



# The Moray Burial Ground Research Group Newsletter

## The Pictish grave of Rhynie



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# Editors Note

Well, it's been a hectic few months for all involved in the group sorting out the work that's been done over the year, and due to various reasons I'm afraid we're a bit behind with the newsletter again. We've only had one small snow shower up here so far, but it's a relief to be in the warm now and not out cleaning and recording as it's still pretty cold out there!

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



*Derek C Page*

## ADVERTISING FEATURE

### Moray & Nairn Family History Society Death Notices, Articles Concerning Deaths and Obituaries from the Forres Gazette, 1837-1855

Unlike today, in 1837 there was no newspaper published in Forres and the people of the town had to content themselves with newspapers from other parts of Scotland, and further afield.

Scottish newspapers that might just contain small snippets of news local to Forres were being printed in Edinburgh, Glasgow and elsewhere. Local articles might also appear in newspapers published in Inverness and Aberdeen. Between Inverness and Aberdeen, though, the only local newspaper being published at that time seems to have been the Elgin Courant which started in 1836.

John Miller, a son of Elgin clothier and draper Lachlan Miller, left the town in 1837 when he chose to move to Forres to open there a printing establishment, and in June that year, posters were displayed announcing the publication of a new newspaper, the Forres, Elgin & Nairn Gazette, still going strong in the town today as the Forres Gazette. Starting as a monthly publication of only four pages, it was not until 1851 that it was published fortnightly and only from April 1855, weekly.

The notices cover deaths in Forres, the near neighbourhood, the rest of the county, throughout the country and even overseas. Examples can be found of notices from Australia, Canada, India and other parts of what was to become the British Empire and also from the United States and more unexpected places such as Paris, Buenos Ayres, Gambia etc.

There are announcements of the death of the illustrious, the well-known and the humble. The shortest announcement may be one from December 1838 which simply states, "Died, at Elgin, last month, James Hay, Porter." The longest announcement and obituary is probably that for the Rev Thomas Stark whose death is announced in the issue of February 1849 and whose obituary occupies

many columns of the next issue on March 1849. The series, in three parts, around 100pp each, is available from Moray & Nairn FHS - the cost of each part only £6, p&p extra.

Email [publications@morayandnairnfhs.co.uk](mailto:publications@morayandnairnfhs.co.uk), or write to the Society at c/o 39a Park Street, Nairn IV12 4PP.

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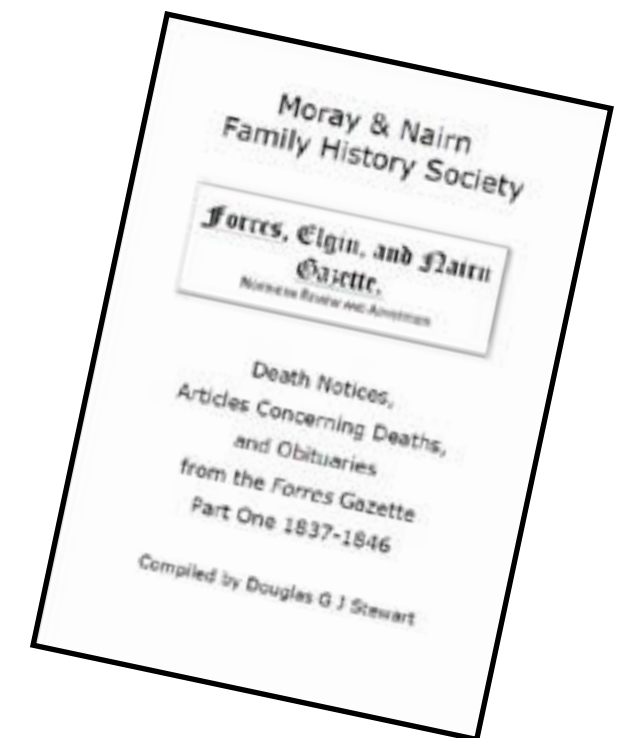
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### In Memorium

It is with regret we announce the recent death of Stella, wife of one of our original members, Sandy McAdam of Dufftown. The Group extends its sympathy to Sandy and family.



Front Cover:  
Kirkmichael © Derek C Page Photography 2013



# the Picts

## & The grave at Rhynie

The Picts, or 'painted people,' covered a large area of what is now modern day Scotland, including our own county of Moray, and have left their mark across the land mainly with carved symbol stones.

Although much of the history of these people and their symbology still remains a mystery to us, the traces of their civilisation are still strong here.

You may wonder why I have chosen to write an article on this, but a recent discovery in our neighbouring county of Aberdeenshire of a carefully constructed sandstone grave has ignited the enthusiasm of archaeologists who believe they may have actually discovered the rare remains of Pictish royalty.

Project leader Dr Gordon Noble, of the University of Aberdeen, said: "We found elements of the legs, pelvis and jaw bone which we recovered and are now analysing in the lab.

"It's extremely rare to find any human remains from this era in the north-east of Scotland as the soil in this part of the world is so acidic. One of the graves had been carefully made from split sandstone slabs to create a cist and the stone lining and collapsed capstones helped to preserve skeletal material.

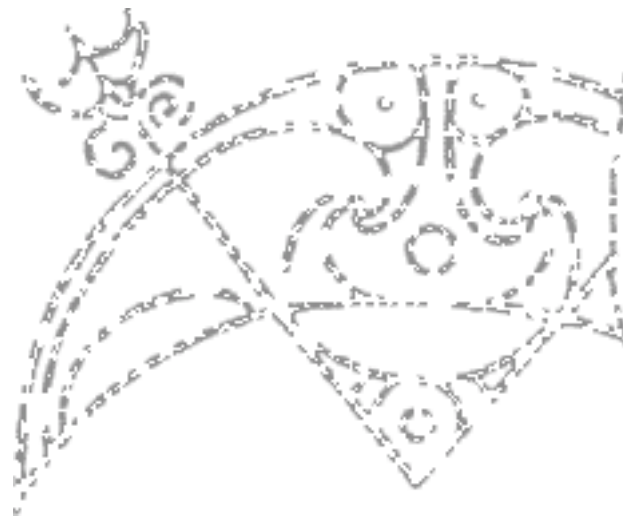
"Unlike Anglo-Saxon areas to the south, the tradition in Scotland was largely for unfurnished burial so we didn't expect to find rich grave assemblages."

"The nearby presence of the settlement near the Craw Stane strongly suggests these may have been burials of high-status individuals and that Rhynie was, like other political centres, a landscape of power rather than a series of individual sites,"

Dr Meggen Gondek, of the University of Chester, said: "The imports, along with the presence of evidence for fine metalworking, suggest that Rhynie is a high-status site dating to the early stages of the development of the post-Roman kingdoms in northern Europe.

The 5th-6th century dates for Rhynie places it in the centuries immediately following the withdrawal of the Roman army from Britain."

We have yet to discover any such graves on our trips around Moray, but here's hoping!



The grave at Rhynie

# Poem for the Departed

by Natalie Tompsett

*For centuries standing in a row  
Like sentinels waiting  
For someone to know  
The message that their lives imparted  
From times gone past  
The dearly departed.*

*A shout goes up  
And excitement is stirred  
As a fallen slab is disinterred  
And from under brown and wormy soil  
The names of loved ones through the toil.*

*Prodding here and prodding there  
Till hollow echo rings loud and clear  
From underneath the grassy carpet  
The life of many is now recorded.*

*So future babes in time to come  
Can find their ancestors one by one  
In the blink of an eye and flick of a switch  
No digging for them down a ditch.*

*And when the notes are clearly made  
The soils put back but not with a spade  
Plastic tools are the order of the day  
So no stone is hampered on the way.*

*And Keith and Helen in domestic bliss  
Take comfort from the thought in this  
And know that when their work is done  
Moray's record will be a 'whole' in one.*



There is much emphasis these days on the serious problems relating to the global financial crisis, unemployment issues, and the ever increasing cost of the bare essential any family needs to survive. The young need our help, and support, and also the older members of the community.

MBGRG members I suppose fall between those ranges – I'm trying to be circumspect here – some great young folks, and also 'olde codgers' like myself, but think fair to say most are 'more mature citizens'.

All are volunteers of course – donating their time and effort freely. No minimum or living wage involved here.

However, I've done a detailed statistical analysis of all available member's work-records, relating to our latest pending publication – Aberlour.

$$R = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\left[ \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2 \right]^{1/2}}$$

Based on the above quadratic exponential algorithm where

R = Real Cost

x = the average time spent by each MBGRG member in person-hours, and

y = the basic Living Wage, the result is clear.

If all members were in fact to receive the basic wage for their efforts, this publication, on our basic, first print-run figures, would need to be priced at £376.89 per copy just to cover costs!

Is this an attempt to pressurise you into buying your personal copy when it is published (hopefully), in early 2014? Of course it is – a real snip at ca £15!

L. Robertson



There are two new additions to the SAFHS website [www.safhs.org.uk](http://www.safhs.org.uk) which may be of interest to researchers.

The SAFHS Graveyard Inventory which was first published as a CD in 2009, is now online on the website. This identifies the location of all 3506 known graveyards, churchyards and other burial grounds in Scotland, the dates they were in use, and also further information on the site. Obviously the database on the website does not include MI transcripts, but it identifies whether the MI have been recorded, and, if they have been published, where these are available. As the publications mentioned in the database at present are only those up to 2009, there is an ongoing process of updating the information, which it is hoped will be completed by the end of the year.

There is also the SAFHS Inventory of Scottish pre-1841 Population Lists which includes the surviving Censuses 1801 – 1831, mainly containing similar information to the 1841 census, Poll Tax Records, mainly 17th century, containing Heads of Households and in some cases other family members, and also the Hearth Tax Records which generally are similar to the Poll Tax Records/ There are other lists of Heads of Families in the Parish, which are only included if it is known that this is a fairly complete list of families in the parish, and there are Examination and Visitation Lists which include a list of the adults and older children in the parish being examined on their knowledge of the scriptures. In some parishes there are Lists of Inhabitants and Population Lists, which are included where this is considered to be a fairly complete list of the people living in the parish or area

The location of these published records is included in the Inventory, and it is likely that as more archival information becomes available and is transcribed and published there will be further additions to this list.

There is of course, also the forthcoming SAFHS 25th Anniversary Conference and Family History Fair "A Matter of Life and Death". This will take place in Dunfermline, the historic ancient capital of Scotland in the Carnegie Conference Centre, Halbeath Road, Dunfermline, Scotland on Saturday 26th April 2014, 9.30 am – 4.45 pm.

There will be four main talks, for delegates, and a series of other talks and workshops during the day which can be booked on arrival. There will also be a children's Family History Workshop. The extensive Family History Fair will feature Family History Societies, Local History Groups and many Commercial Stands.

The cost for delegates is £32, which includes access to all lectures, morning coffee, lunch and afternoon tea. Admission to the Family History Fair will be £2, at the door.

Full details can be found on the SAFHS website at [www.safhs.org](http://www.safhs.org), and booking forms can be downloaded from the website. The event is part of the Homecoming Scotland 2014 programme and has received Awards for All Lottery funding (A4A).

**Bruce B Bishop FSA Scot, ASGRA**

## Field Co-ordinator's Report.

By Helen Mitchell

Due to technical problems I am unable to give an update on outings since last newsletter.

Elgin East is all recorded but awaiting final checks.

Cullen Kirk is completed but awaiting final checks.

Rathven recording is complete.

Burnside (Rathven) is in the process of being typed up.

Mortlach is about two thirds completed, with some buried and recording still to be done.

Kirkmichael recording is completed and checked.

Projects for next year :

Tomintoul, St Lawrence (Forres) and Cullen New.





# AGM

# 2014

We are pleased to announce that the speaker at this year's AGM on Sunday, 23rd March will be the well-known archaeologist, Dr. Fraser Hunter of the National Museums of Scotland. This should be an important date for your diary, as Fraser normally draws a large audience. He will be speaking on burial practices in the north-east during the Iron Age, etc., with references to the digs at Birnie and Clarkly Hill.



The Birnie dig site

## GRAVEYARD SHANTY

by Natalie Tompsett

We are the Moray Graveyard Group  
We come from near and far  
If you've lost a relative  
We'll find em, ha, ha, ha.  
We are the Moray Graveyard Group  
No matter where they've gone  
Our trusty prod will ring out loud  
We'll know it, here's our song.  
We dig em up and put em back  
From birth to death they're found  
Checking here and checking there  
There's nothing that ain't found.  
We are the Moray Graveyard Group  
And one day we'll succeed  
The database will have the name  
The very one you'll need!



Find us on  
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