



# The Moray Burial Ground Research Group

## *Newsletter*



*Issue 23 - July 2015*

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# Editors Note

How fast time flies, it only seems like the other day when I was producing the last edition. Unfortunately, due to a variety of circumstances, I have not been able to take much part in proceedings as of late so I have for my part added a few articles that may be of interest. However, we have some very interesting submissions from our members this month which I hope you'll enjoy, and even a crossword to get the 'little grey cells' working.



*Derek C Page*

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**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!

Front Cover: *St. Peter's Kirkyard, Duffus*  
© Derek C Page Photography MMXIV

# Message from the Chairman

by Keith Mitchell

For any member who may not be too sure about the age of the Group, this is our 13th year of operations in the recording and publishing of Monumental Inscriptions in Moray. Why do I mention this? Well, between you and me, although I am by no means superstitious, it is fair to say that our efforts in burial grounds such as Cullen New, Elgin South and Grange Churchyard, have been greatly hampered by the misfortunes of Lady Luck this year.

First the weather department. Despite what the weather forecasters may have told us, many weekends in Moray, particularly on Sundays have oft times been wet or miserable, and certainly not conducive to recording MIs. Cancellations so far this year have been frequent and that is one reason why we have had to try and organize group outings on any suitable day it is dry.

Second, this year has been very difficult in getting enough members to make going out for a day's recording worth while. Although there have been a couple of outings where we had a reasonable turnout, some have been reduced to a mere handful, while

others have been completely cancelled. Recently as some of you will know, the Northern Scot very kindly gave us a half page, including space for two photographs in an attempt to enlist the help of new members. Guess how many responses we have received so far – Yes indeed, you guessed correctly, Nil, None, Zilch and Zero. Very disheartening to say the least, particularly when we know that our volunteer efforts are so very much appreciated in various corners of the world.

Over the years various appeals have gone out verbally and via Newsletters and Annual Reports, but this time it is more important than ever that we try by whatever means to stop the rot. At the AGM I highlighted this issue and as a result we got a selection of comments and suggestions which the Committee have been analysing. However, it seems that maybe one simple way of increasing our recording team is simply by word of mouth. So please, please please, in conversations you have with colleagues, friends, relations and neighbours, do not be afraid to mention the work of MBGRG. Even three or four new people would make a world of difference. Thank you for reading this!

## *Guess the site....*

Can readers give a location for this cemetery?

Answers to  
[secretary@mbgrg.org](mailto:secretary@mbgrg.org).



Answer in next newsletter.



# MBGRG Member Mary Evans awarded the MBE

Wednesday 1st July 2015 was definitely a day for recording in the family archives!

Having been awarded an MBE in the 2015 New Year Honours List 'for voluntary service to people with dyslexia in Scotland' the 1st of July was the day of the Investiture at the Palace of Holyrood House. I could take three people with me so in addition to my husband I could take only two out of our four adult children and 17-year-old twin grandchildren. As it worked out, coming as it did on a Wednesday and in term time, only our older son Daniel and younger daughter Helen were able to make the day.

We drove into the forecourt of Holyrood between 10.00 and 10.15 as instructed and were then separated as recipients were kept in a nearby room until we went in one by one to receive our award. The ceremony began at 11.00 and was held in the beautiful green and gold Great Gallery and as I stood at the door waiting my turn to step inside I could see the sun shining in at the huge open ceiling-to-floor windows and hear the string orchestra playing in the background. It was lovely!

It was only as we were being briefed beforehand that we were told that it would be the Queen herself who was giving the awards. We were all busy trying to remember our instructions – walk forward, turn to face the Queen, curtsy, receive the award, chat, shake hands, take two steps back, curtsy then walk away – but the moment passed off without a hitch!

What was really wonderful and made the day very special was that despite all the security checks and all the ceremonial aspects with the Archers lining the room, the Lord Chamberlain and the

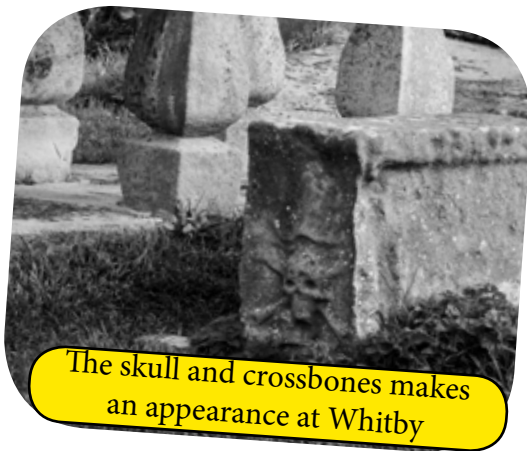
Equerries in their uniforms and countless others in various elaborate uniforms, all the many people who were working very hard to make the ceremony go smoothly and through whose hands we had to pass at the various stages made sure that it was all a very relaxed and happy occasion.





# Whitby

The imposing ruins of the famous Whitby abbey are an amazing site to behold, and make for a truly enjoyable visit. Lesser known, however, is the adjoining St Mary's church and churchyard. Towering over this site is the fantastically detailed carved Cædmon Memorial cross erected in 1898 in memory of England's first named poet who lived in the 7th century AD. According to Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, Caedmon was a lay brother at Streonæshalch monastery (now Whitby Abbey) who had a dream of a poem sent by God and, after taking his monastic vows, went on to produce many more poems.



The skull and crossbones makes an appearance at Whitby



The Cædmon Memorial Cross in St Mary's churchyard, Whitby



A line up of old gravestones in Whitby Abbey

# MORAY – Thank You



The advance in technology since the end of WW2 could almost be described as frightening. How fortunate we the community are that we now have a resource such as the internet, which has made us so global, made so much information readily and immediately available, and removed the tyranny of distance.

As a youngster, here at the bottom of the world my family regularly holidayed on the old family farm at Scarsdale, near Ballarat, Victoria, Australia. The first owner when the land was settled in the late 1850's was James Young who had emigrated from Scotland, the son of a provost of Elgin. All families have early stories and so I thought I would try to validate the claim.

The internet opened the doors which would not have been available a mere few years ago. I ascertained that Alexander Young was Provost of Elgin in 1839-40 and as the timing appeared right, I sought further death and burial information for Alexander. Our Australian connection James Young was born in Elgin in 1822, married in Forres in 1849, had a penchant for alcohol and apparently a good fight in the Plough Inn at Elgin in late 1851. As the 'black sheep' of the family he departed shortly thereafter for the antipodes and the good of Scotland, financed by his father, or so the family story goes. A slight problem though, Provost Young was apparently not married and the death certificate for James highlights that his mother was unknown. But he obviously had money for the venture.

So logically I turned my internet search in the direction of Elgin. I contacted the Moray Burial Ground Research Group Webmaster Lindsay Robertson. Even with wonderful technology and good and reliable infrastructure, reputation can be still controlled by personnel and how fortunate I was with Lindsay. Not only were his email replies quick and efficient they were extensive and full of information which I craved. I got the impression that he was keen to assist which I welcomed (and enjoyed). Having spent many years as a Trustee of Ballarat's two large cemeteries, and being presently involved photographing the headstones of the rural cemetery where James Young is buried I have

an empathy with MBGRG, and salute the volunteers who record and photograph the memorials. I am well aware of the work and commitment involved and required.

Lindsay also steered me in the direction of the Moray Council's Local Heritage Centre, and their LIBINDEX online genealogical research website.

I availed myself of both those services to my great satisfaction and received very prompt email replies from Sharon at the Heritage Centre and processed purchases, but it made me aware of the necessary infrastructure behind the scenes and the number of 'backroom' people of whom I am not aware required to bring requests to fruition. It felt like 'christmas' and all the presents were coming in my direction. How pleased and fortunate I was that James Young came from Moray and not elsewhere.

The Scotland's People website was another invaluable resource, and while further trawling the internet found photographs of Moray and tracked down their origins to Nancy Whyte, a family history researcher with particular interests in Moray, with whom I also corresponded. Nancy too was much forthcoming with local information and corresponded regularly to my benefit.

I am staggered by what I could achieve from the convenience of my house 'down under' late at night, but it is only because of the wonderful and amazing resources and initiative emanating from Moray. So in that vein I say a genuine thank you to Lindsay and MBGRG, Moray Council and LIBINDEX and Nancy Whyte. Not only has your infrastructure been brilliant, the personal contact has been an absolute pleasure and speed of your correspondence amazing. I thank you all – my search has been an absolute pleasure, well rewarded because of the resources made available to me, from you. I am astonished by the breadth and depth of the local research facilities available and the success achieved, and that has given me a distinct affinity with Moray to the degree that in future years I would like to visit.

I sincerely thank you all once again,

Peter Butters

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# Strange Symbols

We are all familiar with the standard symbols of Mortality & Immortality along with various trade and guild markings on our earlier stones, but sometimes more unusual unexplained symbols appear. The grave of the Reverend Ichabod Wiswall is one such stone. It is located in Duxbury, Massachusetts and although the winged skull is familiar, the addition of what appear to be two cephalopod on either side are somewhat unusual. Duxbury does lie on the sea, however, so it may be locally symbolic. The second is from the grave of an iron ore miner in Ohio. The symbol looks like a cross between a fist and a skull with either a figure or a flower coming from the top?

And finally, back

to the UK, and this unusual tomb in London showing a snake, a mirror and another object behind. Any suggestions from the readership?



Caring for God's Acre's began as a pilot scheme in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1997. In May 2000 it became an independent charity, extending its geographical area to cover the Diocese of Hereford.

Due to demand for its support CfGA amended the constitution in 2008 to allow work outside the Hereford Diocese. It also extended its remit, continuing with its initial focus on nature conservation within churchyards and burial grounds, but also developing a commitment to lifelong learning, and a greater understanding of the built environment, and of the role of churchyards in tourism.

This inclusive approach to the conservation and enhancement of churchyards and burial grounds has encouraged local interest groups such as schools, history and wildlife groups, and individuals to become involved in community projects based on these sites.

Caring for God's Acre is unique in terms of the focus and remit of its work.

# Pupils study graves as part of history project

Report by Thomas Morton

**GRAVES** may be silent, but they will be saying plenty to a group of youngsters who are taking part in a history project.

Children from Lacon Childe School, near Cleobury Mortimer, are helping to document and preserve the graveyards of local churches – and learn about the people who lived in the area in days gone by.

The Heritage Lottery-funded project has been launched by South Shropshire Youth Forum, a charity that works with young people aged between 11 and 25.

The Forum has teamed up with Lacon Childe School, as well as Caring for God's Acre, a charity that champions the conservation of churchyards and burial sites across the British Isles.

Pupils will be trained in taking care of and recording the gravestones at Hope Bagot and Kinlet churches before putting the information on the Historic Graves' national database.

The project is currently running one day a week and finishes in June, culminating with a community event at which people will have the opportunity to look at the children's findings.

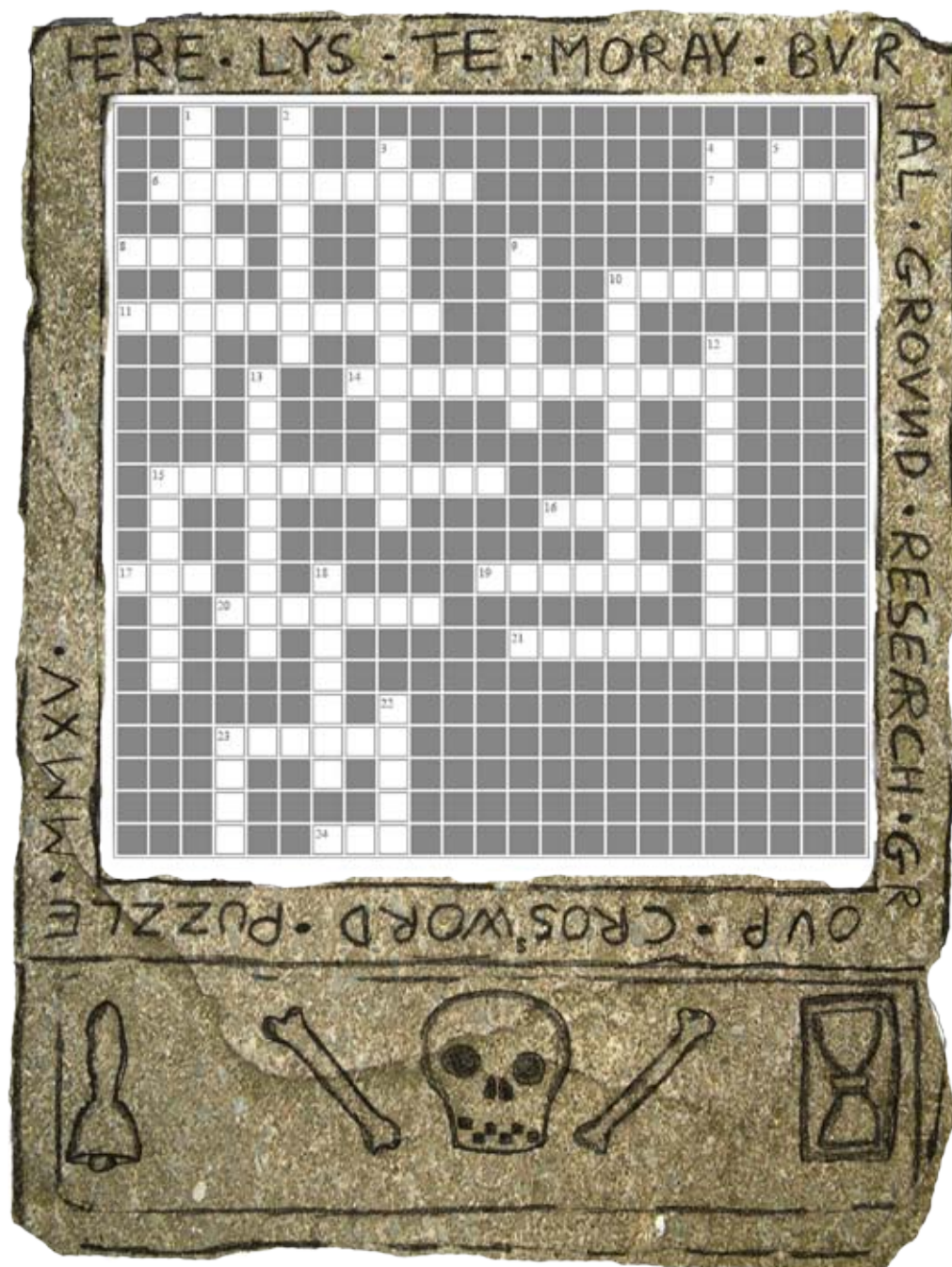
Richard Morley, chief executive of South Shropshire Youth Forum said: "We are really excited about this new project, it will give the pupils an opportunity to explore why graveyards special and important places are for both people and wildlife.

"Apart from recording gravestones we will also be investigating the people who lived in the past and interviewing local people with stories and knowledge of these sacred spaces."



Ed Sharrad records a gravestone at Hope Bagot with South Shropshire Youth Forum's Sandra Edwards

<http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>



#### Across

6. The burial process(10)
7. Tool for locating buried stones (5)
8. Unit of apothecaries' weight (4)
10. More recent than yesterdays (6)
11. Bill was not a bad mason (10)
14. Wood grouse (12)
15. A Fisheries Museum is here (11)
16. Castle near Forres (6)
17. Our booklets have lots of those (3)
19. Fungus and algae living together (6)
20. Not to be relied upon (7)
21. Ruined building in Elgin (9)
23. Where is it? in MBGRG parlance! (6)
24. By-name, or golfing accessory (3)

#### Down

1. The study of family history (9)
2. Describes an old device perhaps (8)
3. Type of stone weathering (12)
4. Not recorded after 1855 (3)
5. No skin here (5)
9. Place of worship (6)
10. Memorial with two ends (10)
12. Part of alphabet after latest info (10)
13. Building with internment space (9)
15. Useful resource from MHC (7)
18. Abbey or former RAF station (7)
22. Certainly not small (5)
23. This memorial is not vertical (4)

Solution in next issue

# Two of Scotland's more remote burial grounds

Bruce B Bishop FSA Scot, ASGRA

As the genealogist and local historian on board the research ship “Polar Pioneer”, for a 12 day cruise with 48 passengers from various parts of the world, all anxious to see where their ancestors originated, I was able to visit several remote islands and the burial grounds which had been in use for generations.

The archipelago of St Kilda, “the islands on the edge”, some 40 miles west of the Outer Hebrides

to individuals and families who were able to trace their ancestry back to a time before the island was evacuated in 1930, and may not represent actual interments, except possibly of ashes. Due to the very shallow soil in the cemetery, in most cases the bodies were laid in a shroud, on the rock, and the soil and sand was formed into a mound above the body, as is clearly visible in the photograph. Local rocks, uninscribed, were used as headstones and



The Cemetery on Hirta, St Kilda.

and constantly battered by the Atlantic gales, are now inhabited only by the men at the occasionally-used army rocket range and by some temporary conservation volunteers on short-term visits. But the main residents are the innumerable, inquisitive, and very comic puffins. It was quite interesting landing on the island in a 10ft swell in Zodiac inflatables, but well worth the effort despite a thorough soaking.

There are only 6 inscribed tombstones in the cemetery which lies at the back of the ruins of the village on the main island of Hirta. These seem to be dedicated

footstones.

Another site which was visited was the Old Farm at Jarlshof, on Shetland. The burial ground here occupies what was the courtyard of the old farm. The old farm associated with the ‘Earl’s House’ went out of use in the first decade of the 19th century, so the burials there must date from sometime after about 1810. There are two suggestions as to

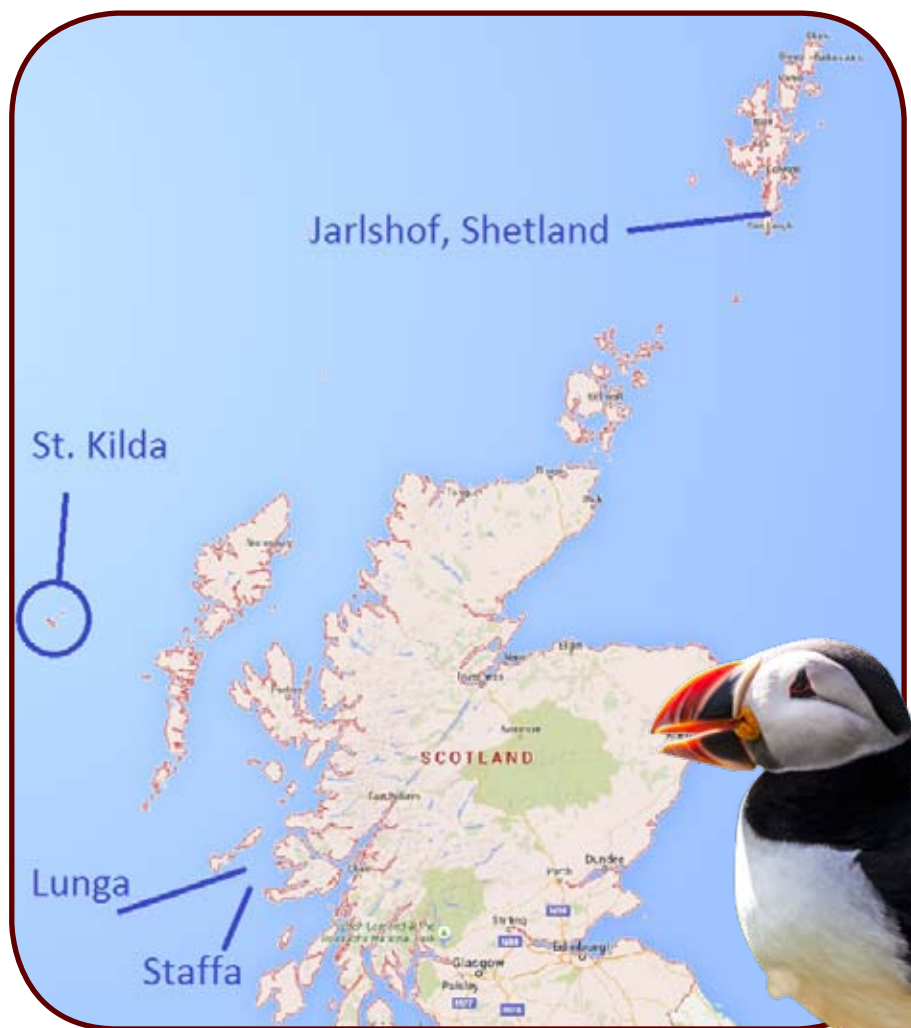


The burial ground in the courtyard of the old farmhouse at Jarlshof, Shetland

why these burials did not take place in the local churchyard at Dunrossness, one is that they were victims of a shipwreck on the shore beneath the old 'Earl's House', and it was convenient to bury them there, the other is that they may have been burials following an outbreak of Cholera in the area, probably in the 1830's.

There are no written records which can either confirm or deny either of these suggestions, but the lack of any inscriptions or even initials on the rough stones maybe suggest that the former reason for the burials is the most likely.

There were also many more similar sites which may have indicated earlier burial grounds, on Lunga, on Staffa and on several other islands, but time and tide prevented a more detailed examination of these places.



## **Press release for Fife Grave Stones Conference 2015**

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### **FIFE GRAVE STONES CONFERENCE, 14 NOVEMBER 2015, KIRKCALDY**

Gravestones and graveyards offer fascinating insights into past lives and the ways in which different societies have dealt with death and burial over the years. The sixth Fife Grave Stones Conference which takes place in Kirkcaldy on 14th November brings together half a dozen experts whose insights are guaranteed to be informative, thought provoking and entertaining.

This year's speakers and their topics include Dr. Margaret Bennett: 'Regional variations in Scottish burial customs', Martyn Gorman: 'For the security of the dead', Dr. Richard Fawcett: 'Scottish Medieval Canopied Tombs', Thomas Elliott: 'Scotland's Epidemics'; and Frank Hay & Len Saunders: 'The Briggers – Forth Bridge casualties'.

In addition to the talks, there will be an exhibition where a dozen stallholders will be offering books, CDs and other relevant products for sale.

The conference takes place at Kirkcaldy Auld Kirk, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy, KY1 1EH on Saturday 14 November, from 10.00 a.m. till 4.00 p.m. The cost for the day, which includes lunch and coffee as well as attendance at the talks, is only £15. To book a place, please contact Anne McIntyre, 73 Harcourt Road, Kirkcaldy KY2 5HF. Please make out cheques to Kirkcaldy Civic Society. For further details phone 01337-831403 or email [hughhoffman@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hughhoffman@hotmail.co.uk) or go to [www.kirkcaldycivicsociety.co.uk](http://www.kirkcaldycivicsociety.co.uk)

The event, which has taken place every 2-3 years since 2004, is organised by Kirkcaldy Civic Society and Fife Family History Society, with support from Fife Council and Crosbie Matthew Funeral Directors.

# The Cost of Dying

By Bruce B Bishop FSA Scot, ASGRA

We all know that the cost of a funeral is increasing, but how expensive was it over two centuries ago?

The lists of Funeral Charges for Edinburgh St Cuthbert's [the West Kirk] were well-publicised back in 1788, and it was also shown just what everyone received as their share of the fees. The Recorder [the Session Clerk], the Grave Digger and the Beadle all got a fee, and a proportion also went to the Poor's Fund. Of course, the Pauper's Burials are not included in this table, and generally the Parish paid a total of between 8d and 1/0d for each poor's burial.

How comparable this is with other parts of Scotland is not clear, as very few of these lists have survived.

## Funeral Charges in 1788 Parish of St Cuthbert's Edinburgh

	Recorder	Grave Digger	Beadle	Poor	Total
Full spokes, turff & train	1/0d	7d	1/3d	8d	3/6d
Full spokes & turf, no train	8d	7d	1/3d	8d	3/2d
Full spokes without turf or train	4d	7d	1/3d	7d	2/9d
Half spokes, turf & train	1/0d	5d	11d	6d	2/10d
Half spokes & turf, no train	8d	5d	11d	6d	2/6d
Half spokes without turf or train	4d	5d	11d	6d	2/2d
A child's corps in arms with a turf	6d	5d	7d	6d	2/0d
A child's corps in arms, no turf	3d	5d	7d	6d	1/9d
A large turf	3/6d	2d	1/0d	2/0d	6/8d
A small turf	1/9d	1d	6d	1/0d	3/4d
A Hearse Burial	2/6d				
A Coach Burial	6d				
To the Sexton for all Children's Burials in arms					8d

"The Session appoints the Clerk to extract a copy of the above table and deliver it to Mr George Innes in order to have it painted in oil paint on two boards, one to be fixed up at the West Church [St Cuthbert's] and the other at the Chapel of Ease for the inspection of all concerned".

National Records of Scotland CH2/718/24/255

# CAPTAIN NEIL MCEACHARN AND THE VILLA TARANTO

(by Keith Mitchell)



Normally when Helen and I are on holiday we frequently end up migrating to a churchyard or burial ground of some description. Last year while making a tour of Hitler's infamous so-called "Eagle's Nest," we popped in for a quick walk about in the local churchyard of Berchtesgaden as reported in a previous Newsletter.

This year was somewhat different. Our "MBGRG" continental tour was slightly reduced in numbers on this occasion with just ourselves and Gordon &

to the Earls of Galloway and it was purchased by Neil's father Sir Malcom McEacharn in 1908 after giving up a very successful career as a shipping magnate and Australian politician.

Captain McEacharn appears to have been a multi-millionaire, and in 1931 he purchased the mansion house and estate, which he named "Villa Taranto," after a Macdonald ancestor, a Marshal of France, who had been given the title of 1st Duke of Taranto by Napoleon. For about 10 years McEacharn set about significantly transforming the landscape of the 40 acres estate, which was opened to the public in 1952. Amongst many other attributes the Villa gardens now contains about 20,000 plant types. These are accessible via some four to five miles of paths and we walked most of these – slowly it must be added and with several stops to admire the view, or rest. It was an extremely hot, sunny day, so a very slow walk with lots of beautiful things to look at was a tranquil moment or two in life to enjoy. Along with the mansion house where McEacharn died, is a little chapel where a large sarcophagus style memorial to him is situated. The



Irene for company. Graveyards were only viewed occasionally and in passing through the bus windows. However, on a separate excursion Helen and I discovered an interesting memorial to Scotsman, Captain Neil McEacharn in the beautiful botanical gardens he created known as the Villa Taranto on the shores of Lake Maggiore in northern Italy.

Captain McEacharn was the son of Sir Malcolm McEacharn of Galloway House which is now a Category A listed building in Sorbie, Wigtonshire. The estate originally belonged



inscription on one line reads:-

1884 - ANTONIO NEIL BOYD WATSON  
MCEACHARN - 1964

In the gardens not far from the tiered area of flowers is a memorial bust of McEacharn on a carved stone pedestal. The inscription on this reads as follows.

1884 NEIL MCEACHARN 1964 CRATORE  
DI QUESTI GIARDINI DA LUI DONATI  
ALL ITALIA, which if my minimal Italian and  
intuition is correct translates as 1884 NEIL  
MCEACHARN 1964 CREATOR OF THESE  
GARDENS DONATED BY HIM TO ITALY.



# Preserving the past

It seems even in our current day where our history is better preserved than ever before, that there still remains a lack of preservation for gravestones. Whilst buildings are generally better protected from degradation, we have seen on many occasions stones that are literally falling apart. Some are due to the type of material used, with stones splitting along natural fracture lines causing slabs to just fall away (usually the front carved face) creating a few instances of impromptu jigsaw puzzle solving in the field. Others may be due to natural erosion by the elements such as those shown on the cliffs of Whitby where the sea air laden with salt has had a really detrimental effect on the stone. Some stones here have been eaten right through in places and toppled!



This is the gravestone of William de Roos, 1255-1316, once an unsuccessful claimant to the Scottish crown, at Kirkham Priory, Yorkshire. It is hidden beneath an old piece of plywood out in the open.



Gravestone erosion on the hills of Whitby





Fordyce Kirkyard  
© Derek C Page Photography MMXII

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