

# Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society

Journal No. 168 • November 2023



*This memorial, in The Square, Tarland, Aberdeenshire, lists the local men who died in the 1914–18 and 1939–45 wars. The Aberdeenshire Council listing for this poignant memorial says “sculpted in 1920 by Robert Morrison of E. Morren, Aberdeen” but doesn’t record who was the model for the statue.*

*Below it, the inscription reads: “We gratefully remember all the men of this parish who gave their lives for King and country in the Great War”.*

*(Photograph by Elaine Petrie)*

## 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.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020, the 12-month subscription rates (choose printed or e-Journal) are:

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### **Internet Banking:**

**Bank:** Virgin Money (Clydesdale Bank plc), 62 Union Street, Aberdeen AB10 1WD

**Account name:** ABDN & NTH EAST SCOT FAMILY HISTORY SOC

**Account number:** 90455891      **Sort code:** 82-11-07

**IBAN:** GB57CLYD82110790455891      **BIC/SWIFT:** CLYDGB21943

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

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

### **ANESFHS website and Members' Forum**

In order to get the most from your Society membership, you should register on our new website. Go to [www.anesfhs.org.uk](http://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](http://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 168, November 2023

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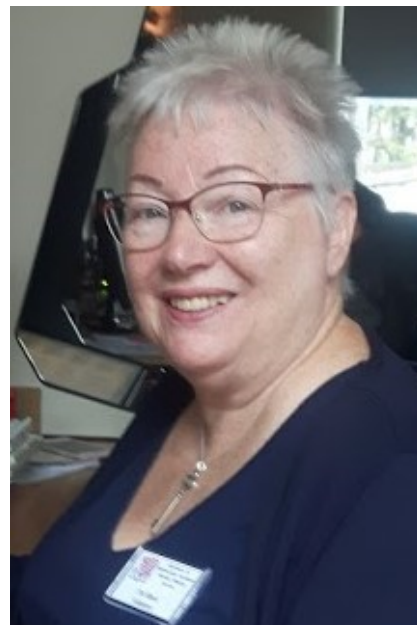
## Society Reports, News and Information

### Pat Black (1950–2023)

We were shocked and upset in King Street one Monday morning to hear of Pat Black's sudden death. We knew she was in hospital for a serious operation to treat cancer, but none of us realised the end was so near. She died at Foresterhill on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> August.

Pat will be missed on so many levels by so many people. She was very involved in many aspects of ANESFHS. She joined in 2009 as member no. 18074 and quickly became a valued and much-admired volunteer. She staffed our Centre a couple of days a week, helping people research their family history. She had a wonderful, relaxed, friendly way with people, and had infinite patience. Perhaps this was the result of dealing with customers in the many years she worked at Clydesdale Bank! She had a bright, bubbly personality and always bounced into the Centre, full of enthusiasm and *joie de vivre*.

Even when her health started to fail, she maintained a positive outlook. I never once heard her moan or complain; and she remained her bright cheerful self at all times.



Pat was profiled in Journal 154 (Feb 2020). Born and raised in Aberdeen, she attended Aberdeen Academy before joining the Clydesdale, where she remained until she retired in 2007. Her mother had died when Pat was just eight years old; but her father remarried, and Pat has a sister and two step-siblings. As an adult, her interest in family history began to develop when her niece asked for information about her father's family. Although she could answer these queries, Pat realised how little she knew about her mother's family. She joined ANESFHS to help her own research, then began volunteering to help others.

During lockdowns and beyond, Pat played a vital part in the Society's online meetings and could always be relied upon to make pertinent observations and give helpful advice. With her banking background, she was quickly co-opted on to the Finance Team, where she is already sorely missed by her colleagues. She was an active member of the Society's Committee, and helped in many capacities. She was far more "techy"-minded than many of us, and helped on the Facebook page answering queries from all over the world.

Our sympathy goes out to her husband of many years, John, and to their daughter Karen. Pat was devoted to them, and to her granddaughter Shannon, whom she adored.

Goodbye Pat. We shall miss you so much.

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Liz Foubister

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### Robert Mathers (1942–2023)

Those of us who have been involved at the Research Centre for many years were saddened to hear of the passing of our former colleague Bob Mathers (no. 1540). His funeral took place in Aberdeen on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October.

Bob was a Wednesday-morning stalwart for many years until his health started to make it difficult for him. He was one of those folk on whom you know instantly that you can rely. Quiet and unassuming, he was always there, ready to help whenever and however he was needed. He had a wide knowledge of genealogy and how best to help people researching their family history.

He was a shy and private person who didn't talk much about himself or his background. I did discover in the course of one chat that he had been a prison officer and had worked in several establishments, including Peterhead. He certainly earned our respect with that piece of information!

In the last few years, his health had started to decline and he decided it was time to retire from the Centre. We remember him with affection and gratitude for his many years of help and friendship.

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## Chairperson's Report

The online poll about updating our constitution to permit online attendance and voting in meetings was a success: over 800 members responded, overwhelmingly positively. The amended constitution can now be viewed on our website.

The last three or four months have been quite busy, with many positive changes taking place or planned to happen. Post-pandemic, it has become clear that we need to update a number of our systems, so we are now recruiting volunteers to assist in the process. A good number of new volunteers have been coming forward; and Committee members are now meeting up in person or online with new and existing volunteers, having identified and prioritised some of the tasks and jobs that need to be done.

For example, a long-needed update to the index of donated Pedigree Charts is under way – but new rules now operate with regard to GDPR that restrict access to the information on these charts. The charts can only be made available to Centre visitors, so we are working on different arrangements for members wishing to access the material remotely.

Most urgently of all, we need a **Treasurer** to oversee our Finance Team's operations. If you have any interest or relevant experience, we would love to speak to you.

Our buildings at 136, 158–160 and 164 King Street are all old, and every week something needs to be fixed and tradespeople found, arrangements made and sometimes the costs shared among a number of owners. This is time-consuming but is all part of the responsibilities of the Chair and the Trustees. More help is always welcomed.

Visitor numbers to King Street are up, and some days our research rooms are full, while other days are very quiet. The important point is that we do welcome visitors, and we regularly receive good written feedback on the amount and level of support we provide. The secret is for a volunteer to support the visitor to undertake their own research, so that the visitor can carry on the research themselves later from home.

*chairman@anesfhs.org.uk*

Bert Lawrie

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## Meet the Gang! Profile: Sheona MacDonald

At one of our monthly Saturday public meetings in Aberdeen, we made an appeal for more volunteers to help in the Research Centre, now that we were starting to reopen after the Covid lockdowns. Fortunately for us, Sheona MacDonald approached us and offered to help Margie in the library. It was quickly obvious that here was a lady who was efficient, capable and, more importantly, prepared to help out wherever needed. (She knows her way round a computer and has come to my rescue on more than one occasion!)

Sheona was born and raised in Aberdeen and attended first the Convent, then St Joseph's and finally Kincorth Academy. On leaving school she joined the Clydesdale Bank, but, after a couple of years, decided this was not for her, and moved to work for BT for 40 years.

Although Sheona would regard herself as an Aberdonian, her father was from South Uist and was a native Gaelic speaker. He came to Aberdeen as a young man to continue his interest in bagpipes, and joined the Aberdeen Police pipe band. Sheona's mother was also interested in music and was a drummer in the Aberdeen Ladies' pipe band. The rest, as they say, is history! Sheona and her sister Donna were encouraged to take up Highland dancing, and entered competitions and festivals.



She was brought up listening to her father talking about his family background and many relatives, both on the island and abroad. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of family relationships, and transferred his oral history into files and notebooks. Sheona discovered all these after her mother died in 2017, and resolved to continue his research. Fortunately, one of her cousins is a genealogist in the west of Scotland and has encouraged Sheona.

She joined us here at the Family History Centre in March of this year and has quickly settled in and proved herself a cheerful, friendly member of our team. She has a wide range of interests, and talks enthusiastically of the Open University, where she studied History and Politics, English Literature and Art History, thus gaining a wider knowledge of British social and political history – an excellent background for widening your family-history research! We are delighted that she has joined us, and hope she will continue to enjoy her involvement with us all at King Street.

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Liz Foubister

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## Members' Meetings: Diary Dates

All members, friends and visitors are always welcome at any meetings of the Society's various local-area Groups. These may take place in person only, or online only, or as a hybrid of the two. For online attendance, sign up via our website when a meeting opens for registration. Speakers and topics may be subject to change at short notice. Details are kept updated on the "Events" pages of the Society's website and on social media.

**Aberdeen** meetings take place at the Fountainhall (ex-Rubislaw) Church Centre on the third Saturday of the month. These are usually hybrid: in person, with Zoom broadcast.

**Moray/Banff Group** meetings take place on the first Saturday of the month, alternating between in person only (in the Activities Room at Elgin Library) and online only.

Other local-area Groups aim to hold meetings four times a year:

**Glasgow Group** is currently alternating between online only (next: 25<sup>th</sup> November, “The Scottish 1921 Census”) and at the Renfield Centre, Bath Street, in person only.

**Edinburgh Group** meets at the Royal Scots Club, usually in hybrid format. Our next meeting, on 11<sup>th</sup> November, looks at using the NLS Map Collection. The meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024 will be online only; then in March we return to hybrid.

**London Group** meets in the Church of Scotland hall, in person only. Dates for 2024 are now on the website.

**Southern Ontario Group** meets online only (next: 25<sup>th</sup> Nov, 1pm EST, 6pm GMT).

For **Australia and New Zealand** meetings, more information will become available soon.

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## Members' Meetings

### Kate Clark, “Cartomania in North-East Scotland: *cartes de visite*”

#### 16<sup>th</sup> September 2023

We were delighted that Kate Clark agreed to give her excellent talk on photographic *cartes de visite* to members in Aberdeen, as it was so detailed and well received when delivered at our Glasgow Group in October 2022. For a full report on the original presentation, see Journal 164 (Aug/Nov 2022, pp. 14–15).

Kate’s talk was extensively illustrated and gave us lots of insights into the curious changes in clothes design for both men and women that could be great clues in dating a photograph. But alas, we also learned that the camera could lie: when you look at your treasured photo collection and admire that handsome kilt with the enormous fluffy sporran that your relative is wearing with pride, just be aware that photographers kept a handy dress-up box and that clients could present themselves in outfits that might be a little grander or more unusual than their standard turnout. The backdrop would almost certainly be a painted canvas, and the chairs and plant stands were all common props – sometimes literally propping up the subject of the photograph. In fact, in the early days, exposure times were long. Very early daguerreotypes required 15–20 minutes, but by the 1860s glass plates usually took less than a minute. However, staying still for even 30 seconds is hard, so people might need a post and brace at the back of their head to help them keep still in order to prevent a blurry image. That can explain why the earliest photographs, where folk are mostly standing, look so awkward.

The North-East was well endowed with photographers. Much of the work of George Washington Wilson has been preserved and can be viewed via the Aberdeen University Library website. Wilson had artistic training, but his fellow snappers came from a variety of backgrounds. Chemists and druggists, who had access to and an understanding of the chemicals required, were well represented. Many wrights and cabinetmakers also turned their hands to the new trade, as did printers and lithographers, for whom it was a natural extension of their trade in illustration.

As before, we had lots of splendid examples of family photographs shared by members, and Kate was kept busy after the talk with folk keen to follow up enquiries with her. Society Chairman, Bert Lawrie, reminded us that Aberdeen Journals threw out their glass negative plates when they moved premises to the Lang Stracht, and as a result have no originals of any photographs taken prior to the 1920s. Fortunately, you may still be able to find grainy images of your antecedents online via the British Newspaper Archive, as local newspapers often printed photographs to accompany accounts of Golden Wedding celebrations and the like.

### **Helpful resources in dating old photographs**

*19<sup>th</sup> Century Card Photos* KwikGuide, Gary W. Clark

*Cased Images and Tintypes* KwikGuide, Gary W. Clark

(Gary Clark's books and other helpful information can be found on <http://www.phototree.com/>)

*Dating CDV photographs from the designs on the back*, Roger F. Vaughan, 2003

*Family Photos and How to Date Them*, Jayne Shrimpton, 2008

*Tracing Your Ancestors Through Family Photographs*, Jayne Shrimpton, 2014

<https://archive.org/details/PetersonsLadysNationalMagazineMarch1883>

<https://virtual-exhibits.library.queensu.ca/young-ladies-journal/>

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O738012/the-young-ladies-journal-triple-fashion-plate-the-young-ladies/>

Victoria and Albert Museum: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/0-9/19th-century-fashion/>

### **Photographers**

*Aberdeen Photographers Index*, Kevin R. Smith (available online)

*Photographers in North-Eastern Scotland to 1914*, D. Richard Torrance (for Aberdeenshire, Kincardineshire and Angus)

*Photographers in Northern Scotland to 1914*, D. Richard Torrance (for Banffshire, Moray and Nairnshire)

Town directories, National Library of Scotland: <https://digital.nls.uk/directories>

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Journal Team

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## **Moray/Banff Group Report**

After a longer than usual break over the summer, we resumed our meetings in September, face-to-face in Elgin Library, on our usual first-meeting-of-the-new-calendar theme of “Bring Along a Brick Wall”. Some topics were submitted in advance, while others turned up on the day – and they all provided us with much food for thought. There were 18 of us gathered in the Activities Room – and, with much input from everyone there, we were able to at least make useful suggestions on all the problems before us. It is hoped some of those brick walls have since acquired a few cracks.

The very successful Banffshire Field Club Conference was held on the first Saturday of October, so our Zoom meeting moved to the second Saturday that month. We kept the “Bring Along a Brick Wall” theme for what was a wider audience – and yet more genealogical problems appeared. A lively meeting ensued, and once again there was a great deal of hopefully useful advice on offer.



We shall be continuing with the plan put in place last year where we alternate face-to-face meetings with Zoom sessions, as this seemed to work well, given that we don't have the technology available for hybrid meetings. November will therefore see us back in Elgin Library on the first Saturday of the month – keep an eye on the Events page for our topic.

In December we shall be celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> Zoom meeting, so we thought that a useful topic would be something of a look back across what is now three-and-a-half years of such meetings, under the general heading of “What have I learned on the way?” We're also hoping to have our Christmas Social in Threaplands Garden Centre Coffee Shop again, so just for this month we should be both Zooming *and* meeting up face-to-face!

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Mary Evans (Group co-ordinator)

No. 1975

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## Edinburgh Group Report

### Prof. Gillian Black, “Genetics, Succession and Family Law”

9<sup>th</sup> September 2023

This was a fascinating talk on an unusual subject. Professor Gillian Black, Chair of Scots Private Law at Edinburgh University, is an expert on family law and on heraldry, being also Linlithgow Pursuivant Extraordinary, an Officer of the Court of the Lord Lyon. As a result, she is wonderfully knowledgeable about the potential twists and turns of succession in royal and noble houses and the transfer of titles for the great and good – but, at the same time, well aware of the subtleties of family life where a shared sense of kinship and belonging may matter more than genetics. But what happens when patterns of inheritance and DNA results don't tell the same story?

Traditionally, titles to honours or the great estates have passed by *ius sanguinis*, the law of the blood. The legal presumption was that any child born to a married woman was the child of that woman's husband, by the very fact that the couple were legally married. This theoretically ensured a line of blood descent, and the law held good even where the baby was born an improbably short time after the marriage or when the couple were apparently living apart. It could not be challenged by a husband claiming he had not slept with his wife in order to disinherit a child. As a consequence, the heir doesn't have to make a claim to the title; it passes automatically.

Inheritance was almost always through sons, even if there were daughters who were older than the first son born to the couple. Any fans of the recent TV series *Succession* will realise that this would have cut out all the twists and turns and changes of loyalty that gripped viewers over four series, as the Roy estate would simply have passed to Connor Roy, the hapless eldest son, who was born during his father's first marriage. However, titles of inheritance could specify the route of inheritance, restricting it, for example, to “male heirs of his body” (sons of the title-holder) or less narrowly to “male heirs” – which might, for example, include nephews or more distant male relatives if no sons had been born. This was the case in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, where, despite his having five daughters, Mr Bennet's estate must pass to his cousin, the dismal Mr Collins, rather than to Jane Bennet, his eldest daughter. Daughters might be important if a title was to pass to a general heir of the holder's body, but the title might pass through the woman to her son, rather than to the woman in her own right.

It used to be thought that “Maternity is a matter of fact; paternity is a matter of opinion” – but as Helen Taylor, our Society expert on DNA, often reminds us, DNA doesn’t lie, but people sometimes do. DNA-testing raised some awkward questions in 2013–16 in the case of Pringle of Stichill. This baronetcy was established in 1683 and had passed through ten generations until it transpired that, in the words of one of the parties, “a cuckoo had entered the nest”. In 2010, DNA-testing established that the eldest son (born in 1903) of the 8<sup>th</sup> baronet had not been the *genetic* son of the 8<sup>th</sup> baronet. On the latter’s death in 1919, his eldest son succeeded as the 9<sup>th</sup> baronet, and in turn his son succeeded as the 10<sup>th</sup>. However, when the succession opened on the death of the 10<sup>th</sup> baronet, in 2013, DNA evidence was brought forward to challenge the titles of the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and prospective 11<sup>th</sup> baronets as not being the genetic heirs of the very first holder of the title – despite all having been raised as heirs to the title, with all the obligations and expectations that went with that. Nevertheless, it was established that there was no Y-DNA genetic linkage to the historic male line. As a result, the baronetcy was reassigned to the descendant of the 8<sup>th</sup> baronet’s second son, who was in fact the eldest *biological* son of the 8<sup>th</sup> baronet. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> baronets had their names removed from the Official Roll of Baronetage in 2016. This case, decided by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 2016, demonstrates the power of DNA evidence to unravel long-established family successions.

Professor Black outlined some of the ways that modern life has brought about changes in family law, leading it away from the narrow prescriptions applied to honours and titles. It was recognised that the concept of illegitimacy placed an unfair burden on a child, and so changes to Scots Law in 1986 and 2006 ensured that the marital status of the parents no longer has an impact for the child, effectively abolishing the concept of illegitimacy by stating as a first principle that “No person whose status is governed by Scots law shall be illegitimate”. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 provided transsexual people with legal recognition in their acquired gender. Legal recognition derives from the issue of a full gender-recognition certificate by a Gender Recognition Panel.

Regarding assisted conception, the 2008 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act set out that it is the woman who carries an embryo to birth who is that child’s mother, not any genetic donor, while the child’s legal father in those circumstances is identified as the mother’s husband or civil partner, or her partner (if she is not married or in a civil partnership). Legislation as far back as the 1930s established that any adopted child is legally recognised as the child of the adopted parents, regardless of the presence or lack of genetic connection.

Yet these changes in law do not apply to the inheritance of honours, and continue in the main to bolster traditional concepts of patriarchy. In one exception, the British monarchy chose to adopt a progressive stance by removing the law of male primogeniture in the line of succession to the throne in the Succession to the Crown Act of 2013. However, far from complying with anti-discriminatory legislation, many heraldic devices make a point of declaring otherness and difference. For example, illegitimacy is recorded on heraldic shields by a “bend sinister”, a diagonal line running from bottom left to upper right. A “voided canton” or small empty square in the top left corner of a coat of arms can refer to a break in the blood line, for example through adoption. A coat of arms for a woman may be shown in a “lozenge” or diamond, rather than a shield, although women now have a free choice as to whether to display their arms in a shield or lozenge. In effect, there are various discriminatory actions as heraldic devices disclose personal information about an

individual in a public way, although some may not mind this when the “differentiation” refers to actions that took place many generations in the past and gives rise to a racy story for family lore.

Some interesting issues were raised during the question-and-answer sessions. We learned about instances of chimerism, where an individual may have different sets of DNA in different parts of their body – for example, when a foetus is absorbed by its twin during gestation. While time and order of birth are regarded as intrinsically important, especially for inheritance, these may be arbitrarily decided by medical staff, for example during a caesarean section, where the doctor will decide which twin to deliver first.

We rounded off the afternoon by persuading Gillian to tell us more about her recent activities as Linlithgow Pursuivant during the ceremonial events that marked the death of the late Queen Elizabeth and the coronation of King Charles. And, if you decide you would like to have a personal coat of arms, the good news is that one awarded by the Scottish Lyon Court is a mere snip at around £4,000 compared with one from the English equivalent, where the cost is about £11,000.

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Elaine Petrie No. 22949

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## **Glasgow Group Report**

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

**30<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

A group of wholly innocent members met in Glasgow to discuss their criminal ancestors. Having been cautioned that anything they said might be taken down and used in evidence, here are some of their confessions.

#### **Exhibit A: the crimes**

The crimes had all been committed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, some in Scotland, some further afield. They included travelling on trains without a ticket, defrauding a lodging-house keeper, forging a bill of sale, abandoning a child, joining with a mob to attack parochial officials, reset of stolen goods, domestic violence, and robbing a Wells Fargo stagecoach of \$20,000.

#### **Exhibit B: finding the evidence**

Most crimes came as a surprise to the researcher. Family members who knew about them often kept quiet about it or sanitised the account. One of the most useful sources was newspaper archives. Searching for ancestors there often brought up references to brushes with the law, as perpetrators, victims or witnesses. One member had randomly searched for ancestors in the online catalogue of the National Records of Scotland and discovered a number of criminals that way. The criminal database on Scottish Indexes also proved useful, as did the prison registers available on ScotlandsPeople.

#### **Exhibit C: the verdict**

It was clear that some ancestors had been reluctantly drawn into crime by circumstances largely beyond their control and were perhaps as much to be pitied as scolded. Others, however, seem to have revelled in their criminality and made a career of it.

It was good to welcome new members and some who had travelled from as far as Moray to join in the fun.

*(report by Graham Robertson, No. 11685)*

Our next Glasgow Group meeting takes place **online only**, on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November. Ken Nisbet will give an updated version of his talk on the 1921 Scottish census. This meeting is now open for registration at the Society's website.

[glasgow@anesfhs.org.uk](mailto:glasgow@anesfhs.org.uk)

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

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## London Group Reports

### 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2023

The London Group met in the church hall to discuss "Our ancestors who died an unnatural death". There were 10 of us on the day; some had been with us before, and some were there for the first time. We heard stories about:

- the events of 6<sup>th</sup> December 1917 in the harbour at Halifax, Nova Scotia, when the French cargo ship *SS Mont-Blanc*, laden with high explosives, collided with the *SS Imo* from Norway. The *Mont-Blanc* caught fire and exploded, devastating the Richmond district. This was the largest human-made explosion at the time. Over 1,700 people were killed and 9,000 injured by the blast or its effects, such as fires or collapsed buildings.
- boats being lost in the sea from Fittie, Downies and Skateraw; and the families who were touched by this tragedy.
- the Anson and the Wellington that crashed mid-air in May 1943 in Cumbria. All occupants on board both aircraft were killed, including my husband's grandfather.

Having thought before the meeting that none of us had anything much to tell, we were all pleasantly surprised at how much information came out, and agreed we had all had a lovely day together again despite having learned the sad fates of some of our relatives.

### 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023

It was a dreich, wet day, and I couldn't be sure who, if anyone, would turn up. We had already had to move the date twice, and so this meeting was earlier than it should have been. Eight other brave souls and I made it to the church hall.

Christine Bennett from New Zealand, who had newly joined the Society at King Street the previous week, came along to see what we were about. We also welcomed fellow member Nick Hide from the Clan Davidson Association; Nick is keen for people to contact him.

We were presented with a bit of a conundrum rather than a brick wall: Mary has a DNA connection with a person she cannot figure out. She brought us partial trees from her family and from the person she is connected to. It seems to have stumped us for now, but some of us will look at it in more dept. The rest of the meeting was spent in general family-history discussion. Why do people "go home" to be buried? Where is home?

Quakers and Plymouth Brethren, as well as the Established Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland, were another topic that came up. I am not sure we came up with any definitive answers to questions, but it was very interesting.

Dates for 2024 were organised provisionally and have since been firmed up (see website), having agreed we will be meeting in person. Everyone agreed to send in any topics they would like to discuss or that we may find a speaker for.

*london@anesfhs.org.uk*

Sheena Clark No. 19190

—oOo—

## **Southern Ontario Group Report**

### **Christine Woodcock, “Early Scottish Settlers in Ontario”**

**30<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Christine, an experienced genealogist, introduced us to the first wave of Scottish settlers in Ontario, or Upper Canada as it was called back then. This first group was issued land in 1783 following the Revolutionary War in the USA. Soldiers who remained loyal to the Crown during the war were given land in Ontario. The first settlement was in Glengarry, Ontario. Some of these soldiers were members of the Highland Society in London, England. These society members were Scottish elites, many of whom were sons of Jacobites who had fought in the battle of Culloden in 1746. The purpose of their organization was to keep the Scottish culture alive. They also supported the education of needy Highland children. In 1811, a branch of the Highland Society set up in Glengarry, Ontario, and soon branches were spreading across Canada.

Many of Canada’s future leaders came from this Society, including, Sir Allan MacNab, Sir John A. MacDonald and John Graves Simcoe.

In 1786, 520 settlers arrived from Scotland to the Glengarry settlements, and soon the word made its way back to others in the homeland. The settlement quickly became well established, and in 1815 the government assisted other Scottish emigrants to come to Canada and provided grants of land in the Lanark County area. Towns like Perth and Prescott flourished with wood mills, tanners, blacksmiths and so on.

In 1820, the Glasgow Emigration Society, among others, set up help for those going to the new land. Many had to pay their own passage, but the society gave them a bible and £1 as part of their passage. Once they were in Canada, they were supplied with things like seed, blankets and food, although they had to share farm implements with their neighbours.

Next, Christine went on to talk about the Huron Tract and how the Crown purchased land from the Algonkian-speaking nation. This land was sold to the Canada Company, and in 1826 John Galt was given a charter for a Land and Colonization company. The company built roads, mills and schools and advertised in Britain and Europe for colonists.

Smaller groups of Scottish settlers continued to arrive over the next couple of decades; and, when the potato blight of 1840–45 happened, people started arriving from the Western Isles. Around this time, 4,650 settlers from the Isle of Lewis settled in Bruce, Huron and Grey counties.

Christine gave detailed information about the waves of settlement, and we thoroughly enjoyed her presentation. We had 55 ANESFHS members and 34 guests registered for this event – and, although not everyone showed up, all who asked were graciously supplied with a summary by Christine.

Our next meeting is on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November at 1pm ET, and we hope to follow up on the same topic with Anne Williams of the Archives of Ontario, who will be telling us about the Scottish/Ontario collection of archive materials. Society members can register through the main ANESFHS webpage under “Events”.

Looking ahead, we are planning a meeting on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2024 on the topic of “My Ancestors were in the News (good or bad)” – so, start collecting your stories to share with us all. Those who want a chance to speak could please e-mail to let us know at the address below, so we can slot you in. Thank you!

[ontario@anesfhs.org.uk](mailto:ontario@anesfhs.org.uk)

Susan Brouwer No. 20475

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

—oOo—

## Library Report

Most of us have family photos from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – and some of us may be lucky enough to have had ancestors who wrote names and dates on the backs. But in many cases, and certainly in my case, there is no indication as to who the people in the photos are, or when they lived. There are, however, many clues to help us date our photos.

This Journal carries a report of an excellent talk, “Cartomania in North-East Scotland: *cartes de visite*”, by Kate Clark (no. 934). Putting a date (and therefore potentially a name) to old photographs is a topic relevant to all family historians, so there was great interest in Kate’s talk, and plenty of audience participation both in person and online.

Kate mentioned several useful sources (detailed in the report) to help with dating old photographs. Richard Torrance’s two-volume book, *Scottish Studio Photographers to 1914 and Workers in the Scottish Photographic Industry* (2011), is in the Society library’s Biography section. It replaces his earlier series of regional booklets and gives much more information about each photographer. A review appeared in Journal 167 (August 2023, pp. 27–28). There are also several “how to” books in our Research Manuals section which will help with dating old photographs.

In general, people sitting for their portrait in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries looked very solemn. We were always told to “say cheese” when we had our photo taken, but perhaps we would have benefited instead from this advice given in the Ladies column of the *Aberdeen Press & Journal* in April 1890:

When you sit for your photograph,

If you want to look pleasant, take a hint (if you can) from the following circular by an American photographer:- “when a lady sitting for her portrait would compose her mouth to a serene character, she should, before entering the room, say ‘bosom’, and keep the expression into which the mouth subsides. If, on the other hand, she wishes to assume a distinguished and somewhat noble bearing, she should say ‘brush’, the result of which is infallible. If she wishes to make her mouth look small, she must say ‘flip’, but if the mouth be already too small, and needs enlarging, she must say ‘cabbage’. If she wishes to look mournful, she must say ‘kerchunk’. If resigned, she must forcibly ejaculate ‘scat’.”

Please keep this in mind the next time you’re being photographed!

[library@anesfhs.org.uk](mailto:library@anesfhs.org.uk)

Margie Mellis

No. 2090

## New MI Booklet: Kirkyard of Strichen

The latest addition to the Society's ever-expanding series of Memorial Inscription booklets is *The Kirkyard of Strichen*. An incomplete version (lacking a plan) had long languished among the "Unpublished MIs", but ANESFHS member Jim Campbell (no. 12688) has now produced a fully revised reading, which is accompanied by all-new kirkyard plans.

The Kirkyard comprises three sections: the original "Old Ground", a small extension dating from around 1870, and the larger "New Ground" opened in 1906. These contain a total of 733 stones (as against 549 in the "Unpublished" version) with details of over 2,700 individuals, dating from 1691 to 2019.

The transcription plus index runs to 114 pages, and the plans cover both sides of an A3 sheet. As this is well beyond the capacity of one of our usual stapled booklets, *The Kirkyard of Strichen* (catalogue number AA068) is offered as a "perfect-bound" A5 volume with the folded plan in a pocket in the rear cover, priced at £9.00.

*mis@anesfhs.org.uk*

Gavin Bell (MI Co-ordinator)

No. 4085

—oOo—

## New MI Booklet: Kirkyard of Auchterless

Auchterless lies eight miles south-west of Turriff and 30 miles north-west of Aberdeen. Little information exists about the church before AD 1157. St Donan is the patron saint, and local folklore says he threw his staff into the River Ythan, which runs close by – and where it came to rest is where they built the original church. The pre-Reformation ruins are still to be seen in the graveyard, and the gable wall of a church built around 1780 is still standing. This building was significantly changed in 1832 to seat over 650. Today's magnificent church with its tall spire can be seen from miles around.

This MI volume has been compiled by Heather Mitchell (no. 10642) and Doreen Florence (no. 13880), who thank the members of ANESFHS and volunteers who turned up for the Graveyard Outing at Auchterless Kirkyard to record and cross-check the inscriptions. With such a large and complicated-shaped churchyard in three sections (and with further memorials inside the church), this publication was a big challenge to complete.

Heather and Doreen add: "As we believe in typing what is written on the headstones, you will find many strange spellings of surnames and places. Even on the same stone there will be different spellings, so please do not think we have made mistakes."

A number of inscriptions which were formerly noted (by Andrew Jervise in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in the "draft" MIs of Auchterless, as recorded by ANESFHS members some years ago) cannot now be found. These are included as an Appendix to this long-awaited ANESFHS MI volume, together with inscriptions from some buried stones.

The transcription plus index runs to 120 pages, and the plan covers an A3 sheet. As with the even newer Strichen MI, *The Kirkyard of Auchterless* (cat. no. AA085) comes as a "perfect-bound" A5 volume with the folded plan in a pocket, priced at £9.00 + p&p. For each volume, copies can be obtained at our King Street Research Centre or via the "Publications" link on the Society's website (<https://www.anesfhs.org.uk/>).

*mis@anesfhs.org.uk*

Gavin Bell (MI Co-ordinator)

No. 4085

## Beginners' Online Course in Family History, 2024

For the past three years, the Society has run an online six-week Beginners' Course tutored by experienced genealogist Ken Nisbet of the Scottish Genealogy Society (and SAFHS, and ANESFHS). These were popular and successful, and may be run again if there is enough interest. The proposed dates are Thursdays, 1<sup>st</sup> February to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024, from 7pm to 9pm UK time (2pm in Ontario; 11am on the North American west coast).

The course is likely to be priced around £46 (£42 concession). A detailed description of each week's material can be found in the News section of the Society's website. Week 2 includes coverage of the censuses and will feature the 1921 Scottish census, which was officially released in early 2023.

If you would like to take part, please e-mail the address below. If there is insufficient interest, the course will be postponed. If there is enough interest for the course to go ahead, we will confirm this to you, and will send a course invitation link at a later date.

[syllabus@anesfhs.org.uk](mailto:syllabus@anesfhs.org.uk)

Ivor Normand and Irene McCafferty

—oOo—

## Banffshire Field Club Conference: “Banffshire Fowk”

As delegates signed in at the Seafield Arms Hotel in Cullen on 7<sup>th</sup> October, the atmosphere had something of an extended family gathering of folk with Banffshire connections. Despite appalling weather conditions, an eager crowd of over 70 turned out to enjoy the day's programme of talks arranged by Banffshire Field Club. It was really good to see so many familiar faces from ANESFHS!

The principal keynote speaker, Professor Marjory Harper, shared the fruits of her research into Scottish emigrants, including, of course, many originating from Banffshire. We also heard of regeneration in the remote Cabrach area, where the personal stories of local residents are being preserved, and of the efforts of primary school pupils at Bracoden to commemorate the lives of Gamrie folk lost during the First World War.

We appreciated the sumptuous surroundings of the Grand Ballroom, where attentive staff kept us fed and watered. Refreshment and lunch breaks provided us with opportunities for browsing bookstalls and a blether with friends from afar.

Our Banffshire Lord-Lieutenant filled in as a replacement speaker for Keith and District Heritage Group, whose publication *Companion to the Standing Stones* provides a record of personalities with Keith connections who have achieved worldwide renown. This was followed by a look at the impact of Catholicism and of Banffshire's Catholics, whose influence extended far beyond Scotland's shores. The day was rounded off by Mary Evans, well known to ANESFHS members, who provided a simple introduction to genealogical research for novices, as well as invaluable advice on avoiding pitfalls for more experienced researchers.

This was an ambitious new venture by Banffshire Field Club – and, after all the months of planning, the success of the day was a source of great delight to the small organising committee. We are already working on a similar event in 2024, this time on the theme of “Banffshire Places”. So, save Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October, and keep a look out for updates!

[bfc.1880@gmail.com](mailto:bfc.1880@gmail.com)

Alison Smith

No. 7779



## 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 (1<sup>st</sup> 20 per cent, 2<sup>nd</sup> 15 per cent, 3<sup>rd</sup> 10 per cent and 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> prize</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup> prize</b>		<b>3<sup>rd</sup> prize</b>		<b>4<sup>th</sup> prize</b>	
	No.	Mem. No.	No.	Mem. No.	No.	Mem. No.	No.	Mem. No.
<b>Aug</b>	113	Alison Stimpson 15080	29	Edith Stuart 4659	87	William Watson 8320	30	Kenny Harrison 13946
<b>Sep</b>	115	Raymond Mennie 11359	89	Jennifer Boyd 5028	8	Janet Taylor 20994	100	June Melvin 834
<b>Oct</b>	118	Alison Kerr 1602	30	Kenny Harrison 13946	96	Margaret McDowall 18020	87	William Watson 8320

[100club@anesfhs.org.uk](mailto:100club@anesfhs.org.uk)

Jane Cameron No. 9680

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### GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

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

All enquiries welcome

Mrs. Margaret Davidson, CSFHS, Grampian Ancestry Research  
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E-mail: [grampian.ancestry@btinternet.com](mailto:grampian.ancestry@btinternet.com)  
Tel. 01561 361500

<b>Queries</b>
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168/1 *FRASER / KELMAN*: My husband's family descend from Peter Fraser and Janet Kelman, m. 10 Nov 1776 Mortlach, Banffshire (both "in this parish"). In 1777 they were "in Achmur" (Achmore), Mortlach; and by 1779 they were "in Graystonefolds" in the parish of Glass, ABD, on the Banffshire border, where they raised 13 chn:

John Fraser (1777–1857) m. Jean *SMITH* (1775?–1862)

Margaret Fraser (1779–1858) m. John *GUNN*

Peter Fraser (1781–1866) m. Janet *GRANT* (1783?–1857)

Jean Fraser (1784–?)

William Fraser (1785–1862) m. Margaret *TAYLOR* (1788–1862)

Isobel Fraser (1787–1867) never m.

Alexander Fraser (1790–?)

George Fraser (1792–1868) m. Violet *SPENCE* (1797–1888)

Katharine Fraser (1794–?)

Helen (b. 1796; the Helen d. 1873 Boharm was d/o George *TAYLOR* and Isabella Kelman)

James Fraser (1796–1875) m. Helen *TAYLOR* (1793–1873)

Lewis Fraser (1798–1869) m. Anne *DUFF* (1804–1889)

Hugh Fraser (1800–?)

A descendant of Peter and Janet's son Lewis only knew that his ancestors were from Scotland. He took the Big Y-DNA test at FamilyTreeDNA and, as my husband had also taken the Big Y-DNA test, the results showed they shared the same haplogroup R-FT374191, and he quickly found which Fraser family in Scotland he descended from. My husband, Edward Fraser, is a member of the following Y-DNA groups at FamilyTreeDNA: Aberdeen & North East Scotland group, the Fraser and Septs group and the Scottish DNA group.

Are there other male Frasers willing to take a Y-DNA test at FamilyTreeDNA? Do you descend from any of the above Frasers from Graystonefolds? If so, we'd like to hear from you.

*dfgenealogy@gmail.com*

Donna Fraser

No. 6588

168/2 *STUART / STEWART*: According to a dau.'s d. cert., my 2g-gf Alexander (Grant) Stuart/Stewart was b.c. 1819 Aberdeen(shire?) and left Scotland for Ontario in the late 1830s or early 1840s as a bachelor. His father was apparently also Alexander Stuart/Stewart. My 2g-gf m. Jane *SCOTT* (from Ireland) in 1844 in Ontario. They lived in Brockville, Ontario, and he was apparently a Church of Scotland member and eventually Anglican in Brockville. In the 1870s/80s he moved to Philadelphia, where he d. and is buried. Family lore says Alex snr was a widower and remarried a teacher whom Alex snr was also interested in, which led to the departure.

My 2g-gf apparently had an uncle in the *GRANT* family who was a "provost" and was planning to mentor Alex in legal studies. I can find no origin or any details of Alex jnr or snr, or a Grant connection in Aberdeenshire. Any help is appreciated.

*This query appears in the ANESFHS website's **Members' Forum**, "Brick Walls".*

*Batesw386@aol.com*

Bill Bates

No. 23350

168/3 *BURNET(T) / HAY*: Over many years, I have been researching Ong-tong Burnett and have had articles about his background etc. in the Journal. Every so often, a new snippet of information pops up and is added to his story. I now have two conflicting snippets which I am seeking help/explanation on.

Ong-tong is buried in Ellon and is commemorated on the *HARDIE* family stone as having d. aged 64 on 11 Mar 1811. His 3<sup>rd</sup> wife, Elspet Hay of Sandend, Fordyce, appears in a burial list from Aberdeen's Spital graveyard (St Peter's; see Deceased Online) as "Elispat Burnet 55 Y<sup>rs</sup> Relict of Ontong Burnet", and the date is clearly 15 Jan 1806.

"Relict" means widow. My dilemma is: how can she be the *widow* of Ong-tong, who d. 1811? Any suggestions/explanations gratefully received.

*djpeters@btinternet.com*

David Peters

No. 2402

168/4 *BREWSTER / BREUSTER*: I know my ancestor John Brewster came from Scotland, but not where. The most likely candidate was bapt. 16 Jan 1798 in Botriphnie, Banffshire, to John Breuster and Elspet *OYNNIE*. Tracing forwards, I am told there are no records of John jnr in Scotland after that date. The parents' marriage is shown as John *BROWSTER* m. Elspet *INZIE*, 30 Aug 1789 Botriphnie. The Scotland's People index shows other births, all in Botriphnie, to this couple: mother's surname Oynnie (1790), *INIE* (1799) and *YUNNIE* (1802). Clutching at straws, I am hoping one of your members may have researched that family.

A John Brewster is shown as a private in the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars Muster Roll in 1816. He was stationed in Brighton, Sussex, where he m. Charlotte *SHERLEY* on 15 Apr 1816 and his birthplace is given as Scotland, but not where. It is the same on subsequent documents; and he never returned home. The 1841 census shows the family living in Bethnal Green, London, where he d. in 1846 aged 53. He is definitely my ancestor. A genealogist tells me ages were rounded up or down by as much as five years. Sadly, only officers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars' records survive.

*brewster.pica@btinternet.com*

Rod Brewster

(non-member)

### Instructions for Queries

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

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

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

If you resubmit or update an old query, ***please annotate it accordingly***. Journal queries should be sent separately from other correspondence, with your name and membership number on each request, to: [\*\*queries@anesfhs.org.uk\*\*](mailto:queries@anesfhs.org.uk)

## Articles

### James Bruce Pirie MM, the Aberdeen “Swimmin’ Mannie”

My father-in-law, James Pirie, had a most remarkable life story. He not only survived the horrors of the Gallipoli landings and trench warfare in France, receiving a Military Medal for First World War service, but he also became a champion swimmer and instructor back home in Aberdeen, well known to school pupils as the “Swimmin’ Mannie”.

James Bruce Pirie (1896–1956) was born in Aberdeen, at 23 Prospect Terrace, to John Pirie (1867–1933), a cooper, and his wife Maggie Jane (1870–1933), who was also born a Pirie. Both parents were from Peterhead, although Maggie’s family derived from Gartly and Rhynie (see “Genealogical appendix”). They had five sons: John William (b. 1892), Charles (b. 1893), James Bruce (b. 1896), Thomas (b. 1898) and William Edward (b. 1902).

By February 1914, the family had moved to Portland Street, and James and his brother Thomas joined the Scottish Horse, a regiment based in Dunkeld. James was 18, and Thomas was under age. James had been working since 1910 as a boxmaker with A&G Paterson of Craiginches, so neither boy had direct experience of working with horses.

Their family doesn’t know why the lads chose to join the Scottish Horse in preference to the Gordon Highlanders, the local regiment for Aberdonians. The attraction may well have been the chance to work with horses. Bill Duncan, a fellow Aberdeen recruit, said in an interview in *The Leopard*: “I had a liking for horses ... I decided I wanted a mounted regiment, even though I hadn’t an awful lot to do with horses”. Working horses would have still been a familiar sight in the streets at that time.

The Scottish Horse were raised originally in 1900 to fight in South Africa. They were disbanded after the Boer War and then reformed as a cavalry unit in 1903, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment raised in Perthshire, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment recruiting from Aberdeenshire, Moray, Nairnshire and Argyll. An account (*Echoes from Gallipoli*) by William Mowat of Stormontfield, Perthshire, also a fellow Scottish Horse recruit in 1914, recalls that “There were two regiments of the Scottish Horse at the time and they were in camp, training at Blair Atholl. When a third regiment was raised, some of us thought this was just what we would like, and the thought of having a horse to ride appealed to me.” The instructors were veterans of the South African campaign, and the recruits practised marching and rifle drills first. Once the training moved to Scone Racecourse, the recruits were allocated horses and began mounted drills.

After further lengthy training in the Midlands, they embarked from Devonport in August 1915 on the *Transylvania* for the Mediterranean, and while *en route* they were redirected to Gallipoli rather than Egypt. Their horses continued to Egypt and were assigned to the



L to R: Thomas Pirie, John William Pirie, James Bruce Pirie

Dorset Yeomanry for action in Egypt. The beaches being unsuitable for horses, the men were reassigned as infantry to replace the heavy losses in the initial attack on the Dardanelles. In Gallipoli, the Pirie brothers fought alongside Australians and New Zealanders from August until they were evacuated in December 1915. The Scottish Horse, originally 2,000 strong, lost 1,500 men through illness, wounds or death in this disastrous action. Thomas received shrapnel wounds to the hand and hip and was hospitalised in Malta. James was treated for trench foot on the island of Lemnos.

The brothers recovered and rejoined their regiment in Egypt. By September 1916, the Scottish Horse regiments were much reduced in personnel, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiments became part of the Black Watch, to be known thereafter as the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Scottish Horse) Black Watch – later the Royal Highlanders. They elected not to wear the kilt, and retained their own badge and bonnet.

In October 1916, they were shipped to Salonika to fight the Bulgarians in Macedonia, where they endured sandfly fever, malaria and bombardment from hill forts. This ended in April 1918 when they were withdrawn, rested and ordered to north-west France, ranged against the German troops on the Hindenburg Line.

Their experiences in France were equally brutal. Early October was spent mopping up in Vendouille and Masnieres, with severe losses on 6<sup>th</sup> October after heavy shelling. The number of shelling casualties was almost as high as those sustained in battle. One can imagine the hell. Bill Duncan recounted that “Two shells exploded in our midst, killing or wounding all the officers with one exception, and many of the other ranks suffered”.

From 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October 1918, they took part in further heavy action in the battle of the River Selle, closely followed in early November by further testing activity at the Sambre. When given the task to recapture Le Cateau, they had to cross an exposed, heavily flooded area, moving from shell-hole to shell-hole across exposed ground. The Battalion War Diary entry for Selle records:

17<sup>th</sup> October 1918: “There was a very thick mist which, added to the smoke of the barrage, occasioned great difficulty to the advance although it also afforded some protection from enemy machine guns.”

4<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Battle of the Sambre: “The morning was very misty; there was considerable hostile shelling and several casualties occurred in the assembly position and also during the initial stages of the advance through the enemy’s barrage which was very heavy ... when the mist cleared the operation became easier.”

This series of determined actions helped finally to wear down the opposing forces and bring about the war’s end, but at a very heavy cost: the battalion lost 120 men and officers killed or mortally wounded, and 350 wounded in just six short weeks – just as bad in its way as their experiences in Gallipoli. Jim and Tom, as the family called them, were lucky to have survived. I think these events must have had an impact on James: his sense of his own good fortune in surviving gave him a sense of purpose and motivation in his later life.



*James Bruce Pirie*

James had achieved the rank of Lance Corporal, and it appears he was given the rank of Acting Sergeant during a period of heavy losses in 1918. Around this time, he and 20 others in the Scottish Horse Battalion were awarded the Military Medal, an award given for “bravery in the Field to ... Warrant Officers, non-commissioned Officers and Men”. (The Military Medal, introduced in March 1916, was an equivalent to the Military Cross, the award for commissioned officers.) James’s citation was lost during a house removal, but it is likely to have been for events at the River Selle and Le Cateau.

After the armistice, the Battalion remained in France near Le Quesnoy, where they were inspected by King George V, until being demobilised in July 1919. Both James and Thomas were fortunate to survive the war, and were demobilised on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1919. Thomas emigrated to Portland, Oregon to work for a wood export firm. James returned initially to boxmaking; and in 1939 he was a voluntary officer with the Auxiliary Fire Brigade in King Street, Aberdeen.

Their elder brother John William Pirie (born 1892) had also served throughout the Great War, in the RNVR, and became a marine engineer on freighters in the Pacific in the 1920s. He was drowned in 1938 when the trawler SS *Cristel Steven* capsized while being towed off Cruden Bay. There were two other Pirie brothers: Charles had died aged two, while William was too young to serve in the Great War but was a warden with the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) in 1939–45 in Inverness.

In civilian life, James’s great passion was swimming, and he was known to dive into the River Dee off the bridge at Cults. A keen competitive swimmer and diver from the 1920s onward, he was an active member of Bon Accord Swimming Club, was Northern District Diving Champion and gained several medals in local competitions. He put his talents to good use as an office-bearer in his local 12<sup>th</sup> Company of the Boys Brigade of Ferryhill North Church, where he provided instruction in gymnastics, swimming and life-saving to his own company and to the battalion’s competition teams.

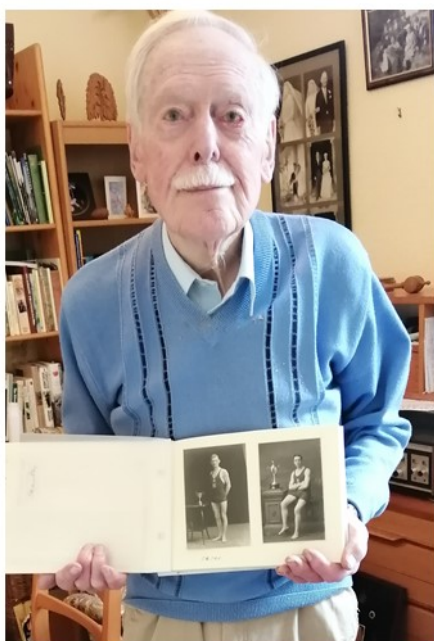
His poolside prowess and prominent role in Bon Accord Swimming Club opened up a whole new career, leading in 1930 to an appointment with Aberdeen Education Authority as Swimming Instructor for Aberdeen Schools, a post he held until retiring in 1960. He was based in the Instruction Pool at Middle School, which stood at the corner of Littlejohn Street and the Gallowgate. Pupils came for tuition from across all the Education Authority’s city schools. James also taught students from the PE college. He held an Award of Merit and many instructor medals from the Royal Lifesaving Society and played a prominent role in that sector, including acting as an examiner. Having witnessed so much death during wartime, it is pleasing that a significant part of his civilian life was devoted to life-saving.

James compiled an extensive album containing photos taken during his military service as well as a record of the swimming teams he was associated with, both as participant and trainer. The family has this fascinating collection of photographs of the swimming teams who trained at Bon Accord Baths during this period. The photos are very clear and mostly have the names of all participants – a real treasure for family historians.



We have ignored Jim's wife so far – a gross deficiency in this age! Rhoda Wilson married James in 1927, and the couple went on to have twin daughters. Rhoda was just as public-spirited as her husband. She was a warden in the ARP and a pianist for concert parties in Aberdeen and the surrounding area. Her father, William Joseph Wilson (born 1875 in Kent), was a trawler skipper who moved from Margate to Aberdeen about 1908. He died on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1914 from typhoid contracted from the drinking water on a minesweeper trawler in the English Channel while serving in the RVNR because of his local knowledge. He is buried in Rosendael cemetery, Dunkirk (Dunkerque). Rhoda's skill as a juvenile seamstress was applied to making army greatcoats, and her earnings were critical for her family after her father's death. As a child in Aberdeen, she was teased for her Kent accent and for wearing a pinafore at school in the English fashion.

When we look at Rhoda and Jim's story, we recognise that the First World War left nobody untouched. Genealogy is a great route for appreciating other times and situations.



*David with his father-in-law  
James Pirie's photograph album*



*Back row, L to R: W. Rennie (res.), J. H. Lobban (Capt.), G. Beattie  
(Hon. Treas.), F. Cruikshank (moved to Boston, USA), A. Paterson, J. A.  
Anderson (Vice President)*

*Front row, L to R: C. Pedersen, J. Leiper, J. A. Lobban (President), C.  
Ritchie (Hon. Sec.), D. G. Lobban*

## Genealogical appendix

James Bruce Pirie's father, John, was son of William Pirie (b. 1837 New Deer, d. 1897 Aberdeen), a tailor, who married Mary Ann Sutherland (1838–1900) in 1856 in Peterhead. William was son of Alexander Pirie (b.c. 1815 Rathen, d. 1878 New Deer), farm servant and book-deliverer, and Anne Park (1812?–1868), who married in 1835 (recorded in New Deer and Longside parishes). Alexander's parents were William Pirie and Janet Pyper.

James's mother, Maggie Jane, was daughter of William Pirie (b. 1826 Rhynie, d. 1908 Aberdeen), gardener, who married Margaret Greig (1840–1919) in 1857 in Ellon. William was son of William Pirie (b. 1785 Gartly, d. 1861 Rhynie), farmer, and Anne Gauld (1792–1853), married in 1816. This William was son of James Pirie and Isobel Duncan.

I am extremely grateful to Elaine Petrie (no. 22949) for a lot of assistance with this article.

# Record of Ancestors

Membership No: **14073**  
 Name **Brenda CATTANACH**  
 Address Solihull, West Midlands

His Father

Date 4 Oct 2023  
 e-mail brendacattanach35@gmail.com

3

**Robert REID**

*Born* 6 Oct 1872  
*Place* Peterculter, Aberdeenshire  
*Married* 29 May 1895  
*Place* Auchlea, Peterculter, ABD  
*Died* 22 May 1931 (58)  
*Place* Aberdeen  
*Occup.* Farmer

Your Father

1

**Andrew Innes REID**

*Born* 2 Feb 1904  
*Place* West Peterculter, ABD  
*Married* 18 Nov 1933  
*Place* Drumlithie, Glenbervie, KCD  
*Died* 9 Nov 1957 (53)  
*Place* Aberdeen  
*Occup.* Clerk of works

His Mother

4

**Jane INNES**

*Born* 2 Nov 1877  
*Place* Cairnrobin, Portlethen, KCD  
*Died* 28 May 1943 (65)  
*Place* Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardineshire

You

**Brenda Mary REID**

*Born* 26 Apr 1937  
*Place* Aberdeen  
*Married* 3 Feb 1956  
*Place* Aldershot, Hampshire  
*Occup.* Teacher (retired)

Her Father

5

**James MUNRO**

*Born* 8 Aug 1866  
*Place* Backhill, Cluny, ABD  
*Married* 5 Jun 1901  
*Place* Kemnay, Aberdeenshire  
*Died* 1926  
*Place* South Croft, Sauchen, Cluny  
*Occup.* Crofter

Your Mother

2

**Daisy MUNRO**

*Born* 19 May 1910  
*Place* Sauchen, Cluny, ABD  
*Died* 23 Feb 1983 (72)  
*Place* Aberdeen  
*Occup.*

Her Mother

6

**Ann GIBB**

*Born* 18 Nov 1880  
*Place* Rinalloch, Cluny, ABD  
*Died* 30 Oct 1918 (37)  
*Place* South Croft, Sauchen, Cluny  
*Occup.*

Form designed by:

Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS,  
 158-164 King Street,  
 Aberdeen AB24 5BD.



		15	<b>James REID</b>		
			<i>Born</i> 23 Feb 1783	<i>Place</i> Banchory-Devenick, KCD	
			<i>Married</i> 12 Dec 1812	<i>Place</i> Banchory-Devenick, KCD	
			<i>Died</i> 10 Dec 1852 (69)	<i>Place</i> Greenhowe, Banchory-Dev'k	
7	<b>Alexander REID</b>	16	<b>Elspeit CATTO</b>	<i>Occup.</i> Farmer	<b>Wm CATTO / Jean MOIR</b>
	<i>Born</i> 29 Nov 1830		<i>Born</i> 28 Sep 1793	<i>Place</i> Banchory-Devenick, KCD	
	<i>Place</i> Greenhowe, Banchory-Dev'k		<i>Died</i> 2 Feb 1880 (86)	<i>Place</i> Craighead, Banchory-Dev'k	
	<i>Married</i> 7 Dec 1855			<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Causeyport, Banchory-Dev'k	17	<b>Andrew WALKER</b>		
	<i>Died</i> 30 Sep 1913 (82)		<i>Born</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Howeford, W Peterculter		<i>Married</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Occup.</i> Farmer		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
8	<b>Jane WALKER</b>	18	<b>Margaret MOIR</b>	<i>Occup.</i> Crofter	
	<i>Born</i> 12 Jan 1835		<i>Born</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Causeyport, B.-Devenick, KCD		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Died</i> 4 May 1904 (69)			<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Craiglug, Countesswells, East Peterculter, ABD	19	<b>James INNES</b>	<i>Occup.</i>	
			<i>Born</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	[1 <sup>st</sup> wife Isobel Paterson d. 1858]		<i>Married</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<b>Andrew INNES</b>		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Born</i> abt 1820–23			<i>Occup.</i> Farmer	
	<i>Place</i> Newmachar, ABD	20	<b>Margaret SIMPSON</b>		
	<i>Married</i> 5 Oct 1877		<i>Born</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Cairnrobin, Portlethen, KCD		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Died</i> 15 Jan 1904 (80)			<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Howeford, W Peterculter	21	<b>James JOHNSTON</b>		
	<i>Occup.</i> Crofter		<i>Born</i> 1816–17	<i>Place</i> Banchory-Ternan, KCD	
10	<b>m. (2): Jane JOHNSTON</b>		<i>Married</i> 3 Feb 1849	<i>Place</i> Nigg, Kincardineshire	
	<i>Born</i> abt 1851		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Charleston, Nigg, KCD			<i>Occup.</i> Labourer	
	<i>Died</i> 14 Feb 1886 (34)	22	<b>Helen PAT(T)ERSON</b>	<b>Joseph P. / Mary CRUIK</b>	
	<i>Place</i> Cairnrobin, Portlethen, KCD		<i>Born</i> 1828	<i>Place</i> Gartly, Aberdeenshire	
	<i>Occup.</i>		<i>Died</i> 4 Jun 1870 (42)	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen	
				<i>Occup.</i>	
		23	<b>Alexander MUNRO</b>	<b>Robert M.</b>	
			<i>Born</i> 1788	<i>Place</i> Black Isle, Ross & Cromarty	
			<i>Married</i> 22 Sep 1816	<i>Place</i> Kemnay, Aberdeenshire	
			<i>Died</i> 6 Nov 1848 (60)	<i>Place</i>	
11	<b>James MUNRO</b>	24	<b>Margaret BODIE</b>	<i>Occup.</i>	<b>John B.</b>
	<i>Born</i> 20 Nov 1821		<i>Born</i> 25 Apr 1795	<i>Place</i> Kemnay, Aberdeenshire	
	<i>Place</i> Cluny, Aberdeenshire		<i>Died</i> 4 Apr 1875 (79)	<i>Place</i> Cluny, Aberdeenshire	
	<i>Married</i> 17 Jun 1853			<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen	25	<b>James WALLACE</b>		
	<i>Died</i> 7 Dec 1898 (77)		<i>Born</i> 1807	<i>Place</i> Largo, Fife	
	<i>Place</i> Cluny, Aberdeenshire		<i>Married</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Occup.</i> Ditcher and dyker contractor		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
12	<b>Ann WALLACE</b>	26	<b>Isabel FOWLER</b>	<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Born</i> 27 Mar 1828		<i>Born</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Old Machar, Aberdeen		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Died</i> 21 Dec 1879 (51)			<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Cluny, Aberdeenshire	27	<b>James GIBB</b>		
	<i>Occup.</i>		<i>Born</i> 1821	<i>Place</i> Kintore, Aberdeenshire	
			<i>Married</i>	<i>Place</i>	
			<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i> Upperhill, Cluny, ABD	
13	<b>Charles GIBB</b>	28	<b>Barbara FORBES</b>	<i>Occup.</i> Farmer	
	<i>Born</i> 15 Feb 1856		<i>Born</i> 1820–21	<i>Place</i> Tullynessle, Aberdeenshire	
	<i>Place</i> Cluny, Aberdeenshire		<i>Died</i>	<i>Place</i>	
	<i>Married</i> 28 Feb 1879			<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Cluny, Aberdeenshire	29	<b>George SMITH</b>	<b>Wm S. / Euphemia LAING</b>	
	<i>Died</i> 16 Jan 1910 (53)		<i>Born</i> 20 Mar 1804	<i>Place</i> Leochel-Cushnie, ABD	
	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen		<i>Married</i> 30 Aug 1834	<i>Place</i> Leochel-Cushnie, ABD	
	<i>Occup.</i> Cattle and horse dealer		<i>Died</i> 15 Nov 1872 (68)	<i>Place</i> Upper Burnside, Cluny, ABD	
14	<b>Ann SMITH</b>	30	<b>Elizabeth COUTTS</b>	<i>Occup.</i> Farmer	<b>John C. / Eliz. THOMSON</b>
	<i>Born</i> 30 May 1853		<i>Born</i> 8 Nov 1812	<i>Place</i> Leochel-Cushnie, ABD	
	<i>Place</i> Culthibert, Tough, ABD		<i>Died</i> 21 Feb 1894 (81)	<i>Place</i> Bankhead, Midmar, ABD	
	<i>Died</i> 23 Aug 1921 (68)			<i>Occup.</i>	
	<i>Place</i> Aberdeen				
	<i>Occup.</i>				

## Pitfalls in Dating Photographs

These are my 2g-grandparents, Alexander Jamieson and Isabella Hay, who married in Old Machar on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1836. My father had written their names on the back, so we can confidently say who they were. This is further confirmed by a head-and-shoulders line drawing which appeared in the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1896 on the occasion of their diamond wedding anniversary. This was a most helpful article which enumerated their descendants (10 children, 28 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren). From around 1857 they lived in Hadden Street in Aberdeen, which was renamed Great Northern Road in 1891. I had assumed that this photo was an original taken by Alexander Wilkie, who operated in Woodside and moved to 615 Great Northern Road from 1896. But, if the photograph was indeed taken in 1896, they look very well for 80 years old! It is more likely that this is an earlier photo which the family had had reprinted and distributed to relatives in 1896 to mark the big occasion. It is possible that this photo was taken on their golden wedding anniversary in 1886.



I do have another photo of them in which they appear to look older, and I suspect this one was taken after their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in which Isabella is wearing a shawl which is possibly the one she was presented with on the anniversary. Again it is a copy, on old stock card which merely says "A. Riddle, Rhynie" on the front with nothing on the back. There was an Alan Riddle in an 1873 trade directory, but I think this photo was more likely produced by Alexander Milne Riddel (baptised 1849 in Old Machar; his father was born in Rhynie), who was a photographer operator in Aberdeen before moving to Oban by 1891. I have followed the spellings of Riddle/Riddel as given in Richard Torrance's *Scottish Studio Photographers to 1914 and Workers in the Scottish Photographic Industry*.

Both photos are precious. Alexander Jamieson and Isabella Hay died within two years of their diamond anniversary, aged 81 and 82 respectively.

[buzzygarden99@gmail.com](mailto:buzzygarden99@gmail.com)

Buzzy Garden No. 12916

*Here's what our photo super-sleuth, Kate Clark, had to say:*

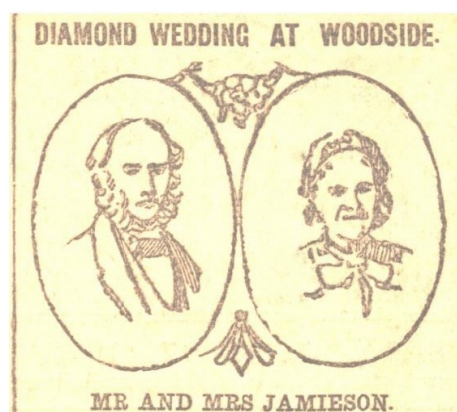
This photograph happened to catch my eye, online, a short time after I had been doing a little research into the photographer Alexander Wilkie. As I looked more closely, I

realised everything in the photo did not match the dates when he operated at the address shown, 615 Great Northern Road, which were from 1896 to at least 1914.

**Background:** This was the first thing that jumped out at me: completely out of keeping with the 1890s. The single draped curtain, the plain wall, the high skirting and patterned floor covering are from a much earlier time.

**Pose:** Full-length subjects were in vogue from the 1860s–1870s. She is braced against the table – and, if you look at his feet, I believe there is the base of a neck brace. These two things suggest a time when a long exposure was required, i.e. much earlier than 1896.

**Clothing:** The roomy sleeves on the man's jacket are c. 1860–70 when “raxing room” was allowed in the cut. His shoes appear to be square-toed, indicating a similar date. He wears a cross-over tie, which may be his choice, but in a later photograph he might have chosen a “four in hand” knotted tie. He is wearing unmatched three pieces – coat, waistcoat and trousers. By the mid-1890s, most men would wear matching top two pieces. I can't be sure about his cane. Nowadays we would carry a cane if it was required, but in earlier times it was a fashion accessory. To my eyes, it ages him rather than aggrandises him. He still has a reasonable amount of naturally coloured hair on his head, suggesting middle age. His facial hair is trimmed to a “Newgate collar”, perhaps in an effort to hang on to his youthful good looks – again pointing to the 1860s–70s.



*From Aberdeen Press & Journal,  
17<sup>th</sup> June 1896 (image © D. C.  
Thomson & Co. Ltd; image created  
courtesy of The British Library  
Board)*

The woman's dress skirt is post-crinoline (late 1860s) but before the 1870s bustle and “apron front” came into vogue. The long jacket-styled top which falls well below the fitted waist suggests early 1870s, as does the high perched “headband” bonnet. There is no indication of the elaborate hairstyles of the 1870s, but that is most likely to do with her age and preference. Given their apparent age, I doubt they would be avid followers of fashion. They are smart, well turned out and not unfashionable for the 1870s, in my view.

For fun, I have had a look through my examples of Aberdeen photographers from the early 1870s to see if I could find a match for the studio setting and props. I think the items on the table might be two books, with an *object d'art* (as my Dad would say) tucked behind. I thought these might appear in other photos, but alas no luck yet. I'm favouring Craigen, because he often has light from the left, but I can't be sure ... but I will keep looking!

*kate\_clark@ntlworld.com*

Kate Clark

No. 934

—oOo—

## A Tale of Three Brothers

When Robert Law, tenant of Old Harthill farm in Oyne, Aberdeenshire, died in 1848, he was buried not in Oyne but in the kirkyard of Peterculter beside his first wife Ann Glennie. He had been miller and grain merchant there at Mill of Brotherfield, and it was there that my great-great-grandfather Robert Law jnr was born.

Robert snr remarried Isabella Henderson, and about 1843 he gave up the tenancy of the mill to Bannerman Crockett, his son-in-law, who had married Robert's eldest daughter,

Jean. Robert snr moved about 35 miles north to Old Harthill with Isabella and their remaining family: John, Anne, David and Robert jnr.

When Robert snr died, the age-old problem facing the younger sons was where to make their future. Anne had married two years previously to William Mearns, a coachman and later steward on the nearby Elphinstone estate, so David and Robert jnr had decisions to make. Were they to remain in Aberdeenshire working either for their brother John, who had taken over the lease, or for another farmer? A third option was the one the brothers took: to move away altogether.

Their choice of emigrating to Ireland may seem surprising; why not Canada, the USA, Australia or some other popular destination? The reason was that in the mid-1850s, Ireland was starting to recover from the Great Famine of 1845–52. Many of the large estates in the west and south of Ireland were bankrupt, and the government had introduced the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 to try to introduce capital and improve agriculture by bringing in entrepreneurs.

One such entrepreneur was the wealthy Alan Pollok of the Glasgow firm of Pollok & Gilmour, timber importers and shipping owners. Alan Pollok had bought up 12,400 acres of east Galway, and it was there that David and Robert came as land stewards.

Back in Scotland, John Law had married Christian (later Christina) Mathieson, daughter of Oyne farmer Alexander Mathieson. They went on to have seven children at Old Harthill before moving to the farm of New Keig in Keig parish, where they had two more children.

Generally, John and Christian's children and grandchildren seem to have prospered, acquiring tenancies of two farms in Inverurie parish, namely Oldtown of Balquhain, and Newbigging. The Great War of course intervened in most people's lives, and three of John's grandsons served in the British Army: Robert Smith Law served in the Gordon Highlanders and Labour Corps, becoming a CQMS at war end; Alexander Mathieson Law in the RAMC; and John Glennie Law in the Black Watch.

All three soldiers survived, but John Glennie Law has become a mystery. In 1923 he emigrated to Manitoba, Canada under the "Soldier Settlement Board", a scheme set up to encourage ex-soldiers to settle in the Prairie Provinces. John's military pension records show that in 1919 he had suffered a gunshot wound to his right hand and was suffering from neurasthenia (shell shock). In November 1925, John attempted to enter the USA at St Albans, Vermont, but was rejected as he didn't have a visa. He said his address was 183 McDermot, Winnipeg, and his destination was Chicago. It seems strange that he travelled all the way east from Winnipeg to Vermont in order to travel all the way west to Chicago. Nothing more is known of John Glennie Law, but it would be good to know what became of him.

In Ireland, John's brothers David and Robert took up their posts as land stewards in Galway. Did they know what they were getting involved in when they left Scotland? They were soon to find out.

Pollok's methods were controversial to say the least. As an "improver", he considered the existing farming methods totally inefficient, so he set about evicting most of his tenants and destroying their mud-and-thatch cabins. True, he employed a good percentage of them as farm labourers, whom he re-housed – but there must have been a lot of real hardship for those who were turned out and had to emigrate to the USA and elsewhere.

Were Robert and David involved in these evictions? I have only found one instance in the Petty Sessions Court Records, when Robert and five others were accused by a family called Coghlan of assault and putting them out of their house. Certainly, land stewards and other senior servants of the landlord would have been unpopular with local people, whether they were involved in evictions or not. There was certainly a lot of violence, and Pollok's farm buildings were burned, and his new mansion at Eyrecourt was destroyed. In one instance, a Scottish steward named McCall was shot at through a window.

The evictions resulted in much debate in Parliament, in which Disraeli and Palmerston were involved, and to much negative comment in the British and Irish press, as it was felt the evictions were undoing the good intentions of the Encumbered Estates Act.

In 1866, Robert had probably had enough. He married Margaret Christie, daughter of James Christie, a land steward from Fife. They were married in the Presbyterian Church in Creggs, which Pollok had built for his Scottish and northern Irish farm servants. They moved to County Down in what is now Northern Ireland, and Robert took up a position as a land steward at Gilford Castle.

In 1853, David Law had married Jane Tarbat Keay, daughter of a Forfar innkeeper. He had briefly been grieve to a farmer from Rescobie, Forfarshire, before moving to Galway with his new wife. David and Jane had four children in Galway before deciding that life there was not what they hoped for. They moved south around 1862 to West Cork, where David became land steward to William Bence-Jones, owner of about 3,000 acres between the towns of Bandon and Clonakilty, centred on the small village of Ballinascorthy (birthplace of the father of Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company).

That David and Jane had taken their family from the frying pan into the fire was soon to be made evident. Bence-Jones was again someone who thought he was an "improver", and hiked his tenants' rents regardless of whether they could pay them or not – and again this led to evictions.

David and Jane had five further children in Cork, but the situation they grew up in can't have been good. The local tenants were encouraged by an organisation called the "Land League" not to pay exorbitant rents and to boycott the landlords where necessary. The Law family were not exempt from the boycott; in fact, even Jane Law's wee shop in Ballinascorthy was put out of bounds to any would-be shopper.

In December 1880, Bernard S. Becker, a *Daily News* journalist, visited the Bence-Jones estate and reported in an article, "Disturbed Ireland", that at first sight all seemed well until he noticed the presence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoon Guards and the Royal Irish Constabulary guarding the gate and doorstep. He went on to say that 40 or so farm servants had quit work, and Bence-Jones and his family had to do all the work with the help of a few servants and Mr Law "the Scotch bailiff". He reported:

On Monday morning Mr Law stood aghast at the sight of a farm of a thousand acres with nobody to work it; but soon recovered himself and with the help of his own work and that of a couple of labourers and the co-operation of the master's son and daughter, matters went on despite the strike. Mr Law is, of course, as a good Scotch bailiff should be, greatly distressed at the state of the cowhouses, feeding stalls and stockyard, now ankle deep in muck; but the fine shorthorned bull seems none the worse, and the pigs have taken kindly to the new disorderly condition of affairs.

Just last year, I visited Ballinascorthy, for only the second time in 40 years, and met a local historian who told me the story of “The Bold Tenant Farmer”. This was about Dan Walsh, who refused to pay his increased rent and who verbally abused his landlord when he met him. This feisty man was immortalised in a song by the Irish folk band The Clancy Bros and Tommy Makem, who cut a record in the 1960s called *The Bold Tenant Farmer*.

I was surprised to find that Dan Walsh’s cottage was just across the lane from David Law’s farm and has a plaque on the wall commemorating the event. Dan and his wife Brigid are buried in Kilmaloda parish churchyard on the south side of the church close to Henry Ford’s relatives. The Bence-Joneses are on the north side, and appropriately the Laws are interred between them on the east side.

David Law died in 1900, and Jane snr in 1904. Both are buried in Kilmaloda along with four sons who died in childhood. Two daughters married local men and raised families of their own. Two other daughters did not marry. David jnr married but had no children. Only William Mearns Law, who married Frances Kingston in 1898, had Law children: Emily, Eveleen and Robert or Robin. Emily and Eveleen emigrated to the USA, married and had families.

Robin did not get on with his father and went to live with his aunt Jane in Cork City. He joined the Dublin Fusiliers in the Great War and served in France and Flanders before being taken prisoner in the German spring offensive of 1918. He saw out the war in Kassel POW camp but did not return to live in Ireland. He married an English woman, worked as a travelling salesman in London and had two children but no grandchildren. There are therefore no Law descendants of a once large Cork family.

Meanwhile, in the north of Ireland, my grandparents Robert Law and Margaret Christie had six children, all born in the steward’s house in Gilford, Co. Down. Despite Robert’s diligent work as a land steward on the castle estate, fate was to deal his family several cruel blows. In 1874, daughter Annie died aged two because of measles. In 1882, son Robert jnr died as a result of a shooting accident at Gilford Castle.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1886, Margaret and eldest daughter Elizabeth (Lizzie) travelled by train to Portadown to do some shopping. On the return journey, the locomotive came off the tracks at Brackagh Moss and crashed into a bog, smashing up the leading carriages of the train. Five people were killed on the spot, including my great-grandmother Margaret aged 40 and Lizzie aged 19. Twenty-nine others were seriously injured. At a Board of Trade enquiry, it was found that the track had not enough ballast under the sleepers, and expansion joints had closed up, buckling the rails on what had been a very hot day. No prosecutions followed, but Robert received financial compensation from the railway company, as did Elizabeth Christie, Margaret’s mother.

Cruel luck continued in 1892 when Alexander died of tuberculosis aged 15. That left only two sons who lived to adulthood: James, a cattle dealer who died aged 38, and my grandfather William (Bill). Robert retired as a steward in 1895 and received a beautiful illuminated and framed address along with a marble clock and accompanying urns. The address etc. was given at his retirement do when his good works in the community were praised, including being a cattle judge at local shows and introducing an improved breed of shorthorn cattle to the area.

Robert and son Bill bought the farm of Birchgrove, a short distance from Gilford. Robert died in 1906 aged 77, and the following year Bill married Lily Christie, his first cousin.

All seemed set fair for the young couple, and my father Robert (Bob) and uncle William (Bill jnr) were born soon after at Birchgrove farm. Ill fate was to strike again a short time later when my grandmother Lily contracted diabetes at a time when it was untreatable. She died in 1915 aged 33. This must have been the final straw for my grandfather, as he took to the bottle and neglected his farm, which had to be sold by auction in 1921. Bill snr and his two sons moved to a terraced house in Dumbarton Street, Gilford, but Bill snr died two years later of cirrhosis of the liver, leaving the two boys orphaned.

Ironically, my father Bob was sent to work as an engine cleaner for the Great Northern Railway of Ireland, the company that killed his grandmother and aunt Lizzie. Bill was sent as a boarder to the Masonic Boys School in Dublin (which he hated) before starting work as a millwright apprentice in the village of Tandragee in Co. Armagh.

The family had probably reached its nadir at this time – but, thanks to hard work and making the best of their situation, the two boys went on to marry and raise families of their own, and there are now Laws from the Co. Down branch to be found not just in Northern Ireland but also in the Republic, in England and in North Carolina.

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## The Second Christian Watt: A Hereditary Taint?

I first happened upon *The Christian Watt Papers* by chance. They piqued my interest because of the unmistakable parallels I drew between the protagonist, Christian Sim (née Watt), and my 4x great-grandmother, Christian Ritchie (née Watt), who likewise spent several decades incarcerated at Aberdeen Lunatic Asylum on account of mental illness. When I discovered the two were in fact cousins, I knew the onus was on me to delve into the records and investigate. This revelation was the impetus behind my MSc dissertation at the University of Strathclyde, which examined asylum records through the lens of gender disparities and patient experiences in the wake of the Lunacy (Scotland) Act 1857.

Hitherto, no reference has ever been made to the similarities between the Christians' cases; bound together by blood, name and irreparable loss, the fates which befell these two women make for compelling reading.

For context, *The Christian Watt Papers* were published posthumously by David Fraser in the 1980s. Watt, a long-term asylum inmate, was encouraged by attendants to write down her recollections. Propelled into the public eye, these became a canonical account of women's struggles with the stigma of being labelled lunatics in socially conservative 19<sup>th</sup>-century Scotland. Fraser makes a series of editorial annotations which question the authenticity of Watt's account. Similarly, in their analysis of the papers, Beveridge and Watson (2006) consider the limitations of relying solely upon autobiography for

interpreting the past, equally contending that the corresponding asylum documentation available for Watt should be interrogated for evidence of distortion. Reading the papers and records in conjunction, both paint an unsurprisingly jaundiced picture of the asylum experience more generally – and yet they are quite at odds with one another.

This is not to say Watt's account is deserving of disregard in any way, nor should factual inaccuracies detract from the historical relevance of the papers. Personal and clinical accounts seldom chime together, and this is a chief difficulty of historical interpretation. Corroboration is key when handling disparate collections of facts: to arrive at any sort of conclusion involves rigorous analysis, judgement and – most importantly – an awareness that historical accounts will always conflict to some degree. The scholarly consensus is that the papers provide vivid clarity into the insurmountable hurdles women of this period inevitably confronted, regardless of what historical aspects remain unreconciled.

Many readers may be familiar with *The Christian Watt Papers* already. This article looks at the life of her first cousin of the same name, my 4g-grandmother. For want of a pencil, her experiences have been erased from living memory.

Christian Ritchie (née Watt) was born on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1814 at Broadsea, Fraserburgh, the eldest child of William Watt, fisherman, and his wife Ann Watt (née Pirie). William was the eldest brother of James and uncle to Christian who wrote the papers; ergo, the two women shared paternal grandparents.

According to *The Christian Watt Papers*, William “Wulla” Watt and his wife Ann resided at 7 Broadsea. The 1841 and 1851 censuses do not pinpoint their exact address, though when a widowed Ann applied to Fraserburgh's parochial board for poor relief in 1865, she was ordinarily resident at 16 Broadsea. She died there five years later. Christian's younger brother, James, took up residence at 7 Broadsea, thus he likely inherited the Watt family home, given that his two elder brothers emigrated to Australia. Christian likely spent her early years growing up among this cluster of streets in Fraserburgh.

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1836, Christian Watt married my 4g-grandfather, James Ritchie “Troup”, a native of Rosehearty. James had five children by his first wife, Jean Ritchie “Orem”, who had died in the early 1830s. James and Christian had eight documented children: James (1837–c.1842), William (1839–1916), Alexander (1841–1915), James (c.1844–c.1853), Christian (1846–1911), John (1849), Mary (1853–63) and Margaret (1857). I carry the Ritchie surname through their son Alexander, pictured here.

Large families were customary among fishing communities, though this was the potential cause of Christian's decline. She was first admitted to Aberdeen Lunatic Asylum on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1849, receiving a diagnosis of melancholia. The case notes contain invaluable genealogical facts: she had been married for 12 years, had eight children, and was believed to be free from any hereditary taint. She appears at the asylum in the 1851 census recorded by initials only, as was standard practice of the time. Husband James appears at Rosehearty with seven children, one of whom was from his first marriage. Christian possibly raised James's elder children as her own, hence why the case notes refer to eight children when she only had six documented at the time of her admission.





Described as quiet, industrious, of “cheerful disposition and [of] healthy constitution of body”, it is said that Christian always became increasingly aggravated after childbirth. Her principal symptoms consisted of religious despondency, pain in her head, and illusions of sight and hearing. This was attributed to an injury of the head and the puerperal state. Following the birth of son John five months earlier, Christian began wandering from home and became excitable and dangerous in manner. The language of her case notes may appear meagre but reveals disturbing information: Christian was physically restrained to her bed with cords, causing sores to develop around her wrists and ankles.

Her condition deteriorated rapidly upon admission to the asylum. Suicidal tendencies manifested, and Christian required constant watching for fear she would injure herself. She was known to conceal string and handkerchiefs – which staff firmly believed she intended to end her life with – and so was searched every night before being put to bed. With her suicidal ideation beginning to wane by February 1850, Christian’s health gradually restored itself, and she was discharged in April 1851.

Physicians of this period worked with vague diagnostic frameworks modelled upon Victorian ideals of medicine, attributing insanity within men to criminal lunacy and intelligence, and insanity within women to childbirth and the reproductive system. Christian’s case notes suggest she suffered from puerperal insanity or mania – the modern equivalent being post-partum depression. This can be broken down into two categories: excitement and delirium; and low melancholy. With the former, symptoms typically included sleeplessness, delusions and extreme fluctuations in behaviour. The latter manifested in the form of despondency, hopelessness and suicidal ideation. The case notes imply Christian exhibited symptoms of both categories.

Following her discharge, Christian returned to her family at Rosehearty and had a further two children. While her symptoms did not reappear, the family were beset by several tragedies: her son James died circa 1853, husband James in 1860, and daughter Mary in 1863. Her elder children, Alexander and Christian, were living elsewhere by the 1861 census, while another son, William, had emigrated to Australia.

A widowed pauper relying on state maintenance, Christian was admitted to the Lunatic Wards of St Nicholas Poorhouse in January 1866. These wards separated pauper lunatics from the general pauper population. There she remained under supervision and was prone to paroxysms of excitement and restlessness, in which she talked incessantly throughout the night – to the annoyance of other poorhouse inmates. She was deemed quite unable to take care of herself, and on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1866 was admitted to Aberdeen Royal Lunatic Asylum for a second time. Constituted through royal charter in 1852, the institution was now under the auspices of medical superintendent Dr Robert Jamieson.

This time, Christian was diagnosed with dementia, nowadays understood as schizophrenia. Asylum reform in 1857 – the result of legislative action and centralised governance – meant that proper certification for the insane became a statutory requirement. Besides case notes, records available for Christian include two medical certificates and a certificate of admission. The medical certificates state that Christian had delusions regarding how she was to be treated, demanding she be given her money. She would write letters and place them under the doors of different rooms, desiring to return home where she thought her relatives were staying. Physicians believed she was oblivious to the reality of her financial situation: subsequent case note entries for 1868, 1872 and 1873 reveal her

condition remained unchanged. She would frequently attempt to open doors and would scream throughout the night for her “cartloads of siller” (“silver”, i.e. money).

Spending the rest of her life at the asylum – where she was recorded in the 1881 census as an insane pauper aged 66 – Christian succumbed to pneumonia on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1890 at the age of 75. Her deathbed illness lasted four days, and her death was registered by the house steward, James Kemp. As the informant on her death record was no relation, this may explain why her husband’s name was misrecorded as “George” Ritchie.

Six days later, at 6am on 21<sup>st</sup> January, Christian’s body was received into the University of Aberdeen’s medical school. Supplying the bodies of asylum inmates to medical schools for research was common practice if they had no known relatives. This also applied to poorhouse inmates and to those whose deaths were unascertained or pending further investigation. Christian was buried four months later in Aberdeen’s Nellfield Cemetery. Whether any relatives were present is unclear, though none appear to have been mentioned in the case notes, medical certificates or admission register entries; thus it can be inferred that she was possibly castigated by her family.

The question of a hereditary predisposition to mental illness within the family inevitably emerges when comparing the cases of the two Christians. The papers state that five Watt cousins were afflicted – and, although no names are disclosed, my 4g-grandmother is likely included here, ambiguous as the reference may be. Both Christians appear to have been prone to religious despondency and self-destructive behaviours as far as the records suggest. The former is perhaps best explained by the religious revivals that swept North-East Scotland in the 1860s, in which Methodism took firm root and flourished. The spiritual awakening experienced in fishing communities was attributed to the uptick in patients who exhibited symptoms and behaviours of a religious nature.

Looking towards the direct family of my 4g-grandmother, the circumstances surrounding the deaths of her sister and two sons warrant acknowledgement. Magdalene Watt died at the same institution on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1899, aged 72. Her case notes directly refer to her sister dying in the asylum after 30 years’ residence, and that Magdalene herself had a daughter who was an inmate at the asylum the previous year. Christian’s son, William, died in Australia on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1916 from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, the death certificate stating that the particulars of his mind were unknown at the time. My 3g-grandfather, Alexander, died on 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915. It is believed he went for a walk during the night and in the darkness fell into Rosehearty’s West Harbour and fractured his skull. Although Alexander’s death was deemed accidental, the nature of his death – and of those of his brother and aunt – testifies to the recurrent tragedy within the family and to the possibility that there was indeed “a hereditary taint”.

This is testament to the genealogical value of asylum records. Genealogists are all too familiar with the limitations present when researching prior to statutory records, such as having to rely on patchy census data and burial registers. Asylum records are remarkable in their ability to circumnavigate these issues and showcase lived experience, much to the contrary of conventional record sets, which are oriented towards capturing objective data. Asylum records have the added bonus of revealing family hardships, strains and incidents which may evade other record sets and otherwise remain unknown. Highlighting the experiences of the incarcerated, these records bring to light rich historical information, complement the genealogist’s repertoire, and initiate dialogue with other record sets by providing key information for follow-up research.

Nevertheless, caveats should still be exercised when handling the records. Information supplied for cases was often relayed by family and friends – and, in the case of paupers, by the Inspector of Poor. As the information is secondary in nature, facts may have been intentionally concealed or erroneously recorded. Considering that moral treatment – which was predicated upon the idea that patients ought to be treated with humane compassion – was still in its elementary phase, cases may have been exaggerated to justify institutional confinement. Moreover, the language used in these records is nowadays construed as crass and derogatory, hence it is important to appropriately situate these records within their historical and genealogical contexts, remaining mindful of language when deploying research on family histories.

In the case of my 4g-grandmother, these are the only records which can authoritatively tell her story, regardless of what influences – clinical or otherwise – were behind her admission. I find it remarkable that in all my years of research, it should have taken this long to find records that should convey an abundance of information relating to her confinement, even more so because of the similarities she bears to her first cousin. The Christian Watts were victims of this period beset by trials and tribulations beyond their control, and as genealogists we must tell their stories with tact and diplomacy. Over 130 years after her death, I should like to think I have told the story of my ancestor respectfully and reminded the world of her existence.

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## Theophilus Ogilvie: Illegitimate Gentleman and Premier Citizen

In February 1799, an important meeting was held in Aberdeen to discuss the various needs in the city and the proposed improvements and developments being considered. A list was published of all the leading citizens and those who qualified by financial standing to have a voice – and top of that list was Theophilus Ogilvie Esq. His name preceded the current and former Provosts, the baillies, advocates, merchants and all the rest. It was a very full list. Theophilus was a man of significance – but few have heard of him. Who was he?

For a leading citizen, Theophilus did not have a particularly propitious start in life. His baptism was recorded in the Old Parish Register for Cullen, Banffshire:

“1722 May 26<sup>th</sup>

Ogilvie An Child baptizd to Ann Hay called Theophilus begotten in fornication with George Ogilvie Witnesses Walter Ogilvie Alexander Hay”

Four months earlier, the parish Kirk Session had recorded that Ann Hay in Cullen was with child, in fornication, and claimed that George Ogilvie was the father. She faced church discipline of course, and over the following months was not just admonished but also fined and made to stand on the pillory before the congregation. It was noted more than once that George Ogilvie was currently in Edinburgh but that he accepted Ann’s claim. He eventually confirmed his admission of fatherhood in a letter to the minister. Ann’s father Alexander paid her fine for her. Thus did Theophilus enter the world.

He did have one enormous advantage: he had been born into one of the most influential families in the country. His father, usually styled “*Mr George Ogilvie*”, was a son of the Ogilvies of Inchmartine, holders of many noble titles and senior government positions. George’s elder brother James inherited several peerages from their father, another James Ogilvie, who was 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Seafield, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Findlater, Viscount Reidhaven and Lord Ogilvie of Deskford and Cullen. He had also been Secretary of State for Scotland during the 1690s and very early 1700s, Lord High Chancellor, Keeper of the Great Seal etc. (the list of official appointments goes on at some length). His wife, Theophilus’s grandmother, was Anne, daughter of Sir William Dunbar of Burn. Sadly, both his father George and his Ogilvie grandfather died in 1730 when Theophilus was just 8 years old. His father, an advocate, had spent much time in Edinburgh and had never married.

Theophilus’s great- and great-great-grandfathers, both James Ogilvies of Inchmartine (their wives Lady Anne Montgomerie and the Lady Elizabeth respectively), had been Earls of Findlater too, and are traced in *Burke’s Peerage* back to Sir Andrew Ogilvie of Inchmartine (Perthshire), who married Marjory, daughter of Sir John Glen of Balmuto, in February 1440. Theophilus was part of an ancient and distinguished heritage.

In his teens, Theophilus studied for three years at King’s College (University), Aberdeen, became a writer (lawyer) and then married Marjory Gordon, daughter of an Aberdeen merchant. His work at the centre of the Scottish legal system in Edinburgh meant that he and Marjory lived there for a few years after their wedding. A family soon arrived. Daughter Marjory was born in December 1741 but died only six months later, by which date Theophilus had been appointed Secretary to the Solicitor General. Soon, and almost certainly due to family influence, he moved into the national customs and excise service, taking up posts based in Aberdeen but with responsibility for the whole North-East. He was Tide Surveyor for several years, then promoted to Controller of Customs and finally to Collector. These posts don’t sound glamorous, but they were important. The Collector

was responsible for all matters of customs between and including Kincardineshire, north through Aberdeenshire and Banffshire. He controlled as many as 20 officials based in the ports big and small, and he had to report daily and quarterly to HQ in Edinburgh and deal regularly with local councillors and merchants throughout his area. Smuggling was almost a national pastime during that era, and trying to stop or control it was both extremely difficult and hazardous. Theophilus was Collector until 1781/2, nearly 30 years.

During that period, his family grew. Eldest son George was born at Christmastide 1742, and James in January 1744. Elizabeth followed in October 1745, within a fortnight of the Jacobite victory at Prestonpans; then William was born in May 1751. John was baptised on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1753, and Sophia Mary on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1756. All the baptisms were formally witnessed by William Gordon, Marjory's father (who eventually rose to be an Aberdeen baillie), and by others in the customs service. James Ogilvie, a close kinsman, the former Collector of Customs and Excise for the whole of Scotland, who almost certainly played a part in Theophilus's rapid promotion, was witness to several of the baptisms.

Of the children, only James appears to have made any significant mark, though George deserves a mention. The latter became an advocate quite young but appears to have died soon after that. It seems that William died as a youngster, Elizabeth probably remained single, John is thought to have died quite young too, while Sophia Mary married in 1784 but left Scotland. James, however, went to sea, joining the East India Company. His rapid rise through the ranks was probably accelerated by his father's influence and connections with ship managers. A fourth mate in 1763, by 1772 he was captaining the *Valentine*, on which he had sailed as a senior officer to China and several Indian ports. Under his command, two events gained considerable public attention: a naval battle with the French in 1778, and the storm-tossed wrecking of his ship on rocks off Sark in the Channel Isles in November 1779. His bravery and dedication to duty were complimented on both occasions. He had married from his father's house at Greenhall, just north of Aberdeen.

Theophilus himself showed an ability and dedication which impressed contemporaries. His nomination by the Earl of Findlater in 1770 as one of his estate commissioners was a judgement on his good sense and reliability, as was his lengthy office as Collector and his partnership in a new Aberdeen banking company in 1767. Residing for many years at Greenhall, he also purchased the fairly small estate of Auchlunnies in Maryculter parish in 1771. According to the parish minister writing in the *Statistical Account* some years later, he was a benevolent heritor who contributed much to the relief of the distressed. He paid his dues – the taxes on servants, horses and windows – and was among the notables (lords, knights and landowners etc.) who supported Sir David Carnegie's return as MP for the Aberdeen Burghs in 1788, when Theophilus was described as "Once Collector of Customs at Aberdeen: Independent: Brother of the late Lord Findlater: a sensible man". Named on that list immediately after him was the Provost of the city ... which brings us back to the 1799 list of Aberdeen's leading citizens which placed Theophilus at its head.

He died quietly at home at Greenhall on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1807, aged 85. His death was recorded in both the *Scots Magazine* and the *British Register* without further comment. His Maryculter estate was sold off by 1810, but he had gifted his custom house at the corner of Regent Quay and Shore Lane to the city. Theophilus Ogilvie remained thereafter a notable name from the past in Aberdeen and the North-East, where he had lived his life as a sensible man and as a respected gentleman to the end.

## **William MacGregor and Harry Kellas**

### **The High Road and the Low Road from Tillyduke School to Queensland**

In the 1851 census, Tillyduke in the parish of Strathdon consisted of a school and teacher's residence along with three other cottages: two occupied by farm tenants, and the third by a shepherd's family. Harry Kellas, aged 11, was living in the household of his uncle Harry Findlay, one of the Tillyduke farm tenants – and William MacGregor, aged 5, was with his parents at Clashnewnie in the neighbouring parish of Towie. Both were listed as being at school, so would have been sharing the classroom of Tillyduke school.

#### **The high road**

Agricultural labourers, like William's father John MacGregor, had no security and had to follow the opportunities for work and accommodation. John, born in Banff, and his wife Agnes Smith, born in Leochel Cushnie parish, married in 1843 in the parish of Tarland, where their daughter Anne was born a few months later. They had moved to Hillockhead, Towie, by the time William was born on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1846; and by the 1851 census they were in Clashnewnie, Towie. Subsequent censuses showed further moves and at least six more children born over the next 15 years.

The 1861 census found William, aged 14, working as a "cattleman" for Peter Thomson and his wife Helen at Knowhead, Towie. The census shows six Thomson children, including Mary, also aged 14.

Encouraged by his schoolmaster, the minister and the local doctor, who all recognised his ability, William entered Aberdeen Grammar School in April 1866 and enrolled at the University of Aberdeen in October 1867. After studying there, he attended Anderson's Medical College and the University of Edinburgh, qualifying as a doctor in 1872.

William had not forgotten his former employer's daughter Mary, and they married on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1868. Their son, James Robb MacGregor, was born in January 1869.

After qualifying as a doctor, William's first position was as a medical assistant at the Royal Lunatic Asylum, Aberdeen. Perhaps he found that his humble beginnings restricted his career opportunities. In any case, he soon looked overseas for advancement, becoming assistant medical officer in the Seychelles in February 1873. His second child, Helen, was born there in 1874 before the family moved on to Mauritius, where William had been appointed resident at the hospital and superintendent of the lunatic asylum.

Apparently William impressed the Mauritius governor Sir Arthur Gordon, who, on being transferred to Fiji in 1875, recommended him as chief medical officer of Fiji. Among his challenges there was a terrible epidemic of measles, which resulted in the deaths of 50,000 local people. It seems William's administrative capabilities stood out, and in 1877 he was made receiver-general. A variety of other offices was later added, including the colonial secretaryship. He occasionally acted as governor, and was also acting high commissioner and consul-general for the western Pacific. Sadly though, his wife, childhood sweetheart Mary Thomson, died in 1877 in Fiji. William remarried in 1883 to Mary Cocks, with whom he eventually had four more children.

In 1884, the ship *Syria* ran ashore about 15 miles from Suva. William organised a relief expedition and personally saved several lives, which earned him the Albert Medal for Lifesaving from the British Government and the Clarke Medal from the Royal Humane

Society of Australasia. In January 1886, he represented Fiji at the meeting of the federal council of Australasia held at Hobart.

His next posting was in 1888, as administrator of British New Guinea, and subsequently as lieutenant-governor until 1898. While he encouraged European investment in industries such as gold-mining and coconut plantations, he also encouraged Papuans to participate, endeavouring to prevent their exploitation. He appointed Papuan village constables and recruited Papuans into the armed constabulary. As part of visits of inspection, he explored 600 miles up the Fly River and climbed Mount Victoria.

During his next posting, as governor of Lagos Colony, Nigeria from 1899 to 1904, his work in instituting a campaign against malaria earned him the Mary Kingsley Medal from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. During his governorship, roads and a railway were constructed.

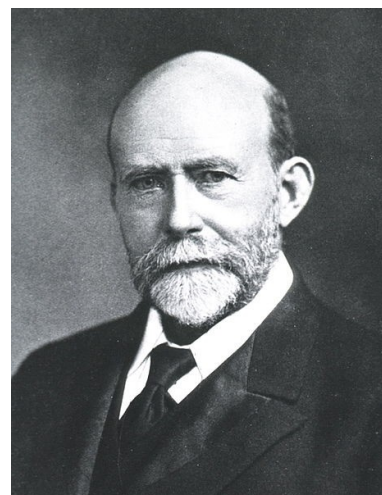
As governor of Newfoundland from 1904 to 1909, he used his medical knowledge in combating the very prevalent tuberculosis. His mediating skills were useful in a dispute over fishing rights between the local and British governments, where his suggestion to refer the matter to the Hague International Tribunal resulted in an amicable settlement.

In 1909 he was appointed governor of Queensland in Australia, and travelled widely throughout the state. While a decision had already been made to set up the University of Queensland, he supported its establishment, including the handing over of his official residence for its first home. He attended the dedication ceremony in December 1909 and became the university's first chancellor, taking great pride in its early development. He was also president of the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland and, after chairing its first meeting, became patron of the Historical Society of Queensland.

He retired in 1914 and returned to Scotland, being appointed a Privy Councillor in that year. During the First World War, he advised the Colonial Office on Pacific issues.

Sir William MacGregor, GCMG, MD, DSc, LL.D, died on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1919 and is buried next to his parents in Towie kirkyard. His name continues to hold prominence in Australia in two suburbs named Macgregor: one in Brisbane, the state capital of Queensland, and the other in Canberra, the federal capital.

The *Dictionary of Australian Biography*, after listing his many achievements, summarises the man:



Macgregor was a man of immense physical strength, it has been said of him in his early days that he was like a “great block of rough unhewn granite”. He began life with no advantages except his innate ability, and rose to be one of the really great men of his time. He was a fine linguist; apart from his home universities he had studied at Paris, Berlin and Florence, and he was an excellent scientist, as his medical work done at Fiji, Lagos and Newfoundland showed. He was a great administrator – always working for the good of the subject races and helping them to develop, and yet able on more than one occasion to save his own life by his excellence as a rifle shot. Contact with a world of men gradually softened a certain roughness of manner, until he became the courteous man of his later years. But he was always a great personality, a great fighter, striving continually for the cause of right and justice, and using his scientific knowledge for the good of humanity.

## The low road

My great-grandfather Harry Kellas was born at Tillyduke in 1839, the youngest of eight children born to Alexander Kellas and his wife Ann Findlay. The family lived with Ann's unmarried brother Harry Findlay, who was tenant of the 16-acre farm, with Alexander working as an agricultural labourer.

Young Harry Kellas attended Tillyduke school, as shown in the 1851 census. By the 1861 census, he had left home and was working as a shepherd in the parish of Tullynessle & Forbes. By 1864 he had moved to Banff, where he fathered a child with Margaret Smith. Though he reported the birth and was named on the birth certificate, he was apparently unable to offer Margaret a home. She married another man in 1874.

Harry's uncle Harry Findlay and mother Ann died in 1862 and 1864 respectively. By 1871, Harry had returned to Tillyduke and is shown as head of the household. His sister was keeping house; and his brother John, who had also previously worked as a shepherd, was shown as a dependant, presumably having been struck down by accident or illness. (John never worked again, remaining a pauper all his life.) Their father Alexander Kellas was recorded as a visitor in a neighbouring parish.

Harry was still living at Tillyduke in 1874 when he married Jane Coutts, though the marriage took place at his aunt's house in Aberdeen. Their son James Coutts Kellas was born in 1879 at Tillyduke, but by 1881 Harry had obtained a tenancy at Persley on the outskirts of Aberdeen, and moved his new family there. He was running the tenancy as a dairy, delivering milk door to door. The household included one male farm servant and Jane's unmarried sister Mary, who was a dairymaid. Life must have continued well for them over the next decade, as by 1891 they had moved to Quarrie Farm, Persley, and Harry was employing two male and two female farm servants, again including Mary.

The Depression of the 1890s brought misfortune and hardship to many people around the world. Harry couldn't see the children of his customers and neighbours go without milk, and he continued "selling" milk on credit, but his generosity resulted in his bankruptcy. His family lost the tenancy at Persley, and everything else. By 1901, Harry Kellas was back to being a shepherd on a farm at Drumoak, Aberdeenshire, while his wife Jane was in the workhouse at New Machar.

James moved south, presumably looking for better work opportunities, and by 1903 he was a coachman at Mill Hill House, south of Edinburgh, when he married Mary Wood, a cook at Newton House. James and Mary moved around nearby areas, probably for work opportunities, with four children born at different locations over the next few years. By 1909, they were living in the gardener's cottage on Newton Farm, Cambuslang near Glasgow, and James's parents Harry and Jane had come to live with them. Jane died there in 1909; and James's fifth child, Beatrice (my mother), was born there in 1910.

James, Mary and their children migrated to Australia in 1911, arriving in the state capital Brisbane and going straight away to Toowoomba on the Darling Downs, a rural area to the west. James was concerned that his father's



*James Coutts Kellas  
and Mary Wood*



bankruptcy would be held against him when he applied to migrate to Australia, so he reversed his name – from James Coutts Kellas to James Kellas Coutts. The family has continued to use the Coutts name in Australia.

Harry followed them to Australia within a year or two. After they had tried some farming ventures without a great deal of success, James found employment at Levick's shop in Westbrook outside Toowoomba. Harry walked out each day to a nearby farm, where he grew vegetables on a share basis. More children were born to James and Mary (seven survived infancy). On Sundays, Harry would take long walks out into the countryside, taking the grandchildren who were old enough to accompany him. He told them stories, and he would stop to rest and read to them from the Bible.

Harry Kellas died in 1920 in Toowoomba. His legacy in Australia is that he has well over 100 descendants who have contributed in all sorts of ways to Harry's new country.

William and MacGregor are not uncommon names. I often wonder if, when Harry Kellas arrived in Queensland in 1913, he knew that William MacGregor, Governor of the State of Queensland and Chancellor of the University of Queensland, was in fact his childhood younger neighbour and school friend?

I was spurred to write this article after researching Tillyduke regarding my ancestors and finding the illustrious other pupil of the school there.

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## The Family of George Mackay: A Seafaring Tradition

In Journal 166, we summarised the colourful life and adventures of George Mackay, who began as a herd loon and, after a life of adventure on the high seas, served for many years as harbourmaster at Fraserburgh. A comprehensive account of Mackay's descendants is available for consultation in the Society's library downstairs at King Street.

Perhaps it's not surprising that many of George's family became equally entranced by the sea. He married twice and had 11 children in all, several of whom maintained a seagoing tradition. Robert Mackay (1860–1914), the eldest son, joined the merchant navy in 1875 aged 15 (just like his father). His papers show that he joined in Peterhead but was bound to John Anderson, a shipowner from Macduff. He qualified as a Master Seaman in 1884 and two years later married Jessie Jane Nicol, daughter of a Fraserburgh shipbroker. They relocated to Cardiff. He commanded a series of large vessels involved in trade to India and Hong Kong and became commodore of a trading fleet. He even hosted his father, then aged 75, on a voyage in the Mediterranean. Sadly, he died at sea of dysentery, aged 46, in November 1914 while master of the *Hova*.

Another son, William (1870–1934), also took to the sea – in 1893 he became second mate and in 1895 a master for foreign-going steamships. By 1899 he was commanding vessels in the China seas. In 1900 in Hong Kong, he married Catherine (Kate) Gordon MacAllan (b. 1873), who was a teacher in Fraserburgh. They had daughters Helen Gray Mackay (1901?–1997) and Kathleen MacKay (b. 1904). In 1911, William entered upon what

proved to his main life's work, when he became master of the *Thrift*, the collier belonging to the Northern Co-operative Society, which carried coal from Blyth to Aberdeen.

You might think Captain George Mackay's daughters avoided the travelling bug – but Jessie Gray Mackay's family maintained a fine sea-going tradition. She married James Alexander Grant, a Fraserburgh ironmonger, in 1891, and had seven children. Her third child, also James Alexander Grant (1897–1985), went to sea aged 15 at his grandfather's suggestion and qualified as a second mate in 1920. He married Caroline



*Jessie Mackay in 1891 with her husband James Grant*



*James Grant jnr and Caroline (Carrie) Cooper in*

Cooper in 1931 in Cardiff, when she was 21 and he was 34. They had three children – Rita Mackay Grant (1931–2015), Ian Edward Grant (1933–2015) and Jessie Miriam Grant (1934–2021), who was named after her grandmother but was known as Joy.

James retired from the Merchant Navy just before the Second World War and became a Royal Navy Voluntary Reservist, his years of seafaring experience soon earning him the rank first of Lieutenant and then from 1942 of Lt Commander. He completed many trips on convoy duty guarding merchant vessels travelling between the USA and Britain. Finally obliged to leave the navy because of bad eyesight, he was asked by a US Vice Admiral to become his aide and go to the USA, where they worked with American senior officers on the Marshall Aid Plan.

James' son Ian Grant (1933–2015) joined HMS *Ganges*, a shore training establishment, at Harwich on the River Orwell as a boy seaman. The barracks had six billets, each housing 10 boys, with hammocks for beds. Their training included square-bashing, rifle training, vessel maintenance, Morse code, knots, flag signalling and climbing up the tall mizzen mast in the training yard. The training lasted three months, with a passing-out parade where Ian was awarded a medal as best boy seaman. The ceremony culminated in all the boys climbing the mast and standing on yardarms near the top. Ian had to stand on the very top.



In 1950, aged 17, Ian joined HMS *Consort* in Hong Kong. As he filed up the gangway, the first question asked was “Do you play sport?”, then “Where are you from?” “Cardiff”, he replied. “Put him down for rugby”, somebody else said.

Having previously been apprenticed to a signwriter, Ian was quickly assigned painting duties, reminiscing that “I became ship's painter, with many jobs, including painting ship's plaques (crests) and lifebuoys to painting 8s on the funnel”.

Soon Ian's ship was on its way to the Korean conflict, where she began the routine of patrolling, shore bombardment and enforcing the blockade. During the winter patrols, the first job for the seamen every day was to clear the unbelievably thick ice that covered the

guns and superstructure. Even though this work was carried out each morning, it made very little difference, recalled Ian: “We could not train or elevate the guns because they were frozen up”. Ian’s naval career was curtailed by a bad traffic accident in Portsmouth. He later ran a silk screen printing business with his wife.

Another of Jessie’s grandsons was Gordon Grant Simpson (1933–2012), who was the son of Ethel Grant and was born in India, where his father was in the jute business. He came to Aberdeen as a boarder at Robert Gordon’s College, later serving an apprenticeship at Hall Russell in Aberdeen and becoming a chief engineer for the shipping lines between India and the UK. After retiring from the Merchant Navy, he was involved in the growing offshore oil industry in the North Sea.

But it wasn’t just the boys who fancied a life on the high seas ...

Rita Mackay Grant (1931–2015) was the eldest daughter of James and Carrie Grant. She is the only woman in the family to have served in the Navy, joining the Wrens when she was 17 and serving until 1955. She considered a second term, but met Peter Phillips and got married instead. Peter is now 93 and a big contributor to the family’s ancestry research!



*The Wren days (Rita Grant in foreground)*

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—oOo—

## **Kirkyard or Cemetery? A Grave Problem ...**

Between 1801 and 1901, the population of Scotland rose from just over 1.6 million to nearly 4.5 million. In other words, it had nearly tripled. This caused multiple problems for the living, in housing, health, welfare, education and employment. But also for the dead – where were they all to be buried?

This question became critical for the Aberdeenshire parish of Strichen in 1906, provoking a dispute between the minister, the Rev. Richard Goodwillie, and Mr John Sleigh, the factor who managed the Strichen Estate, about extending the kirkyard.

The minister’s interest in the matter is obvious, but what did the factor have to do with it? To answer that question, we must go back nearly three and a half centuries, to the time of the Reformation, when the extensive lands which once belonged to the monasteries, abbeys and bishoprics of the Catholic Church found their way (by rather dubious means) into the hands of a group of the nobility and gentry. These new owners of the lands came to be known as “heritors”. As a condition of their ownership, they were obliged, among other things, to provide and maintain the kirk, the kirkyard, the manse and the school in each parish – tasks which their successors carried out with varying degrees of zeal.

Unusually, the parish of Strichen had just a single heritor, who owned the entire territory. Since 1855, it had been in the possession of a family called Baird (Strichen still has a Baird Road) – but in 1893 the last laird, an absentee playboy, amateur jockey and promoter of bare-knuckle prize fights, who had squandered much of his fortune, died without direct issue. In 1906, the heir, a child of his cousin, was a minor, and the estate was in the hands of trustees, a firm of London solicitors, whose interests were represented locally by the factor of the Strichen Estate, Mr Sleigh.

What we know of the quarrel comes from a 24-page document, *A Statement for the Information of the Parishioners of Strichen*, written (and presumably paid for) by the minister – and I am indebted to ANESFHS member Jim Campbell (no. 12688), who unearthed a copy of this booklet in the course of his work to record the Memorial Inscriptions of Strichen (see page 13).

The *Statement* reproduces a series of letter exchanged by minister and factor between January and April 1906, and follows this up with a 12-page narrative setting out the Rev. Goodwillie's view of the matter. On 13<sup>th</sup> January 1906, he had written:

*I beg to draw your attention to the necessity for an immediate enlargement of the Graveyard. The last lair is now occupied with the remains of Mrs Taylor, whose interment took place today.*

He then went on to describe, in graphic detail, the general state of the kirkyard:

*There is not one tenantless grave left, and for some time there has been far too much crowding. It is not very long ago since I saw three bodies, the lowest and longest-buried of which was very far from being decomposed, broken up in a gruesome manner to make room for the burial of another member of the same family.*

In reply, the factor merely promised to bring the matter to the attention of the trustees, and on 26<sup>th</sup> January he wrote:

*I forwarded your letter to me of the 13<sup>th</sup> inst. to the Strichen Trustees, anent the Strichen Churchyard. I have now heard that they do not see their way to enlarge the same.*

The trustees, he reports, feel that

*proper and legal proceedings will have to be taken to have a new burial ground provided under the Act.*

From further correspondence, it emerges that this was a reference to the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act of 1855, which had empowered Parochial Boards (one of the predecessors of the County Councils) to set up cemeteries (i.e. burial grounds independent of the Kirk); but, beyond clarifying that point, the factor, despite numerous lengthy epistles from the minister, had nothing further to say – which presumably helped spur the Rev. Goodwillie into composing his *Statement*.

The narrative which forms the bulk of the *Statement* is long-winded and unfocused, and at one point the minister is moved to make a personal attack on the factor:

*The management of the Churchyard has been for a long series of years in the hands of one man, and events have proved it to have been grievously mismanaged.*

But, if we strip out the irrelevances and expressions of outrage, the dispute boils down to a seeming contradiction in the law, between the traditional obligations of the heritors, as cited by the minister, and the new powers offered by the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act, as promoted by the factor and trustees. In fact, there is no clash. What the factor and trustees failed to recognise (or chose to ignore?) was that the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act was merely permissive – that is, it allowed parishes to open cemeteries, *if the ratepayers requested*, but did not impose any obligation to do so. And, as the Rev. Goodwillie reported, on 11<sup>th</sup> April, at a parish meeting,

*The people present, by an overwhelming majority, signified their intention to have an extended Churchyard at the hands and cost of the Heritor.*

So, why would the factor and the trustees have been in any doubt about this? One might allow that the trustees, marooned, as they were, in the wilds of London EC3, might not be wholly up to speed regarding the obligations of heritors anent kirkyards, or conversant with the details of a 50-year old Act of Parliament which applied only in Scotland. But that the factor, who had represented the heritor for decades, should have been similarly unaware of the legal position is a little harder to credit. And he must certainly have known that, in the neighbouring parish of Lonmay, the heritors had, just the year before, provided a sizeable extension to the kirkyard. Did he really not understand the legal position – or did he think he had found a loophole?

We shall never know. Nor, in all likelihood, shall we know exactly how the drama then played out. We do know that the minister, besides composing his *Statement*, had further covered his back by reporting the matter to the next level in the Kirk's hierarchy, namely the Presbytery of Deer. Were they able to exert pressure? Was the factor eventually persuaded by the minister's arguments – or worn down by his persistence? Whatever the reason, the Rev. Goodwillie's stance was vindicated, because we find, on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1906, the earliest entry in a new Burial Register covering interments in the "New Ground" – the area to the south of the original kirkyard which the Rev. Goodwillie had proposed for the extension to the kirkyard.

It's fairly easy to see why the factor and the trustees might favour the establishment of a cemetery: it would save them trouble and money. But why were the minister and the congregation so opposed to the idea? This comes back to the traditional status of the kirkyard – because, if the heritor had obligations, the parishioners had rights. Residents of a parish were entitled to claim a burial plot in the kirkyard. That plot then belonged to them and their heirs indefinitely and exclusively, and they could (assuming they could afford it) raise a monument over the deceased.

In a cemetery, things were very different. An individual or family could still acquire the exclusive and inalienable right to a grave plot – *but only against payment*. Anyone unable to meet this cost would be buried in what might euphemistically be designated a "common" or "unassigned" lair – but which was more generally known as a "pauper's grave". You would be interred in the next available plot, along with whoever else happened to die around the same time, so it was almost inevitable that you, your spouse and your children would all end up in different – and unmarked – graves. This is why the Rev. Goodwillie and his congregation did not wish a cemetery.

There is a nice irony to round off the story. In one of his letters to the factor, the Rev. Goodwillie had pointed out that, as neither of them had a family plot in the original kirkyard, there would be nowhere for either of them to be buried. So, when they died – the factor in 1918, aged 92, the minister in 1934, aged 87 – where were they interred? In the New Ground, over which they had argued so acrimoniously! The factor's stone is up against the south wall, facing north; the minister's at the northern boundary, facing south, more or less opposite the factor's. They may, of course, with advancing years, have composed their differences – but I rather like to imagine them glowering at each other through all eternity, across the disputed ground.

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