

**THE MORAY
BURIAL GROUND
RESEARCH GROUP**

Fra Birt To Graif



Na Rest We Haif - 1571

**ANNUAL REPORT
2008 - 2009**

The Committee of 2008-2009

Hon. President	Betty E Willsher, M.B.E.
Chairman	Keith L Mitchell, FSA Scot
Secretary	Bruce B Bishop, FSA Scot
Treasurer	Irene Black
Field Co-ordinator	Helen Mitchell, FSA Scot
Ordinary Member	Moira Windwick
Ordinary Member	Stephen Leitch
Minute Secretary	Moira Windwick
— O — O — O — O — O — O — O — O — O —	
Auditor	William Windwick
Webmaster	Lindsay Robertson, FSA Scot

Committee Appointments Held During 2008-2009

Publicity Manager	Stephen Leitch
Fundraiser (Elgin Cathedral)	Ruth McIntosh



Members on last day of MI recording at Elgin Cathedral

Chairman's Report

In a very short time, hopefully within the next few weeks, the Monumental Inscriptions from Elgin Cathedral should become available. Hopefully this publication will generate a considerably amount of interest amongst local and family historians alike, as of all the churchyards and other burial sites in Moray, I suspect it should be considered as the crème de la crème from a genealogical point of view. Since recording work began here in 2005, a substantial effort has been made by many members of MBGRG to record all the MIs as accurately as possible. This process has involved countless checks using photographs, card indexes, the Moray Heritage Services LIBINDEX system, together with all sorts of research in several archive centres. **Well Done!**

It goes without saying that this project could not have come to fruition without the time and effort given to it by so many people, in respect of time, dedication, expertise, not forgetting of course that obvious necessity, money. Sadly for practical reasons it is not possible here to individually thank everyone involved with the project. So on behalf of MBGRG, I would like to say a very big thank you for all your help in reaching the end of our goal - your support and efforts are very much appreciated. However, I would like to single out one person, whose gritty determination to see this pursuit through to the end must be seen as truly outstanding. I refer of course to our Field Co-ordinator, Helen Mitchell (my wife), who has so doggedly persisted with the project well past the point where on more than one occasion of late has been heard to say that she has been "ready to press the delete button on the computer."

Speaking of individual efforts, I would like to mention here the work of one other member who has produced a very considerable achievement on behalf of MBGRG. I refer to Ann Gerrie from Forres, who last year undertook to record the whole of Clunyhill Cemetery all by herself. This burial ground is relatively modern, containing some 1600 tombstones which date back only to about the 1850 period. The MI record she has compiled would indeed rank as a fair test of anyone's dedication, so I take this opportunity of thanking Ann for completing this rather daunting task.

Considerable thanks must also go to everyone who has participated in any of our Group projects this year, either in the field, or for example, sitting behind a computer screen. What you do is absolutely vital to the continued success of everything we are trying to achieve.

Not long ago when in the Moray Voluntary Service Organisation (MVSIO) shop having the November Newsletter printed, I spent a little time gazing over all the volunteer leaflets displayed on the main wall. One result of this musing was that it struck me quite forcibly just how dull our own leaflet looked beside the rest. Discussing the situation with Dawn Craig, (Group Support Administrator), she very generously offered to design a new one based on photographs and text supplied by the Group. And Dawn did just that – in double quick time too! In fact she provided three separate drafts, which Members of Committee are currently discussing. It is hoped to have this revamped leaflet available for the AGM meeting, so on behalf of everyone – a big hearty cheer to Dawn for all her artistic and creative skills which have been put to such good use on our behalf.

In these days of economic uncertainty it is obvious that any way we can save money, particularly for publication purposes, must be considered worthwhile. To that end we are trying to minimize running costs wherever possible. Last year in an attempt to cut down on postage, we invited members wherever possible to download our bi-annual Newsletter from the Internet. This naturally had minor teething problems, but on the whole worked very well for our November Issue.

As a follow on from this, and with my "Editor's hat" on, I would like to suggest that an "opt out" policy for Newsletter delivery should now be adopted. This would simply mean that unless you inform me, Alan or Helen to the contrary, we will assume that you will be happy to download future issues from the Internet. Please note, for your own benefit, that if you wish to download items relating to Group activities, it is in your own interest to ensure we have your correct and up to date email address.

Much could be said about our successful recording work in several other burial grounds last year, such as at Chapeltown, Dallas, Dundurcas, Kinloss Abbey, Macallan and St Peter's, but space forbids. However, I would like to quickly highlight our forthcoming work at Kinloss in association with the Kinloss Abbey Trust, who became Group Members last year. Historic Scotland has now given us permission to record all the visible MIs on this historically interesting site, but so far is not allowing us to search for buried tombstones. Next month, weather permitting we hope to start recording in earnest, ably assisted by volunteers from the Trust.

Good recording during 2009-2010.

Keith L. Mitchell (Chairman)

Secretary's Report

The Secretary has attended many meetings in Edinburgh over the course of the past year. These have included a meeting of the SAFHS Graveyard Working Group, and the final edition of the Graveyard Inventory CD produced by this group, containing information on every burial ground site in Scotland, which is now published. Discussions have been held with Martin Brann and Patricia Weeks, both of Historic Scotland, regarding the application for Scheduled Monument Consent for St Peter's Duffus, which has now been granted. A similar application for work at Kinloss Abbey has initially met with a refusal to permit the investigation of buried tombstones on that site, negotiations are ongoing. The Secretary has represented SAFHS, and thereby also the MBGRG, on the User Group of the new ScotlandsPeople Family History Centre in Edinburgh.

The Secretary has now been elected Chairman of the Friends of Bellie Churchyard following the resignation of Mr Gordon Baxter from that position, and continues to advise that organisation on the improvements which they plan to carry out to that Churchyard. The new Stone Cross at the entrance to Bellie Churchyard, and the visitor information panel there, which made use of MBGRG photographs and plans, are worth looking at. Communication has been ongoing between the Secretary and Mr Gary Morrison and Mr Ken Kennedy, both of Moray Council Cemeteries Department,

with a valuable two-way exchange of information. The Moray Council continues to be very supportive of the work of MBGRG.

Various communications have been received during the year both by post and email, but the majority of these were requests for information on burial grounds which have not yet been researched. There have continued to be many encouraging comments, both from professional bodies involved with graveyard management and documentation and also from family history researchers, all of whom have highly praised the work which the group is undertaking.

Keith and Helen Mitchell continue to act as representatives for the MBGRG at the twice-yearly meetings of SAFHS.

Both of the local newspapers, the *Northern Scot* and the *Press and Journal*, continue to show considerable interest in the work of the group and have been a valuable source of publicity. The publication of MI and 'Forgotten Tombstone' books continues apace, and all of the publications are selling well, either by mail order or through Yeadons of Elgin, ANESFHS or the Scottish Genealogy Society.

Bruce B Bishop (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report

At the end of December our membership consisted of 35 (27) Ordinary members, 17 (21) Associate members and 1 Corporate group. The figures in brackets represent the number of members we had the previous year. This generated an income of £683.00 in subscriptions (this includes £57.00 in prepayments), an increase of £186.00 from the previous year. Overall, our membership has increased this year.

Our publishing costs for the year came to £1,134.53. This was for the reprinting of previous publications and the first issue of the *Forgotten Tombstones Vol 6*, Dallas, Duffus and Dundurcas & Macallan. Our total income to the end of December from the sale of the publications came to £1,358.00 and we had stock in hand to the value of £725.07. Outstanding income due from bookshops at that date amounted to £164.06. We have received a total of £1,260.00 in donations over the year, £990.00 of which is specifically for the publication of the *Elgin Cathedral Inscriptions*. Janet (Campbell), with the help of her family, has raised £89.90 from car boot sales. The sale of photographs generated £24.00; a further £25.85 came from the recycling of cartridges, £16.49 for refund of equipment and £25.75 from bank interest.

Other expenditure during the year included, web site £93.41; insurance £137.60; printing (of newsletter), travel (Edinburgh SAFHS meetings), telephone, postage and stationery £683.14; equipment £23.01 and £22.90 for hire of room for AGM.

As at 31 December 2008 our bank balance was £3,093.61 and we had £1.90 in petty cash.

Irene Black (Treasurer)

Research Co-ordinator's Report

Information regarding the frequency of site visits and the progress made on individual sites is contained in the Fieldwork Co-ordinator's Report.

Historical and archival research has been completed for all of the sites which have been recorded during the past year, and archival research into Clunyhill, Clovenside and St Lawrence (all in Forres), Kinloss Abbey and Edinkillie is ongoing at present. The majority of the existing site plans date back about 30 years and they have been redrawn, or are in the process of being revised. This will allow the indication of the location of any new tombstones erected up to the time of recording.

The publication of the MI Book for Elgin Cathedral is now nearing completion, and it is hoped to have it ready for sale at the SAFHS Annual Conference and Family History Fair in Aberdeen in April.

At this point in the progress of the MBGRG it may be worth considering the work which has been done in the past by the group. Many publications have been produced, including the Forgotten Tombstones Series, which records the buried or inaccessible tombstones at Dipple, Essil, Kirkhill, Old Drainie Churchyard on RAF Lossiemouth, Bellie, Kinneddar, Burghead, Lhanbryde, Urquhart, Spynie, Alves and Birnie, and also the Monumental Inscriptions Series which records all visible tombstone inscriptions in Bellie Churchyard and New Cemetery, Rafford Churchyard and New Cemetery, Boharm Churchyard, Downan Churchyard, Glenrines Burial Ground, Buiternach Burial Ground, Dallas Churchyard, Duffus New Cemetery and Extension, Dundurcas Churchyard, Macallan Churchyard, Chapelton R.C. Churchyard and Tombae R.C. Churchyard.

In addition to this many Monumental Inscriptions had earlier been recorded and published by ANESFHS, including those for Birnie, Alves, The Vale of Pluscarden, The Michael Kirk at Gordonstoun School, St Andrews Kirkhill, Kinneddar, Dipple, Essil Old and New, Botriphnie, Burghead Grant Street, Urquhart Old and New, Lhanbryde Old and New and Spynie Churchyard.

Surveys have also been made of some other sites such as Greyfriars Convent in Elgin, and the burial grounds on the Knock of Alves and at Innes House. The Group has also been responsible for the production of the Methodology for Recording Buried Tombstones, and other research works.

All members of the group are to be congratulated on the vast amount of information which has been made available to Genealogists and Family Historians over the past years.

Bruce B Bishop (Research Co-ordinator)

Fieldwork Co-ordinator's Report

Another year has passed with quite a large amount of work achieved once again. There was a slight reduction on visits this year, with only 33, mainly due to weather conditions.

Birnie: 1 visit here which was an open day where we hoped for new recruits. We were lucky and have added a few new members. We opened up two tombstones, to allow the public to see what information we can uncover.

Chapeltown: 1 visit with a large team of members and MIs completed in one day. Some older upright stones were problematic, but along with a number of modern stones we completed the work by early afternoon. As this was our 'summer outing' we continued our day with a visit to Tombae and Downan to allow some members to see where we had been working on other visits, and finally to the hotel for a well earned meal. Chapeltown and Tombae have been published together.

Dallas: 4 visits to do buried tombstones only, the MIs having been completed and published earlier. This site has one remaining buried stone which has been partially uncovered, but the team were thwarted because the other part is under tree roots. For those who know us, you can imagine our frustration when we had to leave it due to health and safety. If and when more outside work is to be completed at Dallas Church, we hope to have the opportunity to finish our work, as the tree has already been cut down.

Duffus (New): 1 visit to complete preparation for publication.

Duffus (St Peter's): 13 visits so far. This is quite a wet site as it is surrounded by trees. We stopped work there in early November as the ground conditions were not favourable. The flat stones are very close together and slippery if your foot caught on the edge of one, and the cleaning aspect became difficult. Photography became problematic as the tombstones were very rarely dry and lighting was frequently inadequate. Buried stones have proved to be few and far between.

Dundurcas: 8 visits, which were excellent as we completed the MIs and also the buried stones. Overlooking the Spey this churchyard was a delightful site to work in. These were published in one volume.

Dyke: Research on-going.

Elgin Cathedral: 3 visits which many of you will be saying, 'are they still at it?' These were for checking purposes. We are still on track to publish the first volume of MIs in the spring.

Forres (Cluny): Over 1600 tombstones at this cemetery have been recorded by our member Ann Gerrie, but checking and editing have still to be completed.

Kinloss Abbey: 1 visit so far to allow us to survey and record mainly flat tombstones which members of Kinloss Abbey Trust had cleaned. Our plan is to start recording here in earnest about April.

Lossiemouth: 2 visits which was on such a cold day that we had to stop early. This is still being used as a stand by for training purposes.

Macallan: 1 visit which was a simple churchyard to do with only 42 visible stones and 2 buried. This was published along with Dundurcas.

Three and a half years sounds a long time to be working at Elgin Cathedral where we made 68 visits, to clean and record. Within that time frame readers may be interested to know that we have also recorded and published Birnie (buried), Boharm, Chapeltown, Greyfriars, Dallas, Downan, Duffus (New), Dundurcas, Glenrinnnes, Macallan, Rafford, Tombae as well as Fochabers, Forres Keith, Mosstodloch, Mulben, and Tomnavoulin War Memorials. This also includes Alves, Kinneddar, and Birnie MIs which were re-done using our current recording and checking techniques.

Helen Mitchell (Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

Webmaster's Report

(The MBGRG Website)

During the current year, no major changes to the overall design of the website have been felt necessary. However changes instigated towards the end of the last reporting year have proved beneficial in terms of efficiency of site maintenance, and user functionality.

In particular, the interactive Google map has been updated regularly, allowing users to see at a glance, new sites being researched, existing sites where field work is completed or in progress, current publication status, and whether data for those sites is included in the on-line Photo/MI Ancestor Indices databases.

With regard to the on-line databases, the Group agreed that the timescale between MI publication and addition of the abstracted data to the website databases should be considerably reduced. Wherever possible, the databases are now updated one month after publication.

The 'Progress Report' page has similarly been updated regularly, and allows users to see more detailed progress status in tabular form, ordered by churchyard name.

MI/Photo Indices Databases

Abstracted data added during the current reporting year includes

The Forgotten Tombstones of Moray Vol 5, Alves Churchyard
The Forgotten Tombstones of Moray Vol 6, Birnie Churchyard

Buiternach Churchyard
Dallas Churchyard including the War Memorials at Dallas and Kellas
Downan Churchyard and Ballindalloch War Memorial
Duffus New Cemetery, Cemetery Extension and War Memorial
Dundurcas Churchyard, including buried stones
Glenrinnnes Churchyard and War Memorial
Macallan Churchyard, including buried stones

War Memorials at Fochabers, Keith, Mosstodloch, Mulben & Tomnavoulin.

The number of individual name entries now in the databases has risen from 17,220 in the last reporting year to some 24,030 at this time. It is hoped to add Chapeltown and Tombae Churchyard data during February, and data from Elgin Cathedral in June 2009, which should increase the individual count to some 30,000 names.

Miscellaneous Reports added

Newsletter, Issue 10 and 11
MBGRG Annual Report 2007 - 2008
Report on SAHS Council Meeting, Edinburgh, October 2008

Website Visitor Activity

It is always difficult to assess such activity accurately, but some general trends can be given using available software tools. Since the launch of the site in September 2005, there have been in excess of 20,000 hits to the MBGRG home page. Of these some 63% are from new visitors, with 37% being repeat visits to the site.

The majority of our site visitors (ca 75%) are from the UK. Throughout the year however, visitors have logged on from many other countries, mainly dominated by the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Response from visitors, assessed from private e-mail messages and public Guestbook entries continues to be positive, appreciative and very supportive of the work of the Group, and the usefulness of our website content.

The Guestbook currently holds almost 100 separate postings from visitors and MBGRG representatives, with some 25 of those being posted during the last 12 months. Due to update improvements in the Guestbook software, the old problem of the insertion of spam messages has now been eliminated.

In terms of general publicity for the work of the Group, the website seems to be effective. It is very difficult to assess what if any, financial impact the website has in terms of publication sales. Consideration has been given to setting up some sort of Pay-Pal payment method to permit site visitors to purchase items on-line, but for technical, financial and security reasons there are no plans to follow this route in the foreseeable future.

Lindsay Robertson (Webmaster)

Publicity Report

The past year has brought some good publicity for the MBGRG. The completing of research for Elgin Cathedral at the beginning of May was covered in both the Press and Journal and the Northern Scot with photographs. The publications of the Group's books continue to be covered in the Northern Scot. September was a key publicity event for the Group when an information day was held at Birnie Kirk coinciding with the Birnie Dig Open Day. This gained good coverage in the Press and Journal, and gave the Group the opportunity to engage with people going to and from the Birnie

Dig. This successful day resulted in the Group gaining new members, as well as a Latin translator, so consideration should be given to a repeat of this event this year. Future planned work at Kinloss Abbey may provide further opportunities for gaining publicity as will the launch of the Cathedral book.

You can search the archives of the Northern Scot and Press and Journal by going to their websites and typing in Moray Burial Ground into the search box. The photos sale link on the Press and Journal site allows you to view a selection of photos that have been taken of the Group for the various newspaper articles.

Stephen Leitch (Publicity Manager)

Fundraising Report

Discussion took place at a committee meeting in early 2008 around the cost of publication of the Elgin Cathedral Book. The amount of information, photographs and drawings collected at this site meant that it would be a substantial book in size and cost of publication.

I volunteered my services as a fundraiser and this was accepted by the committee. The route I took was to write to local and national companies, individuals and trusts, and an appeal was printed in the November 2008 newsletter.

Unfortunately not being a charity, we did not meet the criteria for many of the trusts but were successful in receiving donations to date of £1,633 mostly from local individuals and business. This includes funds which the Group received during the previous financial year.

The names of those who have given donations towards this project will be acknowledged in the book when it is published.

Due to the economic climate we find ourselves in, I cannot see us receiving any more donations for this particular project, but if you know of anyone who would like to donate, the group would love to hear from them.

Ruth McIntosh (Group Fundraiser)