



# The Moray Burial Ground Research Group

## Newsletter



Issue 24 - Christmas 2015



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# Editors Note



Newsletter time again already, I don't know where the year has gone! As you'll see from this edition, along with concluding a few of the existing sites the team has been busy on a new project at Inveraven which uncovered more than they bargained for! We also have some very interesting articles and photographs from our members detailing sites locally and internationally. Finally I'd just like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

*Derek C Page*

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**Front Cover:**

© Derek C Page Photography MMXV

**THE MBGRG  
NEEDS**



**YOU**

We are urgently requiring help with all group activities. If you are able to come along and help with activities or even just provide a letter or story for the newsletter, we'd really love to hear from you!

# A KER/BURNETT MARRIAGE OF HERALDIC INTEREST

Charles J Burnett Esq. Ross Herald of Arms Extraordinary



The Moray Burial Ground Research Group was founded in 2003 in order to survey and record every burial ground in Moray, 140 in total, which includes the western part of the old county of Banffshire. Since that year 60,000 names have been indexed and 55,000 photographs of gravestones and other memorials have been taken. The record of each graveyard is then published.

The Group are currently recording the Grange Churchyard and Cemetery which lies between Keith and Glenbarry in western Banffshire. Amongst the gravestones is one shown above bearing an impaled shield. As Honorary President of the MBGRG any stones bearing Arms are normally sent to me in order to give the blazon, or written description, of what is on the shield. Behind this shield lies an interesting story.



The complete memorial is shown here. It consists of two parts; an upper oval panel of Portsoy marble within a freestone frame, which carries an inscription in Latin, this will be translated later; a lower section made of dark blue stone carved with a shield and the initials M. A. K. and below A. G. These stand for Magister Alexander Ker and Anne Gordon. 'Magister' is an honorific title for the graduate of a university. The man involved was Alexander Ker, a graduate of King's College University of Aberdeen, who was the parish minister at Grange in Banffshire from 8th January 1652 until his death in 1693.

Alexander Ker was married to Anne Gordon and they had four daughters. Anne died on 16th August 1666 and was buried at the Grange Churchyard. The memorial heraldic stone was mounted on an interior wall of the old Grange church. The stone bears an impaled coat of arms; dexter, a chevron charged with three mullets [stars] with a unicorn head below, for Ker, sinister, three boar's heads couped, for Gordon.

Two years after Anne died Alexander Ker married again, this time to Bessie Burnett, the third child and elder daughter of Alexander Burnett of Sheddocksley, a cadet of Leys. The estate of Sheddocksley lies on the outskirts of Aberdeen and is part of the Freedom Lands granted by Robert the Bruce to the Royal Burgh of Aberdeen. Alexander Ker and Bessie were married on 17 September 1668 in Aberdeen.

Some five years after the marriage Alexander Kerr petitioned the Lord Lyon for a grant of Arms which is recorded on page 172 of the First Volume of the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland. He was granted; Azure, on a chevron Argent between two holly leaves in chief Proper and a unicorn's head erased of the Second, three mullets Gules i.e. a blue shield with a white chevron on which are three red stars with, above the chevron two green holly leaves, and below the chevron a white unicorn's head. Ker was also given a motto; VIRESCIT IN ARDUS VIRTUS – Virtue flourishes in difficulty.



Ker of Knock



Burnett of Sheddocksley

Our interest lies in the fact that Alexander Ker decided to use two Burnett holly leaves to differentiate his Ker Arms from other Kers, and he also chose a motto which is not unlike the motto of the Burnett Chief – VIRESCIT VULNERE VIRTUS – Strength draws vigour from an injury.

Alexander Ker, 66 years old, died in 1693 and was presumably buried in the churchyard. An oval panel made of Portsoy marble, set into a freestone frame was mounted on an interior wall of the old church. The Latin inscription translates as follows:



*Alexander Ker, a learned man, although not a doctor, second pastor of this church after the Reformation, but second to none in the faithful discharge of his sacred duties; a man of great ability and unwearied activity, richly endowed with all the gifts necessary to a minister at home and abroad, taught, cultivated, and promoted, by voice, life, and example, truth, piety, and charity. Here, where he spent his strength, he laid down his remains, A.D. 1693, in the 66th year of his age, and the 43d of his ministry.  
Remember we must all die.*

Presumably Ker's widow and her four step daughters arranged the funeral, but they did not arrange, or possibly were unable to afford, to have a new armorial stone carved to show Ker's registered Arms impaled with those of Bessie Burnett of Sheddocksley. It may be Mr Ker's memorial was erected and paid for by the congregation who wished to remember their devoted minister. They may have composed the inscription and were more concerned to record his virtues rather than his status as an armiger.

The two memorials were originally inside the old Grange church but it had become ruinous by 1793. A new church was built a short distance away in 1795 and these two memorials, which had been separate, were placed together and built in to the outer churchyard wall. This explains the difference in stone and style.

Burnett genes have been shared with many other Scottish families, but to my knowledge this is the only Ker/ Burnett marriage I have seen recorded. The Ker, or nowadays Kerr, family is mainly associated with the Border region of Scotland, not the North-East.

Members of the House of Burnett who have ancestors from the Moray/western Banffshire area of Scotland might be able to obtain further familial information by contacting the Moray Burial Ground Research Group at [www.mbgrg.org](http://www.mbgrg.org)

I am indebted to Keith Mitchell Esq. Elgin, Mark Hamid, Lyon Office, Edinburgh, and John Burnett Esq. Tosheador, USA, for providing invaluable information and assistance, along with various digital images for reproduction in this article.



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# Guess the site....

The answer to the last editions question is:  
Mellieha Village, Malta.

It is not a real graveyard but a film set for Popeye the movie. The set is now a visitor attraction.



## July 2015 Newsletter Crossword - Solution

### Across

6. Internment
7. Probe
8. Dram
10. Todays
11. Goodwillie
14. Capercailzie
15. Lossiemouth
16. Brodie
17. MIs
19. Lichen
20. Dubious
21. Cathedral
23. Farsma
24. Tee

### Down

1. Genealogy
2. Heraldic
3. Delamination
4. OPR
5. Bones
9. Church
10. Tablestone
12. Newsletter
13. Mausoleum
15. LIBINDEX
18. Kinloss
22. Large
23. Flat

*L. Roberson*



# Yorkshire

# MMAJW

A few photo's from our trip to Yorkshire last year.

Derek



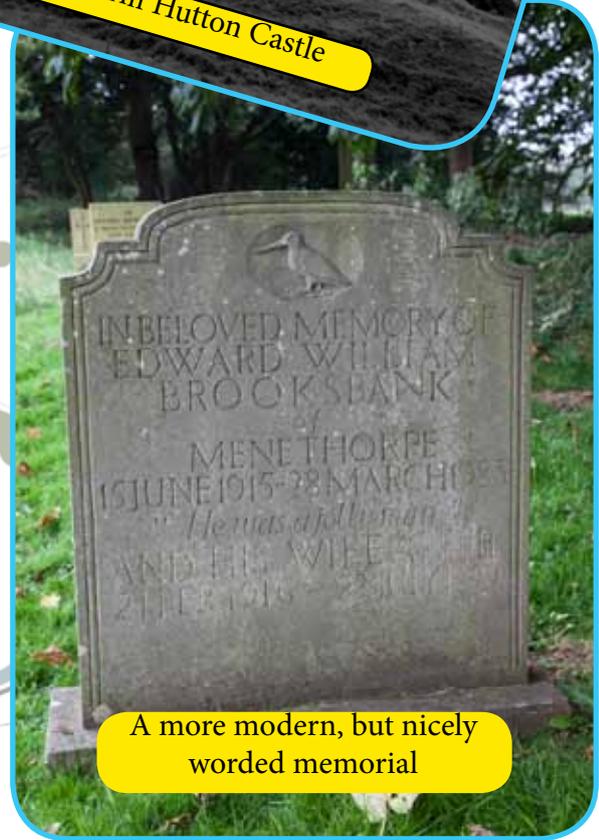
Natural grasscutting taking place,  
St Andrews, Aysgarth



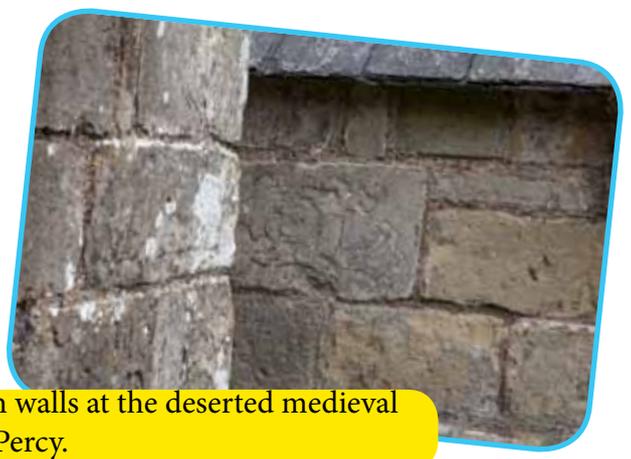
The ruins of Sheriff Hutton Castle



Cross slab, Kirkham Priory



A more modern, but nicely worded memorial



Some of the recycled gravestones in the church walls at the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy.

# Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington New Zealand.



Normally our newsletter focuses on Great Britain but on this occasion I felt that something I had seen on the other side of the world might interest some of the newsletter readers.

Established as a cemetery in 1840 many of the early settlers were buried here, on the outskirts of the new town of Wellington, Bolton Street Cemetery had separate burial areas designated for Anglicans, Jews and Roman Catholics. Many notable people of the town were buried there, including William Wakefield, Wellington's founder. At first headboards as they were called were mainly wooden crosses and in time rotted



a w a y  
l e a v i n g  
i n d i v i d u a l  
g r a v e s

unmarked. Cause of death amongst many early pioneers' at that time was consumption,

Later as people settled and became business owners and farmers with a little more money, stone memorials started to appear.



In 1960 when a white line appeared running across the combined Bolton Street Cemeteries the public were slow to grasp the implications of

this line. Only when the City Council's independent motorway proposal showed the cemeteries being desecrated did the public wake up to the threat. The Bolton Street Cemetery Protection Society was formed in 1964 and they would force debate about the proposals for three years.

The proposed Motorway did go ahead and initially some 700 graves involving 2,000 people were removed, some of them believed to be the earliest settlers, many in unmarked, unrecorded graves. Eventually by the time the Motorway was finished some 3,700 people were disinterred and re interred in a mass grave below a lawn within the cemetery.

As a result of all the publicity

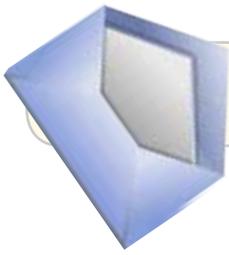


surrounding the motorway it had unforeseen positives, it made the Park into a significant historic site and city reserve. The Formation of The Friends of Bolton Street Memorial Park was also a positive. They set about making a recording of all burials in the cemetery. As of 1999 they have recorded 8,466 known burials.

The city has gradually come to meet the cemetery and the motorway now divides it but hopefully with people now taking an interest, it will survive for many years to come.

Ruth McIntosh





# Your Letters

## Therapeutic Aspects of Burial Grounds

My son Paul and I joined the group this summer and despite the lack of sunshine we got to several cemeteries and enjoyed all aspects of the work carried out with the group. Paul who has learning disabilities particularly liked cleaning the stones, but I am sure he enjoyed the company and helping others too. I myself have an interest in family history and only wish there were more like minded groups down south, providing the same information this group has gathered. Depending on my mood I found cleaning and revealing the architecture of the stones very therapeutic, but also enjoyed recording and digging to unearth more names, which I felt was bringing them back to life and making them known which was very rewarding too. The crack among the group was friendly and welcoming and we look forward to spring next year to continue the good work carried out by everyone involved

Reg Nessling



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### MBGRG Members Report In From Melbourne

Hi to all our friends at MBGRG from Marilyn and Garry. We are now back home and settling into routine life. Just a few words about our recent holiday in Elgin with my cousins Helen and Keith. It was a belated honeymoon for us, having married in March. We arrived in the rain and left in the rain but we had a marvellous three weeks of fine dry weather. So, we were able to go out on MBGRG work, proudly wearing our new blue sweat tops. I have been out before so know some of the members but it was Garry's first time. He learnt how to clean stones, so that MIs were clear enough for photos. He was a bit confused at first but actually enjoyed himself. It was his first picnic in a churchyard surrounded by tombstones.

The extreme oldness of some of the graves fascinated him, something not lost on me either. People were buried in Scotland before Australia was discovered. Our travels took in Skye, where we had a fine weekend touring back and forth from the mainland to Skye. Our thanks go to Keith who tirelessly drove the whole weekend over some dreadful roads. Garry admitted to me later he was a bit worried when he saw

the steep sides of the hills dropping away from the road. The trip to Edinburgh was our turn to drive and we got there and back not using a GPS but Keith's directions. It was a family weekend, time to catch up. **Sunday** was sunny so we spent the afternoon at Cramond. It was ice creams and photos all round. I am sorry we did not have more time but we had to go back to work, and our holiday was over all too soon for another year.

Marilyn and Garry Bainbridge



# MI Publications in Digital Format

Following the decision to make some of our publications available in digital format, Keith, Helen and I have been quietly beavering away and can now report that twenty of the groups MI Booklets are now available in PDF format, and three of the FTM series are in draft form awaiting final checks.

These are competitively priced, at a somewhat lower price than the hardcopy editions. As an example of the format Boharm Churchyard (PDF) has been made available as a free download directly from our website.

This alternative format for our MI Booklets is proving particularly popular with our overseas customers, as often very lengthy deliver times are avoided, and exorbitant postal charges do not apply.

Customers ordering these are supplied with a specific link, which enables them to access and download the relevant file from our secure One Drive cloud storage vault.

The twenty currently available titles are:

Aberlour, Alves, Birnie, Boharm, Burghead, Burnside (Rathven), Chapeltown, Downan, Elgin Cemetery (E), Elgin Cemetery (W), Duffus New, Duffus (St Peters), Dundurcas, Dyke, Kinloss, Kinneddar, Knockando, Michael Kirk, Rathven and St. Ninians.

To date, twenty six copies have been sold through website orders, and the free Boharm Churchyard edition has certainly been accessed regularly.

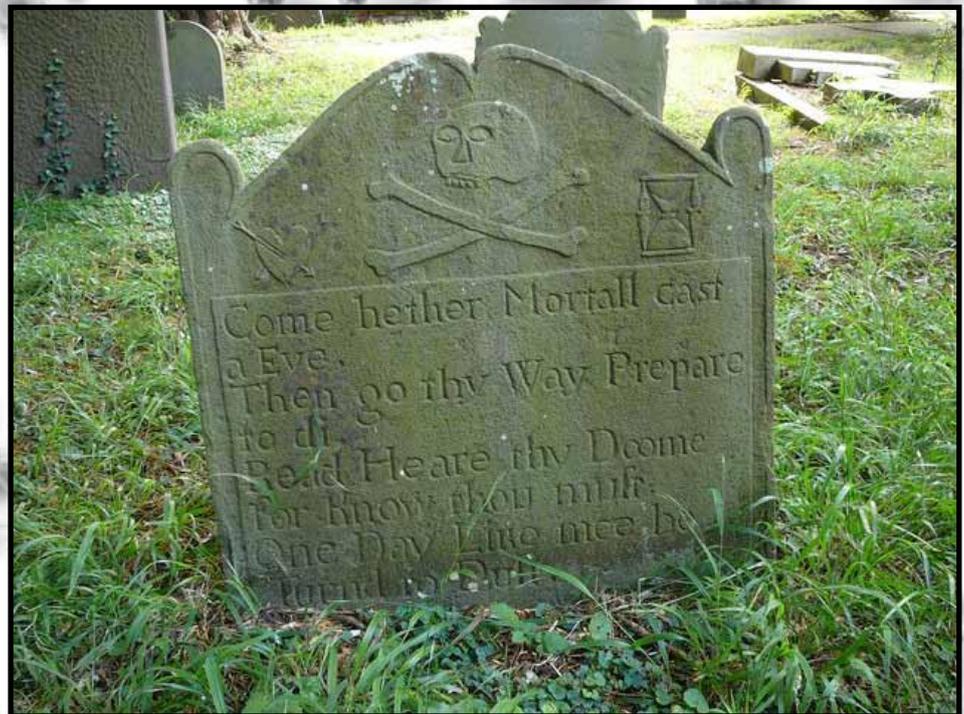
Lindsay Robertson (Webmaster)





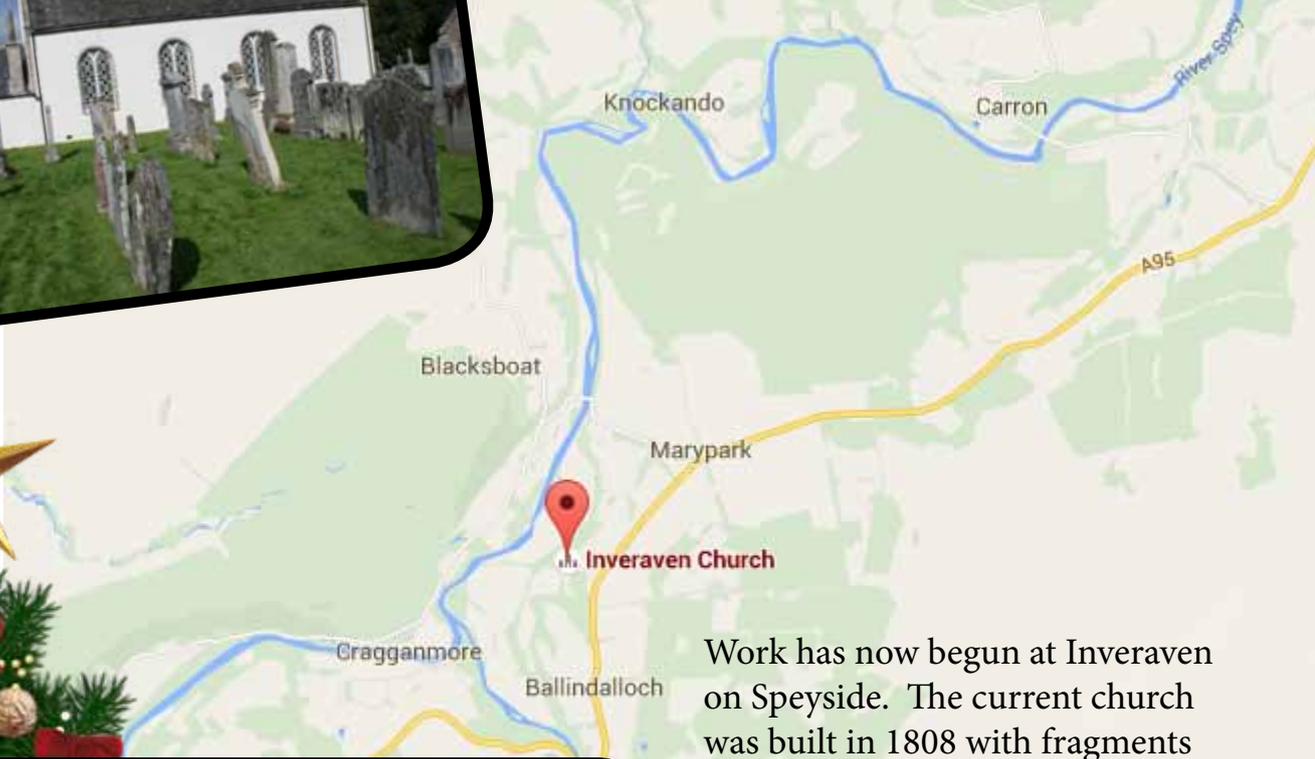
Thanks to Alan Wills for sending this picture in from Sandwich in Kent.

“It looked so much like the Scottish ones especially with the markings near the top of the stone. Pity the stone has split into sections and come away from what now remains.”



This is rather a nice example from Brockley, near Weston-super-Mare also showing a widespread use of symbolism across the UK.

# Inveraven



Work has now begun at Inveraven on Speyside. The current church was built in 1808 with fragments of an earlier 16th century building still part of the fabric, although it is believed a church has stood on the site since the 12th century. There are a few very nice Pictish symbol stones found on the site when the previous church was demolished, and these are now on display within the church's porch.



# Field Coordinator's Report.

By Helen Mitchell

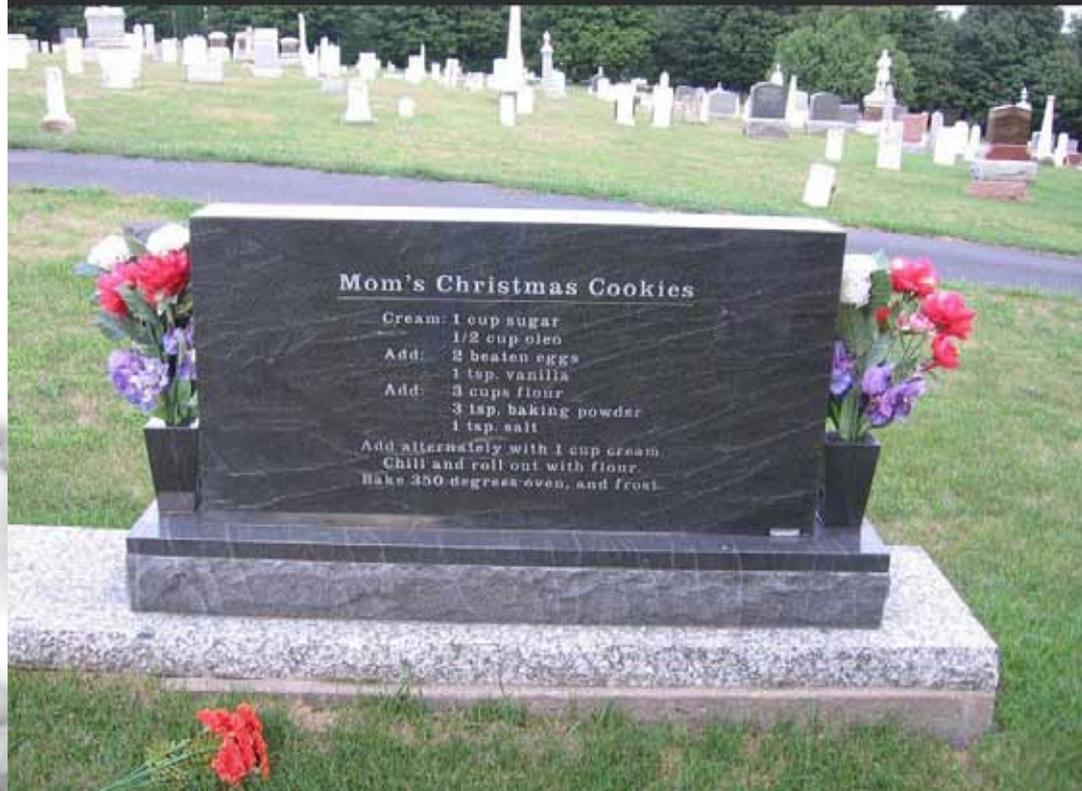
This summer we were stymied by the weather early on. However, we have achieved quite a lot of work from the recording point of view. Many thanks to everyone that helped: your efforts are greatly appreciated by many people in various parts of the world as can be seen on our Website Guestbook! We thought that Grange being such a historic burial ground would be a good candidate for finding buried stones but it drew virtually a complete blank.

The following graveyards have now been completed, Grange, Cullen New, Cullen & Deskford, Rothiemay and Rothiemay New, Tomintoul, Tomintoul New and Tomintoul St Michael's. Elgin South has still to be completed but considering there are approximately 2,500 memorials we are using it mainly as a standby for shorter days and fewer people. Inveraven and St Lawrence are part way through the recording process. We had a productive day at Inveraven on our last couple of visits that caused some excitement. For further details of this see Keith's report. With some of the lovely sunny days we have recently experienced, Keith and I have been taking as much advantage as possible by doing photography.

Next year we hope to be starting at Edinkillie and one of the Keith graveyards but which one has still to be decided. I hope to see you all then so please bring along your friends and anyone else you think might be interested in helping out.

Helen Mitchell

**Backside of mom's gravestone.  
Everytime someone asked for her cookie  
recipe, she said, "Over my dead body!"**



# A Little Inveraven Mystery



As members were informed not long ago, we recently had something of an exciting little mystery at Inveraven

Churchyard which lies some seven miles south west of Aberlour. At one of our visits there in September I conducted a buried tombstone survey over the westerly half of the ground surface and got several positive "hits" with the probe. I then asked Reg to do some trial turf removal. At one of these spots, lying in the south west corner, he found evidence of what appeared at first glance to be just be a rough boulder. Two weeks later on the 20th, however, we returned to the scene with the aim of uncovering this stone properly, just in case it turned out to be more interesting than it appeared at first glance.

Further probing revealed that this



stone was quite a bit larger than at first thought, and as the turf was enthusiastically removed in the usual

small sections by Helen, Jim and Karen, it became evident that this was something of more special interest. Although the upper surface of the stone was fairly flat as in a normal recumbent tombstone, its overall size and shape, along with the lack of any carving indicated that this was not a conventional memorial of the type mainly in use throughout Moray since at least the 17th century.

One of my own personal quests within the overall recording process of the Group has always been the inspiration that maybe, just maybe, we might one day strike lucky and find a Pictish Symbol stone but of course that is just a piece of personal fantasising on my part. However, you never know! Well if ever there was a site in the area where this idea might bear fruit, it surely must be Inveraven so well known for its surviving symbol stones. As a result there were at least some grounds for hoping that something of interest might lurk on the under side of our latest discovery. If you have not already had the opportunity of viewing the four symbol stones sympathetically displayed within the church porch, then try and do so if you are in the area. You will certainly not be disappointed!

Through contact with Ken Kennedy of Moray's Lands and Parks Department with whom we liaise about burial ground matters and Claire Herbert, Reginal Archaeologist for Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray, arrangements were made to lift and completely uncover the stone to view the underside.

So on a clear and sunny Monday morning (November 2nd), all interested in the proceedings turned up at the church



ready for action including council workmen accompanied with suitable plant, should it be required — which in the end it wasn't. After completely clearing turf and soil from the perimeter of the stone, two straps were then inserted under the base and with the sufficient muscle power of four men, it was duly lifted out and made completely visible for the first time in many a year. Sadly it quickly became clear that nothing of real import existed on the newly uncovered face. Claire carefully brushed the surface in a search for traces of carving but none were to be found. And so after some further discussion the stone was replaced in its original position and recovered.

So what are we to make of this buried stone? I had suggested to Claire that maybe it might prove to be a standing stone of some kind. Examples have previously be recorded in the general locality. Interestingly while previously recording MIs at Aberlour and Birnie churchyards we found two examples



that might be described as falling into a roughly similar typology, the Birnie one being another buried example. However, she discounted this possibility based on its overall shape. One other possible clue relates to the wider area at one end of the stone. However, it is difficult to determine whether this had been deliberately created, or was simply result of part of the stone surface flaking off naturally. Both Helen and I wondered if this wider end might suggest possible evidence for the stone having been originally stood upright. Many upright memorials have a base similar to this.



As the stone was more or less in a horizontal position and its general proportions roughly similar to that of flat stones in general, it seems quite possible that it was used as some form of burial marker, originally upright or otherwise. One added possibility is of course that it may represent a form of pre-Reformation burial marker. A roughly similar upright stone at Downan Churchyard which has two crosses carved on it might provide a possible parallel. In conclusion, it seems that on the face of it we must accept that the precise interpretation of the history of this stone is liable to remain largely speculative.

Keith Mitchell FSA Scot  
Chairman



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