

# Newsletter

Fra Birt To Graif



Na Rest We Haif - 1571

Issue 16 -- July 2011

(Currently published twice a year)

## Editor's Note by Derek C Page

Welcome to another edition of the group's newsletter. I'm afraid we're a little behind again this issue, but I'm sure you'll agree it was worth the wait as we have some interesting updates and articles for you. Although the Summer is failing to materialize properly up here in Scotland, we've still managed quite a few outings so far this year and a lot of work has been completed on various sites in the area. Enjoy the issue, and if you have anything you would like to put in the next edition, please forward it through to me in the next couple of months. Thanks  
Derek

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## **A Progress Report** (by Keith Mitchell - Chairman)

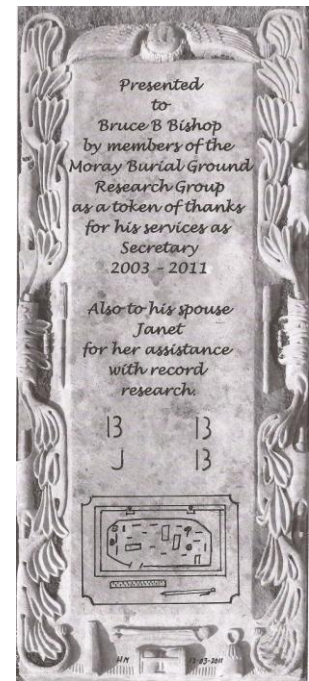
The first thing to say since holding our AGM in March, is that this Newsletter is late in coming out – you should have been able to read it in May. I am partly responsible for this delay, but due to a number of circumstances this has been largely unavoidable. Pressure of various kinds of work is always a good reason to fall back on, but other more lively and energetic excuses can be provided. Our first grandchild, Iona, came to visit us all the way from Squamish near Vancouver. Her stay here included an 11 month old birthday party, which was novel, as well as being great fun! Therefore it has to be admitted that cuddle time with a wee one like this, is much more important than writing things for newsletters, as I'm sure you will agree. Subsequent to this, both Helen and I succumbed to an extremely bad cold, which seems to have gone on forever.



Our AGM at Elgin Library was well attended by members, although on this occasion, unlike previous years, we failed to attract members of the public, which was somewhat unfortunate. All went smoothly and the business part concluded with a presentation to our long serving Secretary, Bruce Bishop, on his leaving this post for more southerly pursuits. He was also presented with an engraved silver whisky bottle label, as well as a bottle of the liquid itself. A bouquet of flowers was also given to Bruce to pass on to Janet who unfortunately could not be present.

Since our group was formed way back in 2003, Bruce has steadfastly helped in many different ways in his position as Secretary and Historical Research Adviser on a regular basis. Janet has also been extremely helpful with her knowledgeable expertise at what used to be known as Register House and New Register House, which over the last few years has gone by a variety of names.

With some care and expertise on her own part, Helen prepared a scroll for Bruce based on one of the highly decorated tombstones from Kinloss Abbey dating to about the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, which you see illustrated here. However, on the presentation copy Helen also skillfully inserted several drawing implements in place of the usual Emblems of Mortality found on many flat and table stones from this period of history. This was in recognition of Bruce's efforts relating to Burial Ground Plans as well as Buried Tombstones. Tea then followed, which was graciously prepared by Stephen Leitch, and once again MBGRG is in his debt for organising our AGM event in the very comfortable surroundings of the Library Gallery.



After the business part of the meeting concluded we were given a somewhat unusual illustrated talk entitled, *Death and Heraldry*. This was presented by Charles J. Burnett, Esq., Ross Herald Extraordinary in his accustomed entertaining and informative manner.

Many people I think have quite the wrong impression of heraldry, considering it to be one of those arcane subjects only spoken of by people who live in ivory

towers, or the like. Having now heard Mr Burnett speak on three separate occasions, I can vouch for the fact that the subject of heraldry is indeed one of considerable interest from both the historical and artistic points of view. It was indeed interesting and pleasing to hear several people who were at the AGM say in no uncertain terms, how much they had enjoyed his talk, and that their concepts about the subject of heraldry in general had been significantly modified.

### **Appeal For New Members** (by Keith Mitchell)

It is with considerable pleasure that we welcome the Buckie District Fishing Heritage Museum Ltd as another Institutional Member of MBGRG. Their initial interest in joining forces with us is to facilitate the recording and publishing of Rathven New Cemetery. Over the last few months, both John Crawford and David Fowler of the museum have very kindly given their time in getting to know some of the recording techniques we use. Hopefully they will be able to encourage a few other museum members to come along and help, thus ensuring that MIs in the parish of Rathven are completed.

As ever, we are desperately looking for new members, preferably, but not necessarily of the younger variety. As time goes by, so working members get a bitty older, making some aspects of our work more difficult.



One particular area where we now have more of a problem is in relation to Buried Tombstones. Recently we have been attempting to complete a small number of buried stones at Knockando. One example shown here is of the memorial to Archibald Smith, indweller in Knockanleek in Kirdles, who died in 1732, his wife being Margaret Achnach, an extremely unusual surname! Interestingly, several people have independently suggested this spelling might represent a colloquial contraction of Cattanach. Any other suggestions are welcome.

We continue to achieve our aims with this part of the project, but it must be admitted that nowadays due to age related factors, this kind of activity is more of a struggle. What is definitely required is NEW, YOUNG (or younger) BLOOD! So if you are in a position to coerce, or twist an arm or two to encourage relations, friends, neighbours, workmates, or any other likeminded soul, please, please, take the trouble to do so. Your efforts may just make something of a difference!

### **Back Room Events – Yet Another Appeal** (by Keith Mitchell)

Maybe it is a lovely day, or more likely the clouds are all over the place, but here we are in some burial ground – say Aberlour Churchyard, and we are set to either clean, dig, photograph, probe or transcribe tombstones – a very worthwhile exercise. Then the frequent cry rings out “*where’s my camera,*” and quite a few people end up with a smirk on their face, or some razor sharp piece of repartee rents the air. If it is cloudy, maybe we will end up with only a few shots at the end of the day, but if it has been wall to wall sunshine, then it is quite likely that by tea time I will have added something between 150 to 300 photographs to our MBGRG photograph archive. Now anyone who has used a digital camera and ended up taking lots of photos at any one time will know the problems relating to cataloguing and describing them on the computer. Because we are out in the field recording on a fairly regular basis, this means hardly a week goes by that aside from everything else that has to be done at home, such as typing, proof-reading transcriptions, etc., etc., a large pile of photographs has to be properly catalogued. This in itself is quite an involved process that generally takes both Helen and yours truly several hours over a few nights to complete.

Our recent appeals for assistance with typing has borne fruit and we now have several volunteers involved doing handwritten transcriptions. We also have an equal number who have volunteered to create tombstone indexes. Both these are indeed a very valuable contribution to the work of MBGRG. However, we have two separate appeals for assistance if anyone can spare the time. Ideally we are looking for two volunteers who could work side by side, identifying individual tombstone numbers to catalogue our photographs as they come to hand. It is assumed that this request for assistance may for various reasons be impractical, but it’s the old story – **if you don’t ask, you don’t get!** Also, if anyone feels they might be able to assist Helen with drawing burial ground plans, or tombstones to be



illustrated in our publications, then we would like to hear from you. If you are not sure, but want to know more – just ask, you never know you might enjoy it!

### Did you Know?

Here is a piece of information I am sure most of you have never heard of. I certainly hadn't, until I watched a recent edition of "*Have I Got News For You.*" Do you know what a *Tapophile* is, and equally what the discipline of *Tapophilia* might be? Well just in case like me you are in the dark over this one, I will enlighten you. According to Wikipedia, *Tapophilia is a passion for and enjoyment of cemeteries.* So it becomes quite obvious that a *Tapophile* is anyone who enjoys, or is interested in the kind of work MBGRG members get involved with. One wonders in the light of this whether the name of this Newsletter might be better changed to the *Morayshre Tapophile's Gazette*. At this point you are meant to laugh, or in modern texting parlance – **lol** so I believe. Incidentally I have been unable to find out the source of this word, and if anyone knows, please let me know.

**Note:** See Issue 17 for spelling correction - Taphophile, Taphophilia.

### Fundraising

Thanks go to all who have recently donated stamps on and off paper. Aside from the fun created at our successful "Stamp Nights," the sum raised at auction in Edinburgh, and by purchase from our own members, is in excess of £100. We have already a collection of material waiting to be sorted and many thanks go to member, Mary Wardell who brought up a shoebox of stamps, which her son-in-law had bought a while back in England. Thanks also go to Mary McDonald for her very useful donation.

Up till now our appeal has only been for stamps, coins, postcards and old documents, but we can now accept donations of anything relatively small that could be classed as a collectable. This includes things like dinky toys and the like, train sets, matchboxes, cigarette cards and old hard cover books, which are in decent condition. If you have anything like this please let us know, as they will make a useful addition at auction.

### A Hidden Relic of Bygone Aberlour (by Keith Mitchell)



Now that work has started in earnest recording Aberlour old churchyard and new cemetery, a few interesting things have come to light as might be expected. On our first main visit there, several months ago, we became aware of what we thought was a large tree, whose leaves were covering up a number of old tombstones. As these appeared to have been recorded in the 1978 survey of Moray Burial Grounds, it was decided that we would have to remove a lot of the lower branches, so that these memorials could see the light of day again.

On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June, when we had the manpower (including Helen), a start was made to this physically demanding task. Not long after we got stuck into it, Jim informed us that we were in fact dealing with ivy. After several hours work we had managed to clear about three quarters of the lower area and in the process filled some 23 bin bags with vegetation. As a result we could at last see what we were dealing with in terms of tombstones, and it was good to note they were mostly still recordable, albeit in some cases with difficulty.



One extremely important aspect of the ivy clearance was that it gave us a much better view of the walled structure it enclosed. Previous examination of this suggested that it was of some considerable age, and in all likelihood part of the original fabric of St Durstan's Church. This was later confirmed by another interesting discovery, which we will tell you about later.

In a webpage relating to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, it is described as being the south gable wall of this pre 1812 church.

On a subsequent visit, on a very wet and miserable day, several of our 'resolute' members, if that's the most accurate word of describing them, cut away the remaining ivy to the height shown in the adjacent photographs. This resulted in a further 20 odd binbags being filled to capacity, which were unceremoniously dragged over to the main new cemetery gate for collection by council authorities.



Bill, Sandy, Penny, Derek & Jim clearing the ivy

The resulting clearance revealed some 16 tombstones, a number of which are 18<sup>th</sup> century or older. This includes what appears to be a possible standing stone, but this has still to be verified.

I suspect that everyone who worked on this task were more than a little pleased to get it all finished. Although the work was demanding, at the end of the day the results proved to be more than worth the effort.



## **New MBGRG Secretary** (by Connie Walters)



As recently elected Secretary to the Group I have been asked to “say a few words” by way of introduction.

About three years ago I, along with my husband John, moved to Forres from Perthshire where I had been researching not only my own family history but also that of others during many years serving as secretary to a Family History Group and also to a Local History Group. During this time I did a small amount of M.I. recording so was pleased, on a chance visit to a Family History Fair in Forres, to be invited by Helen to join the Moray Group. John joined also and we appreciate being given the opportunity to not only become more familiar with the whole area but to also meet and get to know the very friendly and welcoming researchers within the Group on our Sunday ‘forays’. It is a pleasure to join the Committee of such a dedicated band.

## **Fieldwork Report** (by Helen Mitchell)

**Lossiemouth** has now been published (see book launch).

**Rothies** is next in the pipeline for publication, once we have finalised the text.



**Knockando** has caused us a few problems with the weather and timing. We managed to have two midweek outings where we uncovered five stones but have two still to investigate. Afternoon tea and home-bakes are served in the church on a Wednesday afternoon so it is a good excuse to go then. Rita was finishing off the transcriptions so it should only be checks to do, and some photography. After uncovering the five stones mentioned above, we then found another two which means another journey back.

John and Sandy uncovering a buried tombstone at Knockando

**Dyke** – recording work at this churchyard has been completed, but a variety of checks still have to be done.

**Rathven** - transcribing probing and digging has been completed but a number of stones still have to be photographed for our photo archive.

**Rathven New Cemetery** – initial planning work and some recording has been done here. Members of the Buckie District Fishing Heritage Museum will be recording this burial ground, which will be

published as part of our MBGRG MI series. We are very grateful for their valued assistance in this project.

**Aberlour** - transcribing and photography are going well at the moment. We still have to probe for buried stones, but so far it would appear that there are only a small number. Bruce has been doing research and probing around the perimeter where the old church may have been. We have also accessed the keys to the mausoleum and have already recorded the memorials and decorative bosses inside it.

**Elgin** (west) is slowly being completed.

**Clunyhill** has caused many problems fitting the overall layout of the cemetery into a manageable plan. Some 50 stones have been toppled or damaged by vandals but most of our recording work has already been done.

**Moy Work** here has been delayed until at least September when any remaining Hogweed will have died back.

**Kirkmichael** saw 20 of us set off for Glenlivet, no not the distillery, but a churchyard which will take longer to transcribe and dig than anticipated. It is a few years since Keith and I visited this site and we did not remember the state of the lichen on many stones. This is mostly the kind that is like cement and there is nothing we can do to ease the process of transcribing. Some research requires to be done about the Mercat Cross (if that is what it is) and another flat stone with intricately carved swords, which came up beautifully when cleaned. A few areas were probed and it appears as if this site could throw-up a few "goodies."



The Ancient Cross of St Michael.  
Jim & Margaret give an idea of its size.



Members relaxing before having a well earned meal

The rain kept off although it was chilly to begin with. One stone intrigues us. JOHN STUART believed to be born about 1642 lived for 60 years, and died in 1772. His wife died aged 69 in 1802. The inscription is in Latin, but the translation from the Moray Heritage Centre gives this information. The dates are quite readable on the stone.

As this was our summer outing we worked later than usual, then set off to the Delnashaugh Hotel for a well earned high-tea. The smiling faces suggest that a good day was had by all.

So where is our next MBGRG outing to take place?

## Monumental Inscriptions That Commemorate Your Ancestors

(by Member - Margaret Dickson)

I recently joined the Moray Burial Ground Research Group. This volunteer group go to graveyards in the Moray area to transcribe gravestones, draw plans of graveyards, number and name the headstones on the plan, clean headstones, photograph and find, clean and transcribe buried stones. All this information is put together and is available on their website [www.mbgrg.org](http://www.mbgrg.org) and also put into book form for the researcher to access. Although I do not have any ancestors buried in Moray I have found since joining the group that the work they undertake is fascinating. For the researcher the amount of information on a headstone can help put dates and names into the family tree. Scottish head stones often give much information about the family and often the wife's maiden name.

My own family are mainly in Cheshire and Derbyshire. Many of my family are buried in Dukinfield Cemetery. I have looked for head stones but cannot find any. However using the Tameside Council Burials index, I have found three family graves each containing up to six members of the family and the names of two children who do not appear on the census. My mother's family came from Staffordshire but settled down in Derbyshire. My Gt. Grandmother, Eliza Salt nee Simpson was born in Edale, Derbyshire. She lived there until approx 1900 when she and her husband William Salt moved to Ashton u Lyne so William could work on the railways. I visited Edale some years ago and took pictures of family graves. I also managed to transcribe some of the information on the head stones. Edale Parish Church has two cemeteries – the old, which is across the road from the church and the new which is in the grounds of the church. The majority of the Simpson family are buried in the old cemetery. Eliza's parents were John Wigley Simpson and Elizabeth Howe. John's parents were James Simpson and Sarah Wigley. In all there are four family names in the cemetery.

**James Simpson and Sarah Wigley.** - This particular stone was damaged with the top of a cross missing, along with some of the inscription.

*Sacred to the memory of James Simpson who died January 8th 1867--- year of his age, Sarah Simpson, wife of James and daughter of William Wigley, who departed this life --- 11th 1837 in the 28th year of her age.*

*Death reigneth even over them that hath not sinned after similitude of Adam's transgression. As in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The son of man cometh.*

### **John Wigley Simpson and Elizabeth Howe**

This stone was very plain sand stone with an arched top - *In memory of John Wigley Simpson, died Sept 22nd 1892 aged 58. Also his wife Elizabeth died Feb 4th 1886 aged 50. Sarah Ellen daughter of John Wigley and Elizabeth Simpson died April 25th aged 3 years.*

**Elizabeth Simpson – James Simpson's 2nd wife** - *Sared to the memory of Elizabeth the wife of James Simpson of Edale and daughter of Thomas and Hannah Lowe, who died June 9th 1868 aged 54 years.*

**Thomas and Hannah Lowe, her parents** - *Sacred to the memory of Thomas Lowe of Edale who died August 1st 1863 aged 74 years. Also Hannah Lowe his wife who died March 5th 1868 aged 79 years. Also of Mary Lowe their daughter who died May 9th 1862 aged 17 years.*



## Wigley family graves

1. This grave stone was a large square stone. The top part was decorated with two angels; in the middle was a table with "In memory of". The stone is then divided in two columns with writing in each half.

*In memory of Elizabeth Wigley, daughter of William and Sarah Wigley who departed this life June 12th 1828 aged 20 years O happy saint may we like thee be blest in like, be faithful and death find rest.*

*Also John Wigley, son of William and Sarah Wigley, who departed this life Nov 13 1832 in the 19th year of his age.*

*William Wigley who departed this life 9 July 1828 aged 63 years. A worthy father lieth here for him virtues respected were it to please the Lord to call him hence to give to him a recompence.*

*Also Sarah Wigley, wife of William Wigley who departed this life January 6th 1858 in the 54 year of her life. Also Thomas Wigley who died March 13th 1880 aged 81 years.*

2. This stone was a large square stand stone.

*Sacred to the memory of William Wigley, son of William and Sarah Wigley, who departed this life Sep. 25th 1846 in the 46th year of his age. Also Esther, wife of William Wigley who departed this life January 30th 1867 aged 67 years.*

3. This stone is a tall sand stone with a round top.

*In memory of John Wigley who died June 11th 1896 aged 71. Also Elizabeth his wife died Dec. 22nd 1909 aged 77 years.*

In the new cemetery are the graves of George Allsop and his wife, Phancy Allsop, daughter of John Wigley and Elizabeth Simpson. This headstone was difficult to read as it was a leaded letter stone.

*George Frank Allsop Died 10th march 1944 And his wife Phancy Allsop Died 6th May 1949.*

### **Harold and Margaret Allsop – son of George and Phancy**

*Harold Stewart Allsop Died 5th March 1969 Age 76 years and Florence Margaret his loving wife died 19th April 1967 aged 75 years.*

Until I joined the group I had not appreciated the need to transcribe completely what is on the grave stone. Noting any commas, dots & dashes, and the spelling or shortening of words e.g. Novr , & his wife, 25<sup>th</sup>, Alexer are very important. Checking the exact date, as many figures and letters can look very different from different angles depending on how the mason did his lettering. Looking for masons' details. Mason's spelling of words. For the historian a mistake by the transcriber can give some wrong information and may lead to a wrong avenue of research. One of the rules from the group when transcribing is "write what you see not what you think you see." I have found some of the early Scottish graves fascinating as they have elaborate symbols of mortality and immortality – skulls, crossbones, spades, hour glasses and bells, something I have not seen on English graves.

## Computer Corner (by Lindsay Robertson – MBGRG Webmaster)

There has been some discussion recently regarding the various versions of MS Word documents, as some members, have been unable to open such documents sent from other members. One common reason for this is that the document was prepared with a recent version of Word (e.g Word 2007 or 2010), and the recipient is attempting to open it with an older version of the software such as Word 97. The older Word documents normally have a default extension **.doc** while newer versions are **.docx**. There are three possible options to resolve this issue.

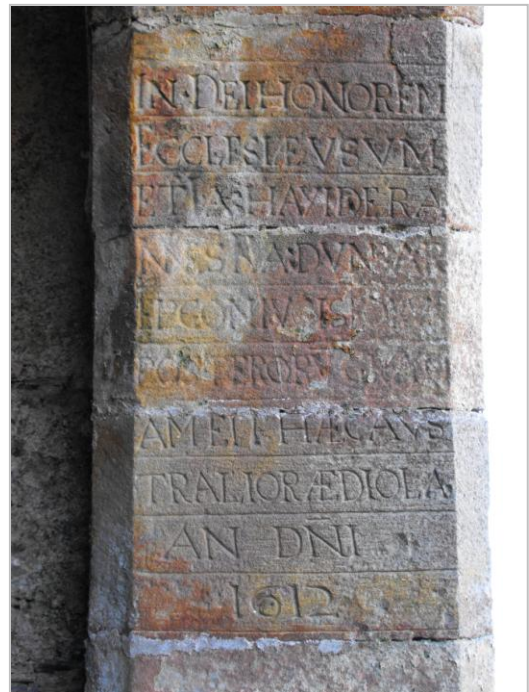
- 1) **Upgrade to the latest version of Word.** This has the advantage of giving you all the new features, but can be expensive, and may result in that typical ‘new version learning curve’ problem.
- 2) **Contact the sender of the file, explaining your problem, and tell them what version of Word you have.** They can usually ‘Save the file as’ a version compatible with the software you are using. For example Word 2007 users can save as Word 97-2003 compatible versions which you will be able to open, if you are using one of those older versions of Word.
- 3) **A third solution is that you consider installing the appropriate MS converter pack.** There are a range of converter packs available, which users can download, that will allow them to open and view the newer document versions. This applies not only to Word, but Excel and PowerPoint files also. You may lose some of the new formatting features (as is to be expected).

You must consider carefully which particular pack you require, depending on your own requirements. You should also read the installation instructions carefully before installation, as you may have to ensure you have all the relevant MS updates installed before adding the pack. Further detailed information can best be found by doing a Web Search on ‘Office converter packs’.

## Raising Rannas (by Stephen Leitch – MBGRG Publicity Officer)

The old Rathven parish church St. Peter’s was built by 1224/6 when reference is first made to a church. Its replacement was built in 1798 and is still in use today as the parish church. The old church was demolished in 1794 with the building of the new parish church, with the exception of the Hays of Rannas burial aisle. It was built onto the old church in 1612 and can be precisely dated due to the mason leaving an inscription and date of his work on the archway of the aisle into the church, in a very similar fashion of Cullen Old Kirk, and his masons mark.

While recording in the churchyard where the remains sit, and looking around the Aisle, it became apparent that some alteration had taken – at some point it had been raised - yet no documentary evidence has been found which makes reference to this. The evidence though maybe contained within the aisle itself.





Though most of the outside of the building has been harled, from the corners of the gable end of the building the first 8-9 ft of stone is sandstone. A block of this with the date 1798 on demarcates a change in the stone course to granite. Within the building itself is a rather large family memorial stone to the Hay family, which appears to have been put there no earlier than 1798. Externally the walls of the building also taper slightly inwards from the height of the 1798 stone indicating some alteration. From the evidence above it may be concluded the raising of the Rannas Aisle took place in 1798, four years after the demolition of the old church.

For further reading about this fascinating parish there are a number of excellent books including:

- *Banffshire: People of the land : Pre-1855 death and burial records for the parish of Rathven,*  
○ *by Bruce B. Bishop.*
- *Banffshire. The people and the lands : Part 5, The Parish of Rathven prior to 1750,*  
○ *By Bruce B. Bishop*
- *Banffshire. The people and the lands : Part 6, The Parish of Rathven 1750 to 1850,*  
○ *by Bruce B. Bishop.*
- *The Church and Churchyard of Rathven, William Cramond.*

### **MBGRG Book Launch Lossiemouth New Cemetery (North & South Sections) & Other Local Memorials**

On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July, at 7.30pm, MBGRG celebrated its book launch of this latest volume of MI transcriptions, in Lossiemouth Library, courtesy of the Librarian and our Publicity Officer, Stephen Leitch. We had a good turn out of members as well as local folk, with about 36 people there in all. After a brief introduction by Stephen, Keith, Bruce and Helen spoke about various aspects relating to our recording work in the area, as well as the book itself. This was followed by light refreshments dispensed by Stephen and the other library staff. Helen sold 12 books, so that made a good start for the sales of this volume.

**ADDENDUM** - Information came to light that our caption for the illustration opposite page 194 which reads:- **Mosaic of St Gerardine by Lynn Vickery**, should correctly read **Mosaic of St Gerardine by Lynn Vecqueray**.

We sincerely apologise to Lynn Vecqueray for any inconvenience this error may have caused her, or which may cause her in the future.



## Old Drainie Churchyard on RAF Lossiemouth



“The Volunteers” hard at work cleaning”

On Saturday 23rd July, Helen and I were invited to supervise the cleaning up of all the flat tombstones on this old churchyard – the ones MBGRG members recorded and published way back in 2003-2004.

So on a cloudy but dry morning, we arrived at the camp, and after acquiring our passes and transferring our equipment, we were driven over to the site to be greeted by some 20 odd young ‘volunteers’ just waiting to get stuck in! The team was led by Squadron Leader Duffy who would like to ensure the tombstones in this churchyard

are maintained on a regular basis. MBGRG members who attend our own frequent recording sessions, will no doubt be thinking it would make such a huge difference to what our group is trying to do, if we even had half the number of young folk shown in the above photograph working for us.

About lunch time a short religious service was held, and after a brief lunch, work resumed with equal fervor as before. Although great progress had been made in the morning’s work, I along with some others had major doubts about the job in hand being completed by the end of the day. But I was quite wrong! As time progressed it was clear that there was every intention to ensure the task was finished. And so it was that around about 3.30pm the very last stone emerged, free from its covering of grass and moss.



Team members survey the results of their labours

Me thinks this might be something of a world record – 67 old flat tombstones immaculately cleaned in under six hours. Well done RAF Lossiemouth!

**STOP PRESS** – For national coverage of MBGRG’s efforts to uncover “Buried Tombstones,” read Mary Evans’s fully illustrated four page article in the September issue of “**Family Tree**,” magazine, available from 12<sup>th</sup> August.