

THE MORAY BURIAL GROUND

RESEARCH GROUP

Newsletter



Na Rest We Haif - 1571

Issue 17 --- November 2011

(Currently published twice a year)

Editor's Note by Derek C Page

Welcome to another edition of the newsletter, which as you will see covers a large area of the country this time as many of us have been exploring! As Winter now closes in upon us the outings have generally ceased, although I know Keith & Helen have still been struggling on with Cluny after the 'incident' regarding the stored information last year left them without much of the collected work.

Hopefully we've all managed to collate a fair bit of information for the variety of sites we've covered this year and I'm sure that further publications will soon be on the horizon.

All the best for the festive season.

Derek

Highlighting MBGRG to a Wider Audience

(by Keith Mitchell – Chairman)



Since our last issue, the work of the Group has found its way into many households up and down the country, thanks to the efforts of our member, Mary Evans, who writes a column for "Family Tree" magazine. Mary's article entitled *The Forgotten Tombstones of Moray*, which appeared in the September edition, concentrates on the work group members have been involved with over the years on our "Buried Tombstone" project. Helen, the Editor was so intrigued with Mary's article that she decided to allocate four pages to it. The editorial also contains numerous photographs, thus giving the reader a very good idea of what this kind of research is all about.

Mary's article is also mentioned in September issue of *The Scottish Genealogist*, which also includes three excellent tombstone drawings by Bruce Bishop. It also makes reference to other aspects of the Group's work, including our website and Newsletter.

For the January issue of "Family Tree," Mary has produced an article covering the north east of Scotland, which details many useful websites for the genealogist and family historian. This is the fourth in a series of articles covering the whole of Scotland. Well worth a read.

Lastly, somewhat strange to say, the Group featured in the October / November Newsletter of RAF Kinloss and RAF Lossiemouth. It contains an article entitled, ATC Dead Centre, which recounts the efforts made by a group of young, hardy volunteers who very expertly cleaned all 67 memorials at Old Drainie churchyard on the airfield. Helen and I had the privilege of advising these enthusiasts, and they must be highly commended for their efforts. Wouldn't it be great if we could get people like this to help carry on the work of MBGRG. We live in hope!

Conwy Cemetery

(by Associate Members Alan Wills & Jacqueline Burvill)

In June 2010 while on holiday in Conwy, North Wales we came across an interesting cemetery in the centre of the town. The setting could not have been more appropriate as the church in which the cemetery is sited was in ancient times a monastery before being re-consecrated as a church. The cemetery is surrounded by modern buildings but always visible is Conwy Castle built by King Edward I to control the unruly Welsh.

Nearly all the stones were made from solid slabs of slate which for some reason has kept the text of the memorial crisp and clear throughout the decades. Many of the stones listed the deaths of young children indicating that times were hard and illness rife.



One stone in particular was very intriguing. It was a flat stone with a bit chiselled out of the stone and a new piece of slate inserted. The work was pretty shoddy and the cut was not well executed. The new piece of slate had cracked but the text, a verse from a Psalm, was still readable. To us it did seem

rather strange to have the text of a Psalm entered in the centre of the grave stone. We speculated as to why the text was inserted in that part of the stone but came up with no real conclusion. The following day we took a shortcut through the cemetery and again stopped at the grave stone to ponder further as to why the text was there. We were approached by a local man who was repairing the roof of a nearby shed. We got talking and he gave us the answer to the puzzle. The grave was the final resting place of the Griffith family. The breadwinner of the house was a ships carpenter and had been reportedly lost at sea. After a suitable period of time the

family had his name inserted on the family grave stone without his body ever being found. Several years later he appeared at his home alive and well. The family had his memorial inscription removed and a verse from a Psalm inserted into the space. He lived to a ripe old age and had his name carved on the stone once more this time for posterity. I am sure that members of the group would like to know that most of the gravestones had been cleared of weeds and there was no sign of moss at all. The following two photographs show the state of the worst stones in the cemetery, mostly covered in ivy and weeds.





The main reason why we had chosen to go to that particular cemetery was information in the tourist brochure we received that Wordsworth had found a small girl sitting by a grave in Conwy. He asked how many children were in the family and was told there were seven in total, two lived in Conwy, two were sailors at sea and two were dead. Asked to explain how there were seven if two laid buried in the grave the girl replied that she often sat by the grave and took her supper there and sang to them on moonlit nights. He was so moved by her childlike innocence that he composed the poem "We Are Seven".

For some unknown reason the original gravestone was removed and an iron grill erected over the spot. No one now knows where the original stone is.

Obituary

It was with great sadness that on the 24th of September I heard of the death of Sheila McColl. Sheila was a long standing member of MBGRG and a friend to many in the group.

She had many and varied interests in her life, being a founder member of the Embroiders Guild in Elgin and a member of Highland Quilters in Inverness holding the position of Events co-ordinator when she became ill. I knew her in all these capacities and never failed to be amazed at her kindness, hard work and enthusiasm for all the projects she undertook. She was a talented needlewoman and readily shared her expertise with those of us less talented or experienced.

She was also involved with Elgin museum and studied Scottish Archaeology through the University of Aberdeen from 1998 until she gained her Diploma in Archaeology in 2003. She was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. As with everything she did Sheila was enthusiastic about her Archaeology.

She was also a wife, mother and grandmother and mum to Socks the dog. Her grandchildren were often a topic of her conversation.

It is very sad that her life was cut short as she still had so much to contribute to the world and to our wee corner of Moray.

She will be sorely missed.

Ruth McIntosh

An RAF Memorial

On a beautiful autumn day recently I stopped in the square in Braemar, Deeside and came across this memorial to a crew who took off from RAF Lossiemouth in Moray in 1942 never to return.

The memorial is an engine from the aircraft, a very moving tribute I thought.

Part of the Inscription on the memorial.

On January 19th 1942 this aircraft crashed on a routine training mission on high ground near Braemar due to poor weather conditions. All eight crewmen lost their lives. Six crewmen are interred within the Commonwealth War Graves reservation at Dyce Old Churchyard near Aberdeen and two in their home cemeteries in England.

The two Bristol Pegasus XVIII engines were removed from the crash site in 1999 and one is preserved as a permanent memorial to the crew who lost their lives in the Cairngorm mountains.

The crew are named as;

Dickson Sgt. B G, RAAF (W Op Air Gunner) aged 22 of Rockhampton, Queensland Australia

Greenbank Sgt. W M, RAFVR (Air Gunner) aged 19 of Windermere, Westmorland, England

Jackson Sgt R J, RCAF (Pilot) aged 21 of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Kelley Flt Sgt H J, RCAF (Air Obs) aged 23 of Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada

Kilburn Sgt M H J, RAFVR (Pilot) aged 19 of Farnham, Surrey, England

Milliken Sgt. R A, RAAF (W Op Air Gunner) aged 22 of Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia

Ailey Sgt R A, RAAF (W Op Air Gunner) aged 23 of Askern, Yorkshire, England

Thomson Flg Offr J W, DFC RNZAF(Pilot) aged 25 of Oamaru, Otago, New Zealand



Ruth McIntosh

Fieldwork Report (by Helen Mitchell)

This year we “retired” early from recording. One reason was that the weather forecast said we were in for a nasty winter again, and looking back on the outings that were cancelled last year I decided it was a no go area. Typical, during October / November this year we have had some lovely sunny Sundays.

The recording of tombstones in various cemeteries is well ahead and this was another reason for “retiring”. There is a lot of background work to do and we need to concentrate on that. Other members have come forward to help with typing and checking that ages tally with the recorded death on the tombstone.

Rothes Churchyard and New Cemetery with other Associated Memorials is at the printer and now we start preparing Clunyhill in Forres, with about 1700 inscriptions. We are having to check some tombstones on site as it is a very difficult cemetery to photograph due to the sun quite often not penetrating between the trees. Those who have been helping at Clunyhill know that the 1978 plans we use are very deceiving, e.g. the stone next to 1020 is 1037 and directly behind is number 566.

Knockando, Dyke, Rathven and **Elgin (west)** are fully transcribed but await checking.

Aberlour churchyard and extension are fully transcribed, but the new cemetery has to be done.

Kirkmichael is about half way completed, with some ground still to be probed. I mentioned in the last newsletter that I thought this area could throw up some “goodies”. We were wrong or at least up to now. Many of the buried stones are rough slabs with very crude letters or nothing at all. A little disappointing to say the least for our enthused digging team. We will resume recording and probing, possibly in May next year.

Elgin (east), our last outing saw about nine members ascend, and with great gusto six of them recorded about 160 inscriptions in the four hours we were there.

I look forward to seeing you all again at the start of outdoor work in the spring.

Recent Burial Ground Vandalism in Moray

(by Chairman Keith Mitchell)

As many readers will know, Moray has suffered from several horrendous attacks on its Burial Grounds in recent months. These events have taken place in Keith old churchyard, Elgin Cathedral, Cluny Hill in Forres, and lastly in New Elgin (East & South Sections), where some 50 tombstones were brutally knocked down, causing some to be irreparably damaged.

At Cluny Hill, where a similar number of tombstones had been knocked over, it is good to see that a group of volunteers are in the process of rectifying much of the damage by properly re-erecting them. This work clearly involves a great deal of manual labour, not to mention cost,

so it hardly goes without saying that they should be highly commended for their strenuous efforts!

One positive result of their work is the fact that some memorials which had been lying face down for a very long time have now been re-erected. This has enabled us to accurately record their inscriptions.

Website Report (by Lindsay Robertson – Webmaster)

The last Newsletter report regarding the website, was almost a year ago, so a brief update is presented here.

Databases:

Since December 2010, the Ancestor Indices have been updated to include abstracted data from Kinloss Abbey Churchyard (including buried stones) and New Cemetery, and also Lossiemouth Cemetery (North and South Sections - the more modern West Section is NOT included), St. Gerardine's Church, Lossiemouth Community & Fisheries Museum, and Lossiemouth War Memorial. Abstracted data from Rothes Churchyard and Cemetery is expected to be added towards the end of the year, or in January 2012, which will result in the total count of individuals included in the databases reaching some 43,000. Work is in progress, abstracting and checking data from the transcripts for both Dyke and Clunyhill (Forres), both of which are as yet unpublished.

Guestbook:

Due to technical difficulties, the on-line Guestbook had to be replaced, but the majority of entries from the old version have been transferred to the new one.

On-line Sales:

Over the year there have been some 50 Quotation Requests for transcripts, tombstone photographs and publications. Since the instigation of our PayPal service in April 2010 net sales have reached just over £600.

Mutterings From the Ranks!

Over the last couple of months there have been a few comments made that perhaps some Group members might like the opportunity of taking a short holiday / long weekend type break together. One idea put forward is that those interested could plan a tour of various sites of interest (not necessarily all connected with burial grounds)! Transport could of course be via personal vehicles or a hired minibus. Another option might be to take an organised tour, say from the likes of Whyte's of Aberdeen. The tour would really be anywhere members were agreeable to.

Obviously the cost of such a holiday would be commensurate with the overall agreed plan, so clearly it would not necessarily suit all members. Also a venture of this nature will definitely not happen unless at least some members indicate an interest in the idea. At the moment there are no plans of any kind, and basically we are simply putting the idea up for general discussion. So if a venture of this kind appeals to you, please let Helen know your thoughts and suggestions as soon as possible.

Graves in York



On a recent trip to the historic city of York to watch a concert by Blackmore's Night, we decided to make a few days of it and explore the sights. Needless to say, it wasn't long before we found some gravestones of interest!

York Minster has a huge amount of memorials inside, all along the walls and floors, but I singled out a couple of special interest.

The first is that of Matthew Pollard, Squire of Sir Richard Pollard who died in 1529. The stone is obviously quite worn, but in remarkable condition for its age, no doubt due to its location inside.

The second stone is that of a young girl who died at the age of 18 weeks and has a crude skull drawn on the bottom, which is a rare sight outside Scotland. It is from 1639 and therefore fits within the times that we see this sort of symbolism on the Scottish stones.



The full transcription of this reads:
HERE LYETH Y BODY OF STANHOPE
DAVGHTER OF D STANHOPE AND HIS WIFE
WHO DIED Y 27 DAY OF OCTOB 1639 BEEING OF
YE AGE OF 18 WEEKES.



As we traveled outside of the minster itself down the ancient streets, we came across an alcove off the road containing more stones, but without any church or other buildings of that nature anywhere near, they seemed rather out of place. Those that can still be read again date from around the 1600-1700's. Whether this was originally the site of a graveyard I have no idea, but there were just these few stones.

The memorial mounted on the wall reads as follows:

BENEATH IS REPOfITED ALL THAT WAS MORTAL OF MARGARET THE DAUGHTER OF MARTIN
AND JOANNA BURNELL SHE DEPARTED THIS LIFE 16. OF JUNE. 1787. IN THE 18. YEAR OF
HER AGE.

And goes on with another Biblical text. The wording of many stones found through the years have had such unusual terminology for the deceased such as this and certainly makes a change from the rows of 'In Loving Memory' that are so prevalent on the mass-manufactured stones nowadays.

When I 'depart this life' I intend to have something similar with the necessary symbols of mortality and revive the lost craft of the monumental masons of old.

Derek



Did you Know? - Part of the Answer (by Keith Mitchell)

In the last issue I asked what the origin of the words *Tapophila* / *Tapophile* were. Thanks to our Secretary, Connie Walters, we now have part of the solution. First of all in my ignorance I got the spelling wrong – so that didn't help matters. The words in fact should read *Taphophilus* and *Taphophile*. It might appear that these words are either relatively new, or perhaps more likely, somewhat uncommon. A check on several standard dictionaries in our house failed to provide an answer, while the well known Internet source *Wikipedia*, merely gives a simple definition.

Salford Church (An Interesting 17th Century Memorial)

(by Keith Mitchell)

In early September Helen and I decided to visit relatives in Bath and Maidenhead. Our Bath visit was to Group Members Alan Wills & Jacqueline Burvill. They kindly showed us many interesting places including an intriguing visit to see the famous remains of I K Brunell's S.S. Great Britain – a visit I would heartily recommend to anyone.

On the way to Bristol where this vessel is berthed, we made a quick stop to see Saltford Parish Church, a 12th century site of religious worship, situated not far from Bath. Although we were only there for a few minutes, it was obvious that we were in a place of great antiquity. However, in such a short space of time it was impossible to take it all in. One memorial nevertheless proved of immediate interest. This was a 17th century stone built into one of the walls, dedicated to a couple with the somewhat unusual surname of *Flower*.



The main inscription reads as follows.

HEARE LYETH THE BODY OF LAMEROCK FLOWER WHO DECEASED THE 6 DAY OF APRIL 1639 FLOWERS THEY WAR (DE)IPT IN YE SPRING BVT FLOVERISHING NOW WITH CHRIST THEIR KING. The curved border reads:- ROBERT FLOWER WHO DECEASED THE (?) DAY OF IVLY 1631.

Aberlour Churchyard (Some Secrets Revealed)

(by Keith Mitchell)



Derek inside the Macpherson Grant Mausoleum

been partly smashed, thus letting in the rain, etc., as well as allowing birds permanent access. This has resulted in much of the inside being littered with bird droppings. All the carved bosses have been photographed.

Another item of possible significant interest is what at first glance appears to be something akin to a small standing stone. This is placed almost dead centre beneath the window in the surviving gable of the original church along with several upended table tops which clearly are not in their original position. However, as this stone has initials carved onto one side, it may simply be a crude memorial, albeit probably of some considerable age. One most interesting development is the discovery of a plan dating to 1858, which shows the outline plan of the original church of St Durstan. This has helped considerably with our overall understanding of the site.

Since the last issue, there have been several interesting unexpected discoveries made at this churchyard, which are worth reporting. The first being gaining access to the Grant-Macpherson Mausoleum. This building is situated on top of part of the foundations of the original St Durstans's Church and from a ceiling boss inside we learn that the building was erected in 1859.

Unfortunately it appears that that branch of the family has died out, so no-one now cares for the structure. The glazed window at the rear has

Caught in the Act (by MBGRG's Photographer)



Mary, Lindsay and Helen record an old coffin shaped tombstone at Kirkmichael



Lunch time at Aberlour Churchyard