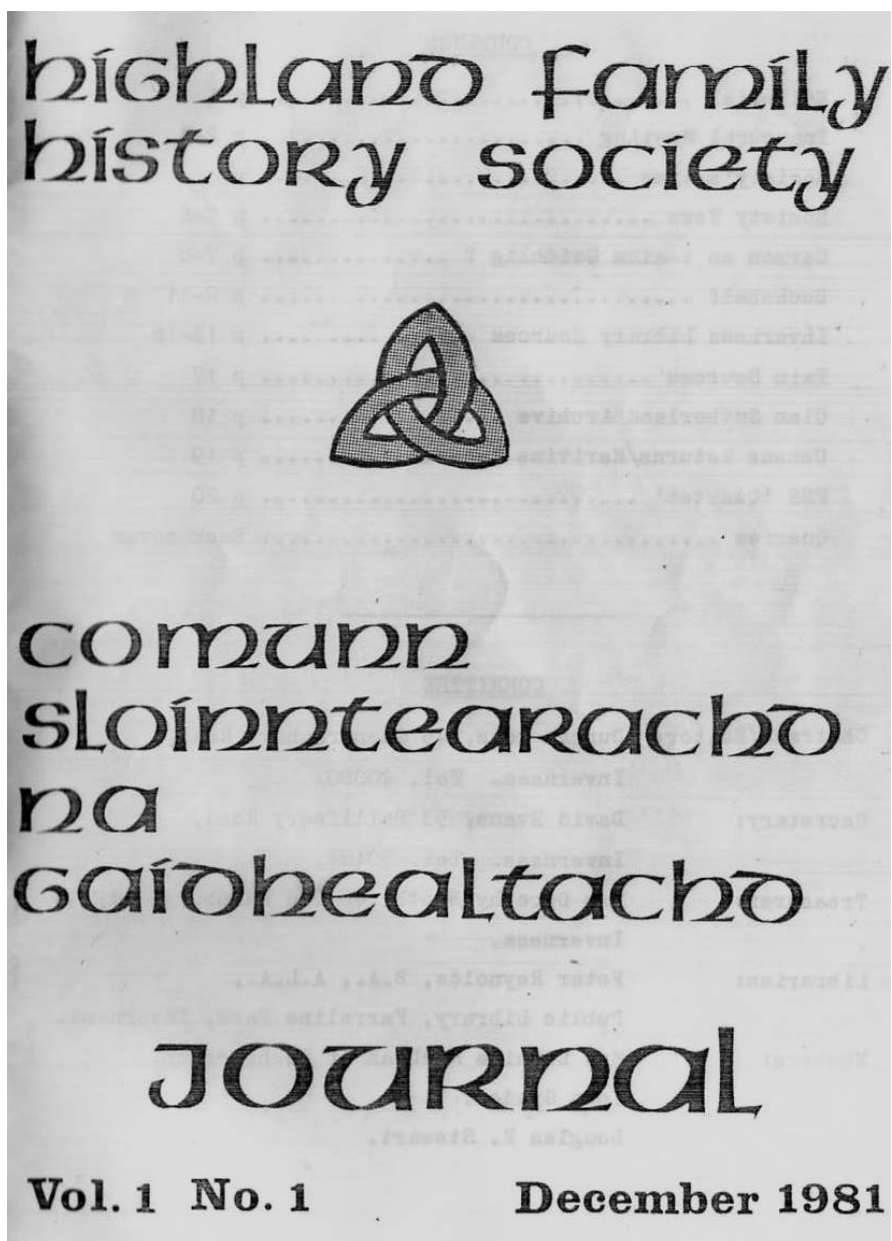


HIGHLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY



Volume 40, Issue 4

August 2022

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<i>CHAIRMAN</i>	<i>Angus Bethune</i>
<i>SECRETARY</i>	<i>Stuart Farrell</i>
<i>TREASURER / MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY</i>	<i>John Durham</i>
<i>JOURNAL EDITOR</i>	<i>Stuart Farrell</i>
<i>SYLLABUS SECRETARY</i>	<i>Jonathan McColl</i>
<i>MEMBER</i>	<i>Imelda MacDonald</i>
<i>SAFHS REPRESENTATIVE</i>	<i>Angus Bethune</i>

*All correspondence – c/o Family History Room,
Highland Archive Centre, Bught Road, Inverness IV3 5SS
Please mark each item for the attention of the appropriate official*

SUBSCRIPTION RATES for year 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023

Category	United Kingdom (PDF)	Overseas (PDF)
Ordinary	£12.00	£12.00
Institutional	£18.00	£18.00

Highland Family History Society
Comunn Sliointearachd na Gaidhealtachd
Scottish Charities No. SCO15987

IMPORTANT NEWS

It is with sad news that this, as we intimated in our last issue, that will be our **last printed** journal. From September 2022 when memberships are due to be renewed, we will be moving to an electronic-only version of the Journal (ie PDF).

As we move into this transition phase of the Society it has been decided that we will not be able to have talks for the coming winter due to Archive Centre no longer having late opening hours, and as we go to press the rise in Covid cases. We will consider what we do in the spring of 2023.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

The Society is always looking for new articles from members, however small, so please contribute what you can. We also accept queries and please send them to the editor for inclusion in the next journal.

New Email Address – The Highland FHS has a new email for enquiries, articles etc – HighlandFHS@gmail.com.

Any correspondence, including membership, should be addressed to: Highland Family History Society, The Highland Archive Centre, Bught Road, Inverness, Highland, Scotland IV3 5SS or to the above email.

Find my Past – The Society in partnership with Find My Past – is now able to offer a discount on Membership of Find My Past – use the Code HIGHLAND2022 – this should get you a 15% discount.

Publications – Monumental inscriptions for Carrbridge Cemetery, Inverness-shire are now available with 332 inscriptions; and new material is also underway so keep an eye out for announcements in future issues.

Web Page – We will soon have a revised web page, with additions to our old one of lists of pedigree charts (we will be adding charts at a later date), back issues of journals and a strays index. Additional material will be added at a later date.

Stuart Farrell

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

The new financial year for the Society commences on the 1st September 2022 and this is the annual reminder to members that their membership subscriptions are now due. The action you need to take, if any, depends on the method you use to pay your annual subscription. Each member will fall into one of the three categories 1, 2 or 3 below.

NB. For UK members and Overseas members, there are now only two rates – that of Ordinary Membership at £12 and Institutional Membership at £18. All members will receive the journal by PDF.

1. If you pay your subscription by Banker's Order, make sure your bank sends the appropriate amount to the Clydesdale Bank plc [Bank Sort Code: 82-65-18 and Account Number: 20290121]. If you have been paying the Senior rate of £8 or Family rate of £16 previously, please change the amount to £12.
2. If you have paid your subscription in advance, a slip is enclosed acknowledging that fact.
3. If you fall into neither of the above categories, a pink reminder slip will have been enclosed with this journal. If you have received the reminder, please pay your subscription as soon as possible and preferably by the 15th October 2022.

If you prefer to pay using an on-line bank facility, the Society's bank details can be found in 1 above. Remember to include your membership number.

The Society has a 'stand' on GENfair, the Online Family History Fair and Genealogy Bookstore. This has been very successful from our point of view as many members joined the Society for the first time using this method and it is a very easy way of renewing your membership. In addition several members and non-members have purchased publications using this very secure system of payment.

If you have a credit or debit card, and have access to the Internet, you can use this facility to renew your membership. This will be of particular benefit to overseas members who do not have a sterling bank account. At present they incur additional charges either in obtaining a sterling cheque or a bank draft. Using GENfair also saves postage and you will receive on-line confirmation that your subscription has been paid. To use this service: -

1. Go to <www.highlandfhs.org>
2. On Home page, click on Membership
3. On Membership page, click on GENFair
4. Click on either Membership of Highland FHS - UK only or Membership of Highland FHS – Europe & Overseas
5. Select the appropriate category (Individual or Institutional) and follow the instructions.

If you still prefer to pay your subscription by cheque (Sterling cheques only), the enclosed reminder slip should accompany your payment. This will ensure that it is credited to your membership number.

Chairman's Column August 2022

The continuing fallout from the Covid pandemic on what we can and can't do has led to us having to make some serious decisions regarding the future of the Society. As Stuart has noted, this will be the last printed edition of the Journal to be produced, with future editions being available as pdf downloads. This isn't an ideal solution, but mirrors what many other organisations have been doing recently, to counter increasing printing and postal costs.

We have also been considering whether we can resume our monthly meetings in one form or another. We have enjoyed a long and happy relationship with our friends at the Archive Centre, but acknowledge that they have had to rethink their way of working with the public. As a consequence, it will not be possible to hold evening meetings there for the time being, but the prospect of holding our regular meetings in an afternoon, say, is one that we are pursuing. For now, however, we feel it still isn't quite the time to organise a series of speakers for these regular meetings.

As with many organisations, we rely on a small number of volunteers to assist with the running of the Society - and none of us are getting younger. John Durham has been our Treasurer and Membership Secretary since Adam was a boy - well, a very long time! - but sadly he is shortly moving away from the Highlands, so we wish him well and again acknowledge the power of work he has done for the Society down the years. And other members of the current committee have had to reconsider their involvement, with one Committee Member resigning and another reducing their input, the consequence that a lot of work rests on a few shoulders - willing shoulders I should add, but we can't continue in this fashion for too long.

As always, we would welcome any feedback from you, our members, on the situation which I have outlined, and the future direction of our Society.

The Journal will continue to be produced regularly, and we aim to continue to man the desk in the Archive Centre on a regular basis. Further publications will continue to be produced as and when, and our website is currently being overhauled to make it more relevant.

Angus Bethune
Chairman

The Highland FHS Journal – 40 Years on.

by Stuart Farrell

As we have announced this will be the **last** printed journal of the society, but I feel we have done well to keep it going and hope that you will still enjoy it in a different format in the future.

The early years of the society's journal did not contain many articles but gave mostly information on microfilms, fiches and census indexing projects and sources that were available – how we must have struggled before the web! There were offers of help with research in faraway places like Caithness (which has its own Family History group formed in 1999).

Some things seem so strange now, like notes on sources in New Register House – just how long things took before Scotland's People.

An early event in the Society's annual Calendar was the 'Social Night' where members were invited to come along, swap information, listen to a talk and of course have something to eat and meet other members. This event was stopped due to a lack of local members and rising costs.

Of much interest is how well the society did in its formative years. The first year saw over 200 members and the cost of production for the journal for 3 issues was £142 (now we are well over ten times that) we were helped no doubt by adverts in the *Inverness Courier* newspaper (cost £32.30) but these were stopped quite soon as being expensive.

There were reviews of books and of course numerous queries. We still occasionally get the latter but lots of material on the web does not resolve all the problems and there is much material that is not on the web.

Our first MI book was Geddes Churchyard, Nairnshire surveyed under the auspices of Mrs Irene Sutherland, an early Committee member with the help of her husband and volunteers, but it took a while to undertake and get it published, initially this was sold for £1! MI recording was then undertaken by another Committee member Hamish MacLennan (who is still a member!). We are still undertaking MI surveys and producing books and a complete list of books available can be found later in this issue and why we still record all.

An early major project for the Society was the indexing of the 1851 Census and producing a register of member's interests. Now with all the Census's available online these early indexing projects have become almost redundant but we still have the data and hopefully these will be added to our web site soon. The register of members interests will appear in our updated web site soon and its hoped soon to have the charts available online too in the near distant future.

DID HE FALL OR WAS HE PUSHED?
The Mystery behind the Death of a Master Mariner
 By John Durham

For a number of reasons since I started to research in detail the more colourful individuals on my family tree, hardly any documents relating to members of my family have survived the passage of time. In the case of my great-uncle, Captain John Durham, I have been more fortunate. The following items are currently in my possession: his Master's Certificate of Competency and this 'sailing card' for his final ill-fated voyage to the West Indies.

follow "MERJULIO," s.s.
 Last day for Shipping, 12th March, 1890, unless previously full.

The "Direct" Line of Steam Packets
 BETWEEN
LONDON AND THE BRITISH WEST INDIA ISLANDS,
 For Barbados, Tobago, Trinidad, Grenada, St. Vincent,
 St. Lucia, Antigua, St. Kitts, Montserrat,
 (Calling at Martinique and Guadeloupe, if sufficient inducement offers).
 THE SCREW STEAMER.

MORVEN, 100 A1 at Lloyd's.

365 Tons Reg. 900 H.P. effective. J. DURHAM, COMMANDER.
 Loading in the Eastern London Dock.
Goods from the Continent and Water-borne goods may be ordered alongside on and after 10th March.
Postal arrangements will be announced in course.
 Every package must have the port of destination distinctly marked upon it, or the Owners will not be responsible for delivery of the same.
 Freight payable 14 days after clearing, or on delivery of Bill of Lading. Mate's receipt will be required in exchange for Bill of Lading for water-borne goods.

For Freight or Passage apply to
CAW, PRENTICE, CLAPPERTON & Co.,
 175, WEST GEORGE STREET, GLASGOW;
HENRY LANGRIDGE & Co.,
 16, GREAT ST. HELEN'S, LONDON;
 or to **SCRUTTON SONS & Co.,**
 3, GRACECHURCH STREET, LONDON.

Bills of Lading for this Line to be had ONLY of WHITEHEAD, MORRIS & Co., 9, Fenchurch Street, E.C.
 FEBRUARY, 1890.

Handwritten notes on the left margin: "To follow the Compartment" and "No 9172"

I also have his silver watch, which he presumably had on his person the day he drowned. The main body of the watch is dated 1887, the year in which he passed the examination to gain his Master's Certificate. The back of the watch, which has the entwined letters JD inscribed upon it, is dated 1893, some three years after he died, and must have been replaced.

The watch was a silent witness to the events of 2nd May 1890, which resulted in the following item appearing in the *Northern Chronicle*. "The Late Captain Durham – On Saturday news of the death by drowning of Captain Durham, of the steamship Morven, was received by his parents in Thurso. He was a young man of much promise, and became captain of this ship when ordinary men in his profession could scarcely expect to secure the role of being able seaman. His father, who is Boot & Shoemaker in Thurso, is much sympathised with in his bereavement." [1]

As well as sharing the same name, the fact that we were both born In Shetland was another factor in stimulating my interest in this man, the eldest of my grandfather’s six brothers. My late aunt recalls that a friend of the family, who was the editor of a national newspaper at the time, said to her “Of course, you realise his crew did away with him.” Comments like that are an added stimulus to family research, even if subsequent research very often fails to find evidence to support such statements. However, the suggestion that there was a query concerning his death was a further inducement to try and find out more about his career in the Merchant Navy.

My first port of call was to the Guildhall Library in London. In the upstairs reading room I looked up the appropriate volume of the “*Registers of Certificates of Competency and Service – Master and Mates*”. [2] These volumes are in alphabetical order and each covers a period of ten years. In order to request the correct volume, you need to know the years during which your ancestor was an officer in the merchant service. For Captain John Durham, I found the following abbreviated details of his relatively short career as a master mariner:-

1888 - MORVEN /S/ 82283	January 24	Foreign
	May 5	West Indies
	July 7	Mediterranean
	July 9	Foreign
	November 23	South Pacific
1889 – MORVEN /S/ 82283	February 26	West Indies
	May 5	Baltic, Norway
		White Sea or Cattegat
	June 7-17	[Ashore and off]
	July 7	Baltic, Norway
		White Sea or Cattegat
	September 24	West Indies
December 6	West Indies	
1890 – MORVEN /S/ 82283	March 14	West Indies
	May 3-19	Ashore
	June 16	Captain reported drowned

I already knew three of the four pieces of information which are essential when researching the career of someone in the merchant service. These were my grand-uncle’s name, the number on his Certificate of Competency (obtained from the copy in my possession) and the name of the vessel he commanded (from both the newspaper item and the ‘sailing card’). The missing piece of information was the reference number of the ship, in this case 82283. In addition to distinguishing between two vessels bearing the same name, this reference number would be required later on in my research.

The next step was to obtain details of the events leading up to the sinking of the *Morven*. These were to be found in the pages of the “*Shipping Gazette & Lloyds List*” for 1890, [3] microfilm copies of which were located in self-service cabinets on the ground floor of the Guildhall Library. This publication, which appears daily from Monday to Saturday each week, contains information relating to the movements of shipping all over the world. It was at this point that I made one of the mistakes that enthusiastic researchers tend to make from time to time. I was informed that there was an index to the newspapers and it was recommended that I consult it first. Thank you very much, but there is no need to. I know the date the event took place so why look at an index? How wrong I was.

I extracted the film that covered the period starting 2nd May 1890 and searched for entries that mentioned the *Morven*. The fate of the ship began to unfold:

Friday, May 2nd – Sombrero, *Morven* sailed (1st) for Stettin.

Friday, May 2nd – Sombrero, *Morven* sailed (1st) for St Kitts.

Saturday, May 3rd – St Kitts (by cable). British steamer *Morven*, struck on a rock, compelled to run ashore near Sandy Point to prevent sinking, is full of water. Captain drowned. Cargo is Sombrero Phosphates. Is she insured and where? Send instructions. (Lloyd’s Agent)

Monday, May 5th – London May 3 – Following telegraph has been received from Captain Fox, dated Barbados, May 2 – “*Morven* ashore, full of water, north end St Kitts. Captain missing.” [see Saturday’s edition]

Monday, May 5th – St Kitts (by cable) – *Morven* lying in an upright position, she lies well supported along her whole length, she is lying on a hard bottom, four fathoms aft, three forward, West Island, 13 miles, Basseterre; must become a total wreck; cargo can be salvaged.

Over the next four months, a further eleven items were found, all of them referring to the attempts to salvage the cargo, but there were no further comments concerning the fate of Captain John. This is not surprising as the under-writers at Lloyds would be more interested in being kept up to date with the extent of their possible financial liability, rather than in the fate of the master. The last entry I found was dated 18th September 1890. It referred to the successful transportation to Eldorado of approximately 700 tons of phosphate rock salvaged from the *Morven*. This was all I was able to look at on this visit as, having failed to look at the index first, as recommended by a member of staff, I wasted a lot of time having to search each page carefully for references to the *Morven*.

The following week I wrote to the archivist on St Kitts, enclosing details of what I had found so far. My first letter did not arrive (or was mislaid) and, on following it up, I was informed that there was nothing in the archives relating to the *Morven* or to the death of Captain John. I thought this was surprising and wrote again, querying the lack of comment in local papers of the time. I did not receive a reply. Subsequently I discovered that the Public Library in

Basseterre, the principal town of St Kitts, had been destroyed by fire in 1982 with the loss of all archival material stored there. A pity I had not been told that in the first place.

The next move was to follow up the reference to the *Morven* having been ashore and then off between 7th and 17th June 1889, a year before the final voyage. This required a further visit to the Guildhall Library. This time, before starting to check "*Shipping Gazette & Lloyds List*" for June 1889, I consulted the index to the newspaper. [4] It is also on microfilm, is in alphabetical order by name of vessel, and takes the following form: -

1889 Jun 3/26 4/22 4/7 5/176 6/19 7/17 8/6 13/6 18/11 21/21 25/9
Jul 9/6 10/5 17/8 20/8 23/10 31/7 31/8 etc

It is a very simple code. The first number is the date of the month and the second is the column number (not page number) within which you will find a reference to the vessel. If I had made use of it on my previous visit to the library, I would not have had to read through every page of every edition printed between 2nd May and 16th September 1890, looking for the name *Morven*. Using the index entries for June shown above, I once again consulted "*Shipping Gazette & Lloyds List*" and found the following items [5]: -

Monday, June 3rd – The following telegram has been received from the Neptun Salvage Co. dated June 3rd 9.30am – "*Morven* (S), wood cargo, stranded Wester Finngrundet, Poseidon despatched."

Tuesday, June 4th – Gefle, June 4 11am – British steamer *Morven*, cargo wood, is ashore at Wester Finngrundet, but will probably be got off with little damage. Some cargo has been put into lighters.

Wednesday, June 5th – London June 5 – The following telegram has been received from the Neptun Salvage Co. dated June 5 – *Morven* floated.

Thursday, June 6th – The following item has been received from the Neptun Salvage Co. dated June 6, 10.201m – *Morven* arrived Stockholm.

Friday, June 7th – Stockholm June 6, 2.05pm – *Morven* (S), Durham Master, has put in here leakey [sic], having been ashore at Finngrundet, made jettison of 180 standard, and got off with assistance from Neptun.

Thursday, June 13th – Stockholm. *Morven* sailed for Boulogne.

Tuesday, June 18th – Boulogne. *Morven* arrived from Hernosand.

Friday, June 21st – Gefle, June 16 – The *Heppet* passed, on her way to Ljusne, a great quantity of planks and boards, probably from the *Morven* (S) which stranded in the neighbourhood.

Tuesday, June 25th – Boulogne. *Morven* sailed (22nd) for Tyne.

Fortunately, not too serious an incident, but it must have resulted in at least a question mark about his navigational skills being entered in Captain John's personal file. At this point I decided to contact the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. With Captain John's Certificate of Competency in front of me, I spoke on the phone to a very helpful member of staff there. I was very surprised when she informed me that they had my great-uncle's Certificate of Competency. In the best traditions of the pantomime, I then said "Oh no, you haven't" to which she replied "Oh yes, we have".

The reason for the apparent anomaly is that two certificates are issued, one is given to the successful candidate and the other is retained by the authorities. The second copy would be needed to prepare a replacement copy if the original was lost for some reason. A more interesting piece of information was that, when a candidate applies to sit the examinations for either his mate's or master's certificate, he has to fill in a form detailing his maritime experience covering the previous four years. These application forms were also held at Greenwich and could be viewed on request. On enquiring if the Log Book had survived, I was asked for the reference number of the *Morven* which I had obtained on my first visit to the Guildhall Library (I mentioned previously that it would be needed). A quick check on a computer database gave me the bad news that the ship's log had not survived.

It was then suggested that I look for the "Agreement and Account of Crew" for the final voyage of the *Morven*. All crew members have to sign on prior to every voyage and then get paid off at the end of the trip, usually on returning to the original port of embarkation. I assumed copies of these would be held at the National Maritime Museum, but that is not the case. When they were all stored there, they took up several miles of shelf space, so it was decided to retain only those for the years that end with a '5' i.e. 1875, 1885, 1895 etc. The remainder were then offered to a number of repositories, the main one being the Maritime History Archive at Memorial University in Newfoundland [6], as a letter from one of the archivists informed me: -

"The Maritime History Archive holds approximately 75% of the surviving crew agreements and official log books of British registered vessels for the periods 1863-1938 and 1951-1976. The Public Record Office at Kew has retained all surviving documents prior to 1861, and for 1939-1950, as well as a 10% sample of the 1861-1938 and 1951-1976 periods. All surviving documents for 1861-1862 and years ending in '5' (e.g. 1885) are held at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich".

You have to write to the Maritime History Archive in Newfoundland enclosing the reference number of the vessel you are interested in (I told you it was important) and the relevant date(s). Their index will confirm if they have crew agreements for a particular year, but a full scan of the microfilm will be required to check if they have the copy for a specific voyage that year. If you wish to proceed further, you will have to pay a search fee of \$35 for one hour, which will cover the cost of approximately 10-15 photocopies. Fortunately they were able to find the one for the last voyage of the *Morven* from London to Barbados via

Dartmouth. Most of the crew were signed off in St Kitts with “shipwreck” in the column headed “cause of leaving ship”.

There were no references to problems with the crew (although these would most likely appear in the daily log) and once again another avenue of research appeared to be closed to me. While scrutinising the list of crew members, I noticed that Alexander Wallace, aged 20, came from Caithness. I checked the IGI and noted a possible birth in Dunnet parish and, on checking the census return for 1871, found Alexander, aged 10, with his family. Referring to our ‘*Register of Members’ Interests*’, [7] I noted that another member of our Society was researching that name in Dunnet. I contacted him to find out if he knew of this particular family. He did, but then told me that Alexander was himself lost at sea some five years later as First Officer on the *Livonia*. Yet another dead-end!

He was able to put me in touch with a grandson of Alexander’s elder brother Sinclair, who had also been a master mariner. At long last was I going to find out what really happened that day over 100 years ago? No such luck. When I spoke to him on the phone, he told me that his grandfather died just before, or soon after he was born, and his grandmother never talked about her husband’s life at sea as she found it of no interest! There were other members of the crew from Scotland, but tracing descendants of each of them would be very time-consuming.

While waiting for further inspiration, I decided it was time that I visited the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. [8] I wanted to look at the application forms that Captain John had filled in when he applied to sit the examinations for both his Mate’s and Master’s Certificates. I telephoned in advance giving them my great-uncle’s name and certificate number. This meant that, when I arrived there, the documents had already been extracted from the repository and were waiting for me at the reception desk. When I opened up the folder I was delighted to discover that inside it were not one, but three certificates, and their associated application forms. These were for Second Mate, First Mate and finally Master, the latter being identical to the one I already had in my possession.

The application forms were a fund of information. From the first I learned that my great-uncle initially went to sea as a cook, four days before his 14th birthday, on the 75 ton schooner *Janet Fraser* out of Wick. In fact, from the information in that one folder, I have been able to reconstruct his entire career. At the age of 18, when he first applied to sit the examinations for Second Mate, his application was turned down as he did not have a certificate to confirm the three months he claimed he spent on the *Cairdhuna* of Wick as an Ordinary Seaman. I also discovered that he had to sit the section on navigation twice before he passed his examination for First Mate, six weeks before his 21st birthday. He served on fourteen other vessels before joining the *Morven* as First Mate on 3rd December 1885, having served on her for a period of three months the previous year. He gained his Master’s Certificate on 10th May 1887 and took over command on 24th January 1888. On his application form my great-uncle is described as being 5’ 10” tall, of fair complexion, with fair hair and brown eyes.

The next area of research had to be the records held at the Public Record Office at Kew. Having never been there myself and not knowing which documents would be relevant, I decided that this time I would use the services of an experienced researcher. It was money well spent and, although there were no reports of what happened to Captain John that day, the researcher did find a reference which may be relevant. There was some correspondence in September 1890 between the Board of Trade and the Colonial Office respecting the Sandy Island light and its importance vis-a-vis St Johns harbour. [9] *“In the absence of any dangers to the north-west or south-west, it is only careless navigators that would approach the light during hazy weather so close as to risk striking on the outlying reefs. With land in sight, ordinary care would enable mariners to keep their vessels clear of dangers”*.

If these comments were a reference to the *Morven*, it looks as if my great-uncle's problem with navigation, first highlighted when he had to re-sit that section of his examination for First Mate, then re-emerging when he ran the vessel aground off Sweden the previous year, had finally caught up with him. Albert Cole, an assistant steward, the last member of the crew to sign on, did so on the 1st May in St Kitts. This information indicates that, before setting off for Stettin, the *Morven* returned to St Kitts after loading its main cargo of phosphate rock at Sombrero. Having had to double-back before setting off for England, Sombrero being 100 miles north of St Kitts, Captain John may have tried to recover some of this time by taking a short-cut. This decision possibly resulted in the *Morven* striking the rock on which the Sandy Island light was located at a time when the visibility was poor.

In the only family letter relating to this branch of my family tree I have come across in my researches, the youngest daughter of Captain John's eldest sister wrote *“My mother's other brothers – John (her favourite) – Ship's Captain went down with his ship in the traditional way and is buried in St Kitts”*. [10] This seems a more fitting epitaph than believing that his crew “did away with him”. As the incident must have taken place not long after the *Morven* left St Kitts, the captain will have been on the bridge at the time, and would have to accept full responsibility for the wrecking of the vessel. I find it difficult to believe that the crew could have taken such action without someone noticing. In addition to the crew of twenty, there were several passengers on board at the time, making it very difficult to hide such a crime from all of them.

Captain John could have believed that this disaster would certainly lead to his temporary demotion and, quite possibly, to the loss of his master's certificate. If that was the case, the comment by his niece that he “went down with his ship in the traditional way” was probably a correct reflection of what actually happened.

Sources and references:

1. Northern Chronicle, 7th May 1890
2. Registers of Certificates and Competency – Masters and Mates – Guildhall Library, London
3. Shipping Gazette & Lloyds List, 2nd May 1890 to 18th September 1890
4. Index to above – Guildhall Library, London
5. Shipping Gazette & Lloyds List, 3rd June 1889 to 25th June 1889

6. Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1C 5S7
7. Register of members' Interests, Highland Family History Society, August 1995
8. Maritime Information Centre, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London
9. St Kitts despatches Nov-Dec 1890 – Public Record Office, Kew (CO 152/179)
10. Letter from Elizabeth Mary Oag (1906-1989) dated 23rd April 1979

I wrote the above article for the May 1997 journal. Now, 25 years later, I have at last found out what exactly happened in St Kitts 132 years ago. I have my family tree loaded on FindMyPast. They sent me an e-mail to say that I had a close connection to another user with their tree also on FindMyPast. This turned out be a lady who was concentrating on the Caithness name of Oag but who also added any siblings who married to anyone called Oag. She told me where to find the entry displayed below. You will notice that the 'sailing card' displayed at the head of this article was addressed to Mrs Oag, who was Captain John's eldest sister. The comment records that "Inquest held at Basseterre, St Kitts. Verdict: That the said John Durham whilst suffering under temporary insanity did kill himself by throwing himself down the hold of the SS Morven". A very sad end to our story.

x

M10451/90.

Inquest held at Basseterre St. Kitts Verdict: That the said John Durham whilst suffering under temporary insanity did kill himself by throwing himself down the hold of the SS Morven.

Durham, John	-	Male	27	Master	-	Thurso	-	Thurso	-
Dyett, W. C.	-	Male	48	Fireman	-	Romney	-	Cardiff	-
Edez, Joseph	-	Male	32	Engineers' Steward	-	Sunderland	-	Williamson Terrace, Monkwearmouth.	-
Ervin, Joseph Edward	-	Male	18	O.S.	-	English	-	Sholingfield, 19 miles from Lowestoft.	-
Erichsen, P.	-	Male	29	O.S.	-	Gothenburg, Sweden.	-	Newport	-

Fatal Fire at Inverness 1883

By Stuart Farrell

Whilst recording the gravestones at Kiltarlity (Tomnacross) there was found the following inscription: 'Erected by Betsy Cameron in memory of her mother Isabella Cameron died 21st August 1881, aged 70 years. And her father William Cameron died 7th November 1882, aged 80 years. Also in painful remembrance of her sister Catherine Ferguson, aged 47 years, who along with her husband, William Ferguson, aged 48 years, and their two nieces Elizabeth Hughes, aged 3 years, and Catherine Taylor, aged 3 years, all of who perished in the fatal fire on Inglis Street, on the 15th of June 1883.'

The following was recorded the same day in the *Inverness Advertiser* of 15th June 1883: 'Alarming Fire in Inverness. Four persons supposed to be burned to death. Shortly before two o'clock this morning an alarming fire broke out in the dwelling-house owned and occupied by Mr Hugh Allison, and resulted in completely gutting the building. The tale is all the more lamentable from the fact that up till the hour we went to press grave fears were being entertained for the safety of a man named Ferguson, a pensioner, his wife, and two young nieces, named Katie and Lizzie, about three and four years of age. Not one of the number were to be seen after the time the fire broke out, and grave fears were entertained for their safety. The building, which had recently been fitted up, was a very commodious one. Four families stayed in the upper flats, and the lower portion was occupied as shops by Messrs Murray & Watson, clothiers, and Mr Thom, hatter, entrance to which was from Inglis Street. The fire originated in Mr Allison's apartment. All were in bed, and Mr Allison and his son very narrowly escaped in the flames. Both were seriously burned, and had to be removed to the Infirmary. A young man, Millar and his sister, who lived in the third flat escaped without any injury, and so also did another tenant. The most of the goods and all the books were removed from the shop premises, but the furniture in the houses was entirely destroyed. Even at so early an hour a large crowd assembled, and quite a thrill of horror passed through it when it became known that several had perished in the flames. The flames raged furiously for several hours, the roof of the building falling in about three o'clock. At this hour there was every prospect of the flames being confined to the building in which it originated. The water supply was very defective at the outset. The furniture was partly removed from the adjoining houses, the flying spark placing these buildings in great danger. Mr MacDonald, the captain of the fire brigade, was most arduous and conspicuous in his efforts to subdue the flames, and direct the fire brigade.'

The following week's edition gave more significant details and the enquiry of the Town Council into the fire, recorded in the *Inverness Advertiser* of 22nd June 1883: 'The Fatal Fire in Inverness. Death of Six Persons. The brief report of this fire, which was its height shortly before we went to press last Friday morning, must have sent a thrill of horror throughout the whole country. Not in the history of the present generation has there been a fire accompanied with such a loss of life in Inverness. The building in which it originated was a four storied one, situated in the centre of Inglis Street, and extending backing to Hamilton Street (Theatre Lane). The lower flats, entrance to which was from Inglis Street, were occupied as shops by Messrs Murray & Watson, tailors and clothiers, and Mr Robert Thom,

hatter. The entrance to the other flats was from Theatre Lane. The proprietor of the building, Mr Hugh Allison, potato merchant, resided along with a son and a daughter in the second flat, and the other flat and the top attics were occupied by tenants. Miss Allison, who had gone to bed shortly after eleven o'clock, was the first to discover the fire. She was awakened by a noise in the adjoining bed-room occupied by her father, and she got out of bed. So soon as she opened the door she was alarmed at the volumes of smoke that were issuing from her father's bedroom. She at once roused her father and brother who was sleeping in a room on the same flat, as well as the inmates of the flats above. The building was by this time in flames, and every one tried to escape as best they could. Wild cries for help continued for some time. The only chance of escape was to rush down the circular stair through the smoke and flames. Mr Allison was still in his bedroom very much overcome by the smoke. His son, Daniel, however, got hold of him, but was very much burned and scorched by the flames while dragging him from the room. Dr Mackenzie, who was in almost immediate attendance, examined them both in a neighbouring house. He considered their state critical, and ordered their immediate removal to the Infirmary. There were other sixteen persons staying within the building, and a number of those who had got out to the street, covered only with their night dresses, stood round in terror. The most of them knew that Ferguson, his wife, and too little nieces, were still within the walls. One of the young men who escaped from the burning building, ran to the Police Office with nothing on but his night shirt, and seized the hose reel and brought it to the scene of the disaster. A crowd of people had assembled, and he was helped with willing hands. The hose reel was quickly attached to two plugs in Inglis Street, and ladders were also brought. Ferguson and his family could not be seen. They made no response to the cries that were offered them. The poor unfortunate man was seen at the top of the stair immediately on the alarm being given, but he went back to his room for the purpose of saving his wife and the two young children. It was said, too, that his wife was at one time on the top of the stair, but she also turned back to rescue the children. Every effort was made to subdue the flames. Mr MacDonald, superintendent of the burgh police, and captain of the Fire Brigade, with the members of the Fire Brigade, were active in their exertions. The supply of water, however, was most defective, the hose reel leaked badly, and matters looked very gloomy indeed. About an hour afterwards the roof fell in with a dreadful crash, causing a thrill to pass through the large crowd which had assembled. It was clearly seen that nothing could now be done in the shape of rescuing anyone in the flames, and the injured persons were attended to. Mr Allison and his son were by this time in the Infirmary. The old man was not so severely burned as his son, but he was paralysed with fright, and could not move a step to save himself. He succumbed to his injuries on Sunday morning. Daniel Allison, his son, died yesterday at one o'clock, making the sixth death. Most of the inmates who escaped bore marks of the flight. One young girl, a friend of the Fergusons, who was also in the building, was so overcome with excitement and grief at the death of her friends, that it was found necessary on Friday afternoon to remove her from the sight of the place, and take her to a house at a distance. The following is a list of the parties who resided in the building:-

Killed. William Ferguson, pensioner, 50 years of age, employed a labourer in the Highland Railway Works, Inverness.

Catherine Cameron or Ferguson, wife of the above, aged 45 years.

Catherine Taylor, three years of age, niece of the above, and daughter of John Taylor, Crown Street, Inverness.

Elizabeth Hughes, three and a-half years of age, niece of the above, and daughter of John Hughes, bricklayer, 118 Hyde Park Street, Glasgow.

Hugh Allison, potato merchant, Inverness, proprietor of the premises.

Daniel D. Allison, pressman, *Courier* Office.

Injured. The persons who escaped with but slight injuries are – Maggie Allison, daughter of the late Hugh Allison. Peter Grant, plasterer. John Grant, joiner. Donald MacMillan, grocer. James MacMillan, joiner. Murdo Beaton, cabman. Donald MacDonald, joiner. Mary Ann Taylor. Mary MacMillan. Mr Conner, Sergeant-Instructor in the Artillery Volunteers. Mrs Conner and child.

Meeting of the Magistrates.

The Magistrates met on Saturday night to consider the whole subject, particularly the alleged want of water, and the absence of life-saving apparatus. They expressed deep sorrow at the lamentable disaster, and it was unanimously resolved to hold a public inquiry into the occurrence.

Meeting of the Dean of Guild Court.

There was a meeting of the Dean of Guild Court on Monday at which Dean of Guild Mackenzie presided.

A letter from the Burgh Surveyor stated that he had examined the ruined front wall in Inglis Street, and was of opinion that the Court ought to order the wall to be taken down. Iron and wood-work were bent and destroyed by the heat, and the stones under the iron pillars were destroyed. The wall hung six inches over the pavement. After the search for the remaining bodies had been completed, the wall ought to be at once taken down, and the barricades removed back, in order to re-open Inglis Street and Theatre Lane for traffic. After consultation, The Dean of Guild and the Court were unanimously of opinion that the wall should be taken down, and they ordered accordingly.

Another meeting of the Court was held in the afternoon, at which a report from the Burgh Surveyor and Mr Ellis, builder, was read. It stated that the chimney on the north side should be taken down to within two or three feet above the roof of the adjoining house. Mr Clark, solicitor, then presented a petition to the Court, in which it was stated that part of the buildings were in a dangerous condition, and ought to be taken down. Mr Campbell, solicitor, for the representatives of the late Mr Hugh Allison, and Mr James Forsyth, accepted service of the petition, and dispensed with the *induciae*, stating at the same time that they desired that everything should be done for the safety of the public. The Court decided to grant the prayer of the petition, and ordered the walls to be taken down at the sight of the Burgh Surveyor and Mr Ellis.

The Search for the Dead.

The water was kept playing constantly on the mass of smouldering wreck during almost all the forenoon. Large crowds of people assembled all the day, and watched the operations of the firemen with much interest. The scene all the day, was to say the least, heartrending, and many a tear was shed as they gazed upon the lamentable occurrence. The back wall of the building was considered to be in an unsafe position as it stood, and it was deemed advisable to pull it down to the inside. This gave extra work when the searching for the bodies began. But so soon as the *debris* had been sufficiently cooled by the supply of water,

a diligent search was made by a large staff of workmen, and shortly before six o'clock in the evening they were successful in finding a body, while another was found an hour afterwards. It was difficult that they were recognised, as they were almost reduced to a cinder. On the second body a strip of steel belonging to a woman's corset led to the identification of the woman's body, and the other was then known to be that of William Ferguson. The remains were immediately removed to the dead house. The search for the two children was continued, but they have not been recovered. They being mere children it is only natural that they have smouldered into ashes. We learn that Ferguson and his wife, who were hard working and thrifty people, were insured in the Prudential Assurance Company for £48 15s. When Mr Goodman, the Inverness agent, heard of the calamity, he at once telegraphed to the manager, and received the following satisfactory telegram by reply:- "If claims are satisfactory you can pay at once, and forward forms and the amount will be remitted." We may here state that Mr MacDonald, Police Superintendent of the Burgh and Captain of the Fire Brigade, deserved the greatest gratitude of the inhabitants of the town for the manner in which he acted during the serious disaster. The members of the fire brigade also did their work right well. With the pressure of water that was at their command, the saving of the adjoining buildings was, to say the least, very miraculous indeed. We were on the scene of the fire about half an hour after it started, and the roaring flames that were ascending from the doomed building often led the crowd of sorrowing onlookers to be of opinion that yet more havoc would be the result. At one time the flames caught hold of Mr Mackintosh's house, but it was speedily subdued. The buildings on the lower end, occupied by Mr Davidson, grocer, and Mr Urquhart, seedsman, were also in imminent danger. Mr Urquhart was from home, and his sisters, who were naturally dreading for the worst, had a considerable portion of the most valuable furniture removed to the other side of the street. Further particulars on the subject are unnecessary, as all the facts from the moment the fire originated will be found in our lengthened report of the proceedings of the public enquiry which will be found below.

Meeting of the Police Commissioners.

In accordance with the following requisition to the Town-Clerk, a special general meeting of the Inverness Police Commissioners was held on Monday night:-

We, the undersigned, hereby request you to call a special meeting of the Commissioners of Police, for the purpose of considering a question by Bailie MacBean in regard to the alleged deficiency in the water supply at the late fire in Inglis Street. (Signed), Wm. MacBean, *Bailie*; James Melven, *Bailie*.

Provost Fraser presided and there was a good attendance.

The minutes of the meeting of the Magistrates on Saturday night having been read, Bailie MacBean said he was not going to make a speech. He only rose to put two questions to the officials:- (1). Was it the case, as was alleged, that the water supply on Friday morning was so defective that the hose could not send a stream up to the higher storeys? And (2), was it the case that the Captain of the Fire Brigade could not find the key which regulates the pressure? They might take it for granted that the Procurator-Fiscal would make an exhaustive inquiry into the whole subject, and the Magistrates had also ordered an inquiry; but these two inquiries could not relieve the Commissioners of their duty, which was to make a thorough investigation in order to rectify defects in future.

The Provost said – In view of the public inquiry about to be held, he doubted very much the propriety of putting these questions just now.

Bailie MacBean insisted in his questions being put.

The Provost said the Magistrates very much deplored the painful calamity of Friday morning, and desired to make a public investigation of the most through character. The officials had got notice of that, and therefore he thought Bailie MacBean should consider the propriety of putting his questions at the proper time.

Bailie MacBean was surprised at the reply of the Provost, and argued that he had a perfect right, as a Police Commissioner, to have his questions at once answered. No inquiry could, in the nature of thing, be final if conducted by the Magistrates, for the Fire Brigade and water officials held their appointments, not from the Magistrates but from the Police Commissioners.

The Provost put the matter to the meeting.

Councillor MacLennan said he was very sorry to differ from both the Provost and from Bailie MacBean, for though he sympathised with the object, he entirely disapproved of the intention to inquire into this most melancholy and painful disaster by the Magistrates. The Magistrates and the Police Commissioners were at this moment at the bar of public judgement, and it appeared to him that it was not for those who were so placed to proceed to inquire into their own responsibility, but it should be left to the proper authority, for depend upon it, the public would not be satisfied unless the whole circumstances were thoroughly investigated by those whose duty it was to ascertain the cause of the fire, and more particularly the cause of the sad loss of life. It would not do for a number of men, charged with some offence, to sit together in judgement on themselves. The idea would not recommend itself to the minds of responsible men.

Councillor MacAndrew differed from this view, and thought the Police Commissioners were bound to make an inquiry into the means which they ought to have at their disposal in case of sudden midnight fires, into the means which they actually had at their disposal last Friday morning, and into the use which that means was made by their officials. But he had a strong idea that the Magistrates were not the proper parties to make the investigation. He thought the investigation ought to be made by a small committee of the Police Commissioners as a body.

The Provost had no objection to this course; neither did he suppose any of the Magistrates had an objection.

Bailie MacBean said, before a motion could be adopted, he must have his questions put and answered.

Councillor MacAndrew had no doubt Bailie MacBean had a right to have his questions answered, but it would it not be wise to put them off, seeing a full inquiry was to take place in course of another day?

Councillor John Mackintosh rose to move the appointment of a committee of the Commissioners to conduct the inquiry.

The Dean of Guild sympathised fully with the object of Bailie MacBean's questions, but to put them now was, in the circumstances, premature.

Councillor J. B. Falconer was strongly of opinion that a thorough investigation be at once entered by the Police Commissioners – an inquiry into the duties of the Brigade and water

officials, into how that duty was performed on Friday morning, and into the character of the fire appliances which the town possessed. He moved accordingly.

Baillie MacBean seconded, and withdrew his questions.

The Dean of Guild quite concurred in the motion; they could not have too much inquiry.

Councillor Burns suggested that the Magistrates consent simply to join the Police Commissioners in conducting the inquiry, because he feared that in making the investigation themselves they would be undertaking work quite novel to the duties or even powers of the Magistracy. They would be simply instituting a Coroner's inquest. It was premature to attach blame to any one for the melancholy occurrences of Friday, but they ought to make an elaborate investigation, and endeavour to elicit all the facts.

The Provost incidentally said there was a statement made outside that the water had been turned off from that part of the town on Thursday night. This was not the case. He was proceeding to speak to another statement about the age (40 years) of the water pipes there, when members suggested this should form part of the inquiry.

It was then agreed that the Police Commissioners simply adopt the Magistrates resolution to hold an inquiry on Tuesday at two p.m. in the Town Hall, and not the Burgh Court-house, as was originally proposed.

It was resolved to purchase 200 yards of fire hose forthwith, as, of 200 yards of the canvas hose now in possession, only 80 yards can be relied on. In a letter by the Superintendent of Police, complaint was made regarding the accommodation for keeping the fire appliances.

Public Enquiry.

On Tuesday afternoon a meeting of the Inverness Police Commissioners was held in the Council Chamber for the purpose of holding a public enquiry into the whole circumstances attending the late fatal fire in Inglis Street. Provost Fraser presided, and most of the Commissioners were present. A considerable number of citizens were also present, and took a great interest in the proceedings.

Sergeant-Major Connor, Inverness Artillery Volunteers, was the first witness examined. He stated, in answer to the Provost, that he lived in the house which was destroyed by fire last Friday morning, his rooms being on the same flat as Allison's, where the fire originated. After the alarm of the fire he immediately jumped out of bed, and young Allison immediately came to his bedroom door and shouted for him to save his father. He went with him to the room where his father was, but was prevented by the smoke and flames from entering. He made a second attempt, however, and with the assistance of another person succeeded in getting old Mr Allison out into the lobby. He went back to his own room to look after his wife and child, who had, however, already succeeded in reaching the street. He followed her down stairs. When he got out he did not know whether the policemen were there or not. There was a great number of people. One of the lodgers ran for the fire brigade and hose. All access to the upper flat by this time was cut off. He did not see any one appearing at the windows or on the roof of the house. He firmly believed that had there been a fire escape that the people would have been saved. The smoke issued from the room Allison lived in. When the fire brigade appeared there was no water. They could not get it to rise above the first storey. The water came about fifteen or twenty minutes after the fire brigade was on the spot. This would have been fully half an hour from the time the fire began. He went to bed about a quarter past eleven, and first heard of the fire at a quarter past twelve. The water reached the first storey after the extra pressure came on. He remained about the building till

a quarter to two o'clock. The water reached up to the second storey before he left, but he could not say how long. The ladders were at the back windows about five minutes after he had got down stairs.

By Mr Falconer – He did not see any part of the hose attached to the couplings, and he was not aware of any. Had there been a proper supply of water and a fire escape, he believed the people would have been saved. The fire brigade did their best and worked very hard.

Peter Grant, plasterer, a young man who was lodging in the doomed building, was the next witness – In answer to the Provost he said he lived on the upper flat. He went to bed at nine o'clock. He broke the window when he heard of the fire, and went out and tried to get down. In this he failed and came in again and went down the stairs. He met some of the inhabitants when he was coming down the stair, and said it was death or life. He believed it was Ferguson he met. The first one he met at the door outside was Allison, the old man. He had on his trousers and vest. The flames below the staircase were cracking when he was going down. He saw every one of the people that stayed in the house. He was the last to get out. The fire brigade were not on the ground till about half-an-hour after that. When they did arrive there was no water. It would be an hour and a-half whatever before the water came. The roof was in before the water came. He did not hear any of the inmates crying for help.

By Bailie Smith – He believed they would have been saved had there been water.

By the Dean of Guild – The room was all smoke when he left. He thought that half-an-hour after he left there might have been a possibility of saving them had there been a proper supply of water. There was no one in the room he left but himself. Ferguson was bawling when he passed, but he did not stop to hear what he was saying. It was on the landing at the very top that he met him. He went for the brigade as soon as he got out. He met Sergeant Stewart on High Street, and told him. He saw the hose being fixed. This was done in a short time. When it was fixed the water would not go above the fellow's head that was working at it. The hose that they had was leaking.

By Mr J. Falconer – There were no flames in the room when he left, and it was quite possible for them to get down. There were flames under the staircase when he was going down.

By the Dean – He thought people could have got out even five minutes after he got.

By Mr Burns – He thought the Fergusons were trying to get the children out when they were staying so long. There was a ladder set up against the wall, but it was not long enough to reach the window. One man tried to get up, but someone told him to come back.

By Mr Falconer – He had no idea how the fire originated.

Mr Douglas, Aberdeen Town and County Bank – In answer to the Provost, said he heard the fire about one o'clock. It was burning on the flat where the Allisons' stayed at that hour. There was no doubt but that had there been a ladder or a fire-escape at the back the people would have been saved. He did not see any of the fire brigade till half an hour after he rose. He went to the police-office to give the alarm there, and when he came back he saw the hose being fixed. It took about a quarter of an hour to attach the hose to the plug. It began to play at once, but very meagrely, and it did not improve till the engine was put on. They had two hoses, one for the top of the street and one for the bottom. He did not hear any screams. Nobody could have attempted to go up the stair by this time. There was a terrible want of water and pressure, and the hose was leaky. The hoses attached to the engine were better, but not without fault. After the engine came there was no want of water. He thought that, had the engines been at the Police-Office, they would not have been so long of being

on the spot. The men did their best, and he believed the men came as fast as they could. He would have all the fire appliances near the Police-Office. The men should be near the Police-Office. The time occupied was by far too long.

By Mr J. B. Falconer – He only stated that the fire brigade should have been on the spot earlier.

By the Dean – When the manual hose came on it was applied to save Mr Mackintosh's building. It was too late to save the house at that. The hose was not in a state that it could have been attached in proper time. The hose was leaking after they got it attached.

Mr MacDonald, Superintendent of the Burgh Police and Captain of the Fire Brigade, said he was aroused by Sergeant MacBean about ten minutes past one o'clock, and he was at the scene of the fire in less than five minutes. When he arrived the hose was fixed, but not turned on. He turned it on himself, but it would not rise higher than the first window. He immediately took hold of the hose, and along with one of the brigade, went upstairs to see what they could do there. They got the length of the first landing, but as the flames by this time had seized the stair, and as the bannisters were falling down red hot, they could not make any progress, and they retreated and went to the front part of the building in Inglis Street. He got hold of another hose, and went to the top of Mr Mackintosh's house adjoining in order to prevent the fire from spreading, as his house at the time was in imminent danger. The pressure, however, would not send the water up this height. He thereupon sent for the manual engine, which arrived in the course of a few minutes. It was quite impossible for them to save life either by the stairway or by the windows when he arrived on the scene. He was using the canvas hose because it was more easily worked than the leather one. It, of course, was apt to leak when first used. His impression was that any quantity of water would not have affected the magnitude of the fire. There was no additional pressure on the water till about four o'clock. It was improved by the tightening of the hose, however, in a short time.

By Bailie Smith – When the engine was sent to work the supply was quite sufficient to save the adjoining buildings, and that in any event was all that could be done. It was no part of his duty to interfere with the water pipes; in fact, he had no right to put a hand upon them.

By the Dean of Guild – He first ascertained the pressure that was in the pipes before he sent for the manual engine. On the morning of the fire it so happened that the policemen were meeting the visiting sergeant when the alarm of the fire was given, so that the brigade was turned out much sooner than would in ordinary circumstances have been the case. He had sent a messenger for Beaton, who had charge of the valves, at an early hour, but he had changed his residence and could not be found. He did not think that a fire escape could have saved any lives at the time he arrived on the scene.

By Councillor Burns – It was not possible that he could have looked in at the attic window when he first arrived. He was the first to get on the roof. When he did get there was part of the roof down. The place was so much burned that nobody could go near the attic window. He was satisfied that it was useless to attempt to save life and he still thought so.

By Councillor J. B. Falconer – He complained of the want of accommodation for the fire engine and other appliances about two years ago, and it was time that he obtained the leather hose. The result was that it could not possibly be kept in order, nor could the appliances be kept together. The shed in which the hose was kept allowed the rain to get in.

Alexander Mackintosh, ironmonger, Inglis Street, in answer to the Provost, said he was aroused by cries of fire about one o'clock. There was only about half-a-dozen people on the scene when he got out. The fire was coming out at one of the windows on the first floor then. He was told by some of the people that all the residents were safe, and by others that they were not. He sent a boy to the Police Office to give the alarm and in the course of ten minutes the fire brigade was on the scene.

By Bailie Elliot – He accompanied some of the men of the fire brigade to the lug opposite the Royal Bank, and in about ten minutes afterwards the water was plying upon the burning house. There was scarcely any pressure of water however. The truth was that it could not reach the first window. When Mr MacDonald, the captain of the fire brigade, arrived he went up the staircase of the burning house, but found he could not proceed far. By the time he got round to Inglis Street the engine arrived.

Mr Mackintosh said he ought to have stated that on coming to Inglis Street, he observed a man engaged in putting up a ladder against the front wall. The man ascended, and, if he was not mistaken, broke one of the windows on the top flat. The fire had made a commencement on the roof of his (Mr Mackintosh's) house, and had it not been that Mr MacDonald took the hose attached to the window and went up through the staircase of his building the house would have been burned also. There was plenty of water coming from the hose that was used at that time.

By the Provost – He was of opinion that no life could have been saved by entering by the stairs, at any-rate it was impossible to do so. He believed if the people on the top flat could leave at the time, they could have been saved by a fire escape.

By the Dean of Guild – The ladder he spoke of only reached the third flat. He thought the brigade did everything in their power in the circumstances. The hoses after a time were in fairly good condition.

Alexander Fraser, Union Hotel, was the next witness. In answer to the Provost, he said he was awakened by hearing cries of fire. So soon as he arose he observed through his window a man coming out of the attic window of Allison's house in his night shirt. He was on the spot at three minutes past one o'clock. When he went to the door of the house in Theatre Lane he met MacDonald, the carpenter, coming down the stair with a pair of boots in his hand. He (MacDonald) told witness that he thought the Ferguson's were still inside. The females were screaming in the Lane. They said the Ferguson's had been roasted alive. Having found that the Allison's were in such a serious condition, he ran for a doctor and olive oil. At this juncture there was ample time still to have saved the people who were yet in the house, if there only had been people and appliances at hand to do so. It would have been quite easy to have gone up by the same window that the young man came out by: but entrance by the stair was quite impossible.

By the Dean of Guild – He was attending to the sufferers at this time. The whole crowd were busily engaged in removing Murray & Watson's and Thom's stock. The Police Superintendent and the fire brigade were endeavouring to get the flames subdued.

The inquiry at this stage adjourned till 7.30.

On resuming, Provost Fraser again presiding – John MacDonald, one of the firemen of the brigade, was called. He was at the scene of the conflagration at ten minutes past one o'clock. He at once got hold of the hose, but there was no water to rise a sufficient height. Mr MacDonald, superintendent, arrived, and together they attempted to ascend the stair, but

they had to retreat as the fire had seized the stair upwards from about the first landing, and the burning material was falling down. They then directed the water on the front part of the building, but the water was very deficient up till four o'clock. When he arrived at the spot nobody in the building could have been alive by any possibility, as the whole back of the house was in a blaze. Even although they had had a fire escape it could not have been of any use in consequence of the progress the fire had made.

Sergeant Fotheringham, plumber, said when he arrived the water would scarcely reach the second flat, and he went and complained of the deficiency of water to Mr MacDonald, the superintendent. The engine was immediately sent for. He did not think any one could have been alive in the building when he arrived. Every one of the brigade did their duty well, so far as he could see.

Alexander Russell, blacksmith, corroborated the evidence as to the scarcity of water. Although there had been another engine present it would not have been of any use as they could not feed the one they had properly.

Dean of Guild Mackenzie here stated for Mr Andrew Dougall, manager of the Highland Railway, that the company have two engines, hose, and a number of ladders, all of which were at the disposal of the town.

One of the firemen stated that the Railway Company's appliances and the town's were different, so they would be of little use.

Provost Fraser – And we should be independent of outside aid.

Adam Cooper, plumber, Meal Market Close, said he was at the Theatre Lane at a quarter before one o'clock. There was no one there save some women crying for help. He ran for a ladder, and put it up to the south-side window on the top flat. It was then shifted to the north window, and he looked in, but only saw some chairs and a table. The fire was beginning to rush in below the door. When he saw that he could do nothing further, he went and assisted the fire brigade at the front.

By Councillor Mackintosh – He did not hear any screams at this time or any other time proceeding from the inside, and he did not suppose that any person could be alive in the house at that time, at any rate they could not have been in a conscious state.

By the Provost – He rapped and shouted at the windows, and listened, but there was no sound. The attic windows could not be reached by the ladder they were using.

John Mackenzie (of Mackenzie Brothers, jewellers, Lombard Street) at the request of the Provost, came forward to give evidence. He said he was at the scene between ten and fifteen minutes before one o'clock and he assisted Cooper, the plumber, to put the ladder against the building in Theatre Lane. Cooper ascended the ladder to the windows in the third storey, and shouted in at them, but he neither saw or heard any person. The ladder was then taken to Inglis Street, and Cooper again went to each of the upper windows, from which smoke was issuing thickly. He saw no occasion for going in, there being no signs of life. He did not hear anyone shouting for help; the house was quite quiet. All those who had escaped from the house were away – being partially undressed, they had naturally gone to their friends, and they were under the impression that nobody was inside the burning house. When he arrived there might have been a possibility of their being alive, but they might have been unconscious, and had anybody gone in they might have been found so.

The Provost – It is possible had there been means to have got into the house from Theatre Lane?

Mr Mackenzie said there was not the slightest doubt about it, and Cooper would have gone in had he been satisfied that were people in the house. He stood quite cool at the top of the ladder, but he said there was no human being to be seen or heard, and he accordingly concluded that nobody was there. At the time they arrived he thought the inmates that did not escape might have been alive, although, perhaps in an unconscious state. Had they had had a long enough ladder to get to the roof it would have been possible to get in by the attic windows. He thought if they had had a fire escape they would have been effectual in saving life; in fact, if there had been a longer ladder they could have managed to get on to the roof of the house, and could have entered by the skylight. If they had more ladders and a few ropes, and got to the top of the skylight a man could have got down for a short time to see whether there was any one there or not. (Applause.)

The Provost – You mean that you would have required a rope before you could have done this. Mr Mackenzie thought prevention was better than cure.

By the Dean of Guild – When he spoke of saving life to the Provost by this means, he meant, of course, that if there had been anybody there to save, they might have been saved by that means.

Allan Beaton, assistant water manger, Upper Kessock Street, stated that he had received information of the fire, and that he proceeded about four o'clock to the valves of the Suspension Bridge and the old reservoir, which he closed, and thus concentrated the full pressure on the part of the town where the fire occurred.

By Councillor Falconer – He only resided at Upper Kessock Street since last term, and he never gave Mr MacDonald any notice of his removal.

Corporal Wm. Cumming, 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders, said he was in Theatre Lane on Friday morning at a quarter to one o'clock, and when standing at the door of the house which was on fire, William Ferguson came down the stairs, spoke to him for a moment, making mention of his wife, and then rushed up the stairs again. The only way to have saved life was by the roof, and they had no means of reaching the top of the house. About ten minutes after he arrived, Beaton, the cabman, appeared, having made his escape by the skylight. Beaton had made an attempt to save the children whose lives were lost. By means of chairs he endeavoured to reach the skylight with one of the children in his teeth, but the chairs repeatedly give way, and in despair was obliged to leave them to their fate, and seek his own safety. Had there been a ladder of sufficient length, or a fire escape at hand he was quite convinced that lives might have been rescued. He was of opinion that had he been on the top of the ladder as Cooper was, he would have entered the house.

Mr Ewan MacDonald, water manger, was examined at some length by the Provost regarding the fire plugs throughout the town. He could give no definite explanation as to the deficiency in the pressure of water. He could not understand how it did not rise. The ordinary supply was on.

The inquiry adjourned at eleven o'clock to meet on Thursday night at seven.

The following was further recorded the next week in the *Inverness Advertiser* of 29th June 1883: 'The Fatal Fire in Inglis Street. Re-Examination of the Superintendent of Police. The Commissioners resumed on Friday to hear the evidence of Murdo Beaton, cab driver. Bailie Smith, in the absence of the Provost, presided. In answer to the Chairman, Beaton said he heard Mrs Ferguson and the children screaming. He rose, lay down again, and in ten

minutes thereafter he rose, opened the door, and finding that escape by the stairs was impossible, he got out by the skylight, crept to the skylight of the Ferguson's room, broke it, and raised the alarm. But there was no one there. He escaped by getting on the roof of Mr Mackintosh's house. He denied the truth of the statement that he tried to save one of the children by taking the child in his teeth. He never told such a story to anyone. He heard their cries, but it came, he thought, from down stairs. He knew the cries were those of Mrs Ferguson and the two children. They must, therefore, have left their own room, and must have been trying to escape by the stairs. Mrs Ferguson was praying that the Lord would come to her help in the dreadful position in which she was.

Dean of Guild Mackenzie – The position in which the bodies were found corresponds with the statement that they had left their own room, and were endeavouring to come down stairs when they perished.

Beaton continuing said, when he reached the street he was told the children were saved and were in King's. He said this was not correct, for he had heard their screams. If there had been a fire escape they possibly might have been saved. If they were conscious, and in the room below the attic, they could have heard a man's voice at the top of the ladder.

Mr MacDonald, Superintendent of Police, was recalled, and in answer to Bailie Smith said he did know whether each member of the Fire Brigade had a copy of the rules of the brigade. He had one himself, and he read it, and the rules had been strictly carried out, so far as circumstances would permit.

Bailie Smith – There is a rule as follows:- The officer on duty at the Police Office shall, on receiving notice of a fire, give an immediate alarm to the Captain of the Fire Brigade, Pioneers, and Fireman, as also to the Gas and Water Manager; and, should the fire be serious, to the Provost and the presiding Magistrate for that month, if his residence be within the burgh, but if beyond the burgh, to the nearest Magistrate.

Was that attended to? Mr MacDonald – Notice was sent to the gasman, and notice was sent to the waterman, Allan Beaton. There was no men to spare at the beginning of the fire to send word to the Provost or the Magistrate.

Bailie Smith – There is another rule as follows:- It will be the duty of the Sergeants of Police to see that the foregoing instructions, and a list containing the names and residence of the firemen and watermen, be read to the constables at least once a fortnight. Each constable must carry a list of the Fire Brigade, and make himself thoroughly acquainted with the residence of each fireman on his beat, in order that he may be able to turn them out at once, when required.

Was that rule attended to?

Mr MacDonald said he was not sure whether this was done, but they have a list of them.

The Dean of Guild – Beaton at least is a waterman. How is it that you did not know, when the fire occurred, where Beaton lived? Can you explain that?

A – He changed his residences in May. Q – Then your policeman could not have had correct lists read or given them, as is provided for by the rule which Bailie Smith has read? (Reply not heard.)

Q – Have you not considered these rules regarding the required attendance of the Magistrates? One rule says – “He (the captain of the brigade) shall have absolute control of the brigade, observing the directions of the Chief Magistrate in attendance, but those of no

other person whatever.” Why was not word sent to a Magistrate? A – In serious cases and – Bailie Smith – Was not this a serious case?

The Superintendent – It was not a protracted case.

The Dean of Guild said it was between nine and ten o'clock before the Magistrates heard anything about it. Bailie Elliot, however, added that he happened to be there at eight. The inquiry was then closed.'

And so the proceedings of the inquiry ended. A subsequent fund was set up to raise funds for those effected by the fire, it being noted that a concert by the Philharmonic Society in early July raised £30 1s 2d to be deposited in the British Linen Bank with the Provost heading up the Committee (Inverness Advertiser 6 July 1883). The owners of the shops were covered by their own Insurances. As noted above Hugh and Daniel D Allison both died; Hugh Allison 63 on the 17th of June in the Northern Infirmary of severe burns and congestion of the lungs; whilst Daniel Allison 27 died also in the Infirmary on the 21st of June of burns to hands and face and pneumonia. Both are commemorated in Tomnahurich Cemetery.

By the 20th of July 1883 the following open letter appeared in the *Inverness Advertiser*. 'The Fatal Fire In Inglis Street. Censure of the Provost and Magistrates. We understand that the following letter, by the Procurator-Fiscal of the County, has been received by the Provost and each of the Magistrates of Inverness:

Death of Hugh Allison, &c

Procurator-Fiscal's Office, Castle, Inverness, 12th July 1883. Sir, - Having reported to the Crown authorities a precognition taken by me in connection with the recent fire in Inglis Street, I am instructed to communicate to the Magistrates the substance of their opinion thereon. While criminal proceedings cannot be taken in the case, Crown Counsel observe with much regret the state of preparations for fires in Inverness. The hose, engines, and other appliances usual and necessary, appear to have been inadequate, and the water supply – if it was maintained to proper pressure and quantity – was of no use towards saving life, though it was latterly effectual to save the adjoining buildings, I am, sir, your obedient servant, James Anderson, Procurator-Fiscal.'

The outcome of this led in 1884 to an extension to be built to the rear of the Town Hall for the storage of fire appliances. The next major fire in Inverness occurred in 1889 at the Victorian Market but that is a story for another day.

Monumental Inscriptions

The Society continues to record monumental inscriptions and though we have some records on Find My Past, we have recently published material not online and we will have new publications soon but it's only fitting to explain why we do it.

Pre-1855 and Only That? by John Durham

Stand clear! I am about to go for a ride on my favourite hobby horse. This is the one that states that all monumental inscriptions in a churchyard should be recorded, rather than only those containing dates of death prior to 1st January 1855, when compulsory registration of births, marriages and deaths commenced in Scotland. Not only that, I believe that the inscriptions should be recorded in full and not in an abbreviated form, where errors in interpretation may arise.

I am also concerned that if you are selective in the choice of the stones whose inscriptions you are going to record, how can you be sure that you have not missed some? I would suggest that if you set out with the intention of recording every gravestone, the chances of missing one should be significantly reduced, if not completely eliminated.

The basic argument of those involved in recording only the pre-1855 inscriptions is that "Before 1855, genealogical records in Scotland, particularly relating to death, are patchy. Much of what useful information was recorded is on gravestones which are now being gradually lost through erosion and clearance but are in any case inaccessible to many researchers, particularly those not residing in the area concerned".¹ The corollary I assume is that all deaths from 1855 onwards will have been recorded and copies can be consulted either at the local Registration Office or at New Register House in Edinburgh. This approach to the recording of monumental inscriptions relies on those named on the gravestones having died in Scotland. That this is clearly not the case can be shown by the following inscriptions where the dates and places of death of members of the family dying overseas are recorded. The first appears in the Old Churchyard, Avoch and the second in Killearnan Churchyard:-

*Erected in memory of George INGLIS, who died 14th Nov. 1919 aged 77 years; also his son John, who died in South Africa, 31st July 1904 aged 29 years; also of his daughter Mary, wife of George CAMERON, who died at Spokane, U.S.A., 5th July 1909 aged 23 years; also Jane Peterkin INGLIS, wife of George INGLIS, who died at Millburn Farm, Inverness 10th July 1929 aged 79 years.*²

Erected in memory of Janet McLENNAN, died at Hawthorn Cottage, 19th Nov. 1883 aged 8 years; Murdo McLENNAN died Hawthorn Cottage in infancy, 6th Jan. 1886; and their parents, Donald McLENNAN, died at Muir of Ord, 18th Aug. 1918 aged 88 years; and Margaret McLEAN, also died there, 16th June 1918 aged 60 years; and their sons, Roderick, died at Sandy Point, South America, 2nd Dec. 1896 aged 28 years; Alexander, died at Punta

Arenas, S. America, 5th June 1917 aged 45 years; John, died at Vancouver, B.C., 21st July 1927 aged 43 years.³

In addition to supplying this valuable information, later monumental inscriptions frequently include what amounts to a significant part of a family tree. This is particularly useful where the surname is a very common one and trawling through the deaths records at New Register House would be very time-consuming. The first example from Killearnan Churchyard contains the names of 12 members of a family while the second, which can be found at Old Alness, has engraved upon it no fewer than 25 different names:-

Erected by the family in memory of their beloved parents, Alexander FRASER, farmer, Tore Park, who died 14th March 1885 aged 62 years; and Elizabeth DUFF, who died 11th June 1906 aged 73 years; also their brother Murdo FRASER, who died 31st July 1904 aged 38 years; also Donald FRASER, who died 23 Sept. 1938 aged 83 years; Margaret FRASER, who died 18 Jan. 1942 aged 78 years; Caroline FRASER, who died 20 May 1948 aged 89 years; Catherine WATSON, widow of Roderick FRASER, who died 8 May 1947 aged 92 years; also Jessie FRASER, who died 30 Oct. 1910 aged 55 years; James FRASER, who died at sea, 30 Jan. 1914 aged 43; Roderick FRASER, who died 24 Feb. 1923 aged 60 years; Angus FRASER, who died 4 Jan. 1931 aged 70 years; John FRASER, who died 11 June 1937 aged 84 years.

Sacred to the memory of Hugh MUNRO, merchant, Bridgend, son of George MUNRO, Whiteford, Alness, died 2 January 1896 aged 61 years; Ann CAMERON, his wife, died 10 August 1910 aged 70 years; their children:- George, died 27 March 1871 aged 8 years; Hector and Christina died in infancy; William Mackenzie, died 17 March 1882 aged 5 years; Hector, died 20 August 1920 aged 54 years; Christian Isabella (Mrs ADAM), died 25th Sept. 1931 aged 57 years, interred in Wanstead Cemetery, London; Donald Alexander, died 9th Feb. 1934 aged 58 years, interred in Dornoch; George, died 22nd April 1942 aged 69 years; Hugh John, died 29th Nov. 1949 aged 80 years; Robina, died 22nd June 1957 aged 95 years; Jean BRODIE, wife of J. Ross MUNRO, died 2nd October 1961 aged 59 years; also the said John Ross MUNRO, died 22nd April 1971 aged 85 years; William MUNRO, and Helen ROSS, his wife; Hugh MUNRO, Clashnabuliack, son of William MUNRO and Isabella CAMERON, his wife; also George MUNRO, Whiteford, Ardross, son of John MUNRO, Kinloch died 1846 aged 38 years; Christy MUNRO, his wife, daughter of Hugh MUNRO, Clashnabuliack, died 26 November 1877 aged 80 years; their sons:- Robert, died 31 January 1863 aged 26 years; John, died 28 April 1902 aged 66 years.⁴

Surely someone researching either of these particular families would be delighted at obtaining all the above data from a single source. The more eagle-eyed of readers will have spotted that the latter entry contains one date which is pre-1855. I would suggest that it is an example of the sort of gravestone, with its preponderance of dates in the 20th century, that could be missed by those intending to record only those gravestones with pre-1855 inscriptions.

My contention that all inscriptions should be recorded in full also applies to pre-1855 inscriptions. I would argue that when an inscription is engraved on a memorial it is the intention of the person commissioning it that it should be read in full. For that reason I am more than happy to spend time cleaning up a stone to ensure that all the words can be faithfully recorded for posterity. The next two examples took roughly two hours each to complete the task of cleaning and then transcribing them. I think they were well worth the effort as they contain interesting, as well as valuable, genealogical information. The first is in Killearnan and only two and a half lines were visible before the cleaning process was started. The second is in the burial ground at Easter Suddie, was covered in moss and had been carved with the minimum of effort by the monumental mason. This made the interpretation of the letters of each word very difficult.

Underneath are the respected remains of William GRANT, Miltown, Redcastle, who ended a most exemplary and highly valued though humble life on the 27th day of October 1831 in the 73rd year of his age. Left an orphan at 11 years old, his acquirements were uncommon. He was a descendant of the family GRANT of GRANT in the fourth line. His eldest son, Wm. Ballantyne GRANT, civil engineer, died in Dublin, Apr. 8th 1824 aged 53 years, deeply lamented his remains are interred in Thomas Churchyard, Marlboro' Street, Dublin. The third son, Gregor GRANT, surgeon, lost his valuable life in the wreck of the ship "Cabalya", East-Indiaman, July 7 1818 at the age of 20 years. His uncoffined body was buried on the sandy bank of Island of Carrados in the Atlantic by a few survivors who bravely sought it out. Note: It is anxiously requested not to disturb or remove this stone whatever the object.

Erected to the memory of Hugh JACK, who died at Culish, the 12th April on [sic] the year 18?? aged 83 years; and also of his beloved spouse Martha McKENZIE, who died at Badaskelly on the 8th March 1838 aged 65 years, by their son Alexander JACK, on his visit to Scotland in 1852 after a sojourn of 20 years in Antigua.⁵

So far the examples of inscriptions to support my arguments have been taken from churchyards which no other group has attempted to transcribe. Now we are in a position to make a direct comparison with work done on behalf of the Scottish Genealogy Society. When I first mentioned to one of their volunteers that the next volume in our series of monumental inscriptions was to be the Old High Church in Inverness, I was told that the pre-1855 inscriptions for that churchyard had already been published. In spite of this, we decided to go ahead with our project for three reasons, the first of which was that we had already completed the preliminary stage of our transcription process. Secondly, we would be including every gravestone transcribed in full and thirdly, and probably most important as it turned out, this was an ideal opportunity to compare the results of the different approaches.

To illustrate these differences the following transcriptions are of the same gravestone. The first is taken from the pre-1855 monumental inscriptions published by S.G.S. last year and the second from the Society's publication which will be available at the end of this month.

FS. Alexander Fraser, Tacksman of Dochnalurg, d 9.2.1834 a 70y, by ss Alexander, William & Charles F & w Marjory Mackintosh; Charles Fraser Mackintosh of Drummond d

10.11.1865 a 80y; ab Alexander F d Calcutta 27.11.1845 a 23y; ab William F, Captain of the Rodney, East Indiaman, d Colombo 11.6.1833 a 30y, Mrs Mary Fraser (only da of Mr Fraser, Dochnalurg, h Daniel MacFarlan) d Paisley 14.2.1856 a 35y.

[Slab] (in enclosure) To the memory of Alexander FRASER, tacksman of Dochnalurg, who departed this life on the ninth day of February 1834 aged seventy years, a man highly respected in life and much regretted in death by a numerous circle of friends and acquaintances. This monument is erected by his sons, Alexander, William and Charles FRASER; also Marjory MACKINTOSH, his spouse and the loved mother of Charles FRASER-MACKINTOSH of Drummond, who died on the 10th November 1865 aged 80; also to the memory of the above Alexander FRASER who died at Calcutta on the 27th day of November 1845 aged 23 years; of the above William FRASER, Captain of the "Rodney", East Indiaman, who died at Columbo, on the 11th day of June 1853 aged 30 years; of Mrs Mary FRASER or MACFARLAN, spouse of Daniel MACFARLAN, only daughter of Mr FRASER, of Dochnalurg, who died at Paisley on the 14th day of February 1856 aged 35 years.⁶

By comparing the two transcriptions it can be seen that there are discrepancies between them. In the first example the date of death 10th November 1865 and age at death of 80 has been ascribed to Charles Fraser Mackintosh, and not to his mother Marjory MACKINTOSH, as the full transcription shows was the correct situation. The second error relates to William FRASER, the Captain of the "Rodney". He died in 1853 and not 1833, but this is a common mistake to make in transcribing as a stonemason's "3" and "5" look very similar.

A line-by-line comparison has been made between the two publications with the following results. In the pre-1855 publication, a total of 220 gravestones were identified as being of that period. Of these 123 are correct in all respects whereas 97 have appeared with at least one transcription error on each of them. These errors are wrong dates, ages at death and failure to transcribe some letters. Some of these errors are minor and, as several of the stones are very difficult to read, it is not surprising that the Society, with a number of volunteers involved, was able to be more successful in their efforts at transcription. However, 104 incorrect entries out of a total of 220 are far too many to appear in a published document. Finally, I expected to find a few gravestones with dates pre-1855 missing but not the total of 52 gravestones, which our Society has transcribed and do not appear in the S.G.S. publication. Examples of gravestones which were missed, with the relevant dates underlined, are as follows:-

[Flat] In memory of Donald FRASER, Dalriach, Dunain who departed this life on the 4th day of October 1870 aged 55 years; and his spouse Margaret MACKINTOSH who departed this life on the 6 April 1842 aged 26 years; also Elizabeth FRASER died 18th December 1917 aged ... years.

[Slab] (under turf) Erected by William FRASER, pensioner, late of the 1st Battn. Royal Regt., in memory of his affectionate son William who died 30th Decr. 1843 aged 3 years and 10 months; also of his infant son who died Octr. 1847; and of his wife Jane COLIER, a native of Melrose, Roxburgh-shire who died 18th May 1855 aged 49.

[Slab] This stone is placed here by William ANDERSON, Tacksman in Essich, in the memory of his parents, M..... ANDERSON who [departed this life] on the 5th aged 71 years; [and his spouse MAC]KENZIE who departed this life on the 14th day of February 1853 aged 85 years; and of the said William ANDERSON who departed this life on the 6th day of September 1856 aged 82 years.

The omission of these 52 gravestones, 19% of those in the churchyard which were pre-1855, shows what can happen if you try to be selective. In addition, using abbreviations can lead to ambiguity at best, even errors as we have seen. Recording the full inscription on every gravestone, irrespective of the year of death, is the better approach. I firmly believe that, as the oft-heard saying goes, "If you are going to do a job, you should do it properly".

Sources

- ¹ Pre-1855 Gravestone Inscriptions in Inverness District - East. Scottish Genealogy Society, 1996.
- ² Monumental Inscriptions, Old Churchyard, Avoch. Highland Family History Society, 1995.
- ³ Monumental Inscriptions, Killearnan Churchyard. Highland Family History Society, 1995.
- ⁴ Monumental Inscriptions, Old Church and Burial Ground, Alness. Highland Family History Society, 1996.
- ⁵ Monumental Inscriptions, Suddie Burial Ground. Highland Family History Society, 1996.
- ⁶ Monumental Inscriptions, Old High Church, Inverness. Highland Family History Society, 1997.

Editor's Note – We still continue to record all inscriptions regardless of date and update sites for example our recent work at Kirkhill and Kiltarlity revealed a number of stones and inscriptions which had been noted as unobtainable or had been missed by the former Kilmorack Heritage Group. A full list of the society's MI books available to buy are listed to the rear of the journal.

MEMBERS' DETAILS

New Members:

- 2841. Mr Michael Cope, Dorking, Surrey
- 2842. Mr Gary Urquhart, Kariong, New South Wales
- 2843. Mrs Dorothy Morrison, Inverness

Resignations:

- 2655. Mr Dennis Hodgson
-

THE ORIGIN OF THE MACPHIES OF N.W. SKYE

By Don Macphie

My line of Macphies is, as far as I can trace, from the Isle of Skye. As the records on the island do not go back much before 1806, at least in the parishes of Bracadale and Duirinish (NW), there is little chance of finding more positive information.

I have, in the company of other Macphie relatives still on the island, discussed a theory as to how they came to be there. We are of course convinced that our families were on Colonsay possibly up until 1623 when "Colkitto" MacDonald murdered Malcolm our clan chief. It is possible that they may have left during the time of his detainment in Edinburgh after his betrayal by MacDonald who had coerced an unwilling Malcolm in supporting as a neighbour on Colonsay, the plunderer "Colkitto", in another of his skirmishes against the Duke of Argyll. Anticipating the worst when, and if, Malcolm returned many may have left. Those who remained may simply have been "not welcome" after the chief and his companion's demise.

What is certain is that after 1623 many Mac-A-Phi's moved to Islay, some to Mull and to the Outer Hebrides and possibly the Inner Hebrides (including Skye?). Many are also known to have joined Cameron of Locheil and settled in the Lochaber region and indeed many of the gravestones to this day still show double - barrelled or hyphenated names of Macphee-Cameron or Cameron-Macphee.

Cameron of Locheil was the first to assist Bonny Prince Charlie when the standard was raised at Glenfinnan and no doubt took many Macphies into battle with him either bearing the name Macphie/Macphee or, to show allegiance to the Cameron chief, took the name Cameron. I am sure that many fell at Culloden in 1746.

After Culloden, Cumberland, "the Bloody Butcher" and his men chased what remained of the Highland Army and murdered them in cold blood. For many, many months, even years, after the defeat there would be no hiding place in the Great Glen and more so not in the Cameron country of Lochaber. Any escapee had to lie low or get off the mainland to some safe haven - the islands.

Most of the Hebridean Islands are quite remote - even more so then - but never-the-less were still patrolled by Redcoats and the Macphies were after all Islanders and mostly well accomplished boatmen - so where to go?

MacLeod of MacLeod (landlord of NW Skye) had been involved in the previous uprisings (1708/15/19) on the Jacobite side but had lost lands and favour when the battles were lost. The new MacLeod was not going to let this happen again so chose to join the government army from the onset. Indeed when his clan and clan followers were mustered in a large flat area close to Ullinish those joining their clan chief were very likely unaware that they were on the "other" side! During the rout and pursuit after Culloden MacLeod "gave chase" to scatter the Highland army but never managed to catch up with those escaping to the West.

Cousins pursued cousins, brothers after brothers and even fathers against sons and, of course, their heart was not in it. It was commonly known amongst the defeated Highlanders that the pursuing MacLeod regiment had some sympathy for them.

Whether our Macphies were the pursued or the pursuers I know not only that they either returned to, or relocated in, the Ullinish/Ebost area. It may have been both - a Macphee crofter of MacLeods creating a safe haven for a not so distant relative from the Jacobite army previously with Cameron of Locheil.

If the case was that the escaping MacPhees were making their own way to the more remote west Skye or beyond would well be worth considering. As Skye was a larger island and with some possible favour towards the Highlanders, or even family connections, the Jacobite Macphies may well have approached the island from the south and around to the west and settled in the Bracadale Bay, Loch Harport area. Our first records pick them up in Ullinish and Ebost in Bracadale parish with no other known Macphies in the neighbouring Duirinish parish (at least not in the militia records) so it may have only been a few families or even just a few "warriors" and certainly all the Macphies that I have on record on the island appear to come from these roots.

I have documented my own tree, the Mason MacPhies, but I have also documented the other relatives on the island and all do appear to come from the same location on Skye - Ullinish and Ebost in the parish of Bracadale.

My thanks go to my fellow Macphies still on the island and to MacLeod of MacLeod who permitted me access to many historical records.

<i>Burial Place</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Memorials</i>	<i>Published</i>	<i>Price</i>
Abernethy Churchyard	INV	439	2012	£7.00
Advie Churchyard	INV	147	2012	£6.00
Alness Old Churchyard	ROC	659	1996	£6.00
Alvie Churchyard	INV	203	2014	£6.00
Ardersier Cemetery [A5]	INV	371	2009	£3.00
Avoch Old Churchyard	ROC	651	2006	£4.00
Badenscallie Churchyard	ROC	270	2016	£6.00
Brachlich Cemetery, Gollanfield	INV	200	2003	£3.00
Carrbridge Cemetery	INV	332	2022	£6.00
Chapel Yard, Inverness	INV	2802	1999	£12.00
Clachan Churchyard, Lochbroom	ROC	298	2017	£6.00
Contin Churchyard	ROC	410	2015	£8.00
Corrimony Burial Ground	INV	95	2020	£4.00
Cromdale Churchyard	INV	365	2011	£6.00
Croy Churchyard	INV	367	2002	£3.00
Dalarossie Churchyard	INV	221	2011	£6.00
Daviot Churchyard [A5]	INV	246	2003	£3.00
Dores Churchyard	INV	427	2004	£6.00
Dunlichity Churchyard	INV	315	2010	£6.00
Easter Suddie Burial Ground [A5]	ROC	209	2004	£3.00
Fodderty & Kinnettas Burial Grounds	ROC	1635	2022	£10.00
Fortrose Cemetery and Cathedral [A5]	ROC	450	2005	£3.00
Geddes Churchyard [A5]	NAI	156	1995	£3.00
Glenconvinth Churchyard	INV	154	2021	£6.00
Greyfriars Cemetery, Inverness	INV	132	2002	£3.00
Invermoriston Churchyard	INV	174	2013	£6.00
Invershin Burial Ground	SUT	142	2020	£4.00
Killearnan Churchyard [A5]	ROC	285	1995	£3.00
Kilmore Old Churchyard, Drumnadrochit	INV	496	2007	£6.00
Kilmuir Cemetery (Black Isle) [A5]	ROC	239	2006	£3.00
Kiltarlity (Tomnacross & Old) Churchyards	INV	769	2022	£8.00
Kiltearn Burial Ground	ROC	830	2020	£8.00
Kirkhill Churchyard & Kirkton of Buncrew	INV	651	2022	£8.00
Kirkton of Ardersier Cemetery [A5]	INV	393	2003	£3.00
Laggan Churchyard	INV	344	2021	£6.00
Lochend Burial Ground	INV	129	2004	£3.00
Logie Wester Burial Ground	ROC	273	2021	£4.00
Moy Churchyard	INV	174	2008	£3.00
Old High Churchyard, Inverness	INV	476	2004	£5.00
Petty Old Churchyard	INV	476	2002	£6.00
Rosemarkie Churchyard	ROC	575	2004	£5.00
St Clements Cemetery, Dingwall	ROC	689	2002	£7.00
Ullapool Burial Grounds	ROC	577	2020	£8.00
Urquhart Old Churchyard (Black Isle)	ROC	937	2006	£5.00
Urray Old + Urray West Churchyard	ROC	495	2016	£6.00



highland family history society

Website: <https://www.highlandfhs.org>

c/o Highland Archive Centre,
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Scottish Charities No. SCO15987

ISSN 0262-6659