adds: “I found it was usually young men who emigrated – or rather, they set off to make their fortune, intending to come home again. If you have ‘lost’ any young men in your family tree, might it be that they went there? 1740 to 1820 is a good period for such emigration; after that, particularly after the introduction of the anti-slavery laws, it was less common to go to the Caribbean. From the 1830s, you might find ancestors starting to go to Canada; and, from the 1880s onwards, also to Australia and New Zealand.”

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Journal Team

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Gordon and Skene: A Trail of Middle Names

My wife’s aunt Margaret died in 2021 aged 96. The most famous incident in her life had seemed to be her appearance on *This Is Your Life* in 1986, when she was a friend of that night’s recipient of the red book. She spoke well of their time together as student nurses early in the Second World War. During Margaret’s funeral service, we were regaled with an extra anecdote that in 1946 she had tended to a young Richard Starkey, who spent many days in a coma and almost a year in hospital. So, not only was she an excellent nurse, a feisty aunt and a TV “star”, but also she had found time to save the Beatles.

When Margaret was born, she was registered as Margaret Skene Gordon Aitken. Her mother was born as Margaret Gordon Skene Duff, and she in turn had a maternal aunt called Margaret Skene Gordon Anderson. It always appeared pretty obvious that this choice of names was dropping heavy hints of ancestral connections – and eventually I was able to confirm that Margaret and my wife have Gordon and Skene ancestry.

The original Gordon line ended with an heiress, Elizabeth, who married Alexander Seton in 1408. Their eldest son, Alexander Seton, was created Lord Gordon and changed his surname to that of his maternal ancestry. He was created Earl of Huntly in 1449, and his senior line are still the Gordon clan chiefs. Alexander's eldest son inherited the earldom, but his second son did all right for himself, as he was created Laird of Abergeldie in 1482.

A generation later, a new Gordon family appeared when William, second son of the 2nd Earl of Huntly, became 1st Laird of Gight, where he resided until his death at Flodden. The line ended when Catherine Gordon, 13th Lady of Gight, married John Byron, who purloined her resources to clear off his debts, leaving her destitute with sole responsibility for their only child. This offspring was none other than the poet Lord Byron – and he and his daughter, Ada Lovelace, ensured that my wife had exotic, if distant, relatives.

The Abergeldie line is my wife's and Aunt Margaret's heritage and is probably most famous for its home of Abergeldie Castle, built about 1550. Government troops occupied it during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, and it was briefly taken over by rebels in 1719.

The estate of Abergeldie borders that of Balmoral – so, when the royal family turned up in 1848, Prince Albert bought up the lease for the Abergeldie estate for 40 years. Bertie (the future King Edward VII) was particularly fond of Abergeldie Castle and stayed there rather than at Balmoral. In his diary, William Gladstone mentions a night spent there; and the Empress Eugenie of France was a regular visitor during her widowhood. George V also spent much time there when he was Prince of Wales. This lease was continually renewed until 2000, when the Laird of Abergeldie moved back into the castle while the game lands continued to be leased by the royal family.



Abergeldie Castle then and now



John Gordon, the 21st Laird, had to fight the forces of nature in January 2016 when the castle was threatened by rising floodwaters from the Dee, leaving it on a precipice. This catastrophe made national news headlines as the 76-year-old laird left his home. Happily, structural engineers saved the situation, although it still looks a little precarious.

The other family in this ancestral tale is Skene and can be traced to Robert de Skene, who became 1st Laird of Skene by charter issued by Robert the Bruce. The 5th Laird was killed at the Battle of Harlaw in 1411, while Alexander the 11th Laird had a tough life. Born posthumously, he immediately inherited the title but was not expected to survive long. He was constantly ill, “vexit with infirmities and sickness”, but defied the medical odds and lived to be 87. He had five sons, and the lairdship passed to James, the eldest. The second son, Gilbert, acquired Tillibirloch; and his son in turn became Alexander Skene of Dumbreck and founded that branch of the family. This is “our” family.

Dumbreck for some people brings to mind an area of Glasgow, but there is also an estate of that name near Dunecht, Aberdeenshire, centred on the present-day Dumbreck Cottage. There was a legal dispute with the local Forbes of Echt, who claimed the Dumbreck estate in 1638 and after many years won their case. The Skenes refused to recognise this, and the family defiantly described themselves as “of Dumbreck” for several generations.

Francis Skene “of Dumbreck” (1703–75) was appointed Regent of Marischal College in 1734 and Professor of Civil and Natural History in 1753. On his death, his professorship passed to his son George. George Skene “of Dumbreck” (1741–1803) was described as a “genuine scholar of good ability, great shrewdness and sense, and witty”. He served as a physician in Aberdeen but at the age of 19 was elected Professor of Natural Philosophy in Marischal College until he took over his father’s role in 1775. He had continued with his medical practice, and in 1788 he retired from his academic roles to concentrate on his growing number of patients. He died suddenly after a short illness, aged 61.

George married Margaret Gordon on 26th October 1769. She was the only daughter of Charles, the 12th Laird of Abergeldie, and she and George went on to have five sons and six daughters. George and Margaret’s son Charles (1777–1844) was heir to the Dumbreck line, but he made no claim to the estates. He continued the lifestyle of his father and grandfather by becoming a physician and Professor of Medicine at Marischal College.

Charles’s son Alexander became Captain Skene of the 68th Bengal Native Infantry, and was killed on 8th June 1857 during the Indian Mutiny while under siege at Jhansi Fort. There is much dispute about whether the Rani of Jhansi, in command of the enemy forces, offered free passage and reneged on it, or whether communications became garbled in the fog of war. Either way, Captain Skene seems to have been under the impression that he and the local community were offered clemency in return for surrender – but a massacre ensued. There is a well-known harrowing painting of Alexander taking his own life, having already killed his wife and daughter once he realised they were doomed.

George and Margaret’s eighth child Margaret (1782–1821) married Arthur Anderson, youngest child of the 8th Laird of Candacraig. Their grandchild was named Margaret Skene Gordon Anderson, which began the middle-name tradition of Gordon and Skene that continued down to Aunt Margaret. It piqued my interest, and I enjoyed the chase.

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Sandy Caple

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A Missing Link? The Strongman and the Poet

One of several paintings in Aberdeen Art Gallery by the celebrated Pre-Raphaelite artist John Duncan is the 1907 portrait of a young red-headed woman clutching a book (probably the first edition of her early poems). She was Rachel Annand Taylor, a “star” of the early 20th-century Celtic Revival movement – poet, author and literary critic. In another part of the Gallery/Museum is a small pine statuette of 1870 with associated presentation belt and medals, which all belonged to the greatest and most decorated athlete Aberdeen (and Scotland) has ever produced – the celebrated Donald Dinnie. There is a close connection between these two exhibits, but it is a link that neither the Gallery nor other commentators seem to have made. To highlight it here might be of some interest, as would a look at the heritage of these two significant figures in North-East history.



Donald Dinnie (1837–1916), known in his time as “The Strongman of the Age” and “The 19th century’s Greatest Athlete”, won more than 11,000 competitions and titles, and was one of the first inductees when the Scottish Sports Hall of Fame was set up in 2002. The statuette/figurine by Gerald Robinson shows Dinnie kilted and standing proud, chest and body covered in a multitude of medals, looking to challenge the world. And he did; and when he died in April 1916 there were newspaper obituaries not just in Britain but also in the USA and Australia – countries where his triumphs had become legendary.

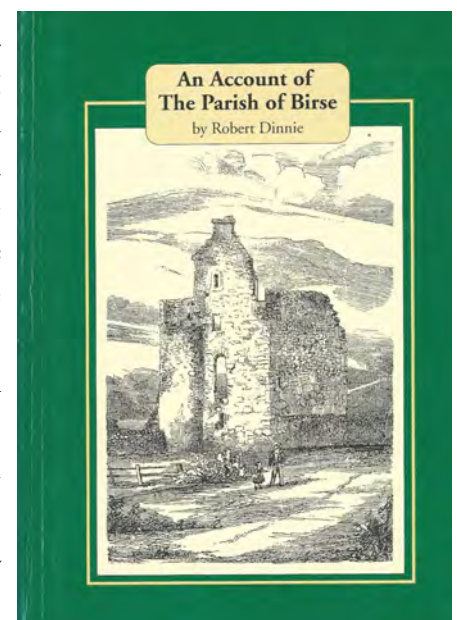


Dinnie’s beginnings were fairly humble. Born on 8th June 1837 at Balnacraig, Birse, near Aboyne, he was the third child and eldest son of ten children born to Robert Dinnie, a stonemason, and his wife Celia Hay, who had married in March 1833. (Details about Donald Dinnie and his family in this article are taken directly from contemporary records and not from sometimes erroneous later biographical summaries.)

The father and the six sons were all big, fit and powerful, and the family had great success at Highland Games across the area, though only Donald became a career professional athlete. He began that career as a teenager and continued it into his sixties, excelling in the throwing events, jumps, foot-races and wrestling as a true all-rounder. He also “starred” on the stage and ran his own touring company. Always a confrontational and somewhat controversial character, after athletics (and living in Australia and New Zealand for several years) he went with his second wife and family to Glasgow, where they ran a fish-and-chip restaurant in Govan. He also endorsed Barr’s renowned Irn Bru drink and was featured on their labels. In 1912 he went to London, where he died in relative poverty – a sad end for a world champion.

One of the unusual features of this Dinnie family was the naming of its sons. None bore a traditional Deeside or North-East name. Donald was a Highland name; the others were Edmund, Montague, Lubin, Digby and Walter. The youngest daughter was Nory, also very rare. It’s likely these names came from the books and research that the Dinnie parents, especially Robert, immersed themselves in. In that sense too, they were unusual parents for a rural working family.

Robert Dinnie was indeed a remarkable man. Overcoming a health problem until his late years, his masonry and building work were much requested by the Earl of Dalhousie and others, but he was much more than a successful mason and builder. From an early age he had been fascinated by the past and anything that told of the past and the districts the family had lived in. There was a room in their cottage which was really a museum, a space full of memories, artefacts and relics he had collected over the years, from stone items to buttons and from wood to paper and swords. As he grew older he became a writer too, producing several small volumes, including histories of Birse and Kincardine O’Neil, and some of his own poetic verses and songs. As a newspaper obituary stated after his passing in October 1891,



he was probably the best-known character on Deeside. His wife, who died six months before him, had nursed him through the difficult last years and won such respect that there was even an obituary for her in the Australian press.

Robert had been born at Allancrigh, Birse, and baptised on 28th April 1808, son of another Robert Dinnie and his wife, Jane Findlay, who had married on 28th December 1801. The family was typical of its time and place, working on the land and very much out of the limelight. However, there was a consciousness and knowledge of their forebears, and these Dinnies could trace their family back to John Dinnies of the mid- and early 1600s. Several other Deeside Dinnie families, most if not all related, are also to be found in the early and mid-1800s and through the foregoing centuries. Robert (senior), the champion athlete's grandfather, described as "Farmer in Allancrichech" in 1841, died in December 1847, but his wife Jane lived on there until August 1858. Her parents were John Findlay and his wife Jane Duncan, who married in Aboyne in December 1778. According to his gravestone, this Robert (senior) was 81 when he died, so had been born in the 1760s.

Turning to the young redhead in John Duncan's portrait, there is an interesting story here too. Rachel Annand married Alexander Taylor in Aberdeen on 15th July 1901. They had been friends at university, were both 25 years old and both schoolteachers. She taught at Aberdeen High School for Girls; he came from Dundee. Rachel had been born on 3rd April 1876 at 51 Queen Street, Aberdeen. Her father, like Donald Dinnie's, was a stonemason and builder, who married her mother, Dinnie's sister Clarinda, at her home in Aboyne on 28th March 1873. Rachel was their first child of five; she had two sisters and two brothers. Rachel's youngest brother, like Donald Dinnie's, was named Walter.

The family settled in Old Machar parish, and young Rachel soon displayed exceptional intelligence and academic ability, became a pupil teacher (aged 15), and went on to Aberdeen University (1894–97), one of the first female students to study there. And she was no ordinary student. The celebrated professor of English, Herbert Grierson, made her his very first "Prizeman", declaring her "the most gifted and interesting student it has been my lot to encounter". She didn't graduate, and soon married, but much later (1943) was awarded an honorary LL.D degree by the University amid much publicity. As noted above, she became a poet and literary critic of repute, highly praised by Hugh MacDiarmid in Scotland and D. H. Lawrence in England. She had gone to London after the break-up of her marriage in 1911. Both her husband and her father suffered from mental-health issues, as did her Annand grandfather, who died long before she was born. A legal separation was agreed with her husband, who continued to pay her an allowance until his death.

John Wilson Annand, Rachel's father, was widely respected as a skilled craftsman and as a thinking and reliable person. His qualities impressed community leaders and led to him being elected and appointed to important roles in the city. Working for the City Council, he became a supervisor and inspector of local works, especially of roads and of certain buildings, such as the new building for the public library. In 1891 the "First Aberdeen & District Economic Building Society" was set up, and he was appointed to its Board; and for several years in the later 1880s and again in the early 1890s he was elected to the Aberdeen School Board as the Trades Council's representative. He was later noted in the press as "one of the pioneers of the Trade Union movement in Aberdeen".

Born on 2nd June 1844, he was the sixth child of John (senior), a skilled coppersmith to trade, and his wife Margaret Robb. He was six years younger than his sister Rachel and

18 years younger than his brother James. His other sisters were much older too – Ann, Charlotte and Margaret. All the children were born in Oldmeldrum. The parents had been married on 23rd June 1825 while John (snr) was busy working copper and brass in Peterhead; Margaret came from Rothiemay. Life became very hard for the family: their mother died before young John was five, so the girls all went into service, domestic and agricultural, and John stayed with his father. Then, before his tenth birthday, his father died too. Young John persevered, though, learned the trade of a mason, and moved into Aberdeen. There he boarded in St Andrew Street along with Walter Dinnie, athlete Donald's youngest brother, who had moved to the city from Aboyne.

It was in Aboyne, in the Dinnie family home there (Wood Cottage), that John Annand and Clarinda Dinnie married, as noted above. Clarinda was one of the champion athlete's younger sisters, born on 26th February 1846, the third of the four Dinnie girls. The athlete attended the wedding, of course. He was also attending court that month, charged with trespass (with his prize-winning dogs) in search of game! But back to the newlyweds. Between 1876 and 1886, John and Clarinda had their five children, all born in Aberdeen – and, when most left home, and later during their father's illness, Sarah, the youngest girl, remained with the parents and ran the house at 11 Osborne Place until they passed away. John died in February 1924; Clarinda followed him in March 1927. Both died having suffered much from arterio-sclerosis. Rachel was in London, where her uncle Donald had died as noted above. She was writing impressively about the Italian Renaissance and the Scottish poet William Dunbar, as well as more of her own sonnets. Rachel was to die in London too, on 15th August 1960.

Clearly, the vital and significant connection linking the Gallery exhibits referred to earlier was the close family relationship. But, more than this, the passionate pursuit of cultural and historical meanings, motives and memorabilia by her Dinnie grandfather must surely have influenced, even inspired, his highly intelligent and inquisitive granddaughter during her impressionable teenage years. She continued that cultural search, in a modern society but with telling glances back into the past. If her Dinnie grandparents had lived long enough, they would certainly have rejoiced with a little pride at her literary and poetic achievements. From <https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/question-39>:

The Question

I SAW the Son of God go by
 — Crowned with the crown of Thorn.
 “Was It not finished, Lord?” I said,
 — “And all the anguish borne?”

He turned on me His awful eyes:
 — “Hast thou not understood?
 Lo! Every soul is Calvary,
 — And every sin – a Rood.”

The above is included – with other poems of hers – in *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*. There are also poems of hers in the *Golden Treasury of Scottish Verse*, the two *Fiammetta* volumes and in other published collections of her work.

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

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