

**THE MORAY
BURIAL GROUND
RESEARCH GROUP**



ANNUAL REPORT
2010 - 2011

The Committee of 2010-2011

Hon. President
Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Field Co-ordinator
Ordinary Member
Ordinary Member

Betty E. Willsher, M.B.E.
Keith L Mitchell, FSA Scot
Bruce B Bishop, FSA Scot
Irene Black
Helen Mitchell, FSA Scot
Moira Windwick
Stephen Leitch

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Committee Appointments Held During 2010-2011

Auditor
Fundraiser
Historical Research Co-ordinator
Minute Secretary
Newsletter Editor
Publicity Manager
Webmaster

William Windwick
Ruth McIntosh
Bruce B Bishop FSA Scot
Ruth McIntosh
Derek Page
Stephen Leitch
Lindsay Robertson FSA Scot



Mary, Ruth and Margaret hard at work recording in Rothes old Churchyard

Chairman's Report

Although our publication list for the year has been limited to only two books, 'Monumental Inscriptions' at St Peter's Duffus, and Kinloss Abbey, both volumes have been selling well. Indeed the Kinloss book might be described as a runaway success, at least initially. At the beginning of January the group held a very successful book launch at the Falconer Museum in Forres, where sales got off to a really flying start. We had several group members present, as well as from the Kinloss Abbey Trust. Visitors included Group Captain J J Johnston from RAF Kinloss. This resulted in a full page article in the Forres Gazette, while the Northern Scot included a pre-launch illustrated report. So a big vote of thanks to all concerned, including Liz and other staff members at the museum who were so helpful in making the launch the success it was! Some may think our publication strategy is very slow, but it is to be hoped that our 'nitpicking' efforts to achieve accurate transcriptions, finally end up with results that in the main can be relied upon by family historians on a world-wide basis.

Our recording work has continued apace, mainly in Elgin New Cemetery, Dyke, Rathven and Rothes. Recording at both Dyke and Rothes have been completed and will probably be next in line for publication. One significant problem occurred over the Christmas period when computer hard-drive problems have potentially meant the loss of many thousands of group photographs, which are liable to create a substantial workload to redo, or recover. A forceful warning to all members who use computers for family research projects – make sure all your files are properly backed up, and that your backup drives have the capacity to hold all the files you require them to store.

As many members will already be aware, this year sees a significant change at Committee level. Basically due to the fact that our Secretary, Bruce Bishop, is transferring his area allegiance from Moray to a more southerly part of the country, he is standing down from his post at the AGM. Bruce has been a stalwart supporter of our group from the beginning, indeed he is one of our Founder Members, known affectionately as one of the "Three Musketeers." He has laboured long and hard on behalf of the group, quite often in many ways unknown to most other members. So on behalf of the rest of the Committee and the group as a whole, I would like to thank Bruce for all his tireless efforts on our behalf, and wish him all success for the future. Thankfully we have been able to encourage Bruce to remain as Historical Research Co-ordinator, and I am sure he will continue to fulfill that post admirably as he always has done in the past.

Speaking of thanks, the group owes a considerable debt of gratitude to Ruth for organizing an extremely profitable charity sale in January at Lossiemouth. The fact that some £500 was earned for group funds is in large measure due to her sterling efforts. Of course we should not forget all the other helpers, in particular Janet Campbell who greatly assisted by going out to the shop nearly every day. Also thanks to Ruth's son for helping with transport and of course all those in the group who donated items for sale. I am sure there are at least one or two attic rafters that are now heaving a sigh of relief. Ours in particular!!!

Filming of our activities still goes on at several levels with Derek and his video camera, but there is still much to do before a DVD is finally produced. Last year, John Crawford of the Buckie & District Fishing Heritage Centre, visited Rathven Churchyard with his filming equipment, and

took a number of clips of group members at work demonstrating a number of the recording skills used to transcribe memorial inscriptions. After the winter ice and snow disappeared, John Thomson Chairman of the Lossiemouth Fisheries & Community Museum very kindly opened up the centre so that Helen and I might record all the plaques in the Memorial Room, dedicated to local people who have lost their lives at sea. This information, along with the Lossiemouth War Memorial will feature in our forthcoming book on Lossiemouth Cemetery.

Recently Helen and I were invited to RAF Lossiemouth to view the overall condition of the old Drainie Churchyard. Squadron Leader Duffy is interested in promoting his project to clean and maintain the tombstones in as good condition as possible, as well as keeping it properly maintained in the future. Later this year he intends to organize a significant squad of RAF personnel to clean the stones, and has asked us to assist with suitable advice.

Secretary's Report

Publication sales, in common with those of most other family and local history groups, have not been as good over the past year, but having said that the response to the new Kinloss Abbey publication was excellent, and we needed a reprint within a few weeks. All of our existing publications continue to be sold either by mail order, via the website, or through various retail outlets including Yeadons of Elgin, ANESFHS, The Scottish Genealogy Society, Grantown-on-Spey Bookshop, Nairn Bookshop and the Buckie Fishing Heritage Centre.

The Secretary has continued, on behalf of SAFHS (of which MBGRG is a member), to attend meetings of the ScotlandsPeople User Group, the National Archives of Scotland Executive Group, the National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland, Moray Connections, and several other bodies involved with burial ground research and family history in general. He has also attended meetings of the VisitScotland Ancestral Tourism Steering Group, which has been established to provide a structural plan for Homecoming 2014.

Contacts have been maintained with the Cemetery Manager of Moray Council, with Historic Scotland and with the RCAHMS. Now that Scheduled Monument Consent for work at Mortlach has been discussed and agreed in principle with HS, it is unlikely that they will have any further input into the work of MBGRG, as there are no other Scheduled Sites on our programme of work. They do, however, always keep a watching brief over all research groups, and are there in the background to provide advice, and in some cases, to provide criticism.

West Register House in Edinburgh will close permanently on 25th February, and although some items will be available in the main NAS building, other items held at Thomas Thomson House will only be produced by appointment. The National Archives of Scotland, General Register Office Scotland and the ScotlandsPeople Centre will merge on 1st April under the new name of 'National Archives and Registration Scotland'. Users should see little difference in the service provided. Fees for Register House also increase on 1st April, a day ticket will be £15, quarterly £490, and an annual seat £1450. There are proposals for weekend opening, not yet finalised, at a charge of £30 per day, and there is also discussion regarding evening opening.

It has recently been revealed that as part of the Local Council cuts, the headstone stabilisation project will be discontinued, which will save the Moray Council some £20,000 per annum. Unstable tombstones will be removed to rest against the boundary walls of the site, or will be laid flat. Representations have been made to ensure that in either case the face of the stone will remain visible wherever possible. There will continue to be a programme of seeding or turfing of any clear area around tombstones, to reduce maintenance costs, and the grass will be cut at even less frequent intervals, maybe as little as twice a year. This will also provide substantial cost benefits to the council. The Council have been made aware yet again of the damage which can be caused by mowing or strimming too close to tombstones.

Various communications have been received during the year both by post and email, which have given some indication of the sites for which family historians are thirsting for information. 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 high praise for the work which the group is undertaking.

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. Other publications such as the *Forres Gazette*, the *Banffshire Herald* and the *Knock News* also have an interest in the work of the group when it affects their own readership area.

Bruce B Bishop (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report

At the end of December we had a total membership of 55 as against 56 for last year, and 1 corporate group membership which remained the same. This generated an income of £657.41 in subscriptions, an increase of £76.41 from the previous year, though £43.41 of this is prepayments for 2011/12. It is good to note that our membership is remaining steady.

Our publishing costs for the year came to £1,378.91. This was for the reprinting of previous publications and the first issue of the St. Ninian's Chapelford, St. Peter's Duffus and Kinloss Abbey MIs. Our total income to the end of December from the sale of the publications came to £1,403.35 and we had stock in hand to the value of £1,368.85. Outstanding income from the sale of publications at that date amounted to £338.48. Though we printed the Kinloss Abbey MIs in the year to December 2010, the book launch did not take place until January 2011 so all income from this will be in the current year.

We have received a total of £368.37 in donations over the year. Janet (Campbell), has raised £17 from car boot sales and Mary Macdonald's donation of stamps etc has raised £85.00 to date with more to come. The sale of photographs generated £145.29; a further £44.65 came from the recycling of cartridges and £1.24 from bank interest.

The above income includes publication, photo sales and donations etc. through PayPal to the value of £200.44. Please see the Webmaster's Report for further information.

Other expenditure during the year included, website £93.41; insurance £167.30; subscription to SAFHS £40.00; printing (of newsletter), travel (Edinburgh SAFHS meetings), telephone, postage and stationery £649.40; Nairn Family History Fair £24.00; equipment £126.14 and £24.10 for hire of room for AGM. The committee also decided that due to the increase in fuel costs, £350.00 would be distributed to members using their cars for site visits over the period from April to September. Other group expenses came to £46.88.

As at 31st December 2010, we had a total of £2,411.33 in the bank, £100.45 in our PayPal account and £1.43 in petty cash.

Irene Black (Treasurer)

Historical Research Co-ordinator's Report

Historical and archival research has been completed for all of the sites which have been recorded during the past year, including St Peter's at Duffus and Kinloss Abbey. Archival research into St Lawrence's Church in Forres, Edinkillie, Knockando, Rothes and the burial grounds in the vicinity of Tomintoul is nearing completion, but research into the churchyards of Aberlour and Mortlach is still throwing up unexpected sources of information. 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.

Work has started at Moy Churchyard, and this private site has been cleared sufficiently to allow an initial plan to be drawn. More intensive historical research on this site is now under way in the National Archives of Scotland and the National Library, and it is interesting to note that locally there is very little information about this site as it seems to be one of the least-known sites in Moray.

With the book on Kinloss Abbey now completed, attention turns to Lossiemouth New Cemetery, the next publication in the pipeline. This should be followed by Rothes and later by Forres Clunyhill, although the plans for Clunyhill Cemetery at Forres are still causing problems from a presentational point of view, and this is being worked on. Work also continues on Dyke, Knockando, Rathven, and various other sites.

Many publications have now been produced by the group. In the "Forgotten Tombstones" series, which records the buried or inaccessible tombstones, there are now Dipple, Essil, Kirkhill, Old Drainie Churchyard on RAF Lossiemouth, Bellie, Kinneddar, Burghead, Lhanbryde, Urquhart, Spynie, Alves and Birnie. In the "Monumental Inscriptions" series which records all visible tombstone inscriptions, there are now publications for Bellie Churchyard and New Cemetery, Elgin Cathedral, 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, Chapeltown R.C. Churchyard, Tombae R.C. Churchyard, St Ninian's at Chapelford, St Peter's at Duffus and

Kinloss Abbey. There are also unpublished surveys of the memorials in Greyfriars Convent in Elgin, and at the burial ground on the Knock of Alves.

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. Much of the recording work for these publications was done by members of the Moray Burial Ground Research Group.

All members of the group are to be congratulated on the vast amount of information which they continue to provide for Genealogists and Family Historians researching their Scottish roots.

Bruce B Bishop (Historical Research Co-ordinator)

Fieldwork Co-ordinator's Report

Another 12 months have gone by with our visits being about the same as last year, which surprised me considerably when I tallied up the outings. The weather and holidays seemed to be against us so often when planning.

Kinloss had three visits to complete the work ready for publication. See other reports about launch of book.

Elgin (west) has seen us visit five times to record and one day photos only. It is progressing slowly.

Dyke has had four visits plus a photo session. John & Connie have been recording the new section. The old part revealed some interesting buried stones with the oldest dating to 1682.

Roths saw us make nine visits to record all three parts including the buried stones. The checking of churchyard inscriptions with photos is complete. The church and War Memorial have still to be completed.

Knockando was our summer outing and the weather held up all day until our way home after a delicious meal at Delnashaugh Hotel. We have three buried stones still to uncover and approximately less than 10% of the inscriptions to complete.

Lossiemouth is in the process of checking for publication, but with over 1600 tombstones, it is taking time. We hope to have the book in publication by the spring. Included in this series will be the Fishery Museum plaques along with the War Memorial.

Clunyhill is still waiting for the plan to be completed.

Rathven has had five visits to date. It is our latest churchyard to see the group in full swing. About 70% of the recording is completed and probes have proved that some buried stones remain to be uncovered.

Moy was visited three times during January to assist with clearing vegetation. It is hoped to carry out recording work at this site later in the year, but as yet there are no fixed dates. It should be noted that access to the old churchyard is completely private, so if you wish to visit here you should in the first instance contact me to arrange how and when to go about this.

During the year Keith and I spent an afternoon at Gordonstoun Open Day giving advice to visitors on some of the older inscriptions at the Michael Kirk.

Nairn Family Fair saw the group with two tables, including our books for sale on one, while the other had our "Graveyard Experience." One typical question at fairs tends to be "have you done such and such a cemetery, and invariably it turns out to be one that we have not recorded as yet.

To date no final decision has been made about the summer outing this year, but we will let you know about this as soon as possible.

Helen Mitchell (Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

Webmaster's Report (The MBGRG Website)

Website maintenance is on-going, and regular attention is paid to updating the relevant pages, to reflect the field activities, and publication progress of the Group, e.g. Churchyard Map, Research Progress, Latest News, Publications, etc. The Annual Report for 2009 – 2010 and Issues 14/15 of the MBGRG Newsletter have been added to the site.

MI/Photo Index Database Additions:

MI abstract records from the following Churchyards and Cemeteries, have been added to the on-line database during the current reporting period, resulting in some 34,500 individuals now being indexed.

Altyre (Pre Publication)	Dallas Churchyard (Buried Stones)
Kinloss Abbey Cemetery	Kinloss Abbey Churchyard
St. Peter's (Buckie)	St. Peter's (Duffus) including Buried Stones
St. Gregory's (Preshome)	St. Ninian's (Chapelford)

Work has continued, with regards to abstraction of data for future addition to the databases, including checking procedures, and the preparation of computer generated publication indices. Sites in this 'in-progress' category are Lossiemouth, including the Fisheries Museum Plaques and the War Memorial, Rothes Churchyard and Cemetery, Dyke Churchyard, and Clunyhill (Forres).

MBGRG PayPal Payment Centre

At the last AGM, it was agreed that an on-line payment facility could be of benefit, and this was instigated on April 19th 2010. Many thanks to those Group Members and friends, who assisted with the initial testing phases, regarding payment types, refunds etc.

Visitors to the website, now have access to a no-obligation free 'Quotation Request Form' where they can request total costs for MI transcripts, photographs or publications, and include any special delivery instructions or request assistance. On completion, the Form is automatically mailed to me, where it is checked, and given a unique MBGRG identifier.

The request is then forwarded to HQ in Elgin, where total cost (including postage, packaging, currency conversion fees where appropriate) are calculated. Total cost is then emailed to the customer.

If happy with the Quotation, he/she can go to our PayPal Payment Centre, enter the unique reference number, and make payment using their own PayPal account, or by credit or debit card. Once confirmation of payment is received, orders are dispatched by email or snail mail, as appropriate, from Elgin.

Although responsible for setting up this facility, it should be noted that most of the day-to-day work involved in costing, packaging, posting, emailing and accounting etc, is handled by Keith, Helen, Ruth and Irene.

Since April, their efforts have resulted in some £320 (net) being added to our funds from on-line sales.

Lindsay Robertson (Webmaster)

Publicity Report

2010-11 produced numerous opportunities for publicity due to the commencement of recording on new sites and the publication of new books. Publicity started in March with the beginning of work at the new Elgin cemetery (west section), with an article and photo featured in the Press and Journal (22/3/10). The Banffshire Advertiser featured an article and photograph of the group starting work at Rathven, with a detailed description of the processes and methodology the group use when recording in churchyards (10/08/10).

The launch of the Kinloss Abbey monumental inscription book on the 7th January 2011 at the Falconer Museum in Forres did prove a successful event, despite problems getting advanced notice of the event into newspapers. Targeted local publicity in and around Forres including posters and emailing information to the Friends of the Falconer Museum, helped to attract 30 people to the launch, and resulted in excellent book sales. The Northern Scot did put in an article and photo (7/1/11), and the Forres Gazette, who attended the launch, also produced a whole page article and several photos of the launch of the Kinloss book and the work of the group (26/1/11).

Both these articles prompted further book sale enquiries, and also provided further general publicity for the work of the group.

With three books already in preparation for publication in 2011 there will be further opportunities for publicity. Through using Moray wide publicity in newspapers and targeting local outlets for specific publications – heritage groups, posters in local shops, local papers etc, this will allow the opportunity to raise the profile of the work of the group throughout Moray.

Stephen Leitch (Publicity Manager)

Fundraising

During the last year I used the Funder finder package at MVSO to identify Trusts and Companies to write to appealing for funds. Moray Firth Charitable Trust, The Albert Hunt Trust, N.S. MacFarlane Trust, David Gordon Memorial Trust, Kintore Charitable Trust were some of those approached.

This had no success as we do not fit neatly into their categories for distributing their funds.

At the end of the last AGM we were very grateful to receive a cheque for £250 from Nick Hide and family from London.

In October we held a stamp night at Keith and Helen's home. We had a substantial amount of stamps, many coming from member Mary McDonald's own collection. To date £85 has been made from that night, and there are two large boxes of stamps and associated material at the Auctioneers in Edinburgh awaiting inclusion in a sale, which were delivered there a few weeks ago.

Thanks must go to Helen and Keith for allowing us the use of their home. I would hope that the stamps continue coming in, as it is an enjoyable way of making some money.

In January £501-15p was raised from running a Charity shop in Lossiemouth. Thanks must go to all who helped in any way with donations or help, but special thanks must be given to member Janet Campbell for all her support and her clottie dumplings!

Ruth McIntosh (Fundraiser)

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