

**THE MORAY BURIAL GROUND
RESEARCH GROUP**

Newsletter

Fra Birt To Graif



Na Rest We Haif - 1571

Issue 13 - - - November 2009

(Currently published twice a year)

Editor's Note by Derek C Page

Welcome to another edition of the MBGRG newsletter, and there are changes afoot! Yes, Keith has convinced me to take on the role of editor of our fine publication. For those of you who I've not yet met, I joined the group along with my Mum, Penny, last year after the group's demonstration at Birnie. Like many others, we were along for the archaeological dig there and found these mad people digging graves up! Well, we just had to join really!

I have a great interest in history and have also been dabbling with our family tree over the last few years, turning up some interesting facts (We still can't get over the fact that one of our ancestors was 'transported' to Australia for sheep stealing near Birmingham!)

I would just like to express my thanks to both Keith and Alan for all of their work producing the newsletter so far, and I will endeavor to keep the flag flying. If you have any suggestions or submissions for future editions, please send them through.

Anyway, it's certainly been a busy few months since the last newsletter, so grab a cuppa and enjoy.....

It is with much regret that we report the passing of member Ronald Butler, on 31st October at Dr Gray's Hospital after a short illness. Both Ronald and Jeanne have been MBGRG members for several years, and he will be greatly missed by all those who worked along side him in our historical investigations. On behalf of the group and its members, we extend our sincere sympathies to Jeanne and her family at this sad time.

Progress & Plans for the Future - (by Keith Mitchell – Chairman)

Since the last issue of the Newsletter, we have successfully completed our MI recording at St Peter's (Duffus) and Kinloss Abbey, while the checking process at Clunyhill, Forres – a massive task in itself – is heading towards completion. Transcriptions have started at Clovenside, the modern public cemetery in Forres, while the extensive municipal burial ground at Lossiemouth Cemetery is proving to be a very long project indeed. In respect of the work undertaken at Kinloss, the cleaning and recording process was undertaken along with members of the Kinloss Abbey Trust, and their assistance has been greatly appreciated.

From the time our book on Elgin Cathedral MIs came out in April, the group has unfortunately not been in a position to publish anything else, but it is hoped to redress this situation very soon with a 2nd edition of our Dallas MI booklet, which will contain all the buried tombstones we uncovered there. Similarly we hope to publish shortly the results of our St Ninian's "Summer Outing" project, which will also contain information on St Gregory's at Preshome, as well as the inscriptions recorded at St Peter's R.C. Church, Buckie. The latter items were recently recorded by Helen and yours truly, thanks to the valuable assistance of Re. Fr. Gerry Livingstone. After the recording difficulties encountered at St Peter's (Duffus), we are actively considering what projects the Group should be looking to in the immediate future.



Memorial at St Ninian's to R.C. clergy

Having narrowed the field, the following projects seem most likely. We have thought about Rothes, with a possible buried tombstone project there, as well as at Aberlour and Mortlach Churchyard in Dufftown. A couple of weeks ago we had a very successful recording session at Rothes. This site contains quite a variety of unusual tombstones, and the large number covered in black residue from the adjacent distillery will pose something of a recording problem next year. Also under consideration is the search for buried tombstones at Dyke and Moy churchyard. However, as this is an active parish church, any visits there will most likely have to be mid-week.

Recently four Family History fairs were held in the area to celebrate the "Homecoming" one in Keith, one in Lossiemouth Library, one in Elgin Town Hall and the last in Forres. So far these events were on the whole successful from the group's point of view, bringing in at least two new members. On three of these occasions Derek's new "Graveyard Experience" was on trial and appeared to capture the interest of at least some of the younger visitors which was good to see! For those of you who have not seen this "hands on" tombstone, this is a fold away

board which has a 17th century tombstone inscription and Emblems of Mortality carved into its surface.

Lastly, I would like to welcome Derek Page to the post of MBGRG Newsletter Editor. Although Derek and his mother Penny are fairly recent members, their continuing enthusiasm towards Group activities is most welcome. Therefore from now on please send all contributions directly to him. Please also note that for the present, the Editor's email address on the website *Contacts Page* remains the same. I would also like to take the opportunity of thanking Alan Wills as Assistant Editor for his timely assistance during the production of the last two issues.

Now to the *hand's-on* side of the group - (by Helen Mitchell - Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

Time to report on our activities once again. Due to the 'Homecoming' events we have had a few extra days out. As to churchyards we have been to Kinloss six times and completed all the recording with the help of members of the Kinloss Abbey Trust. St. Peter's in Duffus has been completed except for rechecks. This churchyard was quite a challenge when trying to find a number for the appropriate

stone. When it was previously recorded in 1978 many of the stones were marked as illegible, with a few not given a number at all. By the time Bruce and I tackled numbering a new plan we had some extra names to go by, and have added some extra stones and re-aligned the rows on the plan. As to the photo numbering that is another story which I will not go into! Forres (Clunyhill) has really only been for photography and checks but the numbering system of the stones there is a nightmare, and new plans have still to be drawn up. One group outing to Clunyhill resulted in "rain stopped play." Lossiemouth is slowly being recorded with two visits lately. Our summer outing was a success as usual with the whole churchyard of St Ninian's at Braes of Enzie being completed on one day. Keith and I have been back to recheck and re-photo but combined it with an interesting visit to St. Peter's RC Church in Buckie to record, also two wall plaques in Preshome Church. Of course the finale of our outing was high tea at Christies which I think was enjoyed by all. We seem to have more people on our summer outings than at other times. Is this because the date is set in advance, or the fact we meet up at the end to socialise and eat in comfort instead of standing around tombstones? Any ideas for next year, or how do you feel about two outings? One visit, with permission from the landlord, was to Altyre Church near Forres, which is a ruin, but Bruce, Bill, Stephen, Keith and I set off to do the needful. Bill phoned me to say it was raining in Forres but it was dry in Elgin so off we set. Shortly after we arrived and had walked to the church, yes, it rained, and trying to draw, clean and record under umbrellas is not easy as many of you know. Determined as we were, we finished the work. There are only seven stones there but it is another burial site off the list of 144 for Moray.



Members of the MAD Club after tombstone recording work at Altyre near Forres

The Friends of Bellie Open Day proved a success as usual with people interested in two buried stones which were uncovered for the occasion. Thanks to our members who helped, also to the 'Friends' for support and providing a gazebo for the publication table. Elgin Cathedral was a two day event and thanks again to members who helped. At Lossiemouth History Fair we were kept busy answering questions. We did however gain one new member. Elgin Family History Fair kept us chatting all day with various family trees spread out on the table. We were unable to fill in information on a stone at Kinloss due to it being damaged. Lo and behold one gentleman asked about family buried at Kinloss and as I brought it up on computer he, the great grandson, brought out the family tree and filled in the appropriate dates for us. This is what makes our recording worth while. We gained two new members. Thanks for the support of members who came along and helped out. Of course we also had our 'Tombstone Experience' which gave an insight into the uncovering of stones. This was a board which represented a carved flat stone, with the text round the outside and Emblems of Mortality in the centre. The idea being that people would lift a piece of turf (foam, backed with green felt) to uncover buried tombstone information and continue until all is revealed. This is to show how we go about recording buried stones. Many thanks to Derek Page for doing the hard work and bringing Keith's idea to fruition.

At the Forres Family History Fair on the 7th November, we were kept busy with quite a bit of interest shown in our activities. We gained three new members. Hurray!



Above : MBGRG 2nd summer outing to St Ninian's, Braes of Enzie : Members hard at work



Right : The new MBGRG 'Gravestone Experience' in action at Lossiemouth Town Hall.

MBGRG Website - (by **Lindsay Robertson** – Webmaster)

There have been only minor visible additions, and updates to the website, since the last Newsletter was published, but behind the scenes, a fair amount of work has been going on. Unfortunately, MBGRG did not escape the attention of the 'hacker' community, based in China, and the entire website was badly compromised in June. This was spotted, and kindly reported to me very quickly, by John Milne, from Kinross. The site was down for a few days, as every page had to be scanned, and the illegal code added by the hackers removed, before re-installing the entire site. Apologies for any inconvenience this downtime caused were subsequently posted on the site. It was my suggestion, that the server that hosts our website had been compromised, but this was, not surprisingly denied by our hosting company, who suggested that our ftp username/password had been obtained by the hackers. I remain unconvinced!

Nothing new has been added to the MI/Photo Indices Databases since the inclusion of the abstracted data from Elgin Cathedral in May 2009. However Senior Management at Elgin HQ, have been cracking the whip (so what's new?), and a large amount of data has been, and continues to be processed. By the time this Newsletter is published, I estimate that there will be in the order of a further 5,000 new names, ready to be posted to the on-line databases, following publication of the relevant MI booklets. This includes in particular, on-going data processing from the extensive Churchyard at Cluny Hill (Forres), St Peter's (Duffus), Kinloss Abbey, and St Ninian's (Chapelford). Hopefully the latter, will be published before the year is out, and should be added to the on-line database in January 2010.

A new 'site visitor' tracking system has been instigated, (Webmaster use only) and this is proving very helpful in determining which of our web pages are most visited, global distribution of our visitors, and if they accessed our website directly, or via a link from other sites. The statistics show that our visitors are predominantly from the UK, USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Average figures, suggest we typically have about 1,300 page downloads, 40 new visitors and 10 returning visitors per week.

View from a long distance researcher - (Nick Hide of London - Member)

I have only recently joined the MBGRG. My interest has been in following up MIs with the name Davidson as a researcher for the Clan Davidson Association. www.clandavidson.org.uk

I have witnessed the high quality research work in the field during a chance meeting with the team at St Peter's Duffus in the summer. I have also been eagerly picking up leads from the published booklets, and other information available from Keith & Helen. The work of the MBGRG is of great importance to researchers like myself who can only periodically visit Moray.

Our own Clan Davidson Association archives have been far too thin on Morayshire history for far too long. This situation is now rapidly changing. Thank goodness, I joined.

Members Gordon and Irene with Nick Hide of the Clan Davidson Association inspecting a very worn Davidson Table stone at St Peter's, Duffus



A History of the Catholic Churches of the Enzie (by Bruce B Bishop – MBGRG Secretary)

The Roman Catholic Chapel of St Ninian at Chapelford [First Chapel ca 1300 to ca 1568]

[Second Chapel 1688 to 1728]

The original church was founded in pre-Reformation times, and was a chapel-of-ease depending on the Priory of Urquhart. As the priory was disbanded in 1454, and the monks sent to Pluscarden as a punishment for their licentious way of life, it is obvious that the Chapel of St Ninian was in existence well before this date. At the time of the Reformation both the Chapel at Bellie and the Chapel of St Ninian were served by the same incumbent, but shortly after 1560, when the Chapel at Bellie was enlarged into a church, the one at Chapelford was allowed to fall into decay. In about 1687 or 1688 the chapel of St Ninian was repaired and enlarged by the Roman Catholics, and was described as "It is

weel sclated and hath a large arch on every side by which they designed it to be in the form of a cross”¹ This stood on the site of the earlier chapel. A report in 1688 states that “In the midst of the country ... there is a large chapel building, capable to contain 1000 persons, on the old found[ations] of St Ninian’s Chapel”. It was described as being 80ft long and 19ft wide, plus the two side chapels making the form of a cross. It came into use in September 1688, and was in use for just under 40 years.

In 1725 the Duke of Gordon refused to allow the local Presbyterian minister and his followers to worship in the chapel, but they broke in and performed services there on that day anyway, and also again the next week, leading to “a number of scuffles”. When the Duke died in 1728, the last use to which the chapel was put to was for the laying of his body in state there. Following this the church was desecrated by soldiers, and was abandoned by the Catholics. After the events of the Rebellion of 1745 a new, more anonymous place of worship was built at Tynet, which continued to bear the dedication to St Ninian.

The removal of the slates from the roof of the now derelict chapel in 1787 hastened the total ruin of the building, and in due course the effects of nature, and the “quarrying” of the local farmers, meant that no trace was left of the old chapel except the keystone from above the door.

By 1870 there was no trace of the chapel building, but the graveyard continued in use. In the Northeast corner is a mausoleum for Roman Catholic priests, and inserted above the door in the gable is a stone inscribed IHS, with a Latin cross above the H, and the date 1687 below the letters. This is the keystone from the old chapel, which was discovered by workmen when they were taking down the pillars of the entrance to the graveyard in 1883, to build the new entrance steps.

In the extended southern part of the graveyard is a modern private chapel known as the Dawson Mausoleum, designed by Reginald Fairlie in 1939. St Ninian’s at Chapelford is the only one of the Catholic Chapels or Churches to have a burial ground, although there are memorial tablets in the Church at Preshome.

The Catholic Chapel in the Barn of the Laird of Tynet [1728 to 1746]

After the loss of the Chapel of St Ninian at Chapelford in 1728, the Catholics of Bellie parish would gather for mass whenever possible in the barn of the Laird of Tynet, which was enlarged by the congregation and remained in use until, like many other Catholic Chapels, it was gutted by the English soldiers returning from Culloden in 1746.

The Roman Catholic Chapel of St Ninian at Tynet [1755 to 1790]

This simple long, low, single storey building was the first Roman Catholic “church” to be built in Scotland after the Reformation, and replaced the earlier church sited in St Ninian’s burial ground at Chapelford which had been desecrated by protestants in 1725 and by soldiers in 1728.

In 1755 the Laird of Tynet built an addition to the dwelling of a “poor woman” as a “cot for sheep”, to form as inconspicuous place of worship as can be imagined for the use of the congregation. Until the building of this chapel the Catholic Mass had been celebrated in barns in the area, frequently at night, and the priest, Father Godsman, would travel the countryside disguised as a farmer.

¹ MacFarlane. W. 1906-1908. Geographical collections relating to Scotland. National Archives of Scotland.

The simple building with its regular pattern of windows was intended to look as much like a cottage as possible, with a plain doorway at the southwestern end. It was originally thatched to be more in keeping with its surroundings, but in 1787 it was enlarged and as much of the roof as possible was slated using the slates salvaged from the abandoned church at Chapelford, although even some 16 years later part of the roof was still thatched.

The Roman Catholic Church of St Gregory at Preshome [1790 to the present day]

In 1788 Father John Reid, the priest in charge of the eastern part of the Enzie, decided that it was now probably safe to build a new church. Being cautious, however, he chose a very inconspicuous site, away from the main roads or track ways, and on Whit Sunday 23rd May 1790 the first Catholic Church in Scotland since the rebellion which actually looked like a church was opened. The west façade is constructed in an Italian Baroque style, in direct contrast to the inconspicuous Chapel of St Ninian at Tynet. The Gable features a panel inscribed “DEO 1788” above the door. It was at Preshome that Bishop Kyle amassed his vast collection of books, letters and manuscripts which are now held in the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh. For many years the Catholics of Buckie were active members of Preshome (Catholic) Parish, but following the Act of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the pressure for a place of worship at Buckie grew stronger.

The Trades Hall Chapel, Buckie [1832 – 1857]

Three years after the passing of the Act of Catholic Emancipation the Trades Hall in Buckie was leased by the Catholic congregation as a place of worship. This paved the way for the eventual building of a new Catholic Church in Buckie.

St Peter’s Catholic Church, Buckie. Also known as “The Catholic Cathedral”. [1857 to the present day]

The design of this fine Gothic Church, with a west front which was reputed to be based on a scaled-down version of the original West front of Elgin Cathedral, is attributed to Bishop Kyle and a young architect, Alexander Ellis.

The foundations were laid in 1851, and, with Father Clapperton as the Parish Priest, St Peter’s was completed in 1857. On 7th August of that year the Banffshire Journal noted that “The new Catholic Cathedral at Buckie was opened by the Rt Rev Bishop Kyle assisted by Rev Wm Clapperton who was the first missionary therein”.

There are only two known burials within the church, those of Sir William Gordon, baronet of Letterfourie, and his brother. It was on the lands of this family that the church was built.

The church is noted for its unusually light interior and the beautiful marble work surrounding the High Altar. In 1991, during restoration work, two large paintings, though to be 19th century, were uncovered, one on either side of the Sanctuary. Having been painted over in the mid-20th century, these have now been carefully restored.²

² Further information on this church is available on www.scalan.co.uk/buckie.htm

Summer Outing at St Ninian's (part 2) – Photos by Keith Mitchell - Chairman



Lindsay carefully uncovering buried text



Important buried text at St Ninian's

SAFHS Council Meeting – (by Stephen Leitch – MBGRG Delegate)

Having taken over from Helen and Keith as the representative for the MBGRG to the council meeting of the Scottish Association of Family History Societies, I travelled down to Edinburgh on the 17th October to attend my first meeting. The meeting was shorter than expected and moved with swift efficiency, being chaired by Bruce Bishop.

While there was nothing specifically related to the work of the MBGRG, the meeting was a good opportunity to keep up to date with developments in the wider family history world. Issues ranged from an update on the amount of Scotland's People vouchers sold via the SAFHS (£17,000), dates for future SAFHS conferences (2010 being in Livingston hosted by West Lothian Family History Society) and the recent computer problems at the new Family History centre in Edinburgh. Of a local interest, the council was informed about a scheme to set up a Banff family History Archive/ Centre including involvement from Buckie Fishing Heritage. The next meeting will be on the 20th March 2010 in Edinburgh, and will encompass the groups AGM and next council meeting.

Stoned on holiday – (by Stephen Leitch – Publicity Manager)

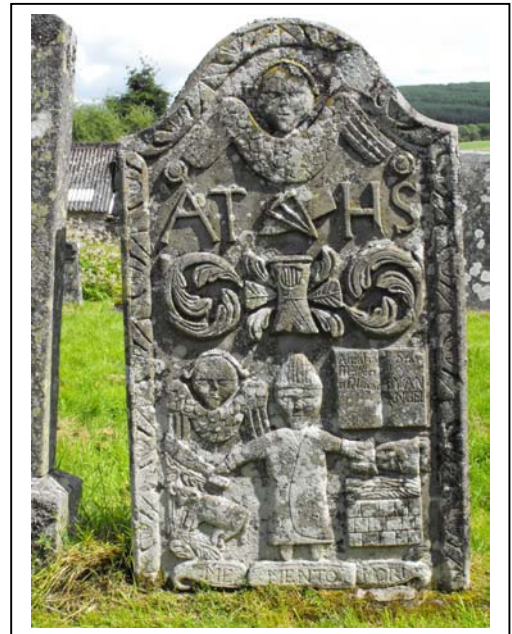
While on holiday in the summer to Perthshire, I went exploring some of the churches and chapels in the area and discovered the mediaeval St. Mary's Church just out side Aberfeldy.

This church tucked away behind a farm looks like an old barn from the outside. The church and churchyard though contain two very special features. The roof of the church is beautifully painted c. 1540, and out side in the churchyard is an amazing Abraham and Isaac stone. These two features are a rare find in any Scottish church, and make this church well worth visiting.

Painted roof feature



The Abraham and Isaac stone



Some Guestbook Entries

John di Folco, Scotland, UK

I was absolutely delighted to read in your Newsletter, November 2008 of the sterling work your group is doing in the area I partially covered in the article I wrote for the PSAS, vol XCIX, 1966-67, in particular the attention you are paying to St Peter's Kirk.

It is immensely gratifying that MBGRG is putting such a welcome and energetic effort into cleaning and updating these distinctive monuments. They are a particularly fine group in the wider Scottish context, fully deserving the attention you are giving them. I wish you every success.

Heather M Becket, New Brunswick, Canada

I was really pleased to find this site, as I research from Canada, and right away I found the McLeod ancestors I was looking for. Thank you to all the Volunteers that make this possible for all of us, especially those who only dream of ever being able to visit these places in person.

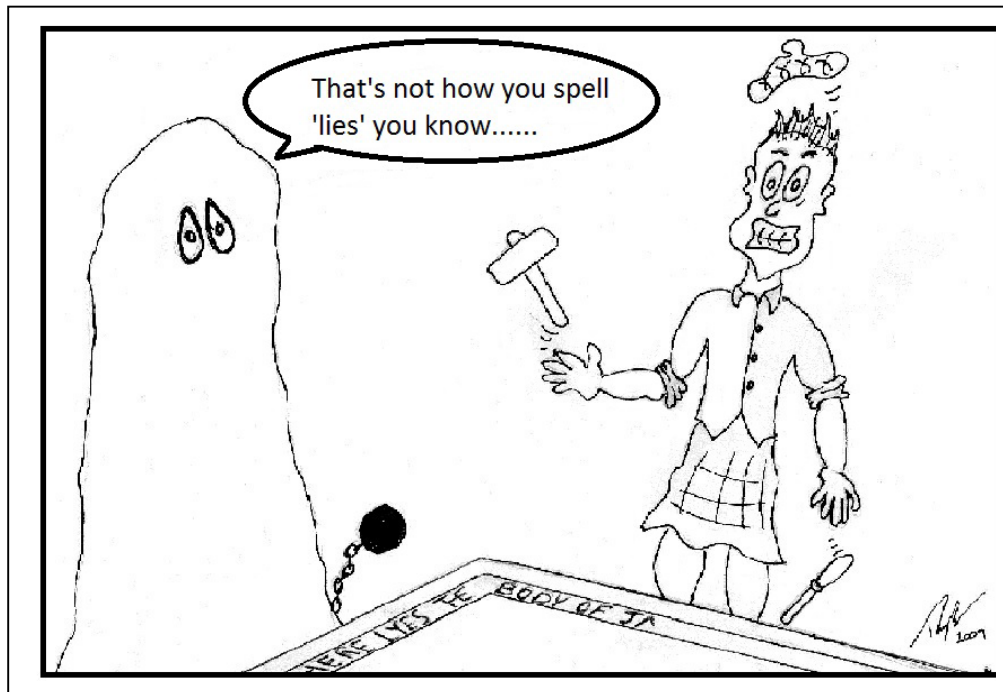
Donna Innes, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

Just a note to thank you for this wonderful website that enabled me to connect with a relative that confirmed my relatives are buried at Glenrinnies.

Valerie Gow, Taurang, New Zealand

Hello and thanks for a great site for us to research. I have ancestors John Gow, Jessie Gow, Mary Scott Gow/Walker on stone No 0997, from Elgin Cathedral.

The lighter side – by Derek Page



Christmas Party (Full Members Only)

16th January 2010 7.15pm - The usual place

Please let Helen know if you will be attending so that seating and food can be arranged.



Editor : Derek C Page, 7 Monaghty Cottages, Alves, Forres, Moray IV36 2RA
Tel: 01343-850572 & E-mail address: editor@mbgrg.org