

Newsletter

FRA BIRT TO GRAIF



NA REST WE HAIF - 1571

Issue 10 - - - May 2008

(Currently published twice a year)

Well at last it has arrived! What I hear you possibly ask? The answer simply is that *your Newsletter* is celebrating its first little major numerical birthday, as this is the **10th Issue**, representing 5 years of publication. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed any of the articles and reports during that time, as well as to those involved with its actual production. Please keep the entries coming, remembering that a well written *one liner* may be just as relevant as a two page article.

For practical reasons it has been agreed that future issues of the **Newsletter** will be sent to you in May and November, instead of April and September. This should mean that members and other readers will get a more even spread of publications throughout the year. Over the coming months your new editorial team (Keith and Alan), will be looking at ways in which the presentational style of the current Newsletter can be improved. If you have any views or ideas about this, please tell us ASAP. Please also let us know if you are willing to download the Newsletter from our www.mbgrg.org website, rather than get a posted version. This is to help reduce ever increasing publication and postage costs!

Recent Events



On the 26th of January, Keith and Helen hosted the annual MBGRG party, at which 17 members attended. From the gales of laughter coming from the main party area, it would seem that a good time was had by all.

One of the special treats of the evening was a visit from member Sue Rennison who talked and jollified things along from her current home in Vancouver. This was all made possible courtesy of SKYPE technology, which allows you to talk with, and at the same time see the person you are talking to— all for FREE, anywhere in the world. One of the other treats of the evening was the grand display of food and drink, largely provided by all the guests. This included the marvellous chocolate Skull Cakes creatively decorated by Stephen, as illustrated above, who also provided Graveyard paper serviettes of all things!

Elgin Cathedral – MI Recording Work is now completed

On Sunday, 4th May, 18 members of the group who had previously helped to record all the visible tombstones inscriptions at this ancient site, were rewarded with a memorable time in the history of the project. Most of the day proved dry and warm, although the sun did not make an appearance till we were in the process of packing up. Par for the course as they say!



Members who participated in the cleaning and recording of gravestones at Elgin Cathedral having their photograph taken by a Northern Scot photographer.

Almost all the work concentrated on cleaning and recording stones in or around the area of the High Alter, and the group was visited by reporters / photographers from both the Press and Journal and The Northern Scot. For the record it is worth mentioning that over the past two and a half years the group has made 46 visits to clean and record inscriptions at the site, plus another 20 for additional photography. Checking of computerised printouts of the inscriptions is still ongoing, and this will probably entail a few extra visits to the cathedral over the next few months. Now comes the really hard bit of putting all the information into a presentable format and also getting the money to do it!

Glad to be back (Mary Wardle - Member)

After being in England for over a year it is great to be back, especially for the last day at Elgin Cathedral. With Brian I had been there at the beginning and I was glad to be there at the end. It was a day of sunshine and laughter and enjoyed by us all.

Since being back I have again visited Dallas, sadly rained off at lunchtime. Also Dundurcas, a place that I would never have found on my own, was fascinating. But best of all was a quiet afternoon with Janet Campbell at St. Peter's. Janet cleaning table tops and myself, on hands and knees, cleaning the moss off flats. An hour and a half later having cleaned two blanks I struck lucky and found an inscription. It was easily read and dated 1708. Once more I have been at the start of a project and hope next year I shall be able to continue to work there. I still have one more week here and hope there will be more surprises in store.

Humour Corner

Sue Rennison is well known in Group circles for her somewhat individual taste in jocosity. She recently emailed several 'Grave' related jokes, of which the following three are a sample.

Harry Edsel Smith of Albany, New York : Born 1903-Died 1942. Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was on the way down. It was.

In a Silver City, Nevada cemetery:

Here lays The Kid. We planted him raw. He was quick on the trigger, But slow on the Draw.

In a cemetery in England:

Remember man, as you walk by, As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so shall you be. Remember this and follow me.

To which someone replied by writing on the tombstone:

To follow you I'll not consent. Until I know which way you went.

Assistant Editor Appointed



Further to appeals for help in the production of our Newsletter, member Alan Wills, has been appointed Assistant Editor. Alan is a former Grampian Police Officer and on retirement was for many years Security and Transport Manager for Gordonstoun School, and lately a Director of The Moray Society. His valued addition to the *team* is greatly appreciated.

Already Alan's ideas about changes to the layout of the Newsletter are bearing fruit, so if you have any comments – good or bad – about the Newsletter, please don't hesitate to let Alan or myself know. Without constructive feedback, it is difficult to know whether or not we are on the correct editorial track.

You can easily contact him by email at assistanteditor@mbgrg.org

Moray Churchyard Monumental Inscription Updates

As a result of our policy of photographing every tombstone MBGRG members transcribe, it was deemed a good opportunity to use the results to recheck all previously published transcriptions in the following churchyards:- Alves, Birnie, Botriphnie, Kinneddar, Pluscarden and St Andrews – Kirkhill. This decision was largely taken as a result of photography proving to be of such immense value when double-checking handwritten and computerised transcriptions. Currently Alves, Birnie and Kinneddar have been completely digitally photographed, while work is in progress at Pluscarden and St Andrews – Kirkhill. At this stage it is not known when work will start at Botriphnie Churchyard.

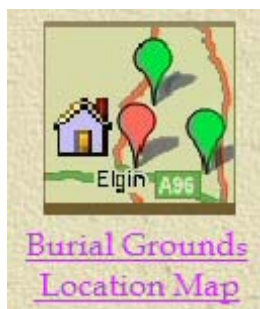
As a result of this work, the old churchyard and new cemetery of Alves was republished in A4 format last November, using the MBGRG formula of recording every part of each inscription '**as is**,' so that no part of the text is missed out, all being deemed to be of historical and genealogical value. In January a

similar publication on Kinneddar old Churchyard was published, while Birnie old Churchyard and New Cemetery, came out in April.

In an attempt to get round all the problems of laboriously creating Indexes manually, our Webmaster, Lindsay Robertson now has at his disposal a very useful computer program, which now means that all future MBGRG Indexes will be *Zapped* out in almost less time than it takes to read this Newsletter. While this method is far superior in production terms to manually produced versions, we have discovered that this procedure still throws up various anomalies and errors. In light of this, Moira Winwick and Simone Vansittart very diligently went through the Kinneddar and Birnie Indexes and their efforts have proved most useful.

Currently there are no plans to republish these volumes on a commercial basis, but copies of Alves and Kinneddar are available for reference at the Moray Local Heritage Services Centre in Elgin, the Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society library, and at *Register House*, Edinburgh. Kinneddar is also available at Lossiemouth Public Library. The Index to all the photographs can be searched on the MBGRG website at www.mbgrg.org.

MBGRG WEBSITE GOES 'GOOGLEY'



Our website has always had a location map, showing Moray, and its geographic position in Scotland. Other OS extract maps showing the location of some of the burial sites are also included.

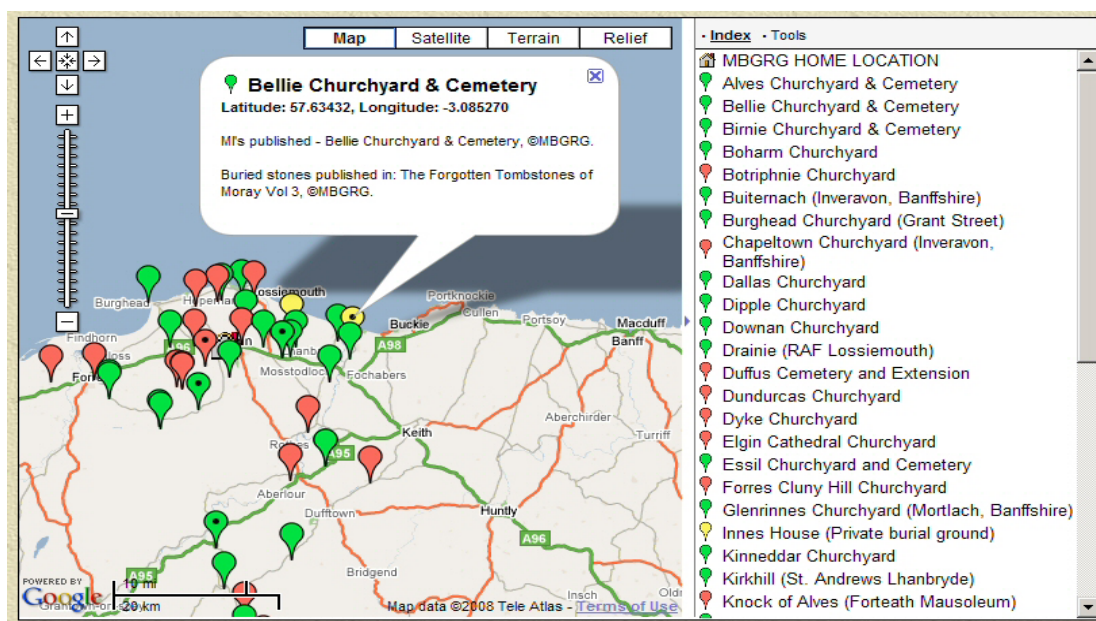
However, as technology has moved on, it has been decided that the inclusion of a 'Google type' map would have several benefits for both our website users and to MBGRG. Our home page now includes this link to our new interactive map.

User benefits are:

- Users accessing the map, immediately see a geographic distribution and list of all the sites we have researched, or are currently researching, and get a better feel for just how active the Group is.
- By clicking on a specific coloured marker, or on any list item, a 'balloon window' opens giving geo-reference location details, publication status, and additional comments as appropriate.
- Extensive zoom levels allow users to precisely locate sites, and view the map in map (as below), satellite, terrain or relief styles.
- We know from Guestbook submissions that many of our users, and particularly those from overseas, plan to visit the area for genealogical reasons – hopefully this display method will help with their tour planning.




Benefits to the Group:

- This is much easier to maintain and update, than previous map display methods.
- The map has been purposely placed in the public domain, and as such will be found, by anyone doing 'Google Map Searches' with appropriate key words. Hopefully this will result in better site hits for the Group and increase our general site exposure.



Google MBGRG Map

KEY: *Note: War Memorials are denoted by a coloured marker with 'dot'.*

-  Churchyards, Cemeteries and War Memorials fully researched, with all monumental inscriptions having been published by the Moray Burial Ground Research Group (MBGRG) or Aberdeen and North-East Scotland Family History Society (ANESFHS). Abstracted MI details are available on our [on-line 'Ancestor databases'](#), which includes both visible and buried stones, [searchable by surname or maiden surname](#) for all burial grounds, or by specific burial ground.
-  Localities where work is currently in progress by MBGRG members, recording and/or photographing monumental inscriptions from both visible and buried tombstones.
-  Items or locations, which fall out with the above categories, but which have been photographed.

Key to Google MBGRG Map

Australian Anecdote Recounted by our Hon. President, Betty Willsher at the AGM

Coober Pedy in Outback Australia is known as 'the opal capital of the world' but is very remote being hundreds of miles from the nearest town. Because of the high summer temperatures most residents live underground where the temperature remains fairly constant, unlike in the few buildings which need permanent air-conditioning.

In the settlement graveyard there are many gravestones of miners of all nationalities. The grave of Karl Bratz (1940-1992), a hard-living local miner, is notable for a beer keg on top of the gravestone and inscribed 'Have a Drink on Me.'

Bratz left his fortune to his mates for them to have a few drinks on him but unfortunately on his death it was discovered that his debts exceeded his assets. However his mates saw him off in style with a great 'wake' and the empty beer keg remains to this day.

(by **Bruce Bishop** – Historical Research Co-ordinator)

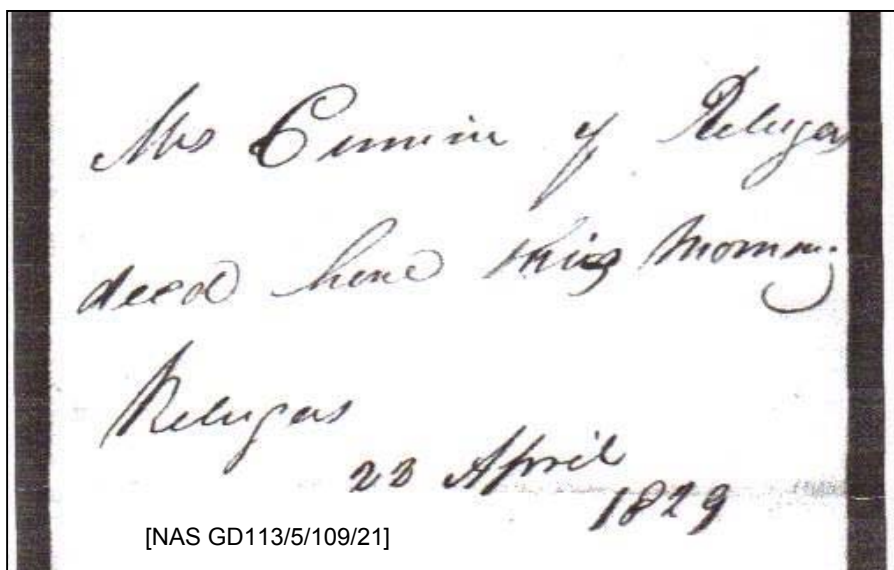
(by **Bruce Bishop** – Historical Research Co-ordinator)

Mort cloth Accounts - Rothes OPR [GRO(S) Parish Ref 141]

newspaper notices and obituaries, and our course, our raison d'être, Monumental Inscriptions.

Death Entries - Dyke & Moy OPR 1674
[GRO(S) Parish Ref 133]

Very occasionally one can come across the gravedigger's notebooks. These are sometimes held in the National Archives along with the Kirk Session Minutes, some are held by the church, and some are passed on from one gravedigger to the next. It is quite interesting trying to track these down, and even



in these modern times you may find that the “wee mannie” on the digger in the graveyard has a pocket-book full of useful information. Some quite interesting conversations can result from a few simple questions.

Newspaper notices and obituaries tend to favour the better off, as they really did not come into general use until after the 1855 Registration Act. Some of the better-off families, however, even as early as the

1770’s would put mentions of deaths in the newspapers, and it is also possible, by reading through the “Local News” section, or its equivalent, in these early papers, to find other mentions of deaths. If you are seeking a particular death you do, of course, need to have a good idea of the date, and beware, it is so easy to get sidetracked into wasting many hours reading the other articles in these old papers!

Very rarely you may find personal correspondence relating to a death, such as this brief intimation written from Relugas in 1829.

And then of course there are Monumental Inscriptions. These will only, of course, relate to those families who had enough money to actually employ a monumental mason to inscribe and erect a tombstone. The one advantage of the Monumental Inscription is that it will often refer not just to an individual but in many cases to an entire family, and in some cases gives a great deal more detail than a simple death record. These MI’s are usually recorded in bleak, windswept churchyards on cold and sometimes even snowy days, by groups of eccentric volunteers. I will refrain from using the term “idiots” as I am one of them. Many churchyards and cemeteries across Scotland have been or are in the process of being recorded and published, but out of over 3500 sites in Scotland, many of them remote and isolated, only about 25% have so far been documented. There is still a lot of work for the future.

And Now A Word From Our Controller - (by Helen Mitchell - Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

There is not much to report since the AGM as the weather has been against us. We may have to change the starting times to slightly later, to allow the weather to clear somewhat. This is due to the fact I have cancelled 3 visits lately as it was wet at 8.30am and by 10.00am it has cleared up and been clear and sunny. If you have any views of time changing please contact me.

Progress report on sites are as follows;

ELGIN CATHEDRAL: See report on Elgin Cathedral.

DUNDURCAS: MIs now completed and work carries on with buried tombstones. Spring should be a good time to work there, as it is such a lovely area sited on an outcrop overlooking the Spey valley.

DUFFUS: the MIs have now been completed, and the next stage is indexing and checking.

DYKE, FORRES, LOSSIEMOUTH: the MIs are being recorded by individual members Jeanne & Ronald, Ann and John respectively, as and when they are available.

MACALLAN: we are waiting for a starting date, once we have completed Dundurcas.

DALLAS: Work on buried tombstones has now started, although the first visit was a short day as the heavens opened as usual and we had to abandon work. The second day was beautiful and we got a further seven stones, one of which was dated 1694.

DUFFUS OLD (St Peters): This appears to be a popular site. It is very old and lots of table and flat stones to clean. Permission from Historic Scotland has been granted for MIs and buried stones only up to a depth of four inches to be recorded.

SUMMER OUTING: During July / August we are thinking of a day trip, armed with paper, pencil, suntan lotion and perhaps the umbrella thrown in for good measure, to record MIs at Chapeltown, Inveravon. Because of the distance we need to make it a full day. We are also hoping to end the day with some form of "Bar Supper" type meal, or similar, so that costs and other arrangements will have to be arranged.

If you are interested please let me know when you are free. It may be a difficult time of year because of holidays but we have to make the best of the daylight for transcribing and photos. If enough people are interested it may be possible to hire a bus.

Very Old Buried Tombstones found at Dundurcas



Rev. John Marshall's tombstone - 1651

During April, two very old buried tombstones were found very close to each other. The first is extremely worn and the largely incomplete text informed us that it recorded the burial of the Rev John Marshall. However, thanks to the complimentary historical research of the area by Bruce Bishop in his recently published book, *The Lands and People of Moray*, Vol. 32 *The Parish of Dundurcas*, we now know that this minister died in 1651, making his tombstone one of the oldest so far recorded by the group. "The following is an extract from Bruce's book:-

Robert Leslie became minister of Dundurcas in 1595, and served the parish for six years until his removal to Birnie in 1601. Again the church was vacant for some years until John Marshall became minister in 1605, serving the parish until his death in 1651. A later document reveals that by 1640 the lands of Dundurcas were divided into five 'parts'. Four of the 'parts' belonged to the Earl of Rothes, whilst the fifth 'part', the one mentioned many times in later documents, was owned by the Cummings of Earnside in the parish of Alves. In 1650 this fifth 'part' was disposed jointly to John Marshall the Minister of Dundurcas, and to James Gordon in Collie and Bessie Marshall his spouse, she being the daughter of the Revd John Marshall."

One of Several Complimentary Comments on our MBGRG Website

Allan Collie (New Zealand)

What an excellent website with such a lot of great work being undertaken by the Moray people...well done....I'm a New Zealand Collie with strong links to Moray.

**Scottish Association of Family History Societies
AGM & Council Meeting Edinburgh 15th March 2008
Report by MBGRG Delegates, Keith & Helen Mitchell**

We arrived at the Gillis Centre in good time for lunch which consisted of soup and sandwiches, which was enjoyed in the comfortable surroundings of well-appointed dinning-room. Both the Council meeting and the AGM were well attended, and debate from the floor was moderate but useful.

Due to unfortunate illness the Treasurer was not present, and as a result a variety of important matters were not available for discussion. Indeed, at one point it seemed possible that the meetings would have to be abandoned; however, members agreed to continue with the proceedings. As MBGRG delegates, however, it did seem somewhat surprising that the funding details of the Association had not been made available beforehand. As new delegates, we were also slightly at a disadvantage, not having the minutes of two previous meetings from which matters arising were discussed.

The Chairman thanked The Highland Family History Society for the interesting and enjoyable SAFHS 2007 Conference, held in Inverness and that had attracted some 150 delegates. However, no mention was made of any of the problems that some Groups had experienced there in relation to the running of stalls, such as had been experienced by MBGRG.

After the retiral of Peter Ruthven-Murray, President of SAFHS, member Societies were asked to discuss and put forward nominations for the next President. Diane Baptie, who had resigned as Bulletin Editor, was thanked in absentia for her services. Ken Nisbet was re-elected as Secretary, and Janet Bishop was elected as the new SAFHS Bulletin Editor. So it was good to see that MBGRG now had two of its members in positions of authority on the SAFHS Council.

There appeared to be some concern voiced by various delegates that some member societies had not received invoices for subscriptions or for their insurance payments. It was also intimated that SAFHS could no longer offer to act as agents or intermediaries regarding personal insurance cover. Bruce Bishop informed the meeting of the insurance arrangements used by MBGRG, which appeared to stimulate some interest.

With regard to the Graveyard Working Group it was reported that the 2nd Edition of the CD would be available by the time of the October 2008 Conference, and that apart from some very small areas of Scotland, the database was nearly complete. After discussion the price of the CD was suggested as either £9 or £10, the final decision to be made by the Executive Committee members. As a result any missing information should be made available to the group as soon as possible.

There was quite a bit of discussion with regard to the SAFHS website. Aside from the Chairman indicating that it was “not fit for purpose,” delegates in general voiced a fair degree of disquiet on the lack of progress being made to update the site. Various delegates including those from MBGRG, took part in this debate, and a variety of positive suggestions were made from the body of the hall.

MBGRG Annual General Meeting

On Sunday 9th March, a very successful 5th Group AGM was held in the Gallery of Elgin Library, thanks very largely due to the helpful assistance of our Publicity Manager, Stephen Leitch. A total of 23 members and guests attended (*not bad for an AGM of this type I think*), including our ever enthusiastic Hon. President, Betty Willsher and her daughter Penny, who had travelled up to Moray by car. The business section of the meeting went very smoothly and was completed well within the allotted time. Two items of specific interest are worth noting here. First, the Committee as a whole was re-elected for a further year, with the exception of Naomi Appleby. We thank Naomi for all her past efforts on behalf of the Committee and wish both her and Robert well in their new home in Alvah not far from Banff. Stephen Leitch was elected to the Committee in her place. The second item of note was the proposed amendment to the Constitution which was agreed by all, there being no dissenters. As a result I can announce that Subscription Rates will not be raised at next year's AGM. Anyone who therefore wishes to propose Subscription Rates changes for the year 2010-2011, should make their thoughts known at next year's AGM.

After light refreshment (tea, coffee and biscuits), courtesy of Bruce, Stephen and Helen we had the pleasure of experiencing two talks of family and local historical interest. As a result of pre-AGM advertising, a further 12 visitors were welcomed to the meeting. First we had a well researched talk about the Earls of Rothes given by Syd Watt, which was ably followed by Donnie Stewart who gave us an insight into his own methods of family history research.

Articles for the Newsletter (by Alan J Wills – Assistant Editor)

With a view to improving the Newsletter over coming issues it would be helpful if contributors could send their copy in plain text format. Text can be sent by any method, typed sheet, email or handwritten if the contributor prefers. If photographs are to be included then could they be separate from the text. In the case of emails photographs could be sent as attachments. I appreciate that it might cause extra work but I hope to use a special program that gives me better opportunities to lay out the Newsletter in a different format. Separate photographs out with the text of an article will allow me to resize and enhance photographs using Adobe Photoshop 7.

Please do not wait until the next Newsletter is due before you send in your articles. If something of interest suddenly comes to mind commit it to paper and send it to the Editor or myself by post or via email. The next Newsletter will be laid out as soon as possible after the previous one is printed which will hopefully ease the last minute rush to get articles sent out. I hope to build up a supply of articles that could not be included in a Newsletter due to their length for example, and these will then be included in following Newsletters again relieving pressure on contributors.

I can be contacted at the following email address assisteditor14@yahoo.co.uk or through the email link on the Group webpage.

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