

THE MORAY BURIAL GROUND RESEARCH GROUP



ANNUAL REPORT 2014 – 2015



www.mbgrg.org

The Committee of 2014-2015

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	Moirra Windwick
Ordinary Member	Stephen Leitch
Minute Secretary	Ruth McIntosh

Appointments held during 2014-2015

Auditor	William Windwick
Historical Research Co-ordinator	Bruce B Bishop, FSA Scot
Facebook Manager	Stephen Leitch
Publicity Manager	Ruth McIntosh
Webmaster	Lindsay Robertson, FSA Scot

St Michael's Roman Catholic Church War Memorial



This photograph was taken while the Group carried out MI recording and survey work at Tomintoul during July and August 2014



MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY PRESIDENT

Another year has passed, and yet again, the members of MBGRG can take pride in what has been achieved in terms of gathering information and making it available to the general public.

By the time of the AGM four books will have been published including one, *Michael Kirk/Gordonstoun* which, for the first time, carries a photograph of every memorial recorded. I am personally delighted that carved stones of heraldic importance are also included!

Apart from published material in book form, MBGRG is moving with the times to produce a selection of books [and out of print material] as PDF files available for downloading.

During the year a most complimentary letter was received from abroad praising the help and advice given by our Webmaster, Lindsay, who continues to work on a daily basis answering queries. The Group now possesses a remarkable corpus of genealogical information which is freely made available to all with Moray roots.

Summer 2014 will be remembered as a real period of sunshine and warmth which makes for smiling faces during fieldwork. Let us hope 2015 will also provide the weather to keep up the good work.

May I wish you a fruitful and rewarding Season to come!

Charles J. Burnett
Ross X.

Chairman's Report



The fallen cross in the above photograph featured in last year's August issue of the Newsletter. Ruth gave us the details about Private William McKenzie of the 5th Scottish Rifles (Cameronians), who was killed on 17th December 1916. Aside from the fact that his name is carved on the imposing memorial designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens at Theipval in France, little or nothing has so far been discovered about Private McKenzie. His name is almost lost amongst the more than 72,000 men who gave their all during the various battles of the Somme between July 1915 and February 1918. It is worth noting that this memorial is completely reserved for soldiers who have no known grave. Inscribed on the memorial in words which in a most poignant manner express the full meaning of the horrors of the war that this cenotaph commemorates.

HERE ARE RECORDED / NAMES OF OFFICERS / AND MEN OF THE /
BRITISH ARMIES WHO FELL / ON THE SOMME BATTLEFIELDS / JULY 1915
FEBRUARY 1918 / BUT TO WHOM / THE FORTUNE OF WAR / DENIED THE
KNOWN / AND HONOURED BURIAL / GIVEN TO THEIR / COMRADES IN
DEATH.

Initially we discovered the cross almost entirely covered by leaves and tree roots in a very sorry state of neglect. Although not a Commonwealth War Graves memorial, it is indeed a sad thing to consider how this soldier came to give the ultimate sacrifice and yet in a future time become so utterly forgotten that a memory of his priceless gift to us lies in such an inglorious manner.

An appeal last year through the Northern Scot, unfortunately brought no new information about this forgotten soldier. However, after discussing the problem with Ken Kennedy of the Moray Lands and Parks Department, he arranged to have the offending tree removed. This in a way was a pity as it is always sad when trees have to be destroyed! As can be seen from the photograph, the cross shaft now lies over the tree roots which are quite substantial. So what comes next?

Ideally it would be best if the tree roots could be removed completely and the cross somehow re-erected in some suitable way. This is still under discussion, but we first have to establish the precise lair record. If this project could be achieved during the coming year, it would perhaps be a fitting that some form of military ceremony was held, say on the 100th anniversary of his death.

Also reported in the August Newsletter was our own Helen's "Scottish Civic Champion's Award" which she received from Derek Mackay MSP at The Lighthouse, Glasgow on 27th April. This award was and is most certainly well deserved, as it reflects the very considerable and tireless efforts she has made over the years on behalf of the Group.

During this last season the work of recording MIs in the field continued at a reasonable pace, although for quite a while we struggled at times to get enough members to do the necessary. However, as usual we did manage to accomplish a fair amount. Latterly we were in contact with members of the LDS Church and a number of them came out as a separate group and took part in a number of recording sessions at New Elgin (South Section). It has been agreed that if they wish to continue their volunteer work, they can finish recording the whole of North Section which they started last year. This new area contains a very large number of modern memorials.

Cullen New Cemetery, Cullen & Deskford New Cemetery, Deskford and the three burial grounds at Tomintoul, along with Rothiemay all have been more or less straight forward from a recording point of view. We hope to finish all of these early in our forthcoming season and head for pastures new such as at Grange, Inveravon and perhaps Edinkillie. At the ancient site of Deskford we soon discovered that sometime in the past, most of the older tombstones had been removed, with several 18th century table-stone tops being decanted to a dump area at the rear of the ruined church. This is quite maddening as they have been stacked in an upright position, so that almost all the inscriptions are hidden from view.

Particularly over the winter months a great deal of backroom work has been undertaken for the publication of three of our new MI books. These are the modern public cemetery of Burnside at Rathven, the old Churchyard of Rathven and the Michael Kirk & Gordonstoun School. Rathven old and new burial grounds were of interest in several ways, one in particular being the frequent use of Tee-names, used by the local community to distinguish people

with the same surname. The Michael Kirk book is a new venture in publication terms. One of the reasons for re-recording the MIs was that we wanted to include photographs of every memorial for our Website archive. Although only a few extra burials have taken place since it was last recorded in 2002 by Bruce Bishop for the Aberdeen & North East Scotland Family History Society, it was felt that it would not be worth trying to produce another version of basically the same thing. Therefore the idea of publishing photographs of each stone and carving both inside and outside the church seemed a good idea. While we were preparing the book, we received permission to photograph and publish several memorials in and around Gordonstoun School, so it seemed worth while rethinking our plans. Getting the whole thing printed at a reasonable cost, proved problematic but a trial run was produced by our own Derek Page. However, the cover caused something of an additional problem and in the end we got a small run printed a very reasonable price via two local firms jointly.

There seem to be moves afoot on a national basis at last to genuinely recognize the importance of "Ancestral Tourism" in Scotland. One of the key aspects of family history research must surely lie within our burial grounds, both old and new. Moray in particular is blessed with a very valuable and ancient heritage when it comes to many of its churches and churchyards which hold a treasure-house of information that in some cases dates back to the 15th century. Sadly many of these memorials have been much neglected in the past, but a realization of their true worth is gradually making itself known amongst the wider community.

Through the auspices of Moray Heritage Connections (MHC), Helen and I have lately been trying to stimulate interest in the possible creation of some form of Heritage / Church & Churchyard Trail and discussions are ongoing with the folk at Knockando Woollen Mill about the prospect of some form of joint co-operation later this year. I suspect it is a case of "Watch this Space." Perhaps the Tourist Industry in general needs to take notice of people like Peter Butters in Australia who in dealing with Lindsay our Webmaster and the Local Heritage Centre at East End School said:-

"As with my experiences with Lindsay, their staff were so professional and helpful with their resources, and efficient and quick in mailing out purchases. I was in awe. No exaggeration, my treatment from Moray has been exceptional, to the degree that several years down the track, I hope to visit."

Keith Mitchell (Chairman)

Secretary's Report - Publicity Report

In the last year I have completed all the usual day to day tasks as required by the secretary post. I have also been involved in researching two old soldiers

who are buried in Elgin East Public Cemetery. The first was Duncan McDonald (Old Balaclava) who served with the 93rd Highlanders and was part of the Thin Red Line. He served 21 years in the Army gaining two Good Conduct medals and retired to Elgin where he died in 1905, receiving a Military Funeral on his passing.

The second was Lieutenant Colonel William Rennie VC who was born in Bishopmill in 1822 and is reputed to be the first man in Moray to win a Victoria Cross. He died in 1896 just weeks after buying himself a house in Duff Avenue.

Both these bits of research helped to get an article in the Northern Scot to publicise the Elgin East publication.

We also received through our Webmaster Lindsay Robertson, a letter of thanks from Peter Butters in Australia who was full of praise for all members of the group. I contacted Sarah Rollo from the Northern Scot who gave us some publicity by giving us a write up containing part of Peter's letter which was published in the paper in mid January.

Ruth McIntosh (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report

At the end of December we had a total membership of 48 (58) and 1 corporate group. This generated an income of £551 (£680) in subscriptions. The figures in brackets denotes the previous year.

Our publishing costs for the year came to £845 (£402). This was for the first issues of Aberlour, Elgin East and the Michael Kirk MIs, also for reprints of Aberlour. Our total income to the end of December from the sale of the publications came to £1,243 (£907) and we had stock in hand to the value of £2,037 (£2418).

Other income came from the sale of Photos, £140 (£237); Donations, £108 (£60); Auction of Stamps, £29 (£105); Raffle, £22 (£20); Recycling Cartridges £4 and Bank Interest £1 (£1).

The above income includes publication, photo sales and donations etc. through PayPal to the value of £154 (£367).

Other expenditure during the year included Website expenses of £214 (£172); Insurance £183 (£177); Printing, stationery, travel expenses to meetings and Family History Fair, Dunfermline, telephone, postage, and photocopying £829 (£329); Equipment £72 (£164); Subscriptions £75 (£75); AGM expenses £37

(£41); Sundries amounting to £173 (£91); PayPal charges £11 (£22); and Annual Dinner expenses amounting to £61 (£142).

At 31st December 2014 our total cash/bank funds amounted to £2955 (£3357).

Irene Black (Treasurer)

Fieldwork Co-ordinator's Report

Another year passes and we have achieved about the same amount of work as previous years considering the number of "recorders" is diminishing and of course the weather plays a large part in our ploys. New cemeteries are now inclined to be recorded from photographs as a mark of respect, as there are a lot more visitors tending their loved one's memorial. It can even be difficult doing photographs. Apart from Mortlach we have not had buried tombstones.

Mortlach : Three outings. We have finished recording the churchyard but have the new cemetery to do. There are also a few photographs on the top part to do so that we can finalise checking the typed MIs. The buried stones gave us a few problems trying to decipher text but as usual we did our best with as many "Heads" as possible working on these problems. See Keith's report in the last newsletter, on the narrowest tombstone in Moray found to date.

Cullen New : Three outings. The largest problem here was trying to formulate an up-to-date plan. There have been so many new memorials added since the 1970s that it caused us quite a few headaches. However, after a lot of effort Ruth and I managed to get it all sorted out. It is a very cold place to work on top of the cliff and we have to brave the elements again this year for at least one more day to finish the recording. The modern Cullen and Deskford cemetery situated beside the top boundary of Cullen is in the process of being recorded completely from photographs.

Deskford : Two outings. These were very successful days as we managed to complete most of the older section. Chris & Peter, of Deskford, are currently in the process of recording many of the newer memorials, as they are unable to be with us during the summer months.

Elgin South : Nine outings. This cemetery is not being rushed as we are keeping it for shorter days. Some of the Elgin branch of the LDS Church members have done some recording for us and they are now working in the North Section of Elgin Cemetery.

Rothiemay : Three outings. Many of the stones here are badly encrusted with lichen which causes a lot of recording problems; however as usual we do our best. The church contains quite a number of memorials inside. The new section on the nearby hillside may probably be done by photographs.

Tomintoul : Three outings. St Michael's Roman Catholic Church and churchyard has been completed and checked. The Parish Church recording is complete but checks still have to be completed once we are able to get a sunny day to photograph the memorials in the top half of the churchyard. The Extension is complete. We hope to publish these burial grounds along with the old Kirkmichael Churchyard later this year.

Keith, Lindsay and I have spent many many hours preparing Burnside, Rathven and the Michael Kirk for publication. Rathven is at the printers now, the other two we have in stock.

This year we will also be working at Grange and Inveravon if all goes to plan.

Helen Mitchell (Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

Historical Research Co-ordinator's Report

The publication of the MI books for Rathven parish is now imminent, and the historical research into Cullen churchyard has been completed. The majority of the research over the past year has been directed toward the parishes of Fordyce, Deskford and Rothiemay.

Research into the churches and churchyards in the parish of Kirkmichael and the quoad sacra parish of Tomintoul is also ongoing, but very slowly as much of the information is not contained in the ecclesiastical documents, but in the papers of the Gordon and the Seafeld families, which between them comprise over 8,000 boxes of documents held in the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh. Fortunately they have been very well catalogued, but it is still time-consuming selecting the relevant information, and then waiting for the documents to be provided. The church of St Bridget at Tomintoul is of special interest as it is almost certain that it would have had its own burial ground, and is subject to further study.

There are some briefly-documented sites such as those at Phona - an early chapel with a Burial Ground which was in use before 1760; Nevie or Chapel Christ - the site of an early chapel and Burial Ground probably used mainly by the Catholic congregation and washed away by the river during a flood at

some date prior to 1760; Deskie near to Downan, and also Achbreck. These sites lie in the rather sparsely populated area which includes the northern part of Kirkmichael parish and the southern part of Inveravon, which was the sanctuary area provided for the Catholics by the Dukes of Gordon following the proscription of that church after the various Jacobite risings.

There were also numerous smaller local chapels in this remote area, often serving little more than a handful of crofts, and visited occasionally by the itinerant priest or minister. Some of them may have had small burial grounds, but there is now little physical evidence of these sites and much more work is required on these.

Research for Fordyce, Deskford and Rothiemay has revealed a very typical north-east Scotland history for these sites. Fordyce is a historic site, from the 6th century with a church dating from 1272, and rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries before being replaced by the present church in 1804. Deskford was erected as a parish in 1545, formerly being part of Fordyce, and the chapel which was noted there in 1542 achieved the status of a parish church in 1545. The new church was built in 1872. The church of Rothiemay, dating originally as a place of worship back into the 6th century, was demolished in 1752, but the footings of the walls of this church are exposed in the graveyard.

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, Glenrinnes Burial Ground, Buiternach Burial Ground, Dallas Churchyard, Duffus New Cemetery and Extension, Dundurcas Churchyard, Macallan Churchyard, Chapelton R.C. Churchyard, Tombae R.C. Churchyard, St Ninian's at Chapelford, St Peter's at Duffus, Rothes Churchyard and Cemetery, Cluny Hill Cemetery Forres, Kinloss Abbey, Elgin Cemetery (West), Elgin Cemetery (East), Elgin Cemetery (South) Dyke Churchyard and Cemetery and Knockando Churchyard. Soon to come are Rathven Churchyard and Rathven Burnside Cemetery. There are also unpublished surveys of the memorials in Greyfriars Convent in Elgin, and at the burial ground on the Knock of Alves.

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 (Historical Research Co-ordinator)

Webmaster's Report (The MBGRG Website)

Items added to the website include details of the Civic Trust Award presented to Helen Mitchell, the Annual Report for 2013/14, Newsletter Issue 22, a recent Northern Scot Press article and a new web page highlighting our currently running MBGRG MI Publications sale offers.

The Ancestor Indexes, have been augmented with the addition of abstracted data from the MI Booklets relating to Aberlour, Elgin Cemetery (East), and Michael Kirk at Gordonstoun. These free to use, on-line searchable records now contain information of some 64,000 named individuals.

Various Indexes for inclusion in MI Publications have been prepared, including the three mentioned above, and more recently those for Burnside Cemetery and Rathven Churchyard Publications which have just become available.

Work continues, in collaboration with Keith, on the preparation of PDF versions of our MI books, and eight are now available. These are for Boharm, Chapeltown and Tombae, Dundurcas and Macallan, Kinneddar 2008 Resurvey, Michael Kirk and Gordonstoun School, St Ninians (Chapelford), Burnside (Rathven) and Kinloss Abbey. The Alves and Birnie unpublished updates are currently being processed.

Boharm is available as a free sample download, while the others are or will be, available for purchase via the website as usual – It is perhaps worth noting that St Ninian's (Chapelford) and Dundurcas & Macallan and Kinloss are now out of print, and are currently only available in PDF format.

Our first sale of a PDF version, yielded this response from Grant Edwards, one of our Canadian customers.

"Thanks for prompt processing of order - I have already been using the PDF version of MI Kinneddar and must say that it works great. Having it in digital format makes it easy to search for dates, keywords, full or partial names, etc. Especially since some of the inscriptions are damaged so names may be incomplete and scanning for full name you will miss the record. Please consider porting over the other documents to PDF as well."

Sales of transcripts and related tombstone photographs have been a little disappointing this year, but some £250 worth of sales have been made.

We now have access to 1Tb (Terabyte) of OneDrive Cloud storage, and this is being used as an additional security backup for the MBGRG photographic archive created by Keith Mitchell. Due to the relatively poor broadband

speeds in Elgin, I have agree to manage this procedure from Aberdeen. At this time, there are some 61,500 churchyard photos stored there, together with copies of the MI PDF files mentioned above, and various web-site and database backup files, to which both Keith and I have full access. It is hoped I will be able to update this in the near future, with copies of additional photos Keith has taken since the original lengthy upload was carried out in September 2014.

Lindsay Robertson (Webmaster)

Newsletter Editor's Report

I have been privileged over the last few years to be the Editor of the group's newsletter after Keith asked if I'd take on the role and thought it about time to include something for the Annual Report this year. With a background in graphic design and print, and a keen photographer, I decided to gamble a bit and try out a new style for the newsletter which, thankfully, seems to have gone down well.

We obviously like to get a good variety of articles into each edition, whether it relates to the current activities of the group or to a specific find from one of the sites we're working on, but also to add variety from out with our area when regardless of where we go on our holidays we always seem to end up in a graveyard! However, we are always in the position of trying to get enough articles together to make it a worthwhile edition which, over the last few issues, has inevitably resulted in delays.

The questionnaire that has recently been sent out to all members has had some very positive returns, and I thank those who responded with their comments. The general consensus is to keep the print run to two editions a year, which I am happy to organise. Ideas suggested for input in future editions has also been gratefully received and will be looked into to increase the variety within the editions.

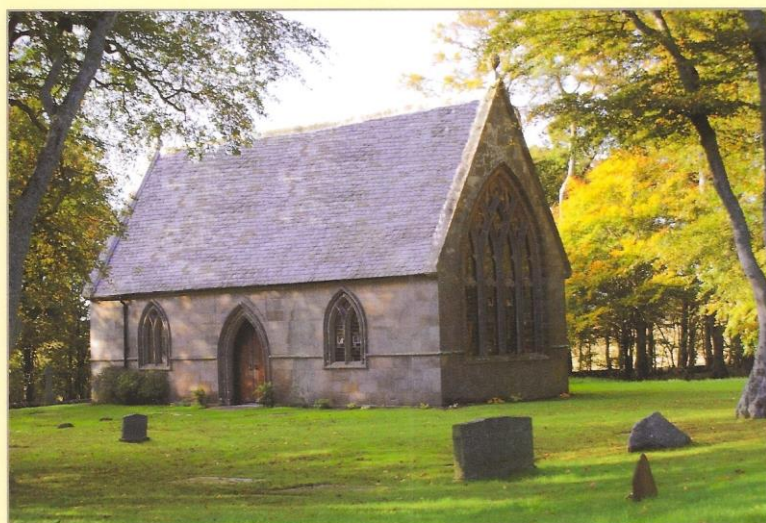
The next edition will be due out in spring after the AGM, so there's still plenty of time to send in anything you'd like to include. May I just take this opportunity to thank all members for their continued support of the group.

Derek Page (Newsletter Editor)

One of Our Latest Books
The Michael Kirk & Gordonstoun School

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS
(Including Buried Tombstones)

The Michael Kirk
and Gordonstoun School
Moray



Compiled & Edited by

Keith L Mitchell, Helen Mitchell
& Lindsay Robertson

The Moray Burial Ground Research Group

The book contains : Introduction & Acknowledgements, A Brief History on the Name "Michael Kirk" Old prints of the church, A complete updated MI description, a photograph of every memorial, including those inside the church, along with other church fittings, Buried tombstones and the Memorials at Gordonstoun School as well as two comprehensive Indexes.

The book retails at £15.00, but is available to members at the reduced price of £11.25 plus post & packing. It is also available as a PDF file. To order your copy contact Helen Mitchell on 01343-546620, or via the website – www.mbgrg.org .

The Start of Season Party



Karen entertains



Willie plays catch up



Moirra's Speech for Lindsay



Lindsay gets a Gnome Award

And Once Again a Good Time Was Had By All!

The Moray Burial Ground Research Group - March 2015