

**THE MORAY BURIAL GROUND  
RESEARCH GROUP**

# Newsletter

Fra Birt To Graif



Na Rest We Haif - 1571

**Issue 8 - - - April 2007**

(Currently published twice a year)

Dear Member or Supporter, on 12th March, the Group held a very successful AGM at the Miltonduff Village Hall with 21 members attending, 6 members sending their apologies, as well as several visitors. We were extremely pleased to welcome our Hon. President, Betty Willsher to our proceedings, particularly as she had taken the time to be with us from her home in St Andrews. At the beginning of the meeting, Betty gave us all some welcome words of enthusiastic encouragement. Subsequently the business part of the meeting was carried out successfully, and the Committee were all individually re-elected.

Three categories of Subscription were altered, these being "Ordinary" now £14.00, "Family (of 2)" now £24.00, and "Associate" now £7.00. It should be borne in mind that these increases have more or less been brought about by increased postal charges. After a short talk about the work of the "Group" over the last year, presented by the "Three Musketeers," everyone was invited to enjoy some light refreshments at "Rivendell" courtesy of Janet and Bruce Bishop.

### A Dallas Churchyard Mystery



**Tombstone 120 : Before**



**Tombstone 120 : After**

In February and March, the Group made three very successful MI recording visits to Dallas, and on each occasion an exceptionally good turn out of members led to all the 226 visible tombstones in the old section of the churchyard being recorded in very quick time.

During the recording process, we came upon a somewhat unusual small stone (No.120), which seemed to stand out from all the rest. As the above photographs show, it is largely made up of a large shield or crest with three escutcheons in the visual left half (known in heraldic terms as dexter, I think), while what appear to be three cushions in the visual sinister section. From the small amount of research done for this Newsletter entry, it would appear that we have a male with the initials R H, whose wife had the Initials E D. Please excuse any inaccurate heraldic interpretations!

This tombstone is adjacent to two others containing the resting place of various members of the Hay family of Edinvail / Edinville, also written as Edinvale. The escutcheons appear to confirm a Hay connection, while the three cushions indicate a Dunbar relationship.

The upper part of a carved letter was visible at grass level, and due to the small size of this tombstone, including several other factors, it was decided to carefully uncover more of the inscription, by removing a small quantity of soil. No sign of a plinth was evident, and it was agreed that this action was quite permissible. What we uncovered can be seen in the right hand photograph. This included two further sets of initials, T H and T I as well as part of a rather naive carving of a skull. These might refer to R H's parents, or a son and his wife. The base was not uncovered.

It seems possible that a wee bit more historical research might elicit the owners of these initials, for although this tombstone appears much older than most of those so far encountered at Dallas, (e.g. 17th or even 16th century), their attribution might still exist in some old documents or the like. Don't hold your breath, but watch this space!

### The New MBGRG Logo Badge



The idea for producing a badge was put forward last year, but it is only now that we have the finished product. Thanks are due to Helen Mitchell for her efforts in getting the production line to this stage. They are being manufactured by Sue Black, who is responsible for the popular Group tea-shirts and sweat-shirts that many of our members wear.

At the AGM it was confirmed that these badges can be worn by all members, irrespective of category, so if you do not participate in Group activities, for example, as an Associate Member, why not think about sporting one. They certainly could prove to be a talking point.

The badge measures 33/8" x 41/8" (8.5cms x 10.4cms.) and is available in a range of colours. However, so far it seems that the dark navy colour as illustrated here appears to be the most practical and popular.

The agreed cost is £6.00 per badge, with £1.00 of this going to boost Group funds.

If you wish to order badges, please contact Helen Mitchell on 01343-546620, or by email at either [mhelenmitchell@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mhelenmitchell@hotmail.co.uk) or at [family-heritage@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:family-heritage@tiscali.co.uk)

Please note that if your badge requires to be posted, postal and packing charges within the UK are £0.50, making a total of £6.50 per badge to pay. Any non UK member who is interested in getting a badge should contact Helen first by e-mail. Sorry, we still cannot accept credit card payments!

**The M.B.G.R.G. Website**  
(by **Lindsay Robertson** – Webmaster)

The Moray Burial Ground Research Group website was originally created in August 2005 with several major aims in mind.

- a) To publicise the work of the Group to as wide an audience as possible
- b) To make visitors aware of available publications (MBGRG and/or ANESFHS)
- c) To give site visitors Membership Application Details
- d) To publicise the ever increasing MI and tombstone photo indices.

**For the benefit of those who do not have Internet access, the following summary of the site contents may be useful.**

<b>Home Page</b>	Brief introduction by the Chairman to the work of the MBGRG, its aims and details of links with other institutions.
<b>Location Map</b>	Map of Moray with links to other websites relating to major towns.
<b>Site Overview</b>	Summary of web site contents.
<b>Publications</b>	List of relevant Moray publications.
<b>Reports</b>	Miscellaneous reports issued by the group.
<b>Newsletters</b>	On-line access to all Newsletters.
<b>Ancestor Indices</b>	Databases listing summary details of all individuals recorded on both visible and buried stones recorded by the group. Fully searchable.
<b>Research Progress</b>	Summary of work completed, pending and in progress.
<b>Image Gallery</b>	Photo gallery of some group activities.
<b>Humour</b>	Light entertainment.
<b>Links</b>	Links to other relevant sites.

<b>Latest News</b>	Chronological list of new website items, additions, publications etc.
<b>Site Search Engine</b>	Search the website (not Ancestor Indices) for any term of interest to the user.
<b>Contact Details</b>	Contact details – membership application forms and information, etc.
<b>Guestbook</b>	Where users can leave comments, queries or request help and advice.

Over the past twelve months, there have been no major alterations to the overall *style* of the website, but content has increased considerably, particularly with respect to the Ancestor Indices (otherwise known as the MI/Photo Index).

### Compilation and Use of the Ancestor Indices

Once tombstone photography and recording of MI's are completed, typed and checked, for a particular churchyard, summary details are extracted for each individual mentioned. If available, this includes churchyard name, stone number, surname, maiden surname where appropriate, forename, and year of death. Pertinent comments as to profession, place of death, etc. are also extracted where it is felt this will be useful to a researcher.

This extracted information is double checked for errors or omissions, and once approved for use by the Committee, is stored in a database, which the website user can access via some predefined scripts and forms.

The user may check to see if an individual of interest is included by entering the first few letters of the surname in a simple form, and is then presented with summary details of all relevant individuals from the database. By noting the churchyard name, the user can search the data for that churchyard, and obtain summary information of all individuals recorded on that particular stone.

This is Stone Number 0175 from BellieOld Burial Ground

Please quote those details in any correspondence

Stone No	Surname	Forenames	Maiden Surname	Death Year	Comments
0175	Anderson	Harriet	-	1863	Infancy
0175	Anderson	Harriet	Brown	1878	-
0175	Anderson	Margaret A. S.	-	1883	-
0175	Anderson	Alexander	-	1906	-
0175	Anderson	William	-	1930	Died at White Plains, New York

Users can then refer to the appropriate publication for the full transcript, or for a small handling fee, obtain full transcripts and or tombstone photographs by contacting the Group directly.

At this time, the database includes summary data for some 12,500 individuals from the following burial sites.

### **Buried Tombstones:**

Old Churchyards currently included in this set are:-

Bellie, Burghead (Grant Street), Dipple, Drainie (RAF Lossiemouth), Essil, Kinneddar, Kirkhill, Lhanbryde, Urquhart and Spynie.

### **Non-Buried Tombstones:**

Sites currently included in this set are:-

Alves Churchyard and Cemetery, Bellie Churchyard and Cemetery, Buitternach (Pre-publication), Burghead (Grant Street), Dipple, Essil Churchyard and Cemetery, Lhanbryde Churchyard and Cemetery, Spynie Churchyard, and Urquhart Churchyard and Cemetery.

Considerable volumes of data from other churchyards, (publication pending), are also in preparation, being checked or awaiting approval to add to the database in due course.

### **Website Overview**

Overall, it is believed that the website has met its major aims over the last year, although it is difficult to know just how successful a website is, the best criteria being user feedback.

Web analyses statistics imply that the website is being visited regularly, by users from around the world (particularly from the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand).

An increasing number of other important genealogical websites now contain a direct link to our MBGRG site, and general comments submitted to our Guestbook by visitors are been very positive.

## **A Little bit of In-House Humour**

From the Editor:- (apologies - no cartoons this time)

Melbourne, 29 March 2007 – Today I was doing my (school) crossing in Whittlesea and thought I had seen it all, but when I looked over at a nearby crossing, I was surprised to see two children carrying a full size coffin across the road. Seems they had had some sort of school pageant. Gave me a bit of a start and I had not even had a drink! Well that's the giggle for the day.

And now there follows two rather odd dreams, one regarding Dallas Churchyard experienced by Helen, followed by another dreamt by Bruce after the AGM.

Helen recounts that in her dream, both she and Stephen were discussing a possible buried tombstone that had been discovered in front of a large upright at Dallas Churchyard. Initially she had her back to Stephen, but in turning round to face him, she walked straight into the upright stone, giving herself a right good bodily smack in the process. This dream induced physical contact with the tombstone, gave her such a massive jolt in reality, that in the process of waking up, she snapped her

head back so quickly and hard, that the muscles in her neck were extremely painful for days afterwards. So while we had a good laugh about it all, this dream had rather nasty side-effects, which were indeed less than funny.

At the AGM some discussion took place about a possible new threat to some disused burial sites in Scotland, which had recently come to light. This must have been something that Bruce was thinking about quite a bit on a subconscious level, as not long after Helen had her dream, Bruce dreamt that the Group had taken on the responsibility of disposing of all the recycled tombstones, and that we were posting them to clients all over the world. Wonder how many stamps that would take!

### **Membership**

At the time of writing it is good to be able to report that only a few weeks after the AGM, the Membership Roll stands at quite a respectable figure. Currently, there are 26 full members and 19 Associate Members. This includes two new members who already have been active in our new season's fieldwork.

### **Annual Party & Fundraising**

On Saturday 20th January the Group festive party was held at 127 Morrision Road. It was well attended and many thanks are due to everyone who contributed so generously to the "nibbles, dips, drinks and other delicious goodies."



**Trimming 1000's of kiloware stamps**



**Someone told a good joke!**

From our last parcel of recycled print cartridges we received the princely sum of £11.00. Thanks to everyone who has supported this venture so far, however, due to the small amount received, we are having second thoughts about the best way of continuing this little project. However, please keep your used cartridges coming for the moment, but unless either we can get a lot more, or we can find a company who will pay us more, we may consider stopping this collection.

During the last few months, several "Stamping Evenings" have been held, when all the postage stamps and bundles of stamp kiloware that so many of you have contributed towards, have been trimmed and sorted into appropriate categories, ready to go for auction. Eight of us have helped in this part of the project, and I think it fair comment to say, that a good evening's entertainment has so far been enjoyed by all. As can be seen in the right hand photograph above, these meetings are not all about stamps, particularly when a cracking good joke is delivered in style.

The plan is to take a large cardboard box full of stamps down to Robert Murray's Stamp Shop in Edinburgh sometime in the next couple of months. It will then be entered into his monthly auction catalogue, when we will just have to see what we get for it. As it is an auction, this will obviously depend to a large extent on who is there on the night.

Please forgive a further appeal for any old unwanted postage stamps, postcards, coins, old documents, etc. If you have any of these lying around gathering dust, please think seriously about donating them to the Group, where they are liable to add to our funds.

Group thanks go to Jeanne and Ronald Butler for putting together a super Quiz entitled "Who do you think they were," as well as providing the prize of a £10.00 gift voucher. Many thanks are also due to everyone who took packs of 10 to hand round friends, colleagues and shops. Although the final date for entry is just after this Newsletter is printed, we have so far sold in excess of £100.00 worth, with the likelihood of further sales still to come in. This seems currently to be quite a popular way of raising funds, and we probably could have sold quite a few more, had it not been for a fair bit of competition from other quizzes in some areas. Jean has produced a second version, based on the Group motto; however, this will be left till later in the year before using it.

**Car-Boot Sale** - Quite a few members reckon to have a fair number of items they could donate and Janet Campbell has agreed to make further enquiries for the Group, but before this idea can bear any fruit, we probably need someone to help organise this project. Any volunteers?

### **Publications**

Our publication on Bellie Churchyard and Cemetery has proved something of a runaway success, and we are now on our third print run.

**Monumental Inscriptions Including Buried Tombstones – Rafford Churchyard And New Cemetery** - After a little "Printer's hiccup" where a complete page was missed out, we now have our first print-run of this booklet. It comprises 63 pages of text and drawings as well as four pages of colour photographs. It is available from Bruce Bishop or Helen Mitchell for £5.99 (plus p&p). **Please note that "Full Members" can obtain a copy at the reduced rate of £4.50 (plus p&p).**

### **Scottish Association of Family History Societies**

On 21st April, Helen and Keith manned a display and stall on behalf of the Group, at the 18th Annual Conference of the above Association, which was held at Culloden. The previous evening we attended a function held in Inverness Townhouse, where we enjoyed a glass of wine along with usual variety of "nibbles." We were given a warm welcome by the Deputy Lord Provost, and everyone had a good opportunity to meet with fellow travellers in very tasteful surroundings. The Council Chamber was also on view, and we had a chance to see the only place where parliament has met outside London; so if you have never visited this historic building, put it on your list to do so, as it is well worth seeing.

By all accounts the conference was very well organised and those who went to all the lectures appear to have thoroughly enjoyed themselves. However, some stallholders, particularly in the area where we were situated – a small side classroom – found things very slow. Most of the day was very quiet, mainly due to the fact that the majority of prospective customers and visitors, spent most of the day listening to lectures! However on the plus side, we sold 10 quizzes, two Rafford volumes and received donations for two Methodology books, as well as meeting a number of interesting people. This included one lady who apparently hopes to be volunteering her mother as a prospective Group member. We also received a complimentary copy of SAFHS's new CD, an "Inventory Of Scottish Graveyards, which uses an MBGRG photo of Elgin Cathedral on its front cover.

## Before And After At Birnie



The above photographs show the difference a little TLC can make when a flat tombstone, completely covered in moss, is sympathetically cleaned. From something that is totally illegible, we are now able to decipher the text in full, and in this case it turns out to be the resting place of Alexander Duffus, Farmer, Tyockside, who died in 1854, along with his wife Mary Scott and his daughter Ann. In a few months time of course, the stone surface will in all probability revert back to something like its previous state.

**And Now A Word From Our Controller -** (by Helen Mitchell - Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

**Forthcoming Events** - Towards the end of last year we curtailed our visits to the Cathedral due to a variety of circumstances and concentrated on Birnie buried stones. During December and January of this year we decided to have a break from outdoor work, thinking that we would avoid the worst weather, not so, as it was quite mild for the time of year. February saw us wrapped up with our winter “woolies” heading off to Dallas. That completed, we started again at Birnie and the Cathedral. We have uncovered 57 stones at Birnie with 33 of interest. The number of members attending has been excellent and allowed us to make good progress. However, due to a change in the timing and frequency of the church service, we are adjusting our work schedule there.

The Cathedral will set us a challenge this year as the majority of work to be done is cleaning and deciphering of very worn flat stones. One afternoon this week three members cleaned three stones which had in 1978 been recorded as illegible. We now have names and some dates for them, so a little time and trouble produced results. Our aim is to finish the outdoor work at the Cathedral this year, weather permitting, then settle down to the publication side of the work, which will be a mammoth task. Duffus is being used as a standby, with the intention of recording Dundurcas and Glenrinnies during the summer. Downan and Chapelton will follow. As they are further away it will mean a longer working day to reduce the number of visits, and perhaps sharing transport. Tombae and Buiternach MI's are indexed and ready for publication and will be withheld to include in a possible Glenlivet book.

Remember if you have friends who are interested in what we are doing and would like to join, bring them along, no experience necessary.

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