

THE MORAY BURIAL GROUND RESEARCH GROUP



10th Anniversary

ANNUAL REPORT

2012 – 2013



www.mbgrg.org

The Committee of 2012-2013

Hon. President

Charles J. Burnett, Esq.,
KStJ, Ross Herald Extraordinary

Chairman

Keith L Mitchell, FSA Scot

Secretary

Ruth McIntosh

Treasurer

Irene Black

Field Co-ordinator

Helen Mitchell, FSA Scot

Ordinary Member

Moira Windwick

Ordinary Member

Stephen Leitch

Minute Secretary

Ruth McIntosh

Appointments held during 2012-2013

Historical Research Co-ordinator

Bruce B Bishop, FSA Scot

Publicity Manager

Stephen Leitch

Webmaster

Lindsay Robertson, FSA Scot

Auditor

William Windwick



Photograph by KLM

Dyke Parish Church : 415b

Armorial shields for Walter Kinnaird & his wife Elizabeth Innes
Both of "Covbine" better known as Culbin



MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY PRESIDENT

This is a welcome opportunity for me to express my admiration for all the work undertaken by members of The Moray Burial Ground Research Group during the year.

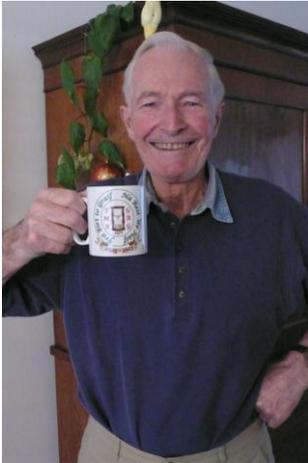
A full indication of what has been achieved is recorded elsewhere in the Report, but the combination of hard physical labour, recording by photography and sketching, and the final publication of the knowledge gained, is of a standard scarcely matched by other groups working in the same field.

Members of The Moray Burial Ground Research Group can take pride in their achievements and I deem it an honour to be your Honorary President.

May I express deep thanks for the welcome you have given me and my wife Aileen, we look forward to getting to know all members over the course of time, and I send best wishes that good fortune will attend all endeavours of the Group during the next year and in the future.

*Charles J Burnett Esq.
Ross Herald Extraordinary*

Chairman's Report



Before anyone jumps to the wrong conclusion, the handsome gentleman in the adjacent photograph, sporting our 10th anniversary mug is definitely not me. It is in fact our member Jeff Russel all the way from Switzerland. Thanks Jeff for making such a great job of modelling the mug – but I'm afraid we can't promise any royalties!

Normally at this point I would be reflecting on this past season's recording activities. However, on this occasion the net must be cast a little wider with some attempt to retrace our steps from a slightly hesitant beginning with a handful of members formed at the beginning of Spring 2003, to a more confident and busy group of volunteers, who I would suggest have provided family historians and genealogists with a splendid cornucopia of research material to ponder over in relation to many of the burial grounds in Moray.

Speaking about volunteers, I think it is worth recounting just how much effort has been given freely over the last 10 years, in almost all weathers, frequently wet and windy, or both, including snow showers. One thing we have not had to suffer to date is recording in a hurricane, but you never know! Obviously volunteers are the lifeblood of the Group, and a monumental vote of thanks must be given to all who have given of their valuable time and expertise over the years. Without rambling on about *credit where credit is due*, etc., the following short item from our Website Guest Book perhaps tells its own pertinent tale. Quoting Stuart Keys from Alberta, Canada, he says:- *Thank you once again Lindsay! The pictures and text came across very well. I know there are multiple volunteers and photographers involved in your projects and they can't be thanked individually but if you get a chance please pass on our gratitude for their hard work.*

In April last year Charles J. Burnett, Esq., Ross Herald Extraordinary became our new Honorary President. His valuable knowledge on heraldry has already borne fruit on several occasions, as he has helped to identify or describe several heraldic subjects carved on old memorials.

One very important aspect I would ask each and every member to consider, relates to NEW MEMBERS. This subject is spoken and written about more or less every year, but sadly the membership roll although quite healthy for our type of group, unfortunately does not reflect a sufficient number of new and younger members to help us *older folk* achieve the goals we have set for the Group. While celebrating this our 10th year of operation I do beg you all consider any, and I do mean any reasonable way we can stimulate younger people to take an interest, for unless we do, it is a simple fact of life that eventually MBGRG will cease to exist – and that would be a real shame don't you think? This then is *A CALL TO ARMS* for you to pester and cajole, or in any way stimulate the interest of relations, neighbours, friends and colleagues to help record and save our monumental heritage for future generations! This is also a scheme we hope to promote throughout the year in the Press such as via the Press & Journal, Northern Scot, Forres Gazette and the

Banffshire Journal, as well as in the Knock News. All have given the Group excellent support over the years.

Publications we have been involved with are detailed in Bruce's report, so I will not duplicate them here. Suffice it to say that for a relatively small Group such as MBGRG, we have indeed been *pretty busy* during the last 10 years. These also include a number of burial grounds that were recorded by MBGRG members initially on behalf of the Aberdeen & North East Scotland Family History Society, before branching out into publishing our own volumes with the very valuable assistance of Bruce and Janet Bishop. Their incredible help cannot be overstated!

Recording inscriptions of course is only part of the process in bringing MIs to an eager family history audience. There also is of course a huge effort that goes into checking and cataloguing inscriptions and photographs, as well as typing, drawing and historical research – the list of tasks is considerable. Then of course we at MBGRG pride ourselves on making the information we publish as accurate as possible, very aware of the fact that there have been some really unfortunate *clangers* published by the Group, such as including a row of index numbers for one person that was meant for someone else. And then there was the person who was 100 years older than he should have been! Oh dear – but really we do try!

Many others have helped along the way. These include people like Graeme Wilson and his staff at the Moray Local Heritage Centre here in Elgin, Parks and Cemeteries staff such as Gary Morrison, and more recently his successor Ken Kennedy who both have always been extremely helpful with our enquiries. Likewise where burial grounds form part of church grounds, ministers and kirk session members, or other officials, have always been most obliging. Currently I would like to thank the Rev. and Mrs Smith of Mortlach Church for their continuing assistance in opening up the church so that we could properly record and photograph the many important monuments inside. Similarly I must mention Bill Davidson of Cullen Old Kirk whose continuing help and considerable knowledge has been of immense help. I must also record our thanks to Bishop Strange, Rector Ketley and Kath Davies, for all the recording work we were able to do at Holy Trinity, Elgin and St Margaret's Episcopal Church in Aberlour. MBGRG is extremely grateful also to Hugh Brown, Financial Director of Gordonstoun School, for giving permission to clean and photograph all the memorials at the Michael Kirk.

Passing onto our website, I must of course mention the stalwart work undertaken by our Webmaster, Lindsay Robertson. Started in 2009, this Internet site has indeed become quite well known amongst family historians all over the world. With a dataset in excess of 52,000 entries, Lindsay has helped to promote the Group for the benefit of family and local historians worldwide, and his efficient and ever kindly assistance is surely a model to go by. An example of a satisfied customer is clearly demonstrated by Jean from Portugal who writes:- *I don't want to waste any of your precious time, but I would just like to say, Thank you for your very prompt, efficient and friendly service. It is a delight to have made contact with you. I wish that all genealogy set-ups were as good as yours. Many thanks.*

In May last year we published our first volume of MIs for Elgin Public Cemetery. This was the oldest section situated in the west of the cemetery, which had its first interment in 1858. This was a fairly awkward burial ground to photograph with memorials pointing in various directions. November saw our latest publication of Dyke Churchyard, which was a very interesting local burial ground. Of particular interest were the Brodie coffin plates. We are of course most grateful to Sandra and Ian Maclennan of Dyke Church for their valued assistance and local knowledge, which greatly helped in the preparation of the book.

So what of the future, well I have been duly warned not to make any rash promises, and that I think is wise advice. However, this coming year we will be continuing our recording work mainly at Cullen, Mortlach and Elgin East. Mortlach is certainly going to provide much to interest us and hopes are high that we may find more buried tombstones of significance. Equally at Cullen, we hope that further research into the infamous Duff of Muldavit memorials may yet yield more of their secrets.

Keith Mitchell (Chairman)

Secretary's Report

Since taking over this role I have tried to keep everything ticking along by dealing with every day correspondence, by snail mail or email, minutes and any other matters within this role.

This year I had much pleasure in corresponding with our new Hon. President, Charles J. Burnett, Esq., Ross Herald Extraordinary. I also helped Helen organise our 10th Anniversary dinner which was a great success.

Following on from comments made at the last AGM, it should be noted that there have been no further communications from Aberdeen University about our enquiry regarding the construction of some kind of electronic machinery for detecting buried tombstones.

You will note from a number of previous AGM Reports that Bruce Bishop's submissions as Secretary were frequently lengthy. Sorry all, I can't compete with that. Come back Bruce, all is forgiven!

Ruth McIntosh (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report

At the end of December we had a total membership of 51 as against 50 for last year and 1 corporate group, a decrease of 1 from last year. This generated an income of £597 in subscriptions, an increase of £29 from the previous year.

Our publishing costs for the year came to £2,228. This was for the reprinting of previous publications and the first issue of Cluny Hill Forres, Elgin West & Dyke MIs. Our total income to the end of December from the sale of publications came to

£2,036 and we had stock in hand to the value of £2,602. Other income came from the sale of Transcripts & Photos, £164; Donations, £140 and Bank Interest of £1.

The above income includes publication, photo sales and donations etc through PayPal to the value of £328.

Other expenditure during the year included Website £114; Insurance £177; Website Guestbook fee £10; Printing (of newsletter), stationery, travel expenses to Edinburgh for SAFHS meetings, telephone, postage, and photocopying £713; Equipment & hire of £133; Subscriptions £55; AGM expenses £30; Sundries amounting to £85; PayPal charges £19; Training Course £10 and Anniversary expenses amounting to £246.

At 31 December 2012 we had a total of £2,584 in the bank, cash in hand of £132 and £146 in our PayPal account.

Irene Black (Treasurer)

Fieldwork Co-ordinator's Report

During the past year we have had 16 group outings, working at, Aberlour, which included St Margaret's Episcopal Churchyard, Elgin (east), Mortlach, Cullen Old Kirk, Kirkmichael and the Michael Kirk. Quite a number of other days have been for checking MI inscriptions and photography only.

One of our first priorities this coming year is to conclude the buried stones at Kirkmichael. MIs at Aberlour and Rathven are finished and await double checking. Cullen Old Kirk and Mortlach are ongoing with MIs and buried stones. Elgin (east) is MIs only but we have about half of it to conclude. Knockando is in the process of final checks for publication.

Group publications were Elgin (west) and Dyke for year 2012-2013. We published Cluny Hill in January 2012, which gave us three MI books in 12 months, which I think is a record.

We took part in an Open Day, organized by Moray Heritage Connections. Duffus (St Peter's) and the Michael Kirk at Gordonstoun were the two sites chosen for our group. Members who took part were kept busy answering questions about the history of the sites and demonstrating how we clean tombstones.

We hope for better weather this year so that our outings are more fulfilling with the work we are trying to achieve. No more having to abandon MIs when the paper is wet (even under umbrellas).

I know we are all another year older but we must keep the enthusiasm going, so bring along your friends. We need new members as well as the "stalwarts" who brave our unusual hobby. We look forward to seeing you all again this year.

Helen Mitchell (Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

Historical Research Co-ordinator's Report

With the books on Elgin Cemetery (West) and Dyke now completed, historical and archival research is now focussed on the burial grounds in the vicinity of Tomintoul and the churchyards of Aberlour, Mortlach and Cullen. Research is also ongoing into the burial ground of St Lawrence Church in Forres, the much earlier St Leonard's Chapel at Chapeltown in Forres, and the church and churchyard of Edinkillie.

Research into the churches and churchyards in the parish of Kirkmichael and the quoad sacra parish of Tomintoul is ongoing, with the church at St Bridget's being of special interest as it is now known that it had its own burial ground. There were also numerous chapels in this remote area, and there is documentary, if not physical evidence, of several other burial grounds in the parish. Historical research into the other burial grounds in the vicinity of Tomintoul is hampered by a lack of surviving records, although an examination of the Kirk Session Minutes for Kirkmichael parish, and for the later Tomintoul parish, is providing some information on the history of this area. Recent events at the Scottish Catholic Church Archives in Edinburgh, which have resulted in the redundancy of the archivist and a virtual closure of the archives, together with the dispersal of the records, has meant that this source of information is no longer conveniently available. Historical research into the histories of Aberlour and Mortlach is now complete, but not yet compiled into a format ready for publication.

The study of the old church and churchyard at Cullen is proving very rewarding. There are indications of a burial ground at the former chapel at Farskane, but the records at this stage are rather ambiguous. This is a site which could only ever be researched from documentary sources, as the owners are unlikely to agree to the demolition of their Cullen Bay Hotel which now stands on the site. This may or may not be the St Charity's Chapel shown on Roy's Maps of the 18th century. There are also suggestions of some burials at Pettinbringen, a fishing hythe as yet unlocated but somewhere on the coast of the parish of Cullen.

Research on the burial ground at St Lawrence's Church in Forres is in its very early stages, but there does appear to be a considerable amount of documentary evidence for the site. The much earlier St Leonard's Chapel at Chapeltown in Forres, where it is almost certain that there are some tombstones beneath the farmyard, is also being studied from documentary sources.

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, Rothes Churchyard and Cemetery,

Cluny Hill Cemetery, Kinloss Abbey, Elgin Cemetery (West) and Dyke. There are also unpublished surveys of the memorials in Greyfriars Convent in Elgin, the churchyard at Altyre and at the burial ground on the Knock of Alves. More recent publications in the "Monumental Inscriptions" series also include details of buried tombstones.

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

(Chairman of SAFHS & Historical Research Co-ordinator of MBGRG)

Webmaster's Report (The MBGRG Website)

Website maintenance is on-going, and regular attention is paid to updating the relevant pages, reflecting the field activities, and publication progress of the Group, e.g. Churchyard Map, Research Progress, Latest News, Publications, Ancestor Indices, etc. Feedback has been very positive from our customers, as reflected in both personal messages and *Guestbook* submissions.

Ancestor Indices Database Additions:

MI abstract records from the following Churchyards and Cemeteries have been added to the on-line database during the current reporting period.

Cluny Hill Cemetery (Forres)

Elgin Cemetery (West) and New Elgin War Memorial Dyke Churchyard, Extension and War Memorial

The Database currently holds records on some 52, 800 named individuals.

Work continues, with abstraction of data for future addition to the databases, and the preparation of Publication Indices. Knockando is currently being processed as of March 2013.

MBGRG PayPal Payment Centre

Requests worldwide, for transcripts, photos and publications have continued, and since instigation of the system, net payments of just over £1,000 have been processed through the website's PayPal system.

Only one report of problems using the system has been reported – pertaining to a payment transaction from Switzerland. A work-around was found, and the basic problem is still under investigation.

Reports

The Annual Report for 2011 – 2012, and Issues 18 (June) and 19 (December) of the MBGRG Newsletter have been added to the site.

The monthly magazine, 'Family Tree', (Issue, September 2011) contains, among many interesting articles, one submitted by member Mary Evans, detailing the work of the Moray Burial Ground Research Group, with particular emphasis on finding, and recording buried tombstone in the Graveyards of Moray.

Following discussion with the copyright holders, Mary Evans and Family Tree/ABM Publishing Ltd, permission was granted to allow us to post a pdf version of this excellent article on the website and this is on-line.

A brief report, on a presentation to our Honorary President, Charles J. Burnett Esq., KStJ, Ross Herald Extraordinary, which took place at Elgin in June 2012 has also been added.

Lindsay Robertson (Webmaster)

Publicity Report

Publicity relating to the MBGRG has been a thing of extremes during the past year. The publication of the Cluny Hill book received virtually no coverage in the media which caused a great deal of concern. Thanks to Ruth who contacted the local papers in reference to publicity, some useful advice for what they are looking for was gleaned and put to good use for future publications during the year. This resulted in excellent coverage in the Press and Journal, Northern Scot and Forres Gazette for the release of the Dyke MIs book.

Working with Moray Connections allowed the group to be involved with the Doors Open Day. This gave the group the opportunity to promote its work at St. Peter's Kirk and the Michael Kirk, as well as being featured in the Press and Journal write up for the day.

The MBGRG has also been featured in the Knock News in relation to work at Cullen Old Kirk and the appointment of Charles J. Burnett, Esq. as the new Honorary President of MBGRG. The group's membership details have also appeared in the Spotlight magazine.

More though needs to be done especially to attract more members. A targeted local approach to publicity related to the areas the group will be working in I see as a good approach, as well as continuing with the Moray wide media. The development of the MBGRG Facebook page will also be a useful tool in promoting the group and its work to a wider audience. Social media has its place in the publicity tool kit and I am glad the group have agreed to use this and other features like QR codes.

Stephen Leitch (Publicity Manager)

And Now For a Little Something Extra

The following are some comments, with a little humour thrown in for good measure, by a few members in memory of what has gone before.

Congratulations for a Fantastic Decade



Ten Years on our Hands & Knees!! This long distance member and researcher has much to thank everyone at the MBGRG for all their hard work.

Best wishes, Nick Hide London.

Kris, Keith, Helen & Sandy trying to decipher an inscription at St Peter's, Duffus

From our very own Publicity Manager – Stephen Leitch

One thing really sticks in the mind while working in Elgin Cathedral cleaning a stone with Mary Mac. It was a table stone on top of a flat tombstone and while we were cleaning the flat I was trying to avoid getting cobwebs stuck in my hair from the table stone above. A brief look up to check all was clear revealed to my surprise writing and emblems on the underside of the table stone. While this brought me great delight, but I think it almost brought on palpitations for Keith and Bruce. I also can clearly recall one day when out at Rafford with the group, standing under a tree in the snow wondering what on earth I was doing there! Was there ever a man like the late Brian Wardle for being able to put back the cut turf from over a buried stone with such skill that you would barely notice it had been removed. And of course Mary 'save the worms' Wardle - something I still try and do.

A Collection of Keith-isms

1. Has anyone seen my camera?
2. Oh come on sun!
3. Could you please move that blade of grass?
4. This could be a Pictish stone!
5. Is this stone blank?
6. Mrs God!

Congratulations – by Marilyn Duff From Down Under

Congratulations on reaching the milestone of 10 years. As you know I live in Melbourne, Australia and as I write we are in the grip of an extremely hot, dry and windy summer. I visit Helen (my cousin) and Keith from time to time and as a Foreign Member have the privilege of joining the MBGRG in their work. I have seen the group carefully search for hidden stones, remove turf and gently wash the grime of ages off an ancient tombstone. Once revealed more work is involved in measuring, photographing, drawing and copying any visible inscriptions. The final touch is to leave the stone as it was found so the turf is replaced and one would never know the area had been disturbed. You note my use of ancient in regard to the stones, one of which I saw uncovered dated back to 1715, long before white settlement in Australia. We have lost so much of our history already as one cemetery I visited here in

Victoria had originally had wooden crosses marking the graves but fires through the area wiped everything out. Now nobody is sure where the graves are.

Battle Cry of MBGRG – by Anon



Is it not wonderful to discover with hindsight that one's little foibles can be a source of amusement in the field, but after all good friends and a sense of humour are definite prerequisites for membership of MBGRG.
Anon II



Any field worker of MBGRG will tell you there is a battle cry which can frequently be heard on outings, namely “Fars ma camera.” Who utters this cry is weel kent by members but must be kept secret from the outside world!!! The above are examples of where the said camera can be found.

Excitement or Disappointment? – by Helen Mitchell



Can you imagine the feeling when I came across a large tombstone to one of my reputed ancestors, John Duff of Muldavit who is supposed to have died in 1404? I had no idea that it existed until we started recording Cullen Old Kirk. The excitement soon changed when I checked The Book of Duffs and found there was no authentic death date for John. Through more research and study of the tombstone it was found that the inscription and engraving had been altered. After researching some books on the subject, Keith & I set off for Duff House Mausoleum to try and find the area where the tombstone had lain after it was removed from the floor inside Cullen Old Kirk. We think we have found the area but that is only part of a much more complicated story. The disappointment felt that we had encountered a massive genealogical fraud was considerable, but hopefully further research may reveal more of this rather intriguing story.

Editor's Note

Well folks that's it for the first ten years, which I must say has been quite an experience. I do wonder what the next ten will bring by way of discovery and whether or not in that time MBGRG will have completed its task of recording and publishing all the burial grounds in Moray. That would be quite a challenge indeed, and more than likely it will take a bitty longer than that. With grateful thanks to everyone for your support.

Keith Mitchell (Chairman)

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