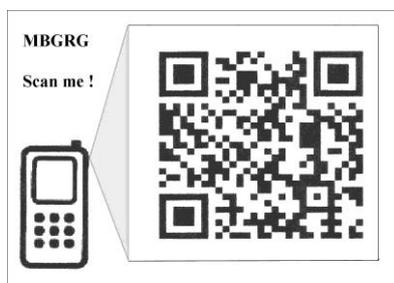


THE MORAY BURIAL GROUND RESEARCH GROUP



ANNUAL REPORT

2018 – 2019



www.mbgrg.org

The Committee of 2018-2019

Hon. President	Charles J. Burnett, Esq.
Chairman	Keith L Mitchell, FSA Scot
Secretary	Ruth McIntosh
Treasurer	Irene Black
Field Co-ordinator	Helen Mitchell, FSA Scot
Ordinary Member	Mary Evans
Ordinary Member	Stephen Leitch
Minute Secretary	Ruth McIntosh

Appointments held during 2018-2019

Auditor	William Windwick
Historical Research Co-ordinator	Bruce B Bishop, FSA Scot
Facebook Manager	Stephen Leitch
Newsletter Editor	Vacant
Publicity Manager	Ruth McIntosh
SAFHS Representative	Karen McGregor
Webmaster	Lindsay Robertson, FSA Scot



Photo KLM

Mary M, Ruth & Helen recording at Buckie Public Cemetery
(on a nice sunny day!)

MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY PRESIDENT



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2018-2019 has been a year of achievement, and a year of sadness.

The Web-master reports increased income from the sale of digital information, and he has been busy answering queries on a world-wide basis.

MBGRG has published two books, *Cullen Volume 1*, and *Cullen & Deskford Volume 2* which are, in my opinion, the best of the Monumental Inscriptions so far produced. The quality and variety of information, along with the range of illustrations, coupled with the high standard of printing and binding make these “must have” additions to any library holding books on Scotland’s heritage.

We share our sorrow with our Secretary Ruth who sadly lost her husband Tosh during the year, and my beloved Aileen passed away in the Marie Curie Hospice in Edinburgh. Both individuals will be sorely missed by families and their many friends.

There is still monumental work to be done in the future, and we must hope for good weather this summer for the recording of inscriptions. We must also increase membership of the Group to share the workload and to provide continuity.

May I wish all members “Happy Recording!” in 2019

Charles J Burnett Esq. KStJ
Honorary President

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In Memoriam



MBGRG is much saddened by the recent passing away of Aileen Burnett, beloved wife of Charles, our Honorary President, and of George (Tosh) McIntosh, much loved husband of Ruth, our Secretary. We send our heartfelt sympathies and condolences to both Charles and Ruth, along with their grieving families.

Chairman's Report

Having now more or less settled into our Livingston home in West Lothian, Helen and I are now gearing up for this years Spring and Summer trips up to our caravan in Cullen. However, the joys of upgrading both house and garden continues to be somewhat stressful, and both of us have got to the point of feeling our age much more keenly.

Unfortunately our Honorary President Charles Burnett will be unable to attend our Annual General Meeting this year. At last year's AGM we had the pleasure of having Charles and his wife Aileen in our midst. However, after quite a long illness, bravely borne, Aileen recently passed away at Marie Curie's Hospice in Edinburgh.

I have also sadly to report that Ruth's husband "Tosh" passed away in February after a debilitating illness. Although Tosh was a MBGRG member for only a short period of time, he significantly assisted with his photographic skills, both inside the historic churches of Cullen "Auld Kirk" and Mortlach Church. George (Seoras), to give Tosh his proper name, was a Queen's Own Highlander and both he and Ruth had many military interests. The funeral service was held at Catto's Funeral Home in Elgin with every seat in the building taken up, largely with military comrades and friends including from across the channel. This was followed by the nearby interment at the adjacent cemetery, where the cortege and followers made their way through a colourful and military style "Honour Guard." Once the burial service was completed, those paying their respects were invited to The Seaforth Club in Elgin for refreshments.

Unfortunately our London based member Nick Hide's wife Katrina has had a very rough time of it health wise. Since early summer last year she has been in hospital continuously up till December when she was discharged, but recently had to go back into hospital for a further operation which she hopes will give her more energy.

To summarize the events of last year's activities is on this occasion somewhat complicated for several reasons, but first of all I wish to offer an apology to those members who receive this report as hard copy and not via the internet. Circumstances are such that I have had to arrange to print out copies on my personal printer, with the result that it is not up to our usual professionally printed standard.

A further apology to all members concerning the Newsletter. Normally we should publish two newsletters every year, but since September 2016 only one other issue was produced in December 2017. Currently the position of Newsletter Editor is vacant, and anyone who feels like taking up the challenge should contact myself or Helen, or any other member of Committee.

As you will see from the Renewal Form there has been a significant change in Membership Categories and Subscription Rates. As some members will be aware, these rates have remained unchanged for a goodly number of years. When the Committee has discussed the possibility of increasing the rates, even just to keep in line with inflation, it has almost been a unanimous decision that they should continue to remain the same.

As there has been a consistent wish to retain these now out of date amounts, a suggestion was proposed and unanimously agreed that a new Subscription Rate of £2.00 per person would be charged, and that all categories of membership would be rolled into one, with the exception of the Institution Rate, which will now be £10.00. As a result of this decision the Group will obviously lose some annual income from subscriptions, but donations of any amount will obviously be welcome, but this is left to member's discretion.

As our recording efforts throughout Moray have now reached a point where the end of fieldwork in general is beginning to see light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, we have begun the process of distributing items such as selected tools and equipment, as well as artefacts. Since our move from Elgin in January 2017, Mary Macdonald has very kindly stored an assortment of MBGRG "stuff" in her garage.

In determining how to put some items to best use, a start has been made by giving our underused measuring pedometer on long loan to members of the Cullen, Deskford and Portknockie Heritage Group for their fieldwork research. Fragments of two rescued gravestones, one from Essil and the other from Moy have been donated to Elgin Museum. At the time of writing we have also arranged to present the museum with Derek Page's marvellous cut-out 17th century flat gravestone, which we have made good use of at several exhibitions which have resulted in a fair degree of enthusiasm by investigative children and sometimes their parents as well.

Last year recording work and other checks took place mainly at Buckie, Broomhill, Clovenside and Elgin (North) public cemeteries, which overall contain a substantial number of memorials both old and new. I am extremely pleased to report that with the exception of the latter, all MIs have now been transcribed and computerized. This has been, if you will forgive the unintended pun, a "monumental" achievement by all participating members who are to be sincerely congratulated for their demanding and conscientious efforts. The majority of Elgin (North) MIs have now been recorded mostly from photographs, although it has proved very difficult to obtain good quality images, mainly due to inopportune weather during most of our visits there. However, with luck, this should be completed during the coming year.

Of course work behind the scenes has continued unabated! With the considerable help and computer skills of our Webmaster, Lindsay Robertson, database checks on all entries have been kept up-to-date. These include, two datasets each for Grange and Rothiemay. After many trials and tribulations, as well as false intended publication dates, including a considerable amount of "midnight oil" being burnt, MBGRG finally managed to publish two volumes of memorial inscriptions relating to the Parishes of Cullen and Deskford. Both these publications are partly the result of a very considerable amount of friendly advice and assistance from many people, particularly from the local community.

From the recording point of view we now have to consider where we go from here! This coming season should see the last photographic checks made at Broomhill, Cabrach, Clovenside, Keith (old), Mortlach (new extension) and St Laurence churchyard in Forres. The last remaining burial ground that is still to be fully recorded is that of Hillhead Cemetery, situated in the parish of Rathven, between Findochty

and Portknockie. This was recently recorded by Jim and Anne Illingworth and published by The Aberdeen & North East Scotland Family History Society. That being so, it could be argued that re-recording this site as being a pointless exercise. However, after considerable discussion it was agreed that MBGRG should produce its own publication based on its original remit to record and publish all MIs within the boundaries of Moray. On the assumption that our plans for the coming year are successful, it then means that most of our future efforts will be concentrated on checking inscription queries, completing where possible our archive of memorial photographs, as well as the main task of getting our remaining research prepared for publication.

On June 1st last year, out of the blue, I received an email from Duncan Michael who hails from Aberlour. He is a drone enthusiast with considerable expertise. Duncan included an aerial shot he had taken of Boharm Churchyard, with the incredibly kind offer that he also had "pictures of Downan, Glenlivet and Inveraven, Ballindalloch and Kirkmichael," and that they were entirely free to use if we needed them. My quick response was obvious! Since then Duncan has gone on to create a variety of aerial stills and video footage from various other burial sites in Moray, and they have greatly helped in our understanding of them in a much clearer and wider context. Indeed one of his photographs is displayed on the front cover of our latest publication on Cullen & Deskford.

After several attempts to clarify the Committee's view of our continued membership of SAFHS, it was finally decided that for several reasons MBGRG would resign from this very worthwhile body that helps to oversee Family Research in Scotland. For further information on this see the Secretary's Report.

On a more positive note, I am happy to report that after a great deal of Committee discussion, as well as meetings held in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, MBGRG finally agreed to sign up to a 10 year Contract with the well known family history website Findmypast. Although this document was signed last September it is still unclear at this point when all our memorial inscriptions and possibly photographs will end up online, nor is it known when we might expect to receive our first royalty payment. However, no doubt patience will win out in the end.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to pay a particular vote of thanks to our Treasurer, Irene Black, who has so expertly and conscientiously carried out her responsibilities in this post since way back in 2004, only one year after MBGRG was formed! However, she has decided that now is the time for her to stand down. Therefore, in the name of all our members past and present, I metaphorically award her a Triple Gold Star and Diploma for all her voluntary endeavours that have benefited us all.

Keith Mitchell (Chairman)

Secretary's Report

As usual I have been busy recording and writing the minutes of group committee meetings. The two publications for the parishes of Cullen & Deskford were released in 2018.

One important decision made by Committee after much discussion was the Group's resignation from the Scottish Association of Family History Societies. To explain why MBGRG took this decision, and the response from SAFHS the following two emails highlight the situation

Resignation from SAFHS

Dear Ken,

It is with much regret that I have to tender the resignation from SAFHS of The Moray Burial Ground Research Group.

Our Committee held a meeting on 22nd October at which membership was discussed at length and the decision to resign was unanimous.

The reasons for this decision are as follows.

- 1) The group has to a large extent got to the end of its main MI recording project and will now largely be concentrating on publishing.
- 2) Due to various circumstances membership of the group has significantly reduced.
- 3) The cost of membership since it was raised does not really reflect sufficient benefits to the group to warrant continuing. This, plus the fact that the insurance costs are, and have been, of no benefit to the group as we have our own arrangements in place for this.
- 4) The expenses incurred for attending SAFHS meetings has proved too costly to make attendance worth while.

The group has enjoyed being a member of SAFHS, but the point has arrived unfortunately where it makes sense to leave.

We wish all our friends and colleagues at SAFHS all the very best and wish you every success for the future.

With best wishes,

Ruth McIntosh,
(Secretary MBGRG)

Response from SAFHS

Dear Ruth,

On behalf of the SAFHS executive I would like to thank the MBGRG group for its contribution to SAFHS while it was a member. Whilst we understand your reasons for discontinuing membership it is always a regret when this takes place. We wish the

group all the best for the future, and look forward to seeing any new publications or work produced by the group.

Best wishes Ken Nisbet SAFHS Secretary

Ruth McIntosh (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report



At the end of December we had a total membership of 35 (35) plus 1 Corporate Group. This generated an income of £377 (£381) in subscriptions. The figures in brackets denotes the previous year.

Our publishing costs for the year came to £458 (£82). This was for the first editions of Cullen Volumes 1 & 2 and reprints of Rathven, Dundurcas, Dyke & Knockando MIs. Our total income to the end of December from the sale of the publications came to £714 (£258) and we had stock in hand to the value of £1314 (£1,448). We also made £270 (£364) from the sale of PDF files.

Other income came from the sale of Transcripts & Photos £63 (£81); Donations £171 (£78) and Bank Interest £1 (£1).

The above income includes subscriptions, publications, PDF files, transcription & photo sales and donations through PayPal to the value of £510 (£527).

Other expenditure during the year included Website expenses of £293 (£251); Insurance £185 (£178); Printing, Stationery, Travel, Telephone, Postage, and Photocopying £505 (£634); Subscriptions £35 (£120); AGM expenses £36 (£65); PayPal charges £28 (£30) and Sundries £34 (£109). At 31 December 2017 our total funds in the bank amounted to £2974 (£2951).

Irene Black (Treasurer)

Fieldwork Co-ordinator's Report

Cullen and Deskford monumental inscriptions have now been published in two volumes. Preparing both publications was both a time consuming and complex procedure. Buckie Cemetery transcriptions have been completed, including the modern section situated a little distance away from the main area. The Moray local heritage plan of the site initially caused some confusion. Originally most of the rows in the large section were divided into four parts. These section breaks have more or less now been filled in by post 1978 burials. The overall result of this confusion has unfortunately resulted in most of the memorials having to be renumbered. This process was extremely complicated and took an inordinate amount of time to complete with over 2,450 stones to collate along side the Libindx numbers.

The large Clovenside Cemetery in Forres has now surprisingly been completed. The MI recording was done by several members, but to a large extent was the result of the efforts of Bev and Dave Marsden and Reg and Paul Nessling. Both Reg and Paul also produced a comprehensive Index.

This coming season MI recording will take place at Hillhead, Portknockie, and all going well, should be completed by the end of the year.

Helen Mitchell (Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

Webmaster's Report **(The MBGRG Website)**

Some routine updates have been made to individual website pages, and the annual SSL certificate was updated and installed. (Note: SSL Certificates are small data files that digitally bind a cryptographic key to an organization's details. As installed on our web server, it activates the padlock and the https protocol and allows secure connections from the web server to a browser. Typically, SSL is used to secure credit card transactions, data transfer and logins). Forced access is also in place, and the old web address for MBGRG (www.mbgrg.org) automatically redirect to the secure <https://mbgrg.org> site.

The previous Annual Report for 2017/18 was added to the website. Normally the bi-annual Newsletters would also be added, but due to a variety of pressures none were issued during 2018.

The website Ancestor Indexes, have been updated to include all records from two recently published MI Booklets. These volumes include Cullen Cemetery, Cullen and Deskford Cemetery and Cullen War Memorial (Vol 1), and Cullen Old Kirk and Churchyard, Deskford Church and Churchyard and Deskford War Memorial (Vol 2). With those sites included, the website currently has abstracted grave stone details on nearly 85,000 individuals.

This work continues in collaboration with Keith and Helen, and abstracting and checking data for Elgin Cemetery (North), Grange, Grange Extension, and Rothiemay Churchyard and Cemetery is underway.

Some sales of transcripts and related tombstone photographs have been made, but most sales were of our MI Booklets, all now available in the popular digital PDF format. To date, 213 copies of such PDF format files have been sold through the website 'Quotation Request' facility.

Total income generated since website sales were instigated in April 2010, has now reached some £3,300 although this figure also includes some Membership Fees, and donations.

Lindsay Robertson (Webmaster)

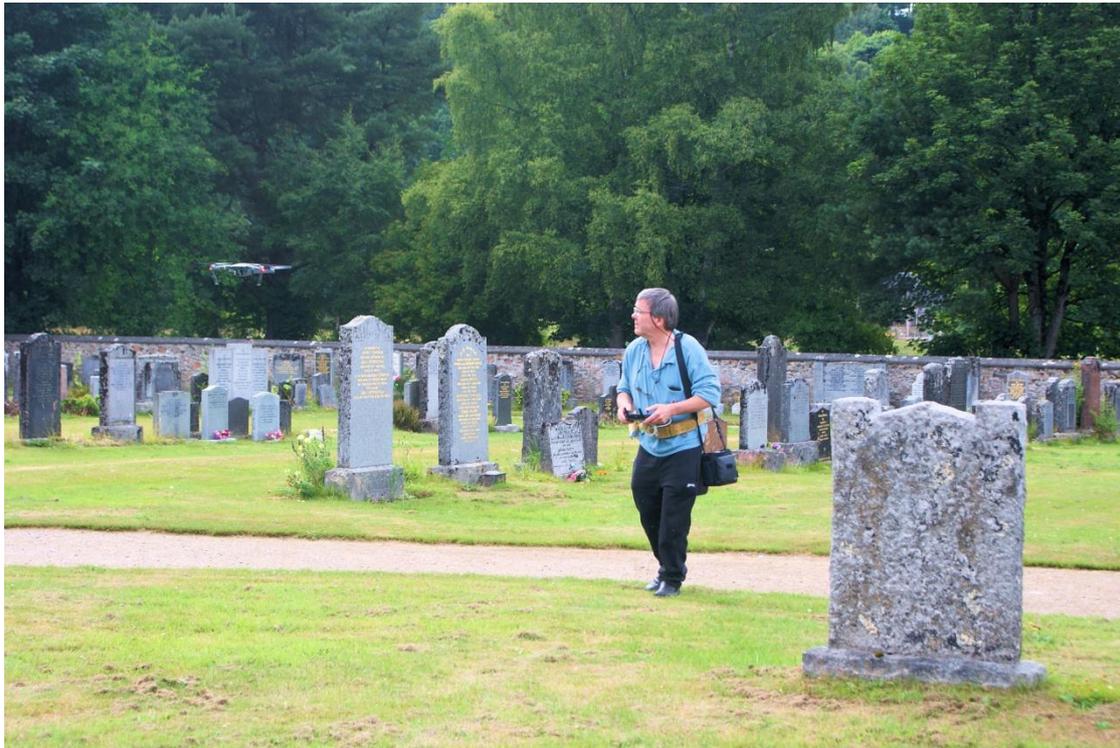


Photo KLM

Duncan Michael demonstrating use of his drone at Aberlour



Photo by Duncan Michael

Knockando Parish Church & Churchyard

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