

THE MORAY BURIAL GROUND RESEARCH GROUP



ANNUAL REPORT 2015 – 2016



www.mbgrg.org

The Committee of 2015-2016

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
Newsletter Editor	Derek Page
SAFHS Representative	Karen McGregor

Pastoral View Taken From Tomintoul Public Cemetery



photo KLM

This photograph was taken while conducting a photographic survey of all the memorials in July 2015



MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY PRESIDENT

2015 proved a fruitful year for MBGRG with the completion of eight projects started earlier, and the commencement of three new recording schemes. All are described in the Chairman's Report.

Recording at Grange in western Banffshire near Keith revealed two interesting memorials which were particularly interesting for me as they combined heraldry with a Burnett connection! Both memorials were featured in our Bulletin.

This is of course the pleasure and fascination of recording tombstones and memorials, and members of the Group can take pride in the amount of work undertaken and recorded.

Unlike previous years publishing the recent findings has not yet been possible due to other commitments. It cannot be forgotten that all the efforts are undertaken by members with more than just burial grounds as a priority! As I get older I am very conscious how difficult it is to inspire younger generations in more than just making a living, bringing up a family and spending leisure time in useful and interesting pursuits.

Since my last message I have reached the statutory retiring age for Heralds and have had to give up my heraldic title after thirty-two years – but not my interest in heraldry. So I will always be pleased to know of any memorials with coats of arms discovered by Members during the recording process.

May 2016 prove to be another year of discovery, enjoyment in each other's company, and a true fulfilment of the aims of the Moray Burial Ground Research Group.

Charles J. Burnett

Chairman's Report



Photo Derek Page

One of two reputed memorials to John Duff of Muldavit in Cullen Old Kirk

This somewhat curious memorial reputedly commemorates the death of John Duff in 1404 and it is more than a little interesting in a variety of ways. Along with the huge stone, supposedly commemorating the same person that stands nearby, both monuments were transported to Duff House Mausoleum in Banff by James, Earl of Fife in the late 18th century, apparently for his own genealogical gratification. Due to the considerable controversy which surrounds the origins and authenticity of these monuments, I hope shortly to conduct additional research at the National Museum of Scotland that will possibly add substantively to the debate. All going well this information will be available in our forthcoming publication on the Monumental Inscriptions in Cullen later this year.

In very similar vein to last year's report it is clear that MBGRG members managed to transcribe, photograph and computerize a goodly number of MIs. A glance at Helen's report is sufficient to see that overall a great deal has been accomplished during 2015-2016, and our overall project of recording all the memorials in Moray has again been significantly advanced. However, it must be stressed as usual that the Group continues to struggle when it comes to getting new members, particularly younger folk. That said, last year we had several people who were in that "lucky" category and it was a real pleasure to be able to encourage them in our activities! We also had the pleasure of welcoming our members Garry and Marilyn from Melbourne, who really enjoyed working with us. As a result of our appeal last year for ideas on how to get new members, we received quite a few which were discussed by the Committee and some have

since been put into action. However, the results so far have been minimal, although a few new people have joined in our activities.

For various reasons, including the possibility that Helen and I may soon be moving down to the eastern Central Belt for at least for part of each year, we have decided to initially record many more memorials from photographs. This is particularly the case with modern burial grounds such as Elgin (North) and Mortlach new cemetery where work on these projects has already started. We recently established that Elgin (North) will be one of our largest projects as currently it look as if this cemetery may contain in the region of 4000 memorials. This is going to prove something of a headache from a publication point of view as it may have to be printed in two volumes.

As usual, but even more so, the winter months have been exceptionally busy particularly for Lindsay, Helen and myself. An inordinate amount of computer work has been undertaken, more specifically by Lindsay to get all our publications up to standard as fully searchable PDF files. This has indeed proved to be an interesting exercise in more ways than one. However, much time wasting has occurred thanks to the "conveyor belt of continuous software updating produced by Mr Microsoft," which at times has been an absolute "nightmare" to deal with. Medals all round for perseverance I think! As a result of our efforts, all our publications except two are now in this easily usable format, which in particular will be of considerable benefit to our overseas customers.

Last year I mentioned the importance of "Ancestral Tourism" in Scotland and the treasure-house of genealogical information in Moray's burial grounds. As a result of this I gave a short presentation to Moray Heritage Connections (MHC) members in the hope that it might encourage the possible formation of some sort of Churchyard Trail. Although several people expressed an interest, no action has so far taken place other than the suggestion that information about burial grounds might be included in some form of heritage booklet. Let's hope that the promotion of our burial ground history will eventually gain some additional impetus to the point where it might compete with the the "Whisky Trail."

Lastly, we are in the process of possibly making our huge archive more widely known and accessible to the world at large. The Committee is actively looking at the feasibility of linking up with the well known Family History website "Find My Past." There are quite a few questions to be answered, but if successful could mean additional income for the Group, which could help to make up for any losses incurred by reduced book sales.

Keith Mitchell (Chairman)

Secretary's Report - Publicity Report

During the last year I have been involved in getting two articles printed in the Northern Scot to publicise the group and its publications. I also put information to Spotlight about the group and in the local newspapers for our AGM.

Along with Stephen and Irene I manned a stall in the St Giles centre to try and raise the profile of the group and recruit new members. Unfortunately neither of these ventures recruited any new working members.

At present I am working on research into Pte William McKenzie's Cross in Elgin South. The group found this cross to Pte McKenzie who was killed in WW1, abandoned at the base of a tree while recording Elgin South. Paul Henderson, Stonemason, has very kindly offered to re-instate the cross free of charge. Unfortunately it is proving rather difficult to ascertain where exactly his cross should be situated. I am liaising with The Moray Council and Registrar's office to try and solve this mystery.

I am also working on publicity for Elgin South and Kirkmichael and Tomintoul publications.

Ruth McIntosh (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report

At the end of December we had a total membership of 40 (48). This generated an income of £446 (£551) in subscriptions. The figures in brackets denotes the previous year.

Our publishing costs for the year came to £608 (£845). This was for the first issues of Rathven, Burnside and the Michael Kirk MIs. Our total income to the end of December from the sale of the publications came to £1,090 (£1,243) and we had stock in hand to the value of £1,900 (£2,037). We also made £145 from the sale of PDF files.

Other income came from the sale of Transcripts & Photos, £76 (£140); Donations, £44 (£108); Raffle, £13 (£22); Recycling Cartridges £4 (£4) and Bank Interest £1 (£1).

The above income includes publications, PDF files, transcription & photo sales and donations through PayPal to the value of £323 (£154).

Other expenditure during the year included Website expenses of £131 (£214); Insurance £183 (£183); Printing, Stationery, Travel expenses to meetings, Telephone, Postage, and Photocopying £371 (£829); Subscriptions £75 (£75); AGM expenses £107 (£37); PayPal charges £22 (£11); and Annual Dinner expenses amounting to £77 (£61).

At 31 December 2015 our total cash/bank funds amounted to £3,200 (£2,955).

Irene Black (Treasurer)

Fieldwork Co-ordinator's Report

We have covered a considerable amount of work this year despite the weather and number of recorders. Some of the newer cemeteries have been recorded from photographs.

Rothiemay churchyard and new cemetery, Grange churchyard and new cemetery, Cullen cemetery, Cullen & Deskford cemetery, Deskford churchyard and Elgin cemetery (South) have been completed.

We will be finishing at Inveravon this year, about a quarter of the tombstones are still to clean and record. Also St Laurence churchyard in Forres has to be completed. Keith and I have been working on Elgin New Cemetery (North Section) and hope to record all the memorials from photographs.

Future outings include: Keith Old which has quite a history to the churchyard. Interestingly there are a fair number of old flat memorials to clean and an unknown number of buried tombstones. Edinkillie (between Forres and Grantown on Spey) where there are also an assortment of similar monuments. There are also about 140 stones in the new cemetery to record. Cabrach near the boundary with Aberdeenshire is also on the agenda and this may be our Summer Outing, weather permitting although again there are some 30 flat stones to clean.

Over the winter Keith, Lindsay and I have been busy with preparing publications. Elgin (South) has now been published, while at the time of writing Kirkmichael and Tomintoul is in the process of being printed.

Hoping to see all our members back at work again and please bring your friends along with paper and pencil or pen at the ready, or a "Scrubbing brush."

Helen Mitchell (Fieldwork Co-ordinator)

Historical Research Co-ordinator's Report

During the past year there have been several communications. Some have been requests for information on the location of tombstones, whilst others were seeking to know which burial ground their ancestors may have been interred in. There have also been a couple of more in-depth enquiries about the histories of specific sites, and the Historical Research Co-ordinator has continued to attend meetings of the National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland, especially in connection with the on-going Historic Environment Scotland (formerly Historic Scotland) research project at Elgin Cathedral.

The publication of the MI books for Elgin South and Tomintoul & Kirkmichael is now complete. Research over the past year has been directed toward the parishes of Grange, Deskford and Rothiemay.

Research into the churches and churchyards in these parishes is proceeding 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 produced.

Research for Deskford and Rothiemay has revealed a very typical north-east Scotland history for these sites. There were also several private chapels in this area, mainly linked with the larger houses, but it is doubtful whether any of these had burial grounds and there is now little physical evidence of these sites.

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 surviving ecclesiastical records date from 1684 but some baptisms have survived from earlier dates.

The old 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. A replacement church was erected soon after this date, which was in turn replaced with a new church built in the early 20th century. There is patchy, and quite damaged documentation for this parish back as early as 1601.

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 Aberlour Churchyard, Cemetery and Aberlour St Margaret's, 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, Chapeltown R.C. Churchyard, Tombae R.C. Churchyard, St Ninian's at Chapelford, St Peter's at Duffus, Rothes Churchyard and Cemetery, Cluny Hill Cemetery Forres, Kinloss Abbey, Elgin Cemetery (West), Elgin Cemetery (East), Elgin Cemetery (South) Dyke Churchyard and Cemetery, Knockando Churchyard, 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 the Annual Report for 2014/15, and Newsletter Issues 23 and 24 (July/December 2015), with regular updates being carried out regarding new publications, updates to the Ancestor Indexes and News items. The Ancestor Indexes, have been augmented with the addition of abstracted data from the MI Booklets for Rathven and Burnside. It is anticipated that data for Elgin Cemetery (South), Kirkmichael Churchyard and St. Michael's and the Parish Churchyards at Tomintoul will be made available shortly, which should raise the number of individuals listed in the MBGRG on-line database to ca. 78,500. Various 'Names Indexes' for inclusion in MI Publications have been prepared, for our latest MI books for Elgin Cemetery (South), Kirkmichael and Tomintoul.

Sales of transcripts and related tombstone photographs have been a little disappointing again this year, but some £200 has been added to the coffers since July last year, mainly from PDF sales. Total income generated since website sales were instigated in April 2010, has now reached some £1,810. Work has continued, in collaboration with Keith, on the preparation of PDF versions of our MI books, and 31 MBGRG publications are now available in this popular format. The remaining two, Bellie and Elgin Cathedral are in a final proof stage, and should be available shortly. To date, 35 copies of PDF format files have been sold through website 'Quotation Request' enquiries. Master copies of the complete collection are stored on our secure OneDrive Cloud storage vault (along with the ever increasing collection of Keith's churchyard photographs). A complete updated list along with prices is available at www.mbgrg.org/sale.shtml.

Some preliminary consideration is being given to possibly updating/merging older Moray publications, in particular those compiled by Members of the Moray and Banff Branch of the ANESFHS and MBGRG prior to 2006, as has already been done for Alves, Birnie, Kinneddar and The Michael Kirk. Our friends at ANESFHS have generously given us full permission to update their publications, and Bruce Bishop has also very kindly agreed to allow us to use his drawings and plans for these. Quite how they will be finally published is currently uncertain, but it is envisaged that some publications may be merged as well as possibly including new and unpublished information.

This is a very much long term project which in some cases entails using optical character recognition (OCR) software to reconstitute digital files from existing hardcopy and the re-scanning of plans, drawing, etc. As a result it is not known when these new publications might become available. This is very time consuming, and will require careful 'proof reading' of the resultant files, but 10 volumes are already in draft mode. These are Botriphnie, Essil Churchyard and Cemetery, Dipple, Lhanbryde Churchyard and Cemetery, St Andrew's Kirkhill, Spynie, Urquhart Old and New and Vale of Pluscarden.

Lindsay Robertson (Webmaster)

Newsletter Editor's Report

Due to Derek having had other personal commitments over the last year, including moving house, he has nothing in particular to report at this time. Although some discussion last year took place about the frequency of the Newsletter it was agreed that it "was still fine 'as is' with two publications a year." Derek comments that he is "happy to carry on with that, and if any member wishes to contribute anything, please just note the change of mailing address on the last edition although the email remains the same."

Derek Page (Newsletter Editor)

On a personal level as MBGRG Chairman, I would like to express our considerable thanks to Derek for producing such a graphically appealing publication that is much superior to our earlier versions of the Newsletter and has quite a distinctive visual impact helping to make it a very interesting read!

The Scottish Association of Family History Societies

S.A.F.H.S. COUNCIL MEETING – SATURDAY 10th OCTOBER 2015

Note -This report does not contain information for the SAFHS Council Meeting on 12th March 2016.

Having taken over as the SAFHS Representative for MBGRG, I attended the Council Meeting on Saturday 10th October 2015 which was held within the Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel for my first meeting. This was chaired by Janet Bishop. There were 26 representatives from various Family History / Genealogy Societies present with 13 apologies from other FHS Representatives. Also present was Dr Joe Morrow, Lord Lyon, King of Arms who opened the meeting with a most fascinating and entertaining talk on the Lord Lyon's Office and Heraldry in general. I would highly recommend to anyone, to go along to a meeting where Dr Morrow is speaking on what in my view, is a most, interesting and important subject on Scottish history and indeed social family history. Throughout the meeting there was nothing specifically related to MBGRG, but the meeting gave me an insight into the wider aspect of social and family history societies.

Matters Arising – Alternative venue for SAFHS meetings

This was discussed at length. However the next SAFHS meeting will take place at the Quaker Meeting House, in Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh on 12th March 2016 due to better public transport links. This venue will also be used to hold the following SAFHS meeting on 8th October 2016.

The Annual SAFHS Conference will take place this year on Saturday 23rd April in New Lanark Mills, Lanark. The theme of the Conference will be "Heritage along the Clyde" with included topics of farming, mining, steel and shipbuilding. Further information on this can be obtained from the SAFHS website. Also discussed under Matters Arising, was an application from ASGRA requesting that they hold the SAFHS Conference at the Cairn Queensferry Hotel, North Queensferry, Fife on 22nd April 2017.

There was further general discussion in relation to SAFHS Conferences, including the reluctance of Family History Societies to host them, thereby putting the future of any future Conferences in jeopardy. The cost of running such a Conference would appear to be one of the main reasons against hosting. However, mention was made by the Chairman, that if the Conference was carefully organised and correctly planned it could be run relatively cheaply.

Valuation Rolls of 1855 and 1865.

The Valuation Rolls had been released in March and September 2015 and have been added to the ScotlandsPeople website while the WW1 Military Service Tribunal Records for Lothian / Peeblesshire and the Western Isles were to be added in November. It would seem that they are the only ones to have survived.

ScotlandsPeople Website

The contract to run the above website expires on 31st August 2016. The new contract has been awarded to C.A.C.I Limited, based in England, who will commence responsibility for running the site in October 2016.

SAFHS Website

Visitors to the SAFHS website have risen significantly. This was due principally to the release of "Inventory of Scottish Graveyards" followed by "Pre 1841 Population Lists."

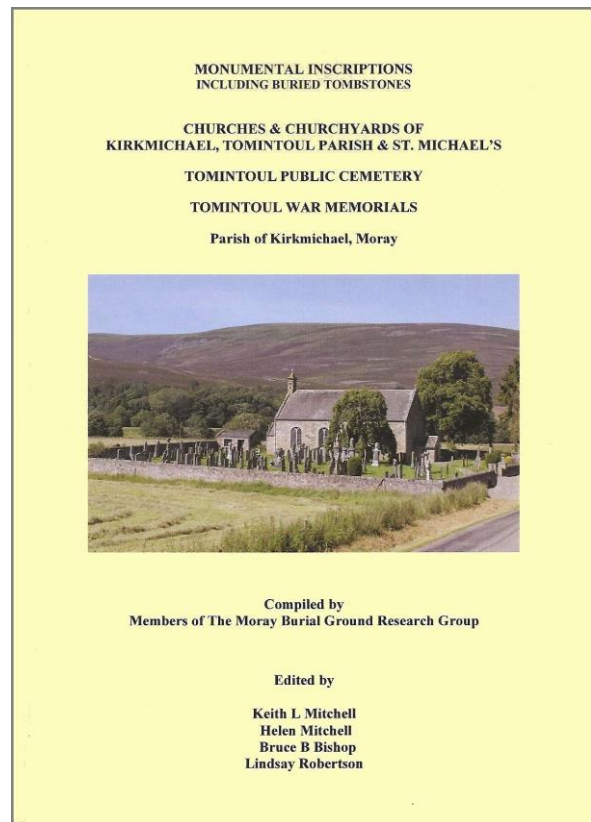
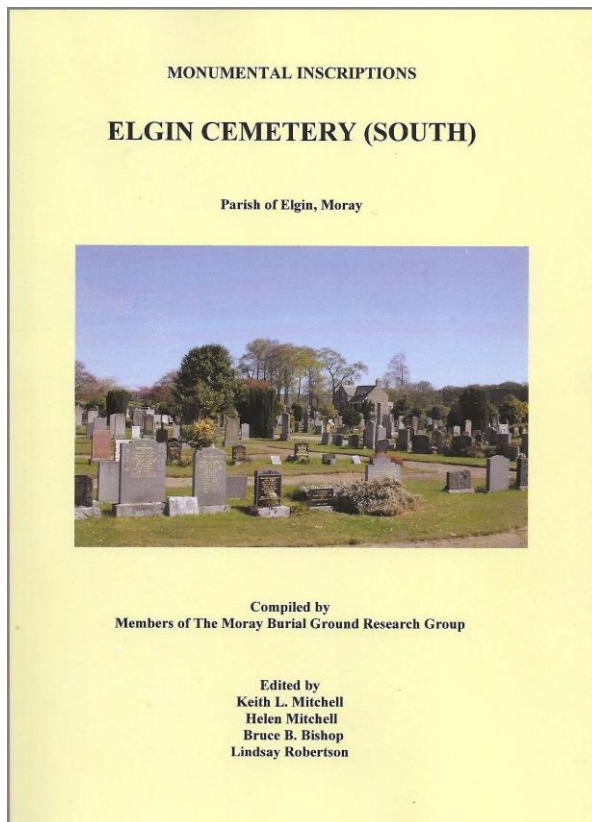
Public Liability Insurance

There was discussion as to how Family History Societies could best protect themselves in respect of any liability. Possible suggestion was a block SAFHS Insurance policy. At the time of this meeting the matter was still being discussed and was to be brought up at the next SAFHS Council Meeting. However, I now understand that from 1st January 2016 Public Liability Insurance of £5 million s to be offered as a Member benefit for all member societies. This will add £15 to the annual SAFHS subscription for 2017. In the interval period, SAFHS will bear the Public Liability Insurance Premium for 2016.

Karen McGregor (MBGRG Representative)

Our Two Latest Books

Elgin Public Cemetery (South Section) and Kirkmichael & Tomintoul



Elgin Cemetery (South)

Elgin South contains MI details of some 2,600 memorials and nearly 7,300 people. It is without doubt the largest book MBGRG has published. Interestingly we are able to offer this volume in both A4 and A5 format as well as a fully searchable PDF file. They are priced at £16.00 and £12.00 respectively.

Kirkmichael & Tomintoul

Kirkmichael & Tomintoul covers all the inscriptions of Kirkmichael old parish churchyard, the parish churchyard of Tomintoul, the church and churchyard of St Michael R.C. Church and Tomintoul War Memorial. It also has six pages of colour illustrations and the same for monochrome. It retails at £11.00, and when available will cost £7.50 for a PDF file. Full Members should remember that they receive a 25% discount on all publications. To order your copy contact Helen Mitchell on 01343-546620, or via the website - mbgrg.org .

Elgin South Publication

(by Ruth McIntosh)

Moray Burial Ground Research Group has recently published their Monumental Inscriptions on Elgin Cemetery, South section. Along with the previously published West and East sections a total of 13,250 names have been added to its Database which can be viewed on the group website at mbgrg.org.

For the Family Researcher there is a lot of information to be found on the gravestones of loved ones and this can be a starting point to look up local records. For example, inscriptions record one family who lost three sons and several others who lost two. In Elgin South there are a total of 27 Commonwealth War Graves, 9 of which are from the Great War and 18 from WW2, all looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. As well as the CWG there are a further 58 Service personnel from WW1 commemorated on family gravestones and approximately another 29 from WW2.

Amongst these brave men some were decorated for their bravery. A Distinguished Conduct Medal was won by 265868 Sergeant D. McLeod DCM, Seaforth Highlanders in the Great War. His citation reads "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He repeatedly organised and led bombing parties and counter attacks across the open under fire, inflicting great loss upon the enemy and taking many prisoners. He showed great courage throughout, and was a splendid example to his men. "I believe this was for bravery on May 15th-17th 1917, possibly at the Battle of Arras. A report in the Northern Scot of 30-06-1917 states "Sgt. McLeod has received the congratulations of the Major General Commanding the Division for Gallantry on April 9th. Sgt. McLeod enlisted in to the Seaforths at the commencement of hostilities. He was a plasterer with Mr. Brodie, South Guildry Street, Elgin prior to joining up."

RSM J. Wilson was awarded the Military Cross. He was Killed in Action in France October 9th 1918 aged 34 years. The Military Medal was awarded to Private John A. Hardie and, to L/Cpl Robert C. Russell of the Seaforth Highlanders and to Cpl. W. P. Spence of the Gordon Highlanders.

It would be impossible to mention in this article all those who gave their lives, but in recording the information on family gravestones and publishing the information in book and PDF format, Moray Burial Ground Research Group hope they have done a little to preserve the information should the tombstones deteriorate and in some cases vanish all together.

Inveravon Pictish Symbol Stones



The Pictish Stones We Did Not Find!

The Joys of MI Recording



Helen & Gordon look very happy at our first recce to Edinkillie Churchyard!



Another happy pair! : Jim & Margaret by St Michael's Cross, Kirkmichael



Stephen, Irene & Ruth hard at work recording at Grange Churchyard