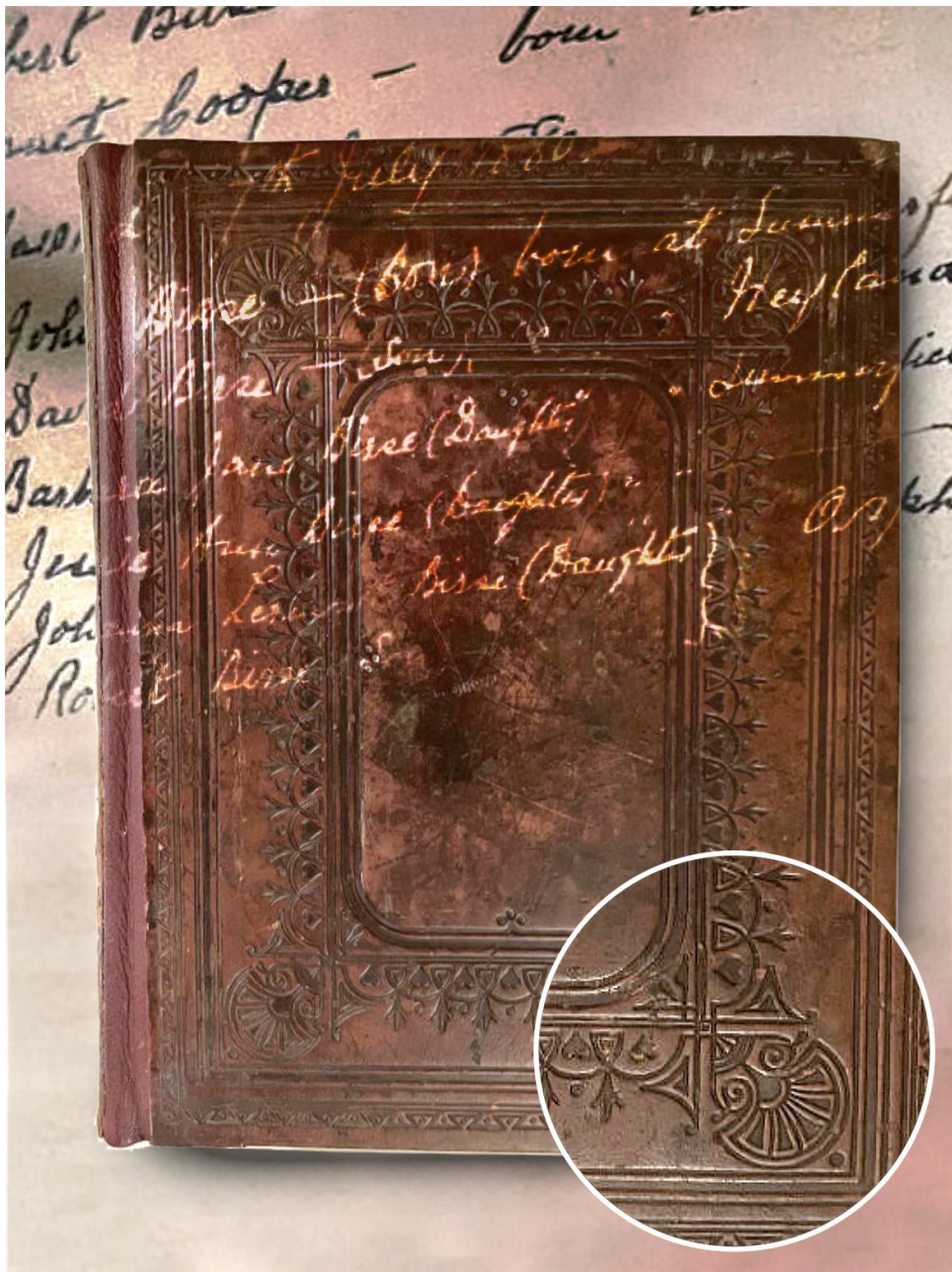


Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society

Journal No. 172 • November 2024



*Details of cover and flyleaf of a Birse/Cooper family Bible
(see article in this issue by Ian Birse, no. 11031)*

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

Ordinary membership:	£25.00	Ordinary digital (e-Journal only):	£18.00
Family membership:	£30.00	Family digital (e-Journal only):	£24.00

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You can pay online at our website (PayPal: account or cards), by post (now cheque only; **no cards**), by Direct Debit, by Internet Banking, or in person at our Family-History Centre. Members who are UK taxpayers may sign a **Gift Aid** declaration (forms supplied on request) and so increase the value to the Society of their contributions by 20%.



Internet Banking:

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

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

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

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

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

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.

ANESFHS website and Members' Forum

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

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

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

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

Issue 172, November 2024

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Society Reports, News and Information

Editorial

Once again, we are grateful to all those who have contributed articles and queries and responded to our requests for family stories. Do please keep them coming in. Special thanks go to Steve Edwards for creative assistance with photos and graphics. This Journal is a full-colour print issue, and we hope you will find plenty to enjoy in it.

Are you contemplating a clear-out? A number of articles in this Journal came about because of people finding interesting family “treasures” while helping to sort through a relative’s papers. Finding out the story behind papers and artefacts can really bring them to life and perhaps inspire a new generation to value them. The story of Jane Jeans’s lovely but “neglected” sampler is a wonderful example. After having spent years in a plastic bag, it is now enjoying a new lease of life. This also led to a photo-dating detective story whereby our “photo and fashion” correspondent, Kate Clark, provided a better date attribution purely on the basis of garment styles ... and the photo-studio details agreed!

Here at the Editorial desk, we are always delighted by odd little coincidences that enliven each issue. We have a very pleasing connection between Joe McLeod’s story, detailing the tools of the line fisherman’s trade included in James Cassie’s painting, and the description of changes in methods of fishing given in Mike Shepherd’s recent talk on Port Erroll/Cruden Bay. Greg Ritchie’s Reid family story also reminds us of the heavy price paid by fisher families when storms rage. All of this provides really helpful social context for those with maritime origins.

Looking to the future, we’d like to have more stories about coastal life, and we also hope to prepare a theme on family traditions and recipes concerning food. Did your family have a special dish that reminded them of the North-East or old family ways? Did your granny have a special recipe for broth or oatcakes or other treats? If so, please let us know at the e-mail address below. Happy reading!

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Elaine Petrie (No. 22949) and Ivor Normand (No. 4161)

—oOo—

Chairman’s and Centre Manager’s Report

The Centre is still busy with visitors, and our volunteers continue to provide them with a positive experience as well as encouraging them to continue their research at home or in future visits to us here in Aberdeen. As usual, we could do with more volunteers to help in the Centre and with various other tasks. Should you have a particular area of expertise that you think might be useful to us, please give us a call. We’d love to hear from you.

Our buildings are over 150 years old and need constant maintenance. Thanks to some sterling work from Bob Strowger, all of areas of 136 King Street have been tidied up, and the materials have been catalogued and moved up to the ground floor. The shared rear patio area has also been tidied up, all the old junk removed and the area cleared of moss and weeds. It’s been a mammoth task, and our thanks go to Bob for all his work.

We have refurbished the frontages of all our buildings with a fresh new coat of paint – Air Force blue for the Research Centre and office, and black for 136. The monies we received

from the Granite Roots Appeal have ensured that all our premises are up to date, bright, cheery and better to work in as well as to visit. Other than the ongoing need to keep our roofs watertight, we are well set up for the future

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Barbara Lamb (Centre Manager)

No. 20206

—oOo—

Library Report

Round about this time of year, I start thinking about Christmas presents, and specifically about books which I think friends and relatives might enjoy. I've already selected a couple from the Society's list of publications, but I also have the following books in mind.

Taste Ye Back: Great Scots and the Food That Made Them, by Sue Lawrence (Hachette Scotland, 2009). ISBN 978-0755318636

I like to think that my Scotch broth is good, but although I learned the recipe from my mother, it's not as good as her Scotch broth, and she always claimed that hers wasn't as good as her mother's. In this book, Sue Lawrence, a well-known Scottish food writer, interviews 70 prominent Scots and asks them about their families, their home and their memories of the food they grew up with. Nigella Lawson calls it "a wonderful collection of childhood memories, a truly nostalgic food trip down memory lane". There are recipes, but the personal element and the recollections of well-known Scots make it much more than a straightforward recipe book.

A Doric Dictionary, by Douglas Kynoch (Luath Press, 2010). ISBN 978-1912147687

Douglas Kynoch is an Aberdeen loon, a weel-kent face on Scottish television, and a well-known exponent of the Doric. This is a two-way lexicon of words and phrases from the former Banffshire through Aberdeenshire down to the Mearns and north Angus, and is drawn from the published works of most of the North-East's best-known writers of the 19th and 20th centuries. I'm looking forward to his next book, *Doric Sayings*, due out in 2025.

The Cruden Bay Bram Stoker Knew: Adam Drummond's Stories, by Mike Shepherd and Adam Drummond (independently published in 2023). ISBN 979-8386682927

And still on a Doric theme, if you enjoyed Mike Shepherd's talk to the Society in October (reviewed earlier in this Journal), you may be interested in his book with the same title. This is a fascinating collection of short stories written by Adam Drummond, who was minister of Cruden Bay at the time Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula*, was there. It's an intimate account of the lives of fisher folk living in an Aberdeenshire village in the 1890s.

The Honours of Scotland: The Story of the Scottish Crown Jewels and the Stone of Destiny, by Chris Tabraham (Historic Environment Scotland, 2019). ISBN 978-1849172752

The Honours of Scotland, Scotland's Crown Jewels, are on display in Edinburgh Castle. The Stone of Destiny, or the Stone of Scone, one of Scotland's and of the UK's most significant historical objects, was stolen from Scotland by Edward I of England in 1296 and taken to London, where it remained for 700 years (apart from a brief repatriation in 1950–1). It was returned to Scotland in 1996, initially to Edinburgh, but it's now back in Perthshire, where it forms the centrepiece of the new Perth Museum. Most people will be

aware of the Stone of Destiny, but perhaps know less about the Honours of Scotland. Both have a turbulent history, and this beautifully illustrated book chronicles this.

Scotland's Forgotten Past: A History of the Mislaid, Misplaced and Misunderstood, by Alistair Moffat (Thames & Hudson, 2024). ISBN 978-0500297803

Alistair Moffat is a Scottish writer and journalist who has written many books on Scottish history. In this book, he focuses on 36 forgotten episodes and overlooked people and places of Scottish history. It's well researched, informative and interesting.

The Scottish Clearances: A History of the Dispossessed, 1600–1900, by T. M. Devine (Penguin, 2019). ISBN 978-0141985930

Tom Devine is a Scottish academic and author who specialises in the history of Scotland. His books are always exhaustively researched, but very accessible and enjoyable to read. The phrase “the Clearances” is very emotive and conjures up images of forced eviction from the Highlands, but the reality is more nuanced; there were clearances throughout Scotland which affected all of Scotland, hence the title *The Scottish Clearances*. This is research based on original sources, and shows that the story is much more complicated than a straightforward struggle between good and evil.

These books are all in the Society library and might be worth considering as gifts for people who are interested in Scotland and its culture and history. I've certainly enjoyed reading them.

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Margie Mellis

No. 2090

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ANESFHS and UKGDPR: A Further Update

In Journal 171, I gave a brief report on our ongoing review of the Society's compliance with UK General Data Protection Regulations. Proposed updates to the Society's Privacy Policy have now been shared with Trustees, and I await their feedback.

By the time you read this, we expect to have met again and to have approved a final version of our Privacy Policy and two other documents affected by the changes: the Society's Constitution and our Information Booklet for New Members. Once approved, these documents will be available on our website for you to see. The changes to the Constitution will, of course, remain as draft until members have the opportunity to vote to support the changes at our AGM in 2025.

Assuming that all is well and the documents are approved, that will just about conclude the review, with one or two smaller items to review and a report on my findings to be shared with Trustees. A “care and maintenance” approach will prevail until 2027, when the next review will be due. Earlier intervention will only be required if the Regulations change or if the Society's practice and procedures change, and should not involve a full-scale review. Help and support will continue to be available if you have any questions or concerns. You can contact me at the email address below.

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Helen Strachan

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Indexing of Ancestor Charts: An Update

It's not just about names and locations! A truly satisfying feeling is when an Ancestor Chart contains an insight into the life of the person who created the chart. Sometimes it is just scribbles in the margin, or lines and arrows chasing an ancestor across the pages. And there is one chart in particular that stands out in my mind.

The Indexing Team had been asked by one member if we could trace the chart which her grandmother had created many years before. We did – and, lo and behold, there in the margin was a note written by Grannie. She wrote a note of thanks to the volunteers (of the time) for supporting her and encouraging her to create her Ancestor Chart. After 18 months or more of research, she had finally completed her chart and was so pleased to be able to leave this legacy so that others might benefit. Can you imagine the surprise that her granddaughter had when she saw Grannie's handwriting, and her sheer delight that we had been able to find the chart? It is a moment that will stay with me forever.

Meantime, the indexers continue to make progress. By the time you read this article, I hope a copy will have been made available of the new index that we have been working on. This is an extension of the original index which is available on the Society's website (Services > Downloads). Members will be notified by e-Newsletter or website news item.

It is likely that, as the number of entries grows, the new index will be merged with the original. But, to make it easier for members to identify new and updated charts, we are keeping the two separate for the time being. At the time of writing, the new index contains around 750 surnames and their associated locations from some of the charts we still had to process, and from some new ones received since the team started. Unfortunately, to comply with UKGDPR, we cannot index the charts of lapsed members – but, if those individuals ever renew their Society membership, the indexers would be happy to help.

Looking forward to next year – already not far away – and Journal 173 (February), I hope to be able to share with you news of an exciting new development for the future of indexing and our plans to bring **all** of our Ancestor Charts together in one safe and secure environment. Watch this space!

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John Shewell (1937–2024)

Many members will know Teresa Shewell (no. 4883) and remember her husband John. Until her recent illness, Teresa was for many years an active member of our volunteer team at King Street. As well as helping visitors in our Research Centre, she organised the 100 Club, helped with classes for beginners, served a few terms as a Trustee, and was always willing to help with bookstalls at various fairs and events.

Throughout, John played a pivotal role in supporting and encouraging Teresa. Born in Manchester, he had an eventful life in South Africa before moving back to the UK, turning his hand to journalism, and eventually coming to Aberdeen, where in 1979 he met Teresa. They made a great team: he



was the ideas man and had the verve and expertise to push through to a satisfying conclusion, while she was the administrator, doing the paperwork and book-keeping. John did a lot to publicise family history and was very involved at Society public meetings and at events/book fairs.

After retiring, John and Teresa had time at last to indulge their love of travel and visiting new places. John reunited with his family in South Africa and enjoyed visits there and worldwide. At home he continued his involvement with various charities and charitable events, and was chairman of the Fundraising Committee for the RNLI. I remember John as the epitome of an English gentleman. He had a fund of wonderful stories and could make you feel you were the most important person he'd met that day – a rare gift.

John latterly developed dementia, and he died on 25th September at the age of 87. A celebration of his life was held at the Marcliffe Hotel on 7th October and was attended by over 100 family members and friends. Our love and sympathy go out to Teresa and the family and to all John's many friends. He will be sadly missed.

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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, by Standing Order. If you would like to join, please e-mail the address below.

The payout is always 50 per cent of the income, and there are four prizes in the monthly draw (1st: 20 per cent, 2nd: 15 per cent, 3rd: 10 per cent and 4th: 5 per cent of the income).

If you decide **not** to renew your ANESFHS membership, please **also remember to cancel your Standing Order for the 100 Club**. Only **you** can cancel your own Standing Order. If cancellation is not requested, the transaction will continue.

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 informed personally and are announced in the Journal. For further details, please see the current Information Booklet on our website.

	1 st prize No. (£17·40)	Mem. No.	2 nd prize No. (£13·05)	Mem. No.	3 rd prize No. (£8·70)	Mem. No.	4 th prize No. (£4·35)	Mem. No.
Aug	Alison 56 Kerr	1602	Janet 8 Taylor	20994	William 73 Copland	20126	John 23 Davidson	6455
Sep	Sue 132 McFarlane	15807	Alex 48 Smith	2880	David 6 Peters	2402	Robert 66 Lawrie	17901
Oct	J. & D. 37 Florence	13880	Dorothy 139 Smith	14618	Robert 14 Strowger	21446	Helen 28 Strachan	22873

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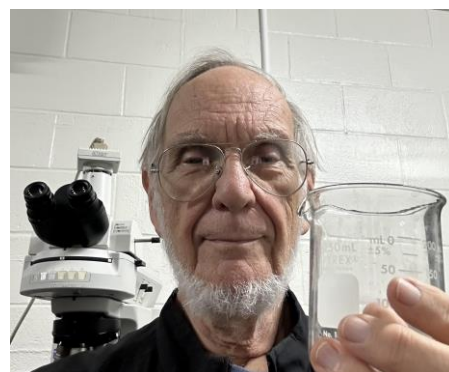
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Members' Meetings

Chris Lobban, "Lobban/Logan/Lobban Lines in Scotland and Beyond"

21st September 2024

The long arm of the Society reaches around the globe, not just to Australia and New Zealand but also to tiny Guam, an island north of Papua New Guinea and east of the Philippines. Happily, Guam came to us in the shape of Christopher Lobban, who works in the Natural Sciences department of the University of Guam, specialising in research into biodiversity research with a main focus on coral reef and mangrove diatoms. It turns out that studying biodiversity is a perfect partner skill for family-history research, both being concerned with how related organisms thrive and develop.



Chris Lobban: still one of the Beaker People

Born in Bristol. Chris emigrated as a teenager with his family to Canada. He caught the family-history bug from his uncle, Alan, who had traced the Lobban family history back as far as records would permit, which for his family branch showed records from 1704 when the first of six generations became tenants of Knabbygates in Rothiemay. However, Alan was keen to track the family lines further into the past, based on fragmentary mentions in historic source documents, all prior to DNA-testing, identifying two main Lobban clusters, in Banffshire and Inverness. Chris, ever the scientist, followed up with Y-DNA testing and was shocked when his first test told him his paternal ancestry was Germanic – not what he was expecting. Spurred by this, he joined DNA special-interest groups and the Guild of One-Name Studies (GoONS).

He has successfully traced Lobban into deep history, even getting a glimpse back before the origin of surnames. In Scotland, Lobban was pretty much a Lowland and North-East Scots family name, broadly Germanic but, like many other well-established Scots family names, possibly Flemish in origin. Further into the Highlands, the surname Lobban may well have had Celtic links and close association with Logan progenitors. These have been helpfully tracked in Cynthia Sweet's genealogical study of *Logan Families in Ross & Cromarty*.

Of course, the family lines continued to migrate, and Chris had some interesting examples of diaspora Lobban across the globe. These included Alexander Lobban of Fordyce (died in 1876 aged 73), who was deported to Australia and went on to become an exemplary member of the community. In America, John Gilmer Lobban (1834–1909) was a captain in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and the great-grandson of one John Lobban, reputedly born in 1734 in Longside near Peterhead. Even earlier, William Lobban (born in 1596) went to Holland in the 1620s as a mercenary soldier. He married a local woman and the family line thrived, perhaps rather neatly returning the Flemish genes to source!

All the results are detailed on Lobban.one-name.net – and, because the website is hosted by GoONS, it will be archived and kept accessible in the future, should Chris no longer be in a position to maintain it. As a one-name study, it also includes Lobban who acquired the surname from being slaves, but it is also a phylogenetic study, meaning that it traces Y-chromosomes into the Logan and Laban branches.

Useful resources

Website: <https://lobban.one-name.net/>

<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/logan-dna-project/about/background>



Map of surnames in Moray, prepared by Alan Rudge. Reprinted with permission.



Clan Logan Society Official Tartan for the 21st century, registered on 10th October 2023. The design was inspired by the colours of the flags of Scotland and Ireland, using muted shades of blue and green.

Based on the Logan tartan, it incorporates five overchecks of black and includes red and yellow lines, intended to represent the coat of arms registered by George Logan in 1672.

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Journal Team

Mike Shepherd, “The Cruden Bay of Bram Stoker and Adam Drummond”

19th October 2024

Mike Shepherd has a range of interesting local-history topics at his disposal relating to his home area of Cruden Bay, but even he was surprised when he was contacted by Louise Fyfe from Ayrshire, who said she had something of interest – a box in her attic marked “Dracula”. It turned out that Louise has impeccable North-East connections. Her father, James Drummond, had been Principal of Aberdeen Technical College, and her great-grandfather was the Rev. Adam Drummond, who had been minister of Port Erroll Congregational Church from 1891 to 1895, overlapping with the period when Bram Stoker was composing his most famous work, *Dracula* (published 1897). Better still, the mystery box contained papers compiled by James Drummond researching a topic dear to Mike’s heart: Bram Stoker’s visits to Cruden Bay. Best of all, it included a collection of Adam

Drummond's short stories written in broad Doric focusing on the fisherfolk he knew in Cruden Bay, describing their lives, feelings and their strong sense of community. Since both Adam Drummond and Bram Stoker had been writing about the same North-East community at the same time, they have left us a wonderful insight into the ways and beliefs of a North-East fishing community at the turn of the 20th century, just as fishing ways and lifestyles were changing along with the fortunes of the local gentry.

Mike explained how the place we know as Cruden Bay was previously called The Ward (from Ward of Cruden), then became Port Erroll in 1880 (in deference to the local landlord, the Earl of Erroll), then finally switched to Cruden Bay in 1924, since that was what the railway companies chose to call the station halt and hotel they created there.

A fascinating section of the talk covered the change in fishing methods. At one time, there were 63 thriving fishing villages dotted along 120 miles of the North-East coast from Moray down into Kincardineshire. In traditional small-line fishing, a fisher family would all be involved in the time-consuming work of collecting shellfish as bait, then fixing these at 1-metre intervals to the hooks suspended on hundreds of long lines. These were then paid out behind the fishing boat. Then followed the arduous work of hauling in the catch and gutting, salting, curing or smoking the fish and then transporting it to markets. The women and children were involved at many of the stages, and women often hawked the fish around the agricultural communities with heavy baskets on their backs.

However, the growing industrial centres sparked an increased demand for fish as a cheaper alternative to meat. This, along with technical innovation, led to the development of steam-driven trawlers using large, wide-mouthed nets that could be dragged along the sea bottom, scooping up much bigger hauls in a single trawl, including immature fish. This may have been one of the factors that contributed to over-fishing and a marked decline in fish stocks in the 1890s. Many of the fishermen whom Drummond and Stoker would have known took part in public enquiries and demonstrations campaigning for quota controls. There was a double impact on the community, since not only did the number of trawlers increase, but also they were based in bigger ports like Aberdeen so that the self-sustaining economy of the small villages faced, in effect, a double drain.

The Cruden Bay that Adam Drummond knew was also the Cruden Bay Bram Stoker knew. Bram, an Irishman from Dublin, visited Port Erroll at least 12 times between 1892 and 1910. A full-time business manager of a theatre in London, his month-long holidays to Aberdeenshire gave him the most time in his busy life to write his books. And not just *Dracula* – he also wrote two novels set in and around Port Erroll, *The Watter's Mou'* (1895) and *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902). And in these books, astonishingly, the author of *Dracula* writes much of the dialogue in the Doric dialect (easily making him the most famous author to write in Doric). According to his son Noel, he loved to yarn to the fishermen. *Dracula*, even more astonishingly, contains a phrase in Doric, "I wouldn't fash masel' about them, miss", slipped into a monologue by a Yorkshire fisherman. And it has even been suggested that the octagonal hall in Slains Castle was used for the octagonal room in Castle Dracula, their descriptions matching exactly.

Florence Stoker, Bram's wife, even contributed a recipe called The Dracula Salad to a local collection, *Cruden Recipes and Wrinkles*, published in 1912, the year Bram Stoker died. The salad majored on red things, with tomatoes as a primary ingredient!

Just as the fishing economy struggled, so did the fortunes of the rather autocratic and spendthrift Hay family, the Earls of Erroll, who owned Slains Castle. This resulted in the sale of the castle and its being stripped of stone and slate by a demolition company for resale, resulting in its rather brooding and ruinous state.

Our audience was especially appreciative of the photographs of Port Erroll residents in the 1890s, and at least three of our Zoom participants recognised family members. So, we finished by celebrating continuing bloodlines rather than a community drained of blood and resources by changing time ... and a famous vampire!

Mike has edited and published Adam Drummond's stories as *Bram Stoker's Cruden Bay*, available in paperback and e-book on Amazon. He shares the proceeds with Louise Fyfe. We also heard from Christine Wilkie about a fascinating family-history tale of her 2g-grandfather, a reported bishop, Joseph Turpin, who turned out to be an enslaved carpenter. Published as *From Barbados to Banffshire: A Family Story Spanning Six Generations Across the Atlantic Ocean* (2023), it is also available from online stockists.

Resources

James R. Coull, *The Sea Fisheries of Scotland: A Historical Geography* (John Donald Publishers, 1996). Available in digital versions.

Peter F. Anson, *Fishing Boats and Fisher Folk on the East Coast of Scotland* (1930).

Peter F. Anson, *Life on Low Shore: Memories of Twenty Years Among Fisher Folk at Macduff, Banffshire, 1938–1958* (1969).

Walter Gregor, *An Echo of the Olden Time from the North of Scotland* (1874).



Port Erroll fisher folk by Mandy Henderson

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Journal Team

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Moray/Banff Group Report

After our short July/August break, we began the new calendar with a face-to-face meeting in Elgin Library's Activities Room on 7th September. Our traditional opening topic of "Bring Along a Brick Wall" saw several interesting problems aired, from long-standing issues to more recent ones. Inevitably, knocking down one brick wall tends to lead to another one, so there is never a shortage of challenges. There was plenty of discussion on each, and, where possible, useful suggestions as to new avenues that could be explored.

We continued this topic in our online meeting on 5th October. This date unfortunately clashed with the excellent Banffshire Field Club Conference, to which many of our local members were already committed – but we still managed to muster 46 attendees from our non-local members, and it was also heartening to see several new faces.

Some brick walls had been submitted beforehand while others were raised at the meeting, with members, as always, rising to the challenge to offer suggestions and, in some cases, a possible solution. There is a wonderfully wide range of experience and expertise on offer!

After Christmas, renovations within the Library will cause some reorganising of our meetings. No rooms will be available for booking until at least May 2025, but as we have alternating months of face-to-face and Zoom meetings it will only affect two or possibly three Library meetings. Probably it will be best to meet online in the early part of the year, and then balance this with more face-to-face meetings in the later part. Finding a new home is difficult in itself, and it brings extra admin issues. Most of our Library attendees also join our online meetings anyway, but we will have another discussion at our next face-to-face before making a final decision.

Hopefully, in addition to our November Library meeting and our December Zoom, we can also look forward again to our Christmas lunch at Threaplunds Garden Centre.

moray.banff@anesfhs.org.uk

Mary Evans (Group co-ordinator)

No. 1975

—oOo—

Edinburgh Group Report

Chris Paton, “Sharing Your Family History Online”

14th September 2024



Chris had talked to the Society before, so we knew we would be in for a good time. He didn't disappoint, and over-ran his allotted time considerably! Chris was motivated to share his research after beginning his genealogical journey in 2000 while awaiting his first child's birth. His father had mysteriously suggested that the Paton family came from Belgium, and cousins confirmed that there were stories about a “Brussels Johnny”. (See end of this report for a list of Chris's suggestions, this being *Point 1: always ask the family first.*)

The trail led Chris to a WW1 internment camp at Ruhleben near Berlin, where the Germans held civil prisoners. As there wasn't a lot of information about the camp, Chris started his own study on the premise that, *Point 2: if you put information out (online), you never know what you'll get back in*, and realising that he would never have found out about the Belgian connection if he hadn't started the Ruhleben study.

Next, *Point 3: write and publish!* This may be daunting, but he told us that for many years he had been keeping a diary (such a simple thing to do) and annotating it with snippets of family history and attaching newspaper cuttings. I was very interested in this, as I have often felt that we concentrate on the distant past too much – not realising that *we* will be the distant past some day! Our own grandchildren will love to read what we got up to!

Chris was at pains to point out that sharing might not be an exclusively online activity: we can go online, but we can use the results of that to publish a book, give a talk or meet cousins – for how else will those unknown at present ever be able to find our stories and confirm them, correct them or add to them? *Point 4: share, share, share.* Think of fishing: use what you have as bait, and hook those cousins in.

Talking more seriously, Chris focused on sharing your family tree online, while warning us that many online trees contain errors and gaps in detailing sources of information. He admitted he is a control freak and that, in his opinion, Wikitree is a disaster and to be avoided; however, many programmes will let you manage your information and research in a private manner. Some of the well-known sites, such as Ancestry or MyHeritage, allow

you to build a tree without a subscription, although you wouldn't be able to access all their databanks. If you do decide to join up, these sites will enable you to ... *Point 5: make contact with those researching other branches of your family.* He suggested collaborating with a cousin or two. You could each focus on one branch. The Ancestry site allows you to promote relatives to be able to make changes while restricting those who can view it. "Communication is the key", said Chris; social media is such a part of our lives now that if we want to encourage younger relatives to share our passion, then we have to embrace social media and use it. He talked at length about various discussion forums online which he suggested we search, join and contribute to. Forums on RootsChat, for example, have "threads" (discussions) about places, lifestyles, occupations – all searchable and useful for building pictures of our ancestors' lives. TalkingScot and WhoWhenWhere are also good.

Point 6: Communicate using all modern means available. That includes this type of meeting: some of us here in person, some on Zoom. Chris suggested using an online call to connect cousins all around the world and introduce them to each other. These meetings can be recorded, and in the future those long-gone voices will still be able to be heard.

Ancestry took over the RootsWeb site, which had many useful discussion boards; these have now been archived and made available. Using these sites and boards, asking questions and engaging in discussions is a way to ...

Point 7: generate links by using social-media platforms. Chris continued by reminding us of many other sites which we might have overlooked: for instance, those with old postcards, maps and the ones which help to date or identify old photographs. MyHeritage has cottoned on to the process of colourising old photos – and Chris suggested that bringing physical copies of newly colourised old family photos (as well as maps and postcards) to visit older family members would make these items more relevant and might spark new conversations and memories. *Point 8: use anything to start a conversation.*

Blogging. Not a new swear word, but a modern method we might think reserved for politicians or stars! It's like a diary, said Chris, but it's more like a regular public post to keep your audience aware of any new developments. You can limit who sees it, and restrict it to your family and those invited. Many platforms are available, such as Blogger from Google, and WordPress. *Point 9: bite the bullet and blog!* Geneabloggers.com has a directory of blogs from around the world – why not search and see if your family has started one already, or maybe someone from a tiny village your ancestors came from? As well as (or instead of?) learning how to blog, why not start a newsletter? Lostcousins.com has a newsletter every week; you could write a monthly one, and this might have the added advantage of helping you to focus your research activity. If you decide to share large files via a newsletter or blog, try using DropBox or storing them on the cloud. This will make it easier for others to access. Chris told us that he uses DropBox himself on his *Scotland's Greatest Story* page.

The talk then shuffled sideways into a DNA discussion, as Chris advised us all to do it while you can! *Point 10: DNA-testing is the ultimate sharing opportunity.* Chris has broken many brick walls, which he went on to describe, by using DNA. The technology is changing all the time, and for the better, and is nothing to be alarmed about: it's simply another tool. The results are becoming more and more precise. Ancestry, for example, will flag up any genetic connections which might lead to surprises, breakthroughs, and new cousins with new stories.

Summing up, Chris reminded us that sharing online comes with *Point 11: responsibilities*. If you put photos online, for instance, do you have permission? How long does copyright last? And, what's the difference between ownership and copyright? (Some of the Edinburgh Group organisers continued this discussion in the pub after this talk, and could not reach a definitive conclusion!) The UK has many laws concerning privacy and data protection. Chris advised us to always check the small print: on Ancestry, for example, you control your content, but Ancestry has use of your content – they can use your photographs and documents which you save to your tree for advertising. You can, however, make your tree and contents completely private. As well as responsibilities, an online presence requires online etiquette and online planning. Chris touched on the need to have a *digital legacy plan* – *Point 12*.

Chris Paton offered us many ideas about how to increase the chances of connecting with cousins, finding new stories, breaking brick walls ... all by going “fishing” and luring in all those unknown family members with a juicy bit of bait! GO ONLINE!

Chris Paton's books may be purchased through www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, and his courses may be accessed through Pharos Tutors on www.pharostutors.com.

Chris's blog is to be found at www.ScotlandsGreatestStory.co.uk.

Points to remember, and links:

- 1 Ask the family first. Use e-mail, telephone, letter, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Zoom and so on.
- 2 If you put information out (online), you never know what you'll get back in: see e.g. <https://ruhleben.tripod.com>.
- 3 Write and publish.
- 4 Share, share, share.
- 5 Make contact with those researching other branches of your family: www.ancestry.co.uk; www.findmypast.com; www.myheritage.com; www.wikitree.com; www.lostcousins.com; www.curiousfox.com; www.familysearch.org/memories; www.cyndislist.com/wikis.
- 6 Communicate using all modern means available: www.rootschat.com; www.talkingscot.com; www.whowhenwheregenealogy.org.uk; <https://home.rootsweb.com>.
- 7 Generate links by using social-media platforms: www.instagram.com; www.pinterest.com; www.flickr.com.
- 8 Use anything to start a conversation: www.blogger.com; <https://wordpress.com>; <https://wordpress.org>; www.geneabloggers.com.
- 9 Start a blog or write a newsletter: www.dropbox.com; <https://wetransfer.com>; www.google.co.uk/docs.
- 10 DNA-testing is the ultimate sharing opportunity: www.ancestry.co.uk; www.myheritage.com; www.familytreedna.com; <https://livingdna.com>; www.23andme.com; www.dnapainter.com.
- 11 Responsibilities: <https://ico.org.uk>; www.gov.uk/copyright/how-long-copyright-lasts; <https://creativecommons.org>.
- 12 Digital Legacy plan – see my talk, “Safeguarding Your Genealogical Legacy”: report, Journal 166 (May 2023).

Southern Ontario Group Report

Lara Haggerty, “Scotland’s First Lending Library at Innerpeffray”

28th September 2024

Our online group was thoroughly entertained by the “Keeper of the Books”, Lara Haggerty from Innerpeffray library in Perthshire. Lara told us how the library was started in 1680 by David Drummond, cousin of the main Lordship seat, and how it was Scotland’s first free public lending library. She also gave us a bit of history on the area, specifically around the library, which is only six miles from the castle and was built on a Roman road. The field across the river from the library actually has the ruins of a Roman fort beneath the crops.

David Drummond started with his personal collection of 400–500 books, which was a lot for that time. Surprisingly, some topics that were popular then are still popular now, such as self-help and how to think positively. When David died, he left detailed instructions on how the library was to remain for public use and that there should always be a “Keeper of the Books” to maintain the collection.

It wasn’t until two generations later, in 1739, that Robert Hay Drummond inherited the library, and the collection grew and was catalogued. Robert updated everything in the library and bought new books as well. In 1747 a borrowers’ registry was started – and Lara read some of the names from the book as well as what they borrowed. She explained how important this was for local and social history and how descendants of the villagers came from all over the world to check the book for their ancestors. Luckily, the book has been digitized and now anyone can look through it at <https://borrowing.stir.ac.uk/>. This is part of the Books and Borrowing Project being run by Stirling University.

Lara also explained that by the 20th century the library was in a poor state and ended up closing in 1968. Then along came Janet Burns Saint Germain, a bibliophile from Vermont, USA. She was one of the library’s most important patrons, donating her large collection of first-edition Scottish books. The library’s oldest book, from 1476, was in her collection along with a song handwritten by Robert Burns himself. There were also many books on gardening, cooking and music. The library had to be restored downstairs to house the collection, with the upstairs being done later.

Lara had some great photos of some of the illustrations from books, and happily shared more information during the question period. It was very interesting to discover that at the time when the library opened, Scotland had an approximate literacy rate of about 75%, and that women also were mentioned in the borrowers’ registration as borrowing books.

Innerpeffray is a hamlet in a charming rural area near Crieff, Perthshire. Be sure to stop in at the library on your next visit to that area to have a tour by Lara, or even to volunteer. Their website address is <https://innerpeffraylibrary.co.uk>.

On 23rd November, Anne Park will give a talk entitled “Roll of Honour: Stories of Local Heroes”. On 22nd February 2025, for Black History month here, we will have an updated version of Sally Low’s talk on “Slavery and its impact on family history”. We also hope to have writer and presenter Jamie Lees talk about her exhibition in Dundee, Scotland, entitled “Left at the Wellgate: the untold story of Mary Petrie Smith”. This fascinating story touches on Mary’s story in Scotland as well as in Canada.

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. 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.

To attend **in person**, just turn up! We do appreciate a note of your intention, but it's not required. Our meetings are always **free** to attend, but do please give a tea/coffee donation!

For **online** attendance, **Society members** please **log in** to **sign up via our website** once a meeting is open for registration. An invitation link will be sent automatically, so check your Junk/Spam just in case. **Ex-** or **non-members** should e-mail the relevant Group.

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. See Mary Evans's report regarding online versus in-person meetings for the forthcoming year.

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

Glasgow Group is currently alternating between online only (November and February) and at the Renfield Centre, Bath Street, in person only (May, and Sept/Oct). See the website for any changes to this schedule. We need more of you to turn up to the Renfield Centre if in-person meetings are to continue.

Edinburgh Group meets at the Royal Scots Club, normally in hybrid format. Topics and speakers are usually arranged well in advance.

London Group meets in the Church of Scotland hall, in person only, at 12 noon. Notice will be given if a meeting has to revert to online only.

Southern Ontario Group meets online only. Next: 23rd November, 1pm EST, 6pm GMT.

For **Australia and New Zealand** quarterly meetings, see the Society's website.

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Family-History Notices

East Surrey FHS is holding its annual Virtual Family History Fair on Saturday 25th January 2025. There are two sessions: 10am to 12 noon, and 2pm to 4pm. In the past two years, home-based ANESFHS volunteers have been on hand to staff our virtual stall via Zoom. Details are at www.eastsurreyfhs.org.uk (follow the Events link); and contact john.urie@anesfhs.org.uk if you'd like to join John in chatting to visitors to our "room".

RootsTech: Registration is now open for the RootsTech Conference in March 2025. For all details, see <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/registration-open-rootstech-2025>.

Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen will host an online information evening on 26th November (18.30–18.30 GMT) for individuals to meet staff and students and learn about the Master's Programme in Ethnology and Folklore, which can be completed in 12 months (full-time) or 24 months (part-time). Students learn how to research the cultures around them and how we make meaning through tradition and innovation. Individuals of varying life and educational experiences are welcome. For further details, see the University website: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/events/21448/>.

Meet the Gang: The Trustees



Chair: Bert Lawrie was born in Lanarkshire but moved to Aberdeen at the age of two. Trained as a community worker, Bert worked with Aberdeen charity VSA for 35 years, latterly becoming their training manager. Within ANESFHS, Bert leads on the maintenance of the Research Centre premises. He was instrumental in setting up the Broad Street Project – an initiative to document some families and businesses recorded in Aberdeen’s Broad Street in 1911. As for his family-history research, Bert’s father was one of 13 and, despite extensive research, Bert can’t trace the family beyond great-grandparents in the Lanarkshire village of Bargeddie.

Vice-Chair: Elaine Petrie joined the Society in 2020 and helps to run the Edinburgh Group. She is part of the Journal team, mainly commissioning and editing articles. She became a Trustee in March 2024 and is currently Vice-Chair. Born in Aberdeen and raised in Portlethen, she now lives in Falkirk. She loves North-East folksongs and her trips to the parishes of Logie Coldstone and Tarland & Migvie in west Aberdeenshire to pursue her family-tree researches. Her hobby is making silver jewellery, which explains why her Facebook profile “handle” is Antonine Silver.



Secretary: Ronald Leith is a professional organist and City Carillonner. This means he plays the 48-bell carillon – set of bells – in the tower of St Nicholas Kirk in Aberdeen, the largest carillon in the UK. If you Google “St Nicholas carillon”, you can hear it playing. He is a founder member (No. 39) of the Society, and during his Chairmanship the Society bought its first premises – at 152 King Street. He is currently Secretary of the Society, and sees that all mail coming into the Centre is passed on to the right persons for their attention.

Susan Freer joined the Society in 2008 and became a Trustee in 2010. Originally from SW Pennsylvania, she lived most of her life in Tucson, Arizona before moving to Aberdeenshire in 1999. As our Social Media Coordinator, she manages our online presence, helps update our website and promotes Society events. She also handles the creation and distribution of our e-newsletters, ensuring members stay informed about upcoming meetings, talks and Society news. She can’t claim any NE Scotland ancestors ... yet.



Her genealogical research focuses on Wales, and she has been learning the Welsh language for seven years to help with that.

John Corall was a teacher who became disillusioned with education and ran away to sea, aged 51. He sailed on Norwegian sailing ships and was mate on a Clyde puffer (steam ship). He was an Aberdeen City Councillor for ten years, holding Vice-Convenerships in Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure Committee and Housing & Environment Committee. In

addition to his role with ANESFHS, he is a Burgess of Guild of the City, Chair of Aberdeen History Society and Member of the Society of Antiquaries Scotland. He's ostensibly retired but, when not gardening, he gives talks locally, on request, to raise funds for the RNLI and to promote the work of ANESFHS.

Barbara Lamb has been involved with the Society for over ten years, first doing her own family research, then as a volunteer and later as Centre Manager. Barbara worked in catering and held various posts from hotel management to running student halls of residence. The latter added spice to life, as she never knew what the students would get up to next! Her catering career was curtailed by ill health, and after doing volunteer work with the NHS, she became interested in family history, inspired by the research already begun by an uncle. Barbara now maintains a private Facebook page for the Lamb family which keeps them in contact with relatives all over the world.



Sheona MacDonald has been a Society member since 2018. She volunteers in the Library and is thoroughly enjoying increasing her knowledge of the many books and records available. Her own research covers a wide area: her maternal ancestors are fisher folk from Buckie and farming folk from Rayne and Pitsligo. Her father's family hails from the Outer Hebrides and Ardnamurchan, and Sheona is currently tracing her paternal relatives who were shipped off to Prince Edward Island in the 19th century. Sheona relaxes with a good book, but in contrast to this peaceful pursuit she is an avid Formula 1 fan and plans to travel to see some live action in 2025.

Ivor Normand joined the Society in 1991. His mother's side is all Kincardineshire and eastern Aberdeenshire. Despite living in Edinburgh, he has long been involved with the Journal and with the Society's Glasgow Group. He co-founded our Edinburgh Group, helped to set up our overseas Groups, and introduced the Society to the world of Zoom during the 2020 lockdown. He was Chairman from then until 2023, and remains a Trustee. To escape the computer, he runs ultramarathons. In fact he's rather good, having recently represented Scotland in a "Backyard Ultra" championship, where he ended as top Scot and third overall.



Helen Strachan joined the Society in May 2020. At that time she had a keen desire to explore her mother's pedigree but soon found out that there is much more to researching your ancestors than just names, dates and locations. Helen fulfils two roles for the Society, the first as our UK Data Compliance Officer and the second as team leader for the Ancestor Chart Indexers. When time allows, she likes to travel, and she enjoys walking, gardening, reading and spending time with her friends and family, especially her very energetic grandchildren.

Bob Strowger joined us in 2016 and was co-opted to the Board in July, having volunteered regularly in our King Street Research Centre with increasing frequency since his recent retirement. He has been preparing some “how-to” guides for the Centre and has been kept busy working with Bert on property care and maintenance. He also works closely with the Publications Team and is a member of the group overseeing the handover of MI work, as Gavin Bell prepares to retire.



Sheila Symons originally joined in 2003 and became a Trustee in 2021, having already served some years as our Membership Secretary. She is the Board’s link to the Finance Team and she liaises with Margaret Stevenson, our Finance Co-ordinator, reporting progress on financial matters to the Board and to the members at the AGM. She was born in Peterculter, Aberdeenshire where her father’s family lived, while her mother’s side were from Arbroath, Angus. She worked in administration, latterly as technical administrator with an oil firm. She re-trained as a therapeutic counsellor and retired from that role.

As a registered charity, the decision-making and administrative body of the Society is referred to as a Board of Trustees, although Society members often affectionately call it “The Committee”. We thought you might like to put some faces to the names you see appearing in various Society documents and learn a little more about their individual roles in the organisation.

The Trustees are normally all listed by name at the end of each Journal, and we currently have 11. They each serve for a three-year period, which can be extended after that; and their election as Trustees forms part of the business of the AGM. Office-bearers are available for re-election to the same role after their first period of office and normally step down after the second term, although they may remain as Trustees.

—oOo—

Graham Robertson’s Mystery Object Quiz



Do you know what this object is? Some of your North-East ancestors may have used it ... but what is it? ... and what was it for?

The answer will appear further on in this issue.

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

Second World War Service: Q&A

My father, Robert Buchan Page (1909–94) from Lochgelly in Fife, married (in London) Bessie Morrice Calder, from Tarland in Aberdeenshire. Dad served in the Royal Engineers during WW2, enlisting at Southampton on 4th September 1939 as a Motor Driver. His war records show that he served in France and North Africa. I knew he had also served in Italy, but his service record doesn't mention it.

During his time in Italy, he used to send me stamps to collect. I also have a photo of him taken at Vatican City, and I know he was in hospital (maybe in Berne, Switzerland) after, I think, a motor accident. He had a broken leg which delayed his return to England until 25th March 1946. He was then on "Y List Home" until 22nd August 1946, presumably the time when he was under the care of a hospital in Orpington, Kent. His war records only show, under "Injuries etc.": "Injuries of a trivial nature on 16 Mar 45 – Not to blame – on duty".

The only reference to Italy that I can find is the award of the Italy Star! Would there be any other records which would show of his time in Italy and indicate hospital treatment in Switzerland, and perhaps where the accident took place?

page@wrc55.com

Robert Page No. 1173

We are grateful to Ken Nisbet (no. 55), an expert on war-service research, for this advice:

Robert needs to know which RE sub-unit his father was serving with. The army records should show that. Most WW2 war diaries are not yet online and have to be accessed in person at UK National Archives at Kew. He should then be able to trace exactly where the unit was at the date of his father's injury. It is very unlikely he was treated in Switzerland: this did happen in WW1, but the Swiss were much stricter in WW2, and any British troops would have been interned. It is more likely that medical evacuation took place directly from Italy. I believe there are no surviving medical records from WW2. In any case, there is a 100-year time bar on access to medical records, even for the deceased.

Books are available on the campaigns at Sicily, Anzio and Cassino, and the attacks on the Gustav Line, but not many on the campaigns north of Rome after its capture in June 1944. Severe fighting was going on, and the weather was terrible over the winter of 1944–5.

Journal Feedback: "George Campbell, Shipmaster"

After my article "George Campbell, Shipmaster: A Family Mystery" appeared in Journal 169 (February 2024), I received e-mail responses from two members. The first was from Andrew George Campbell Skene (no. 21249), in Edinburgh. He wrote:

I was most interested to read your article. A couple of weeks ago I was in Spital Cemetery in Aberdeen, and I quite literally stumbled across the grave of William Campbell and Barbara Diack that you mention in the article.

This sparked my attention, as my great-grandfather (who brought up my father) was George Campbell, and I have been researching our family. It appears that the William noted on the gravestone was the son of William Campbell and Prudence McKay, who

happen to be my 4g-grandparents! I was in fact searching for Prudence's grave when I came across your family stone, as she appears to have been buried there too.

William and Prudence were my 3g-grandparents. I am descended from their son William, and Andrew from their son George, so we are distant cousins. Since then we have been exchanging e-mails, and by sharing our information we have been able to discover more about our common ancestors William and Prudence. We now know that William served with the Black Watch and spent 14 years in North America, including the period of the War of Independence.

The second response was from Carol Sheilds (born Strachan), no. 18688, in Canada. Her connection is through the shipping business, not her Aberdeen ancestry. She wrote:

I became an ANESFHS member in order to research my Strachan ancestors who had lived in Aberdeen since the 1700s that I'm aware of. Your story caught my attention at the part about him being the master of a ship sailing from Cardiff. Now I was really intrigued, as my great-grandfather was in the shipping business based in Cardiff. Then, when I saw that George was the master of the *Gironde* owned by the Cardiff Steamship Company, I was shell-shocked. My great-grandfather was Horatio Hooper (1846–93), and his daughter Gladys married my grandfather George Lewis Strachan, son of John Strachan (1848–1909, son of James 1810–60) and Catherine Lewis.

Horatio Hooper and my great-grandfather's brother William Campbell were joint managers of the Cardiff Steamship Company, and then became partners in the company Hooper, Campbell & Co. Ltd which owned the *Coumoundouros*, which was wrecked when my great-grandfather was the master. So, although we are not related, our great-grandfathers would have known each other.

Carol ended her e-mail by saying: "although something might not pertain directly to Aberdeen or North-East Scotland ancestry, it could help elsewhere".

jeanniecampbell@talktalk.net

Jeannie Campbell No. 19593

Upper Donside Placename Memories

In Alan Johnston's article in Journal 170 (May 2024) about the sampler sewn by Margaret Brown of Beltimb in Glenbuchat, he mentions Craigengower as being where Margaret's mother Jean Gauld had lived before marrying Alexander Brown in 1820. This made me sit up, as my family lived there a little later. I have walked among the ruins there, and it is high up on Glenkindie Hill – a windswept, fairly desperate place, although sheltered from the worst of the westerlies. It was always the poorest part of the Glenkindie estate. The only thing in its favour was connections by four tracks going to different parts of the area.

As far as I can make out, my ancestor James Allanach was ousted from the well-sited Delrossac farmtoun in Strathdon when it was probably reorganised in the mid-1820s, and resettled in Craigengower. Craigengower supported several families, as there were at least two buildings to the south, and another a little further to the north which was a single building of three rooms, one of which was probably for the animals. My family lived in one of the south buildings and rented six acres. Jean Gauld and her husband will have done much better at Beltimb, being close to the valley bottom and its road.

david.allanach@googlemail.com

David Allanach No. 1395

1903 Diary: An American's Trip to Aberdeen

I've been collecting handwritten vintage diaries for about 36 years now, as my website sallysdiaries.com will show you. One diary is by an American woman who visited Aberdeen for a few months in 1903. She also spent a night in Midmar Castle and describes that in detail. By the time you read this note, the diary may still be listed on eBay (my eBay name is "diaries") ... or it may have been sold! Do please check if you are interested.

sallysdiaries@gmail.com

Sally Ivey

—oOo—

Mystery Object Quiz: The Answer



If your ancestor was a blacksmith, farrier, horse doctor, cattle doctor or veterinary surgeon in the early 19th century, he would have used a *fleam* like this. The selected blade was placed on the sick animal's vein and tapped with a fleam stick, and then the requisite amount of blood was removed to effect a "cure". (Maybe this is too gory for the delicate sensibilities of ANESFHS members?)

journal@anesfhs.org.uk

Journal Team

—oOo—

Queries and Brick Walls?

Don't forget about our interactive Members' Forum. It's a great way to share your questions or expertise with like-minded researchers and get quick responses. There were 628 discussion topics at the last count, with top subjects being: Brick Walls; DNA Forum; Surname interests. To access it, log into your account on the Society websites and go to Members' Forum, listed on the front page menu.

—oOo—

Journal Proof-reading and Layout: Join our team

In years past, the Editor has politely declined offers of help with Journal proof-reading. Now he would very much appreciate help with this. Do you have sharp eyes and a keen sense for detail? We would love to work with you on the Journal Team.

To get involved, contact us at journal@anesfhs.org.uk.

Viking Genes Update

Those who enjoyed the presentation by Shona Kerr on the Edinburgh University Viking Genes project (reported in Journal 170, May 2024, pp. 9–10) will be interested to learn that the team has made further important discoveries. They have identified 67 disease-causing genetic variants that were more common in certain populations. Their studies also showed that four populations were clearly distinct from others in their genetic make-up: part and full Ashkenazi Jews, Orcadians and Shetlanders. Welsh Irish and mainland Scots were the next most differentiated. To read more, go to <https://viking.ed.ac.uk/>.

Articles

William Forsyth, a North-East Lunatic with Delusions of Grandeur?

My great-grandfather Robert Robb (Bob) Forsyth died relatively young in 1934 after a motorbike accident. He worked as a flesher in the family firm Robert Forsyth & Sons at 161 Gallowgate, Aberdeen. This was at the brow of the hill, and my grandmother (under her married name Doris Davidson) used it and the wider Forsyth family as influences and inspiration for her romantic and crime fiction novels set in the North-East of Scotland.

During the 1910s to 1930s, Bob's extended family was very close ... but gradually fell apart, so much so that only a few remained alive and in contact by the 1970s, with one brother-in-law declaring himself to be "the last of the Forsyths" in the late 1980s. To hear him tell of it, one could be forgiven for thinking they were a class apart from other people – but it is possible the Forsyth children might have grown up with rumours of some more substantial link to support this.

Doris had many family stories to draw on, and, although she knew a lot about her mother's Paul side, there had been fewer opportunities for much information to be passed down about the Forsyth family line. Her father was one of 11 children to Robert Johnston Forsyth, flesher (1864–1931, pictured below), and his wife Jean Robb, formerly a general servant, who had married in 1886.

This Robert in turn had been the youngest son of William Forsyth, baker, and Margaret Henderson Ross. She had been general servant to the family of merchant shipmaster Robert Johnston, hence her son's full name. Robert would not have had an easy childhood: life in the shadow of William would have been stressful and possibly terrifying, and heavy drinking might have been a way he and his half-sister Eliza developed to cope with it.

William moved to Aberdeen from his native Duffus, north of Elgin, after 1841. Like three of his brothers, he became a journeyman baker, first marrying Helen Booth in 1843. By 1851, William, Helen and their children Agnes and William were living in Windmill Brae. Helen died in 1858, and William went on to have a short marriage to Margaret Innes from Speymouth in 1860. She died at the end of that year after the birth of their daughter Isabella. It was around the time of this second marriage that William moved closer to the harbour, and in 1862 he married Margaret, who came from a Torry-based salmon-fishing family. They went on to have three children (Helen, Robert and Williamina). Despite his appearances at home in the 1871 and 1881 censuses, these were only brief visits, for in 1869, 1873, 1876 and 1878, and from 1882 onwards, William Forsyth was in Aberdeen's Lunatic Asylum or the Asylum Poorhouse.

The National Records of Scotland holds the General Register of Lunatics in Asylum. The years 1858 to 1921 are open to public access. They include indexes of admittance and discharge dates (MC7) and, if you're lucky, surviving detailed admission papers (MC2) for each stay. These documents include remarks from two physicians who examined the



Doris with her parents Maisie Paul (1898–1984) and Tom Forsyth (1893–1934)

patient, and might relate evidence taken from close family, neighbours or friends. William's record has detailed notes for each admission from 1873.

It's clear his condition ("mania", i.e. manic episodes – in William's case probably the manifestations of bipolar disorder and/or schizophrenia) worsened over the years. He became more angry, violent and difficult to communicate with. Despite personal losses – the deaths of his 17-year-old son William and five-year-old daughter Isabella – he often threatened his surviving family with bodily harm; however, some entries portray a more sympathetic character. In one, the doctor recorded: "*he seems quite excited and states that at any time he can see and talk with his first wife in Heaven particularly in a starry night*".

He was concerned about the living conditions of his grandchildren through his adopted daughter Eliza, who lived a few doors down. Her descent into drink led to estrangement from her family and eventually contributed to her suicide in a home for fallen and inebriated women. (Her sister Agnes's children had earlier been taken into care, and she too may have died in a rescue home.) William expressed a desire to forcibly take one of these children into his own "protection". Coupled with a growing obsession with knives, this was the final straw for the doctors, and he was never fully released from the asylum after 1882, dying there a decade later aged 77.



William often repeated claims to the physicians that he had important family ties. In one example, he spoke "*with gravity as if he were in possession of great estates – at one time, as being the Duke of Gordon, the next as Lord Fife*". As his condition worsened, he spoke of having ties to royal lines. It is easy to dismiss these as the pitiful ramblings of a mad pauper – but, on a broader view, he was not alone in his belief that there was some kind of connection to important families. His younger brother Archibald was committed to the same lunatic asylum shortly before he died in 1899; on his admittance register, a doctor recorded him also having "*delusions about the importance and grandeur of his relatives*".

If the brothers had similar intense delusions, it suggests they each heard stories to that effect when they were growing up, or perhaps that they knew such people. To find the truth of this, it is necessary to look further back in time.

Their parents were farmers Archibald Forsyth and Agnes Grigor, who had seven other children, most of them born in the lands of Crookmuir to the west and south of Old Duffus, the farm by the castle. In their time, this area sat right on the edge of the Loch of Spynie, sandwiched between it and the silted dregs of the Loch of Roseisle, both of which had been undergoing long years of transformation via natural changes and drainage efforts to create new and rich land. Farms within and abutting Duffus and Drainie parishes were held under the control of various landowning families and baronetcies, including the Dunbars, Gordons, Earls of Fife and later the Cummings of Altyre.

Agnes was a daughter of Alexander MacGrigor, tacksman (land leaseholder), and Dorothy Riach, born at the fermtoun of Burnside in the north of Duffus parish. Their situation was

seemingly prosperous, given the range of occupations and educations her siblings went on to have.

Inklings of these can be seen in the baptism witnesses recorded for Agnes's children: Doctors William and Alexander Grigor in Burnside; Archibald Keir at Ardivot; Mr James Garden, surveyor. William was a brother of Agnes and initially practised in Elgin before becoming surgeon superintendent for several convict transports to New South Wales. On his final voyage, he fell victim to mania. Their brother Alexander also became a surgeon, for the East India Company, but was pensioned off at a young age, becoming a recipient of money from Lord Clive's fund for disabled servicemen. The Keir family held lands in the area; Simon Keir married Agnes's sister Elizabeth. One of their sons became a successful tea planter in Ceylon.

Elder sister Christina married esquire farmer Alexander Thomson of Westfield. Two of their sons became merchant estate holders of sugar-cane plantations in Jamaica. Youngest sister Dorothy Grigor married similarly to David Simpson of Covesea, and their daughter Elizabeth married landed proprietor and law writer Edward Mortimer. The calibre of these relations alone could account for the statements the Forsyth brothers made. There are other connections to be found further back along the Grigor family (including a cousin, Dr William Grigor, who became well known in Halifax, Nova Scotia). The main interest, however, lies with the Riachs. Dorothy was one of ten known children born to Adam Riach – and it is with him that the probable origin of the belief is found, given William Forsyth's specific words.

Adam was baptised in 1739 at Rothes and died in 1797. He first married Elizabeth Waters(ton) and later Margaret Anderson. His son John recorded him as being "of Gordonstoun" and former gardener there. This occupation is confirmed on most of his children's baptism records; however, on daughter Elizabeth's death record (the only child to die after 1855 when statutory death registration was introduced), her father's occupation was given as "land steward".

Adam did not possess a great estate, but he was at least in part responsible for managing one, and as a land steward (or agent/bailiff) for Gordonstoun he would have had frequent direct contact with the Gordon family. In modern times, Gordonstoun is known as being an elite private school, but during Adam's lifetime it was a landed estate that passed through three Gordon owners, from Sir Robert Gordon (3rd Baronet of Gordonstoun). His sons, Sirs Robert Gordon (4th Baronet) and William Gordon (5th and last Baronet), were among the baptism witnesses for Adam's children; and two children were named for them. The estate was large, as can be seen from a 1783 plan.

Adam undoubtedly had extensive contacts, influence and interests across Duffus, Drainie and other parts of Moray (including Cullen, where one son was born). This suggests that memories of his position had become warped and distorted over time, to change from gardener and land steward to landowner – and with it maybe the conflated and confused implication of familial relationships with the Dukes of Gordon (a related but different branch of the Gordon family) and Earls of Fife. Perhaps other family members had worked for them.

Of course, there could be intimate connections to these families as yet undiscovered, perhaps through the Forsyths, or further back through the Grigors or Riachs – but, as the

basis for the belief in the importance of their relatives, specifically in relation to the Gordon family, Adam’s position as steward seems to be the simpler explanation.

By the time of William Forsyth’s first incarceration, over 70 years and three generations had passed since Adam Riach’s death. His position in society had likely been a source of pride for the family, however differently the details came to be remembered, confused with the lives of cousins, or re-worked in tales to his Forsyth descendants (was it mere coincidence, for instance, that one of William’s illegitimate grandsons was named Robert Gordon Forsyth?). One wonders what Doris might have done with them had she known.

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Fittie Folk: Who Lived Where, When



I did this little project for myself and my siblings as we have ancestors from Fittie (Footdee, Aberdeen), most of who were either Guyans or Allans. I thought it might help to track who’s who and see in which houses they lived over the period covered by the Valuation Rolls on Scotland’s People. Each page shows each of the Valuation Roll entries for a single address and thus shows all the families who lived there from 1865, when the Fittie records began, to 1940. If you have Fittie ancestors, this will be a great tool to show

where they lived and who their neighbours were. The live document includes hyperlinks (listed below) to various useful websites too.

Useful links:

<https://doriccolumns.wordpress.com/welcome/the-royalty/footdee/auld-fittie/>

<https://doriccolumns.wordpress.com/welcome/the-royalty/footdee/fittie-fowk/>

<https://www.scottish-places.info/towns/townfirst4967.html>

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

<https://scotlandspplaces.gov.uk/record/hes/70520/aberdeen-footdee/rcahms?inline=true>

journal@anesfhs.org.uk

Steve Edwards

The guide includes proprietor and occupant information for all the streets in Fittie, along with maps and images of the buildings. Sample screenshots are illustrated here. Steve is happy to send a copy of the PDF version to anyone who is interested; a print-out has been made for consultation in our Family History Research Centre in King Street. Great work, Steve!

—oOo—

The Military Exploits of the Edwards Family of Aberdeen

For years, I had been ignoring inconvenient facts about my Edward(s) relatives. In Journal 144 (August 2017), I wrote about James Edwards (1749?–1844), speculating about several puzzles relating to his life. The first was how he came to be born in or near Inverness, when all his siblings were born in Peterculter parish in Aberdeenshire. This information came from his army discharge papers, although I could find no birth or baptism record to verify this. In fact, the only evidence to connect James with my family was a tree and other family details my grandfather had drawn on a large sheet of paper from information provided by his brother. This showed James as a child of Alexander Edward and Christian Sadler, my 4g-grandparents. The sheet also had a transcription of an invitation to Andrew Edward, my 2g-grandfather, to the funeral of James's first wife in 1823. This meant that there was at least some evidence of a connection between James and the Edwards of Peterculter and later of Nigg parish, Kincardineshire, where Andrew was farming in 1823. My 3g-grandfather, William Edward, eldest son of Alexander and Christian, had moved away from Peterculter about 1790 to take on the tenancy of South Kirkhill farm, Nigg.

I had no reason at first to doubt James's parentage. There was a gap in the recorded baptisms of Alexander and Christian's children between 1745 and 1752, during which James could have been born. Alexander could have been in Inverness around 1749 while serving in Government forces in the aftermath of the Jacobite Rising of 1745–6. Doubts arose, however, when I began to investigate the details of James's life. I found that an Alexander Edwards, weaver in Aberdeen, acted as cautioner (guarantor or sponsor) at James's first marriage, to Ann Stott, in 1770 and was also a witness to the baptisms of their first two children in 1771 and 1774. This Alexander was apparently not James's father, who had died in 1769 and was a gardener at Countesswells, Peterculter.

I later became aware that Alexander the weaver had also had a military career, when Ancestry.com gave hints about army pension records relating to an Alexander Edwards. These were three similar documents in their Chelsea Hospital Pensioner Admissions and Discharges collection, which gave the information that he had been admitted to pension on

30th June 1767. He was aged 44, had served 23 years in the 6th Foot Regiment, had been wounded twice, was born at Aberdeen and was a weaver to trade.

I then researched the 6th Foot during the period of Alexander's service. Having been in Jamaica fighting the Spanish, they returned to Britain in 1742 and at some point they were sent to Scotland, where by 1745 their headquarters were at Aberdeen. It seems very likely that Alexander enlisted at this time. On 19th August 1745, Charles Edward Stuart, the "Young Pretender", raised his standard at Glenfinnan in the west Highlands in support of his father James, the "Old Pretender", in an attempt to overthrow the Hanoverian King George II. The 6th Foot played an important part in the campaign against the Jacobites, though the details of Alexander's involvement are not known.

Following the Battle of Culloden on 16th April 1746 and the final defeat of the Jacobites, the Government army carried out operations throughout the Highlands, intending to break the power of the clans and punish the people. These operations involved the burning of houses and confiscation of property, especially cattle. The 6th were more than likely involved in these activities. In 1753 the regiment sailed for Gibraltar, where they carried out garrison duties until 1763. The regiment then returned to England for two years, followed by six years in Scotland. After his discharge in 1767, Alexander obviously returned to his home city of Aberdeen, where he was able to augment his weaving income by his army pension. The marriage and baptism records referred to above confirm his residence in Aberdeen between 1770 and 1774.

The birth of the above James Edwards around 1749 in or near Inverness makes it almost certain that Alexander the weaver rather than Alexander the gardener was James's father. The presence of Ann Stott's father John, a cooper, as a witness at the baptisms of five of James and Ann's eight known children is added evidence that the former Alexander was in fact James's father, and that it was the two grandfathers who were the witnesses. The lack of any further baptism entries mentioning Alexander may mean that he died between 1774 and the birth of James's next child in 1776, but I have found no death or burial record. James's life and military career are covered in detail in my previous article. In outline, he served for a total of 25 years, comprising five years in the Northern Fencibles, four years in the Aberdeen Battery Company and 16 years in the Aberdeenshire Militia. To trade he was a woolcomber, and after his discharge to pension in 1814 he combined his trade with running a grocer's shop in Chapel Street, Aberdeen. He died in 1844 at the age of 94.

At least three of James and Ann's sons also served in the military. John, their second son, was born in Aberdeen in 1776 and followed his father into the woolcombing trade. In 1797 he married Helen Sangster in Glasgow, when he is described in the parish register as a soldier in the Ross-shire Fencibles. Why he joined this regiment rather than his local Aberdeenshire Militia is unknown. This regiment, which was raised in 1794 and consisted of only two companies, was disbanded in 1799. In 1798, John and Helen had a son at Airth in Stirlingshire. It is assumed that John's presence in Glasgow and Airth is explained by his military duties. The parish of Airth is located on the south bank of the River Forth where it widens out into the upper Firth. It would therefore have been a strategic point to defend the ports of Alloa and Stirling during the wars with France following the revolution. I have been unable to discover any more about John's life, but he is assumed to have died before 1832, as he is not mentioned in his father's will of that date.

Wilson (or Willson), James and Ann's third son, born in 1777, trained as a tinsmith. He was still living in Aberdeen in 1801, but soon afterwards he moved to Dundee, where he

married Ann Greig in 1802. In 1804 he enlisted in the Aberdeenshire Militia, his father's regiment at the time. It is not known how long he remained in this force, but in 1808/9 he is recorded as serving in the 3rd Fife Local Militia. At this time he and Ann may have been living in Kirkcaldy, Fife, but by 1818 they were in Leven, also in Fife. The couple had at least two children. Ann had probably died by 1841 when Wilson is recorded in the census as living with another woman in the village of Colinsburgh in Kilconquhar parish, Fife. Wilson died there in 1846, aged 69.

Maxwell, who was born in 1788, is not known to have pursued any trade. In October 1799 at the age of 10, he began his military career by joining the Aberdeenshire Militia as a drummer. During a militia service of about nine years, he moved about Scotland a great deal. On 27th October 1809, at the age of about 21, he transferred to a regular army regiment, the 24th Foot (later to become the South Wales Borderers). He then disappears from view until September 1811, when he is recorded at Fort William, Calcutta, India, having newly arrived from Europe on 27th August. He was one of a small draft which had been sent to India to replace losses through sickness and other causes. The death rate for British soldiers in India through sickness was very high.

The regular British army was present in India in a supporting role to the East India Company, which had its own military forces. Calcutta was the headquarters of the company. The 24th remained in Calcutta until July 1814, when they were sent to Dinapur, a large military base near Patna on the River Ganges lying about 300 miles upriver from Calcutta. The reason for the posting to Dinapur was rising tensions between the East India Company and the Kingdom of Nepal. In November 1814, the Governor General of Bengal declared war on Nepal, and a force of 17,000 British and Indian troops was assembled for an invasion. The war proceeded intermittently until 6th March 1816, when the Nepalese sued for peace after their defeat at the Battle of Hariharpur on the 1st. The campaigns became known as the 1st and 2nd Nepal (or Gurkha) Wars.

Sadly, Maxwell, having survived the war, was only to live a few months longer. It is recorded on the regimental muster roll for October 1816 that he had died on the 1st at Allahabad on the River Ganges. He was only 27.

In 1810, Maxwell's sister Ann married David Milne, an Aberdeen merchant and grocer, the ceremony taking place in Berwick-upon-Tweed. This is explained by David having also joined the Aberdeenshire Militia and having moved about the country with his regiment. Berwick was an important garrison town, and during the Napoleonic Wars the barracks was manned by reserve forces of militia and volunteers, freeing regular troops for service abroad. In 1813, Ann and David's second child, Euphemia, was born in Dover, Kent – also a garrison town and playing an important role in the defence of the country from French invasion. By the end of 1815 the couple had returned to Aberdeen, by which time there was no more threat from Napoleonic France.

It is not known whether James's other sons Alexander (b. 1774), Douglas (b. 1785) or James ever served in the militia; but Douglas's son, also called Douglas, carried on the family military tradition when he emigrated to America and joined the US Army. I have previously written about him in Journal 163.

Main sources consulted

Aberdeenshire Militia Muster Rolls and Pay Lists
24th Foot Regiment Muster Rolls

Army Attestation Registers; Army Discharge Papers
Royal Hospital, Chelsea, Pension Admissions Register
Royal Hospital, Chelsea, Pension Invalid Soldiers Examination
Historical Record of the 6th Foot (1839)
Historical Records of the 24th Regiment, ed. Paton, Glennie and Symons (1892)
The South Wales Borderers 24th Foot by C. T. Atkinson (1937)
Old Parish Registers; Censuses of Scotland
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Will and Estate Inventory

I am grateful to Mr Scott Fairie for research carried out at the National Archives, Kew, London.

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The Reid Family and the *Nelly Murray* Disaster

Hailing from the Moray coast – once Scotland's maritime hub – my ancestors had generations of seafaring blood coursing through their veins. For them, fishing was a lifeline inscribed into the fabric of their culture. But a life at sea meant families were inevitably plagued by loss. Spending many an hour sifting through records, catalogues and dog-eared books in pursuit of information, I've often wondered how my bereaved relatives fared when husbands, sons, fathers and brothers never came home. Sadly, my family are well versed in tragedy: 11 of my male ancestors perished at sea, and two others sustained serious injuries. One made it ashore to the beach, smoked a cigarette, and collapsed; miraculously, he survived. I anticipate the exact number of losses is even higher.

When the *Nelly Murray* set sail from Buckie on Wednesday, 30th March 1887, she was destined for Skate Hole, around 150 miles east of Fraserburgh. Owing to inclement weather, the ship would founder with the loss of all hands. A relentless storm swept the skies the next day, and the *Nelly Murray* was observed in the Moray Firth, heading southwards. After she failed to return to port, relatives of the crew telegraphed to Peterhead, and a substantial search party scoured the sea, all to no avail. A companion hatch and oar were later recovered by the *Frigate Bird*, one of several Buckie ships engaged in the recovery efforts. With fears mounting and hopes dashed, the *Nelly Murray* was concluded to have foundered.

Among the casualties were my 4g-grandfather, John Reid "Rosie" (1824–87), his three sons, son-in-law, and two nephews. John was acting as temporary skipper in place of William Murray "Lockie", who had remained onshore. This dealt a severe blow to the now-destitute Reid family, and in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy a meeting was convened at the Fishermen's Hall in Buckie to set up a relief fund for the widows and children of the lost men. Of John's family:

- son James Reid (1850–87) left a widow and five children,
- son-in-law James Summers (1856–87) left a widow and three children,
- son Peter Reid (1862–87) left a widow and child,
- and son Robert Reid (1866–87) was unmarried and had no issue.

The family progenitor, John Reid, was born at Buckie circa 1824 to James Reid and his wife, Isabella Reid (née Sinclair). Due to the high concentration of Reids living in the Buckie area, differentiation by way of tee-names was necessary, and so John's family

were nicknamed Reid “Rosie”. Tee-names could be based on physical characteristics (i.e. rosy cheeks, red hair), trades an individual worked in, or may have been taken from the surname of a female relative. The tee-name “Rosie” was possibly based on a physical characteristic. John married Janet Clark on 2nd February 1847. The couple had nine of a family (with eight children surviving to adulthood) and resided in Buckie’s coastal streets which faced out onto the vast expanse of the Moray Firth. John and Janet are documented as living at Nether Buckie in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 censuses respectively, with their address recorded as “Below the Brae”. This is generally agreed to encompass a cluster of streets, including Main Street, Great Western Road and Bowies Lane.

The story of the *Nelly Murray* has cascaded through generations of the Reid Rosie family, coloured by a series of revelatory anecdotes. Contemporary newspapers reported that John Reid had retired from the sea some years back, but had gone in his son’s stead. It is believed among descendants that John’s son, Alexander (Sandy) Reid (1862–1949), dreamt a calamity would befall the ship. Interpreting this as a bad omen, Sandy was reluctant to venture out to sea, hence why John went instead. One descendant, Peter Reid, recites this in a detailed poem of the family’s history. John was also a fearless preacher of the Gospel, and apparently there is a picture of him, in the pulpit, which I am currently searching for. At the time of the disaster, John was said to be building several houses along Great Western Road for his sons to live in. However, the sinking of the *Nelly Murray* forced the Reids into dire financial hardship, and the houses were never completed. The Buckie and Cruden communities rallied together in the wake of the tragedy. The family of the late James Summers returned their thanks to those who took the time to support his widow, Helen Coull Summers (née Reid), and their young family. From the Port Erroll community, around £36 was donated towards the *Nelly Murray* Disaster Fund, the equivalent of around £5,800 today.

John’s widow, Janet, would never remarry. She remained at the family home of 9 Bowies Lane with her daughter and my 3g-grandmother, Janet Bruce (née Reid, 1852–1931), until her death in 1907 aged 81. This home had belonged to the Reids since the 1870s at least, and I suspect they lived there earlier than this, although I haven’t managed to verify this independently. Despite the scale of loss, longevity appears to have run among John and Janet’s children: daughter Helen lived to be 95, son John almost reached 93, and son Alexander lived to be 87.

Fishing brought with it danger and uncertainty. Navigation could be imprecise, with sudden and unaccountable changes in weather dictating a ship’s course. Most families in this part of Scotland suffered losses at sea, whether directly or by proxy. In the case of John Reid’s family, it is exceptional that almost all the able-bodied men in the family were lost in the space of one day, eternally changing livelihoods and futures. The records alone



*John “Reid” Rosie and his daughter
Kirsten Reid*

shed little light on the emotional trauma that was surely inflicted upon surviving family members. To date, several of John and Janet's descendants have gathered to share family photographs, oral histories and poems, leveraging the benefits of shared knowledge to reconstruct a narrative on what is undoubtedly the worst fishing disaster to take place within my family.

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Bottom-Drawer Recollections

The mysterious "Bottom Drawer" was an essential part of any Scottish home for decades – but what did our ancestors keep in them? The answer is: anything and everything during the couple of centuries when it was a versatile feature in everyday life. Many an ancestor started life in this makeshift cradle or thrived on porridge from this temporary meal store. Later on, children had fun inside their imagined "boat" or "den".

For some, it could have been renamed a "Hope chest", as countless lovesick teenage girls embroidered tray cloths and cushions for their "bottom drawers", effectively their trousseau. But, once safely down the aisle, the contents changed, and the best linen was stored there for special occasions.

In my family, it was the source of many an anecdote. To the question "Hope you slept well?", a much-loved guest hesitated and then admitted the sheet seemed a bit stiff. It turned out that my sister had made the bed with a fully starched dinner tablecloth.

Until quite recently, the bottom drawer was also where the funeral pack was kept. Shrouds were made of whatever textile you could afford. Mother was a wonderful needlewoman who, undaunted by wartime restrictions, created a beautiful dress for a first formal dance. Some time later, she did confess she had recycled an upmarket shroud – but hastened to add that it was unused. Initially horrified, my sister had to admit she had had a wonderful evening wearing it.

Another family story concerns two aunts who were clearing out an old house up Deeside. On opening a drawer, they found a dusty old bundle. Aunt N cried out: "What's that?" Aunt M replied: "It's a shroud – and" (in a reverent tone) "it's never been used". Aunt N swiftly replied: "Thrifty Aberdonians we may be, but we certainly do not reuse shrouds!"

Alas, the days of the bottom drawer may be numbered. Will the increasing popularity of built-in storage units hasten the demise of that important piece of furniture and all the ancestral associations? There must be many more tales to tell ...

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Ed.: Do let us know if Anna's reminiscences spark any bottom-drawer stories from your family.

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James Cassie and *The Finnan Fisherman's Fireside*



I bought this painting, called *The Finnan Fisherman's Fireside* by the artist James Cassie (1819–79), in an online auction a few years ago. I have quite a few paintings by James, but this is our favourite and hangs in our living room. He was very prolific, and examples of his work are scattered worldwide in museums, art galleries and private collections.

I researched him in great depth when writing about the coastal village of Burnbanks. While looking at my notes, I fell into one of those rabbit holes that we family historians often find. The British Newspaper Archive is just the best research tool in my opinion – but all too often, you go down some obscure but interesting track, and then you find that it's 4am, you have a wad of interesting articles and have spent a fortune on *Scotland's People* website. Still, it's all worth it for a wee nugget of information.

It was certainly worth it to find James Cassie – and I feel a close link to him. He was “our” artist, who visited our village as well as many others along the coast from Aberdeen to Dundee. I've visited his grave in Dean Cemetery in Edinburgh, where he has a striking

monument bought by his friends. He was a confirmed bachelor (whatever that means) and had no descendants – but, by all the accounts of his peers, he was great company, a raconteur and bon-vivant. He liked a drink and a yap.

He didn't have great health throughout his life, and lost a leg in a childhood accident when he was run over by a horse and cart. Despite this, he still tramped along the coastline looking for willing models and subjects for his paintings.

Cassie lived in the Adelphi in Aberdeen. Locals and visitors will know it as a dead-end street off Aberdeen's main thoroughfare of Union Street. He lived there with his father, a wine and spirit merchant, and his sister Kate. She was loyal and ever-present throughout his life, and she registered his death and was executor of his will, responsible for clearing his Edinburgh artist's studio with its view of the castle. She was one of his models, and a painting of her came up for auction a few years ago.

James had moved to Edinburgh in order to become a member of the Royal Scottish Academy – but he didn't live long enough to enjoy it, and died in 1879 at only 60 years old, just a few months after the move.

Reading the painting

Findon is a small village on the east coast of Scotland only seven miles south of Aberdeen. It has been known for hundreds of years for producing Finnan haddies: haddocks gently smoked with wood and

peat. There are many interesting details in the background of this painting, and these items all relate to the process of catching and smoking the haddies.

What's in your living room? Ours has the usual scattering of unread books and magazines, piles of ironing to be done, an overcramped bookcase, precious family photo frames, cat toys, and is that an unwashed cup from yesterday? We're clean, but not very tidy. And it's the same here, although there is some artistic licence in the layout of the items on display. The family is certainly not bragging about what they own, but it's a fine historical piece, providing an accurate record of what was inside a typical fisherman's house in the 1860s.

On the floor is a soup pot with vegetables, along with mussel shells for baiting lines and redding poles for preparing fishing lines. On the window ledge to the right is a large book – and surely it can only be the Bible. On the centre back wall of the room is a fish smoker with ashes on the earthen floor in front. Lined up on the left-hand side are a peat shovel and two finished haddies hanging on a drying rail. There's a "long line" basket designed for holding prepared lines, baited with mussels. The lines would generally be laid out neatly to be able to deploy overboard without tangling.

The small side table is laid with simple bread and drinks. There's also a scuttle with fuel, tinder sticks or matches. On top of the smoker is a water jug, and just to their right are two types of whale-oil lamp hanging on the wall. The one on the left is a cruiseie double-pan



lamp, a design used for over 3,000 years in Roman and Greek culture, while the one on the right is a more modern brass lamp.

The central subject of this painting is a young woman with a baby. The crib is a Moses basket, and the baby is immaculate in white irrespective of the peat smoke in the house. A reference article I find very useful in understanding what fisher life was like is “The Fishing Industry at Aberdeen Fifty Years Ago” by William Leiper, published in *Deeside Field* (1929), which deals with a similar house in Burnbanks Village. It gives a fascinating description of life in the late 1800s. Fish were smoked inside the house, and it would have been very uncomfortable for the inhabitants. The author commented that as a child, he would go to bed and bury his head in the blankets, so sore were his eyes with the peat and sawdust smoke. The painting tells us the story of everyday life for fisher folk.



The painting belongs to me, and I freely pass electronic copies to anyone. If you would like a copy to study the items more closely, please e-mail me.

All photographs by Joe McLeod; image-editing by Steve Edwards

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Joe McLeod No. 21957

Harry McRobbie and John Thain: Cromar Pranks and Superstitions

The following story relates to a small local mill at Milton of Whitehouse, Cromar. It was the practice of neighbours to gather for a social chat at the mill, but they often took the opportunity to trick the miller, John Thain, who was rather superstitious. Harry McRobbie, farmer in Bridgefoot, known locally as Briggie, was just such a rogue. One evening, after setting off for home, he found an empty sack lying by the road. Knowing that Thain would soon have to close the mill down for the night by shutting off the sluice, McRobbie disguised himself under the sack and lay in wait. When the miller came out and saw the white shape, “he instantly turned with a yell of horror, and bounded home with the speed of a greyhound”, certain he had seen a ghost. Briggie laughed heartily but also closed off the sluice himself so that, in the morning, Thain was even more bewildered.

This story, with other sketches, appeared in the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (26th December 1905) under the title of “Superstition in Cromar”. One of around a dozen articles by local historian George Gauld (1853–1907), it relates events from the time of his grandparents. Happily, parish and statutory records reveal a little more about the individuals. John Thain and his wife Margaret Duncan married in Logie Coldstone parish in 1796. Their oldest son Francis, or Francie (1797–1866), appears elsewhere in the same article and was a labourer at Whitehouse in the 1851 census. Their other children whose records survive were Jannet, William and John. Harry McRobbie (b.c. 1748) died in 1831, aged 83, and his wife Rebecca Reid died in 1833, aged 75 – both too early to be recorded in the 1841 census. They are buried in Logie Mar kirkyard, recorded on stone 107. They married in 1782 and had children named William, Margaret, Elspeth, Rebecca, Jean and Isobel. It’s so satisfying to round out family stories with dates and other information in this way.

Fathers and Sons in the First and Second World Wars

My special interest is researching First World War deaths from North-East Scotland, or with connections to the area. I research from Marykirk in Kincardineshire to Moray, and the Orkney and Shetland Islands – and Gordon Highlanders anywhere. The result is my card-index-style “Roll of Honour” database of over 20,000 individuals, available under DataBank when you log in to the Society’s website.

In the same place, you will also find a database with details of soldiers and other personnel serving in North-East Scottish regiments/units who died in service during the Second World War. Information is steadily being added by Society member Norman Wood, with help from others. I don’t research the Second World War, but I have so far found four families where the father died in WW1, and his son of the exact same name died in WW2. This short article is about these men.

Leslie Richmond, of the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders, was born in 1888 in Victoria, Australia, to an English father and Scottish mother. By 1901, the family had returned to Britain and were living in Perthshire. Leslie attended Sandhurst Military Academy, where he gained his commission in 1906 with the Gordon Highlanders. In 1909 he became a lieutenant, and in the 1911 census, aged 22, he was a lieutenant in barracks at Colchester, Essex. He married Ruth Margaret Greenwood in Yorkshire in 1914, a few months before WW1 broke out in late July.

Leslie was killed in action at the Battle of Mons on 23rd August 1914, aged 26 – the first Australian-born soldier to die in WW1. He is buried in St Symphorien Military Cemetery and is commemorated on memorials in Perthshire. His only son, **Leslie Richmond**, born in January 1915, was a captain with the 10th Royal Hussars and had also only recently been married when he was killed in action in May 1940 at Dunkirk, where he is remembered on the Dunkirk Memorial. I have not yet managed to find his photograph.



Capt. L. Richmond

News has been received of the death in action of Captain Leslie Richmond, of the Royal Hussars. Captain Richmond was the only son of Mrs. Richmond, of Swarcliffe, near Ripley, widow of Col. Richmond, who was killed in Flanders during the last European War.

Captain Leslie Richmond was aged 25. He was educated at Marlborough and took up a military career. Shortly after the outbreak of war he married Miss Susan Sykes, daughter of Major and Mrs. Mark Sykes, of West Ella, near Hull.

Leslie Richmond snr on the left and the newspaper obituary for his son, above.

John Alexander Rose was born in 1887 in Glenlivet on the Moray/Banffshire border, and moved to Aberdeen, where he became an accountant. He enlisted in the 4th Bn Gordon Highlanders, and married Jeanie Ina Sim Hendry in Aberdeen, but within five months he was killed in action on 30th May 1915. He is remembered on the panels of the Menin Gate



at Ypres, and at Downan Kirkyard in Inveravon, and on memorials in Aberdeen, including Robert Gordon's College.

He too had an only son. **John Alexander Rose**, born on 28th September 1915 in Aberdeen, was a signalman with the Royal Corps of Signals (The Cheshire Yeomanry) in the Middle East when he was killed on 22nd April 1944. He is buried at Ramleh War Cemetery in what is now the Israeli town of Ramla near Tel Aviv, and is remembered on

the Banchory War Memorial. Both father and son died at the age of 28.

Benjamin Grimmer was born in 1876 in Scarborough on the Yorkshire coast. In 1898 in Aberdeen, he married Mary Jessie Cowling. In the 1911 census, he was in the Merchant Navy and lived in Aberdeen. During WW1 he was a sergeant in the Royal Engineers (Inland Waterways and Docks), and on 8th October 1917 he drowned while serving near Sangatte, Pas-de-Calais, France. Buried at Les Baraques Military Cemetery, he is commemorated on the Aberdeen City Roll of Honour.



His son **Benjamin Grimmer**, born on 23rd May 1903 in Aberdeen, married Mary Maders there in 1926. He served with the Royal Naval Reserve in WW2, and was skipper of HM Trawler *Forfeit* when the ship was bombed. He died at sea on 6th June 1941, aged 38, and is buried in East St Clement Churchyard, Aberdeen.

James Alexander Dunlop was born in 1887 in Aberdeen, and was serving as a fireman with the Mercantile Marine aboard the SS *Hogarth* during WW1. On 7th June 1918, the ship was carrying a general cargo from London to Aberdeen when it was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine UB-107 off the Longstone Lighthouse, Farne Islands, Northumberland. One survivor was picked up after nearly two days on a raft, but James, aged 31, was among the 26 men lost. He is remembered on memorials in Aberdeen and on Tower Hill Memorial in London, which commemorates men and women of the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets who died in both World Wars and who have no known grave.

In 1916 in Aberdeen, James had married Jessie Ann Davidson. Their son, also **James Alexander Dunlop**, was born in 1917 in Aberdeen. He was aged 26 and serving with the Scots Guards when he died on 1st August 1944 in Normandy, where he is remembered at the Bayeux War Cemetery.



I hope this small piece of research will encourage you to research your family and to find WW1 or WW2 men with connections to these databases that are available to members.

doricanne@sky.com

Anne Park

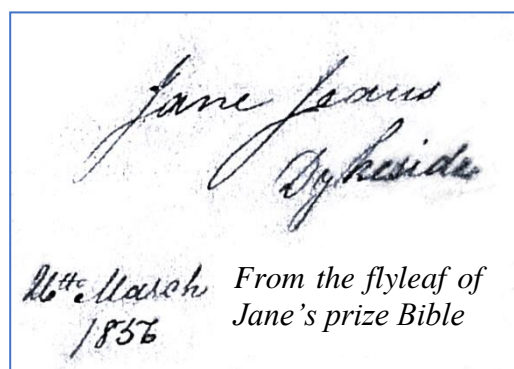
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—oOo—

New Life for a Neglected Sampler: The Family of Jane Jeans

With no Elgin City home game at Boroughbriggs, and a wet, cold Saturday forecast, I made the wise decision to Zoom in to the Glasgow Group's online February meeting about "Family History in Samplers". With the family sampler, which for years has been sitting in a thick plastic bag beside the "big" computer, unearthed and propped up beside me, I listened enthralled to Buzzy Garden's excellent talk. Yes, there was the red and green border plus the stylised house, birds, animals, crown, letters, numbers, family initials etc., just like those all sewn by Jane Jeans.

Jane was born on 25th October 1841 at Dykeside, Clackmarris, on the southern outskirts of Elgin, the youngest child and only daughter of James Jeans and Elspet Forsyth. She was baptised on 3rd November by the Rev. Alexander Topp (one of the leading lights in the 1843 Disruption). The witnesses were John Mantach, George Reid and Jane Forsyth.



After periods at Deanshaugh and Blackhills, James and Elspet were settled at Dykeside by 1838. The census returns show Jane in 1851 as a nine-year-old scholar and in 1861 as an unmarried 19-year-old farmer's daughter. At the age of 14, she was awarded first prize at Bible class. Sadly, Jane was not destined for long life, dying at Dykeside on 14th July 1862 after suffering for about six years from phthisis (tuberculosis), which her death notice tells us "she bore

with Christian resignation". Perhaps it was during her years of illness that the sampler was sewn.

Who, then, are the people whose initials are stitched on Jane's sampler?

James Jeans and Elspet Forsyth, Jane's parents. James was born at Armidykes, Duffus and baptised on 8th December 1791, the fifth child and second son of John Jeans and his second wife Margaret Forsyth, while Elspet was born in 1803 in **JJ EF** Duffus parish to master mason James Forsyth and his wife Jane Innes.

After farming for 25 years at Dykeside, James died there on 6th August 1863. Elspet subsequently lived with her eldest son, dying at Old Cranloch Schoolhouse on 20th December 1891.

JJ James, their eldest, was born on 17th May 1824 at Deanshaugh in New Spynie parish. Never married, James became a schoolmaster at Cranloch School. By the 1881 census, his occupation was given as retired schoolmaster, while in 1891 "crofter" was added to this. A succession of nieces kept house for him, doubtless helping with the care of Elspet – and it was through one of these that Jane's sampler, among other things, came into our possession. James died at Cranloch on 20th February 1897 after suffering with acute peritonitis for three days.

LJ
AW Lachlan was born on 18th February 1827 at Blackhills. Trained as a cabinetmaker and carpenter, he worked in Glasgow before setting off for British North America where, in Fredericton, New Brunswick, he met and married Agnes Wallace, a Kirkcudbrightshire lass with an uncle (James Dickson) in Maitland, New South Wales, Australia. Possibly lured by tales of new opportunities, the couple returned briefly to Scotland to visit family before setting sail from Liverpool on the *Conway* on 21st September 1856, arriving in Sydney three months later. Towards the end of 1857, they moved from Maitland to the expanding town of Tamworth, where Lachlan established a much-respected business as a cabinetmaker and undertaker. On 4th November 1891 he died, but Agnes lived on to the age of 93, dying in 1926.

JJ JB John was born on 26th June 1828 at Blackhills, and his wife, Jane Baxter, was the daughter of James Baxter, a sawyer, and Jane Murdoch. They moved around various farms in the Elgin area before settling to farm at Balmakeith, Nairn, where John died on 25th July 1894, followed by Jane on 16th March 1900.

AJ
KMcK Alexander was born on 3rd September 1830 at Blackhills, and his wife, Catherine McKenzie, was a daughter of Donald McKenzie, a crofter, and Elspet Bowie. Her name is given as Catherine with a C on census returns and on her death certificate, although Jane has used a K on the sampler. Before taking over Dykeside on his father's death, Alexander worked on various farms in St Andrews Lhanbryd parish. In April 1903, the couple celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary at the farmhouse with a dinner and an evening of dancing, and were presented with a purse of sovereigns. They both died in 1920, Alexander on 3rd September and Catherine on 22nd October.

WJ IO William was born on 19th June 1834 at Blackhills, and **IO** presumably records his wife. However, only during recent study of the sampler were William's survival into adulthood and his marriage discovered. Further research is required here.

GJ
AMcK George, who arrived on 4th February 1838, was the first child to be born after the family's move to Dykeside, and his wife was Ann, daughter of John McKenzie, a carpenter, and Margaret Hossack. This couple are my husband's great-grandparents. Their eldest son James was born and sadly died aged ten months while George was a farm servant at Leuchars House. The next move was as farm overseer to the Barnyards of Duff House, Banff, where George and John were born. Their final move was to farm Letter, at Skene in Aberdeenshire, where they saw the arrival of twins Robert and William (my husband's grandfather), Lachlan, Margaret, Elsie and Annie. It was Margaret who latterly kept house for her Uncle James the schoolmaster. When James died, she was left the contents of his house which included the sampler, a wall clock (which made an appearance on *Antiques*



The reverse of the sampler shows the excellent quality of Jane's needlework, so neat that you can clearly read the letters in reverse.

Try holding it to a mirror to see how clear the letters are.

Roadshow when it visited Elgin in July 1989) and various family papers. While living at Cranloch, Margaret met and married John Robertson – and these items came to us through their son John. George died relatively young on 20th January 1885 at Letter, while Ann died on 14th July 1921, aged 85.

The sampler is sewn on what looks like quite rough cloth. It had been tacked on to its frame, had no backing or protective glass, and hung by a bit of cord. The date is unclear apart from “18” followed by a bit of a number and another faded number. The “6” starts the continuation of numbers from several rows above.



This neglected sampler is presently with a local conservator who has declared it to be perfect, especially given that it is on loose-weave linen and that its original frame had no glass or backing. The conservator gave the sampler a very light vacuum followed by a sample clean on a corner using a conservation liquid soap, which verified that it was not dirty. She reckons that the colour on the back is commensurate with age, with the material likely being unbleached linen. Other conservators were consulted, but because of fragility they would only recommend restoring staining, material deterioration or damage to the frame. The frame was cleaned, and it too was dirt-free.

Jane's life on earth was short, but her painstaking handiwork has survived for around 170 years. The sampler will no longer be kept in the thick plastic bag beside the “big” computer, but after its return from the framer it will be displayed and, I hope, admired for many years to come.

Jeans Family Photographs: What Their Clothes Tell Us

Pamela sent us an interesting group of family photographs to accompany the above story of Jane and her sampler. She understood that they portray some of Jane's five older brothers. We asked Kate Clark for some advice – and this is her reply.



Left to right: James Jeans (1824–97) with his niece Margaret Robertson; John Jeans (1828–94) with wife Jane Baxter; Alexander Jeans (1830–1920) with wife Catherine McKenzie.

I would place the first photo of James Jeans and his niece at around 1893–5. This outdoor photo is interesting. Who was the photographer? Perhaps a travelling opportunistic door-knocker, now that photographic wizardry had become technically simpler. James, like his brothers, favours a Newgate collar-style beard. The bowler hat, I'd guess, is to indicate his status as a schoolmaster, a cut above the farm workers. Margaret's blouse style, with neat skirt, is typical of about 1893 when the kick-up-style sleeve was widening, if you wished, to become a full-blown gigot. Her plain, neat hairstyle also fits well with this date.

I would estimate the second photo to be mid- to late 1880s. The woman has a neat flat-fronted bodice which drops below her waist. Her hat is highly decorated, perched on top of her head with a generously wide ribbon tied at one side, a style often worn by respectable older women at that time. The skirt of her dress has swathes of fabric at the front, pulled towards what would be a modest neat bustle at the back. This style fits well with that date. The man has unmatched clothing: perhaps the waistcoat and jacket fabric might be the same, but the trousers are different.

The third picture is of a younger brother, Alexander Jeans (1830–1920) with his wife Catherine McKenzie, but this photograph is taken later than the previous ones, possibly mid-1890s. The V-shaped bodice with peplum fits well with the end of the 1880s, but the sleeves are very loose and wide, and the near jabot insert suggests mid-1890s. The skirt is flat at the front with some fullness at the back, which I'd date to the late 1880s. Her hat is similar to Jane Baxter's in the previous photo but with the ribbons removed. Perhaps she directed the dressmaker to create something to her own design. Unfortunately, the man does not offer me many more clues, as his estimated age and dated facial hair imply that, like his brothers, fashion probably isn't top priority.

Pamela had a fourth picture, which she understood to be of George Jeans (1838–85) and his wife Ann McKenzie. Their daughter Margaret kept house for her uncle James (see first

picture). But this photograph *cannot* be of George, who died in 1885. The fashions belong to a later period. Note this man's modern tie compared to James's in the first photo.



The woman's clothing style is a dressier version of Margaret's in the first picture, except that the sleeve could now be a deflating gigot. The style of the open front jacket with geometric lapels suggests the post-gigot period, a little after 1895. These details and the woman's carefully positioned left hand suggest it was taken to record the couple's marriage.

At first I thought it may have been Margaret Jeans with her spouse John Hood Robertson, who married in 1897 in Skene. There is a similarity to Margaret in the first photo, except her eyes are very different, which I don't think is just due to the camera angle. Alternatively, it could be Ann Jeans (née McKenzie), George's widow, with one of her sons: John (born 1869), twins William and Robert (born 1871) or Lachlan (born 1873). It might help to know who the photographer was.

So, we asked Pamela what she thought. She replied:

Kate Clark is perfectly correct that the gentleman in the picture certainly cannot be George Jeans as we had always believed. I have had a look at the original photograph, and it was taken by the studio of A. Rennie, Donald's Court, Schoolhill, Aberdeen. I have discovered that this business was established in 1886. George died in 1885!

Pamela was given the photographs more than 35 years ago by a relative who thought this couple were his Jeans grandparents. Pamela continued:

Knowing no better, we believed him. As to the photographers, the one with James Jeans and his niece has "Geo. Menzies" stamped on the back, but there is no address. The photographer for John Jeans and Jane Baxter is W Crow Gordon, Westbury Road and Leopold Street, Nairn. The photograph of Alexander with his wife Catherine McKenzie came to us as copies from relatives in Australia and America and have no details. We do have photographs of Annie McKenzie, and I attach them.

Kate concludes: I'm delighted by these additional photographs. I love Pamela's horses one, with people put in for scale, as my Dad would say. I'm sure every North-East Scottish family-history box of old photos has a few of these. I certainly do. I am now curious to know how that photographic experience worked. Did the roving photographer send out flyers, just like the ones you see announcing that the circus is coming? Pamela's team is certainly well turned out, as are the horses in my ones! This leads me to think they were expecting the photographer and that there must have been a booking system. I expect her photo is on a postcard back, as mine are. There is rarely a photographer credited on this format. This is intriguing me, and I feel a whole new area of study coming on.

So, dear reader, do you think these photographs could be of the woman in the “mystery” photograph? And well done, Kate, for demonstrating that fashion styles are indeed a helpful guide in trying to date a photograph.



—oOo—

A Birse and Cooper Family History

My interest in exploring my family history started back in 1980 when I was having a conversation with my late father, David Birse (1914–89). “Where do I start?” I asked Dad. “Contact your Aunty Evie in Aberdeen, Scotland” (Evelyn Margaret Downie, née Birse, 1919–2007) – “she still corresponds with cousins in Canada” was his response. On contacting Aunty Evie and explaining to her my new-found passion for Birse family history, I was informed that the best place to start would be by consulting “the Birse Bible”. My great-grandfather, Robert Birse (1856–1948), had a leather-bound bible, on the first page of which he had inscribed his birth details, those of his wife Janet Cooper (my great-grandmother, 1854–1925) and the full names and dates of birth of their six children. My Aunty Evie had also written their dates of death into this bible. (See cover image.)

During my research, my father supplied Robert and Janet’s original wedding banns. But these posed a quandary as to the correct spelling of Janet’s maiden name. Was it “Cowper” as recorded on the wedding banns, or “Cooper” as recorded in the family bible?

I placed an advertisement in the local newspaper for Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands, where Robert and Janet were married and lived for part of their lives, seeking information from other descendants, particularly as to whether the correct spelling was “Cowper” or “Cooper”. I was fortunate to receive a letter in response, which confirmed – in no uncertain terms in the opening line – that it was definitely “Cooper”.

Robert and Janet had six children: John Birse (1881–1955), David Birse (1883–1934), Barbara Jane Birse (1884–1973), Jessie Ann Birse (1886) and twins Josephina Learmonth Birse (1889–1980) and Robert Birse (1889–1969). I started to wonder: how hard could this ancestry research be? Well, here I am 44 years later and I am still working on connections and descendants of the Cooper family and also descendants of the Foulis and Forbes families – all through the children of Robert and Janet Birse.

Their son John married Elizabeth Clark (1886–1910). They had two daughters, although unfortunately Elizabeth died in childbirth. David married Margaret Gordon (1884–1951)

and produced two boys and a girl, David (my father), Robert and Evie. Barbara married David Kennedy Foulis (1883–1977) and emigrated to Canada. Their family consisted of four daughters and one son. Jessie married George Alexander Thomson, and they had three daughters. Josephina married Alexander J. Forbes (1892–1941) and emigrated to Australia. They had no children. The youngest, Robert, was possibly married (although I have been unable to locate a marriage certificate) to Catherine Gordon Cuthill and took in an orphan girl, Annie Clarke Bruce.

I have spent many years researching all of Robert and Janet's children, and their families, in particular Barbara, who emigrated to Canada. On researching Barbara's descendants, I located a distant cousin based in Armstrong, Canada, who had been aware that her Aunt Marion had been corresponding regularly with my Aunt Evie in Scotland for many years. A friendship was created, and regular e-mails ensued.

Finally, in 2007, I travelled with my family from my home in Adelaide, Australia, to Canada and met my distant cousin, Kaye, face to face, as well as all the descendants of Barbara Birse and David Foulis, by way of a big family BBQ. To this day we still keep in regular contact.

As a footnote, the surname of Birse comes from the district of Birse, Aberdeenshire to the south of the River Dee near Aboyne. It appeared as a Scottish surname, Duncan de Byrss, Burgess of Aberdeen, recorded as early as 1462. Other spellings of Birse were *bras*, *brass* and *bros* (Gaelic), meaning "impetuous".

Sources consulted

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birse>

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- £30.00 (black and white) or £45.00 (colour) per quarter-page (doubled for a half-page)
- £45.00 b/w or £60.00 colour for one third of a page (175 x 90mm)
- £90.00 b/w or £120.00 colour for a full page (175 x 270mm).

Writing to the Society

Please send all correspondence to The Family-History Research Centre (address on back cover). To help us be more efficient, please detail your requirements on separate sheets (with your name and membership number) according to which service you wish to call upon or which office-bearer you wish to write to – or use the appropriate e-mail address (see opposite page) to minimise delays.

Change of address

If you have access to the Internet, then **PLEASE** use the special form on our website to notify address or e-mail address changes. This form is processed automatically on receipt, ensuring fast service. If you write to the Membership Department, **please quote your membership number**.

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We stock a wide range of titles with emphasis on Scottish genealogy. Individuals who are prepared to place a standing order for all Society publications qualify for a 33% discount. A searchable, filterable list of all our publications is available on our website.

For all information on publications and how to order, see www.anesfhs.org.uk, “Publications” tab.

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The Society cannot vouch for the accuracy of offers of services or goods that are advertised in the Journal, or be responsible for the outcome of any contract that a reader may make with an advertiser. Views expressed in contributions are the author's and not necessarily the Society's. **The Editor reserves the right to amend any copy.** The Society Library does not necessarily hold copies of books quoted or referenced in this Journal.



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Centre opening hours

Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

Saturday morning by appointment: please telephone

Closed on local and public holidays

ANESFHS Family-History Centre closures, 2024–25

Closed on local holidays: 22nd April, 6th May, 8th July and 23rd September 2024

Closing at 4pm on Fri. 20th December 2024; reopening at 10am on Mon. 6th January 2025

See website for further details

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