



Moray & Nairn Family History Society

# NEWSLETTER

April 2010

Welcome to the third edition of the Moray & Nairn FHS Newsletter.

## Diary

**Saturday 5 June 2010, 2 pm**

Fiona Watson: "Health Records in Family History"

**Forres Community Centre**

**Saturday 6 November 2010, 2 pm**

Jenny Rose-Miller: "A Tour of Historic Nairn"

**Nairn Community Centre**

## Contacts:

**Chairman:** Bruce B Bishop

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**Treasurer:** Kenneth A M Nisbet

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## Annual General Meeting

Our first AGM took place in Lossiemouth Town Hall on Saturday 13 March 2010. The accounts were presented to those members present. Doug Stewart was formally admitted to the committee.

## March 2010 Meeting

The March meeting took place in Lossiemouth Town Hall, after the AGM. Bruce Bishop gave an illustrated talk: From Lochindorb to Culbin.

## Membership

Our membership continues to grow, and, on going to print, stands at 38.

## Moray & Nairn FHS Website

We have added a form request option to the

website, as well as sections for articles from the Newsletters. A useful section of the site is the Diary page, which should keep you up to date on what is going on family history wise in Moray and Nairn. I keep an eye on the counter, so please add the site to your Favourites! If you have any ideas for the website, please let us know.

[www.morayandnairnfhs.co.uk](http://www.morayandnairnfhs.co.uk)

**SAFHS 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference  
Livingston, Saturday 17 April 2010**

**"Paupers, Physicians & Paraffinalia"  
150 years of Social History in West Lothian**

The 2010 SAFHS Conference is being hosted by West Lothian Family History Society, and takes place at Howden Park Centre, Livingston, Saturday 17 April 2010, 9.30 – 4.30.

Booking is required for the Conference; admission to the fair is free. For details see WLFHS website: [www.wlfhs.org.uk](http://www.wlfhs.org.uk)

**Nairn Family History and Heritage Fair  
Nairn Community Centre  
2 October 2010**

Following on from the success of last year's Fair in Elgin Town Hall, Scottish Genealogical Research are staging a Fair in October 2010 in Nairn. Moray and Nairn FHS will be taking an active part in the Fair. There will be a series of talks, as well as stands. Watch this space for exhibitors!

## Anglo Scots FHS Scottish Marriage Index

Anglo Scots FHS has built a database based on a marriage, because recording details of the couple and their parents gives, in most cases, 4 family names, the place where the Scot was born, the place where they were married and the dates and times of the events. The database is called The

Scottish Marriage Index, and can be accessed at [www.mlfhs.org.uk](http://www.mlfhs.org.uk)

If you would like your family details listed (providing either the groom or bride was born in Scotland) then send the following data to [office@mlfhs.org.uk](mailto:office@mlfhs.org.uk)

Please put **Scottish Marriage Index** in the Subject line; names of the couple; their dates and places of birth; the names of their parents; the date and place of marriage; your postal address and email address. No personal details are listed on the webpage. You will be allocated a number.

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#### MNFHS Publications List

The Parishes of Nairnshire. Deaths and Places of Burial 1855 – 1860, parishes of **Ardclach** and **Cawdor**. Compiled by Janet M Bishop and Kenneth A M Nisbet. ISBN 978-0-9561937-2-8, £4.00

The Parishes of Morayshire. Deaths and Places of Burial 1855 – 1860, parishes of **Speymouth** and **Urquhart**. Compiled by Janet M Bishop and Kenneth A M Nisbet. ISBN 978-0-9561937-3-5, £4.00

The Parishes of Morayshire. Deaths and Places of Burial 1855 – 1860, parishes of **Edinkillie** and **Dyke & Moy**. Compiled by Janet M Bishop and Kenneth A M Nisbet. ISBN 978-0-9561937-4-2, £4.00

The Parishes of Nairnshire. Pre-1855 Burial Records for **Auldearn**, 1721-1754, 1816-1854, and isolated surviving Death Records for the Parishes of **Cawdor**, **Ardclach** and **Nairn**. Compiled by Bruce B Bishop and Stuart Farrell. 84pp, ISBN 978-0-9561937-5-9, £5.00

**SEE THE BOOKSHOP ON THE WEBSITE**

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#### Overseas Payments

For our overseas members, it may be convenient to make payments to MNFHS by BACS, whether for subscriptions or for publications. Renewal membership forms will have the bank details on them, if you wish to make use of this form of payment.

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#### ARTICLES

##### **EXPLOSION ROCKS ELGIN Four Dead, Several Injured by Doug Stewart**

Elgin, 26 January 1761:

The town of Elgin was to-night, in mourning for four of its citizens killed by a gunpowder blast in the shop of William Fraser, merchant there.



A journeyman dyer by the name of Harvie had gone into Fraser's shop to purchase some gunpowder for a pistol to shoot a mad dog that had bitten Peter Anderson.

Fraser and Harvie loaded the pistol in the shop, with an intention to fire it to try the powder.

James Finlay, a tailor, came into the shop and shouted a warning to for them to stop for there was a barrel, estimated to be about 40-50lb in weight, of gunpowder nearby.

His alarm was too late; the pistol went off within the shop!

A spark flew into the cask, which instantly blew up and brought down the whole tenement and rendered the shop a heap of rubbish.

Fraser, the owner of the shop, was instantly killed by the explosion, which burst out at the door and windows, and carried the lintel stones of both to the opposite side of the street.

Finlay and Harvie were buried within the ruins of the shop and would have perished, had not the towns-people, at the hazard of their lives from the broken and tottering walls, dug them from beneath the rubbish.

Outside, Lawrence Calder, merchant, James Bowie, maltman, James Grant, tailor, John Adam, grave-digger, and James Ross, chapman, being in the shade at the door of the shop, were carried off with such impetuosity, that Bowie and Grant were dashed to pieces, and killed against the walls of the houses on the opposite side of the street.

They were found quite dead, and almost naked, their clothes being almost entirely burnt off them.

Calder was found alive, but in the most dismal condition, his head terribly bruised, one of his legs cut quite open, and one foot hanging by a ligament

only; he died a few hours later.

John Adam is most miserably hurt, and it is thought James Ross might not live.

Mr Fraser's wife was in bed in the back part of the house, above the shop. Happily that part of the house withstood the shock; but by the violence of the concussion, she was forced up from her bed, so as to touch the ceiling of the room.

There is no other damage done to the adjoining or opposite houses, but some of the windows and casements broken.

*Sources:*

*Aberdeen Journal, 9 February 1761*

*The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure, February 1761*

*The Annual Register, for the Year 1761*

*The Records of Elgin, Volume 1, by William Cramond*

*The London Magazine, Volume 30*

*The Scots magazine, Volume 23*

matrimonially contracted and regularly proclaimed were married in Elgin by the Rev. Alexander Top, minister of the Free Church there, on the 23rd December 1848.

Donald Hossack, a Shoemaker, was a son of Thomas Hossack, Wright & Carpenter (1798, Resolis) & Isabella McKenzie (1788 Knockbain – 1868, Nairn); born at Nairn, 25 March 1823:

28 March 1823 - Thomas Hossack, wright at Delnies and Isabel Mackenzie his wife had a child baptised named Donald. Witnesses Al Fraser, John McDonald, the child was born on the 25th inst.

and died at 6 High Street, Bishopmill, Elgin on 17 June 1874:

At 6 High Street, Bishopmill, on 17 June 1874 - Donald Hossack (52), Shoemaker (Thomas Hossack, Carpenter (dec) & Isabella McKenzie (dec) married to Jane Smith, by Disease Of Liver Dropsy. John Hossack (Son), 11 Forsyth Street, Hopeman.

So far, I've found four children for Donald Hossack & Jane Smith:

John Hossack, born 26 October and baptised 21 December 1849, Elgin and died aged 28 at 2 Park Street, Nairn on 22 December 1878. John was a baker, he may have married; and might have had at least three children!

Jane Hossack, born 10 September and baptised 29 October 1851, Elgin and died aged 80 at 4 Canal Bank, Lossiemouth on 19 January 1932. Jane married James Shand, Tailor (1853, Lossiemouth – 1944, Lossiemouth) – this is where I connect to these families!

Isabella Hossack, born 17 January and baptised 7 March 1854, Elgin and died aged 59 at 4 Canal Bank, Lossiemouth on 12 June 1914. Isabella seems not to have married or have had any children!

Thomas Hossack, born 11 November 1857, at 56 High Street, Bishopmill and died aged 78 at

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**Jane Smith  
by Doug Stewart**

Jane Smith was born in Elgin between 1817 and 1822 (birth and/or baptism not yet found) the seventh, and possibly the youngest child of John Smith, Blacksmith (1781, Elgin – 1842, Elgin) and Elspet Stronach (1778, Linkwood – 1847, Elgin). She died at 16 Waterside, Bishopmill, Elgin on 24 April 1894:

At 16 Waterside, Elgin, on 25 April 1894 - Jane Smith or Hossack (75) (John Smith, Blacksmith and Bellhanger (dec) & Jane Stronach (dec) widow of Donald Hossack, Shoemaker, by Cerebral Haemorrhage. Thomas Hossack (son).

The first record I've found for Jane Smith is not, as expected, in the 1841 Census Returns but of her marriage in Elgin to Donald Hossack, Shoemaker (1823, Nairn – 1874, Elgin) recorded at Kinloss on 23 December 1848:

Donald Hossack and Jane Smith both in this parish having been

Airdrie, Springfield Road, New Elgin on 3 November 1936. Thomas was a Printer Compositor, he was married twice – first to Isabella Gordon, then to Mary McGillivray!

In the years after their marriage, the family, Donald Hossack and Jane Smith, show up in the expected Census Returns. In 1851, they can be found at Clarke's Close (191 High Street), Elgin:

1 Donald Hossack, Head, Married, 28, Shoemaker, Nairn  
2 Jane Hossack, Wife, Married, 30, Shoemaker's Wife, Elgin  
3 John Hossack, Son, 1, Shoemaker's Son, Elgin

By 1861, they had moved to 39 North Street, Bishopmill:

1 Donald Hossack, Head, Married, 39, Shoemaker, Nairn  
2 Jane Hossack, Wife, Married, 41, Elgin  
3 John Hossack, Son, 11, Elgin  
4 Jane Hossack, Daughter, 9, Elgin  
5 Isabella Hossack, Daughter, 7, Elgin  
6 Thomas Hossack, Son, 3, Elgin

And, in 1871, were at 10 West High Street, Bishopmill:

1 Donald Hossack, Head, Married, 47, Shoemaker, Nairn  
2 Jane Hossack, Wife, Married, 49, Elgin  
3 Thomas Hossack, Son, 13, Scholar, Spynie

Donald Hossack, of course, died in 1874 so by 1881, Jane is the head of household at 21 West High Street, Bishopmill:

1 Jane Hossack, Head, Widow, 60, Elgin  
2 Thomas Hossack, Son, Unmarried, 22, Printer Compositor, New Spynie

And, again, in 1891 at 16 Waterside Street, Bishopmill:

1 Jane Hossack, Head, Widow, 73, Keep House, Elgin  
2 Thomas Hossack, Son, Unmarried, 32, Printer Compositor, Elgin

It is, however, after the death of Donald Hossack in 1874 that a new area (to me, anyway) opened up; that of Poor Relief!

The first instance I've found for Jane Smith is an application for Poor Relief in the parish of New Spynie, Moray on 24 March 1875 (ZPSy A5/2 p23):

Application for Poor Relief by Jane Smith or Hossack, 6 West High Street, Bishopmill. Given as born Elgin and of Protestant religion. Described as widow aged about 56 and housewife with no income or dependents, partially disabled and certified suffering from debility.

Widow of Donald Hossack, shoemaker, who died 17th June 1874 and who had a residence of many years in Bishopmill. The widow, therefore still retains her husband's settlement. Her son John, a baker in Findhorn, is now married and in consequence cannot support her as he used to do; hence, she says, she must seek parish relief. But I think her daughter's illegitimate child has something to do with it. Family as follow, viz.:

1 John, baker, Findhorn, married, aged about 25  
2 Jane, single, at home, with an illeg child of 3 months for whom she receives no support, aged about 23.  
3 Isabella, daughter, servant at Hopeman Lodge, aged about 20  
4 Thomas, apprentice compositor, Courant, 3/6 per week, aged about 17.

No previous applications recorded but no money given, referred application to Board - send to Poor House.

The details in this document (if taken to be accurate) almost form a brief biography of Jane Smith or Hossack. There are personal details; details about her late husband; and, very interestingly, details about her children.

Of most interest to me was the details given about Jane Hossack, the second child, who was "single, at home, with an illeg. child of 3 months for whom she receives no support," and the inspector's comment that "I think her daughter's illegitimate

child has something to do with it.”

So, off I went on a new trail, looking for this illegitimate child of Jane Hossack, born early 1875, or possibly late 1874; which was not too difficult a task given how much information I already had. The child was called Isabella Farquharson, born 27 December 1874:

Isabella Farquharson, illegitimate daughter to William Farquharson, General Merchant and Jane Hossack, Domestic Servant, born 27 December 1874, 6 High Street, Bishopmill.

although William Farquharson remains a bit of a mystery!

Another application, this time on 10 January 1877 (ZPSy A5/2 p29) reveals:

Application for Poor Relief by Jane Smith or Hossack, 25 West Back Street, Bishopmill. Given as born Elgin and of Protestant religion. Described as a widow aged about 58 and housewife with unknown income and no dependents, appears in good health.

Widow of Donald Hossack, shoemaker, who died on 17th June 1874. Her case is well known and at date of application she was in good health. Family as under:

- 1 John, baker, Nairn, married, 1 child
- 2 Jane, wife of Thos Shand, tailor, Branderburgh, 1 child
- 3 Isabella, single, domestic servant, Cloves
- 4 Thomas, apprentice compositor, Courant, 4/6 or 6/- per week.

Previous application Folio 23. Being in good health, applicant was offered relief in Poor House - approved.

Once again, all Jane was offered was “relief in Poor House”; which may have been declined.

Here, the details in the document are known to be incorrect in the case of the name of Jane Hossack’s husband. Her husband’s name was James Shand, Tailor (1853, Lossiemouth – 1944, Lossiemouth).

John Hossack, her son has now moved from

Findhorn to Nairn, and is noted as having one child; Isabella Hossack is still a ‘servant’, but has moved from Hopeman Lodge to Cloves – being between Census Returns, very useful information.

By 17 December 1877 (the same year), another application was made (ZPSy A5/2 p33):

Application for Poor Relief by Jane Smith or Hossack, 25 West High Street, Bishopmill. Given as born Elgin and of Protestant religion. Described as widow aged about 59 and housewife with unknown income and no dependents, partially disabled -debility.

Widow Hossack again prays the Board for an out-door allowance.

Previous application Folio 29. Referred to Board, allowed 1/6 per week.

This time, Jane is more successful; she is “allowed 1/6 per week,” and she now appears in the parish Register of Poor (ZPSy A5/3 p145):

Record for Jane Smith or Hossack, 25 West High Street, Bishopmil, husband's residence, aged about 59 years, admitted 28th December 1877 with 1/6 per week authorised. Given as born Elgin and of Protestant religion. Described as housewife and widow of Donald Hossack, shoemaker who died 17th June 1874, partially disabled - debility - and partially destitute.

Noted as able for out-work occasionally with living in family:

1 Thomas, apprentice compositor in Elgin Courant office, about 9/- per week, aged 20

and not living in family:

- 2 John, baker, Nairn, married, 3 children, aged 27
- 3 Jane, wife of James Shand, baker [sic], Lossiemouth, 2 children, aged 25
- 4 Isabella, single, domestic servant at Cloves, aged 22

On 27th June 1879, allowance continued till September meeting. On 26th September 1879,

allowance withdrawn and Poor House relief offered instead in respect that her son Thomas is now a journeyman compositor, and living with and able to maintain his mother.

26th March 1880, renewed application for relief, merely an offer of relief in Poor House.

This record shows how Jane's circumstances changed over the next few years; her son, Thomas, moved from "apprentice compositor" to "journeyman compositor" by late 1879.

This record is also probably inaccurate about the details of Jane Hossack's husband. At least he is named correctly as James Shand, but his occupation is listed as 'baker', instead of his actual occupation of 'tailor'.

John Hossack, died aged 28 at 2 Park Street, Nairn on 22 December 1878. This does not seem to have been noted in this record, probably because John was married, away from home, with family to support and was not expected to be giving his mother any help.

Associated with the last entry in the above record was another application for Poor Relief, on 10 March 1880 (ZPSy A5/2 p41):

Application for Poor Relief by Jane Smith or Hossack, 25 West High Street, Bishopmill. Given as born Elgin and of Protestant religion. Given as widow aged about 51 and housewife with unknown income and no dependents, partially disabled - not in robust health.

Application in this case is made because her son Thomas is out of his former situation in the Elgin Courant Office. He has, however, got work on a newspaper in Durham.

Previous application Folio 33. Referred to Board - send to Poor House.

This, of course, confirmed that Jane was no longer getting an allowance and had been offered a place in the 'Poor House'.

What's interesting about this application, though, is what's said about her son, Thomas Hossack. That he was "out of his former situation in the

Elgin Courant Office" but that he had "got work on a newspaper in Durham." If only Census Returns were used to track Thomas Hossack, this would never had come to light. He was living with his mother at the time of the 1871 Census; he was still living with his mother at the time of the 1881 Census. Nothing there could tell that he had spent some time away from Elgin, working "on a newspaper in Durham."

In 1884, Jane makes an application for support from the Ritchie Fund (ZBEL UR3/884/1):

Elgin 7th March 1884

Unto the Honourable the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of the City and Royal Burgh of Elgin.

The Petition of Jane Smith or Hossack, residing at No 7, West Back Street, Bishopmill.

Humbly shewith, that your Petitioner, having heard of a vacancy in the Ritchie Fund, begs respectfully to apply for the same; that, in support of that application, she begs to state that, owing to advancing years, she is unable to maintain herself, and has been depending for support solely upon her son Thomas, who is a compositor in Inverness; and that, as maintenance from that source may any day be brought to an end - for example, by the probable marriage of her son - she is anxious to have means of support secured to herself in her declining years.

That your Petitioner, in farther support of her claim to be appointed to the vacancy, begs to state that she is sixty-seven years of age; that she is a native of the parish and burgh of Elgin; that she is daughter of John Smith, blacksmith in Elgin, deceased; and that she is widow of Donald Hossack, shoemaker in Bishopmill, who died on 17th June 1874.

That your Petitioner has spent the whole of her life in Elgin and Bishopmill, with the exception of a period of three years when she was a servant; that she gets no aid from the Parochial Board of any parish;

and that, all along her life she has striven in the midst of poverty and privation to maintain an honest name and to conduct herself in a becoming manner in all the relations of life.

That your Petitioner therefore humbly thinks she has a claim to the charity which she seeks at your Honour's hands; and she earnestly begs that her Petition may be favourable entertained by you.

And your Petitioner will ever pray,  
(signed) Jane Smith Hossack.

The Ritchie Fund was established for the benefit of 6 respectable women, single or widow, born in Elgin, not under the age of 50 years with preference given to those with the name of Ritchie. Clearly, a vacancy had occurred and Jane thought (or was persuaded) to apply.

Thomas Hossack was now in Inverness (again, useful to know between Census Returns) and there was the possibility of a "probable marriage" – although, it seems that Thomas did not marry Isabella Gordon until 1895!

Late in 1893 there was some question as to the date of birth of Jane Smith. The Patrons of the Ritchie Fund seem to have written to Thomas Hossack asking him to furnish them with the place and date of his mother's birth. He replied on 1 January 1894 (ZBEL UR3/884/1):

16 Waterside, Bishopmill  
1st January 1894

Dear Sir

In reply to yours of 30th ult., containing request by Patrons of "Ritchie Fund" to furnish them with place and date of my mother's birth, I have to state that I will not be able to give you the exact date for a day or two. The registration books in the Registrar's Office at Elgin go back only to somewhere about 1854, so I have written to the Registrar General at Edinburgh, asking him to furnish me with the desired information.

As soon as I get particulars, I shall send you word.

I remain, sir,

Yours respectfully  
(signed) Thos Hossack.

And there was a further letter dated 3 January 1894 (ZBEL UR3/884/1):

16 Waterside, Bishopmill  
3rd January 1894

Dear Sir

In reference to your enquiry of 30th ult. regarding the birthplace of my mother, Jane Smith or Hossack, I regret to say that such can not be found. The Registrar-General, Edinburgh has searched without success.

All that I can tell you is that she was born in Hay's Close, Elgin, in 1819 or 1820, as she considers herself to be about seventy-four years of age now.

Her father was John Smith, a blacksmith and bellhanger in Elgin, who carried on business for a number of years in Hay's Close.

I am, sir,  
Yours obediently  
(signed) Thos Hossack

This second letter tells me that Jane Smith was born in 1818 or 1819 (Census Returns indicated between 1817 and 1822) and that she was born in Hay's Close (84 High Street), Elgin

The letter also confirmed that her father was "John Smith, a blacksmith and bellhanger in Elgin". From this could be inferred that her mother was indeed Elspet Stronach!

One other thing that can be inferred from these letters is that Jane had probably been appointed to the vacancy in the Ritchie Fund after her application in 1884, and had been receiving an annuity since that time.

Jane Smith, or Hossack, died on 25 April 1894:

At 16 Waterside, Elgin, on 25 April 1894 - Jane Smith or Hossack (75) (John Smith, Blacksmith and Bellhanger (dec) & Jane Stronach) widow of Donald Hossack, Shoemaker, by Cerebral Haemorrhage. Thomas Hossack (son).

The Elgin Courant & Courier of 27 April 1894 carried her death notice:

Hossack - At 16, Waterside,  
Bishopmill, Elgin, on the 25th inst.,  
after a lingering illness, Jane Smith,  
widow of Donald Hossack,  
shoemaker, aged seventy-five years  
- deeply regretted. Funeral to Elgin  
Cathedral To-day (Friday) at One  
o'clock. All friends invited.

No memorial has been found to Jane Smith; nor has one been found for her husband Donald Hossack.

Had I been restricted the usual sources of OPR, BMD, Census Returns, Newspapers, Etc. there are whole areas of Jane Smith and her family's lives I would have known nothing about. For me, although not for her, I've been lucky to discover she had to rely on Poor Relief allowances and annuities from the Ritchie Fund. Jane Smith is not just a series of 'dates'; she is becoming a person.

The only problem I now have is that I have whole new set of questions to answer!

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**One way to pay for a bridge!**  
by **Bruce B Bishop**

In 1793 the minister of the parish of Dallas in Moray noted that the roads were in bad repair and that there was not a bridge over the River Lossie anywhere in the parish, there was not even a footbridge. The only way across was by means of the various fords on the river.

Although by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the parish had one small planned village of 32 houses on the north bank of the river, close to the church, the parishioners from the other side of the river were finding it difficult to get to the services, especially when the river was in spate. In 1802 the Kirk Session discussed the cost of building a bridge over the river and found that it would cost £15/7/0d Sterling.

They came to the decision to increase the fines for the most common sin in the parish, that of fornication. They even kept a record of the parties involved and the penalties they paid. They are listed as

Alexander Allan in Windy & Elspet Clark in Connachy of Kellas - £1/1/0d

Alexander Anderson in Craigton & Christian Hay in Briach of Rafford - £1/5/0d

Robert Young in Torcastle & Christian

Anderson there - 15 shillings

Alexander Cameron in Edinvile & Isabel Wink there - 15 shillings

John Smith in Achmagallan of Cromdale & Isable McGillivray in Edinkillie - 10 shillings

David Philip in Brakery & Marjory McRobert in Achness - 15 shillings

Thomas Morison in Leanoach & Margaret Anderson in Brakery - 10 shillings

Robert McKay, merchant in Colhome and Ann Hay in Briach - £1

Alexander Murdoch in Easter Kellas & Isabel Cramond in Edinkillie - 15 shillings

Alexander Grant in Knockadow & Jane Harrold in Rinnigoup - £1

William Leslie, Miller in Ardach & Janet Kandach in Souldow - 15 shillings

Robert Young in Torcastle & Christian Anderson there - £1/13/4d

James Cameron in Blackhills & Jane Ross in Torcastle - £1/13/4d

These fines gave the Kirk Session a total of £12/7/8d, just less than £3 short of their target. No doubt the Kirk Elders were keeping an eye on the young unmarried ladies of the parish, scouting behind every haystack and in every barn to try to make up the difference! Eventually the balance was made up of funds from the session box, plus one guinea which had been given to the factor for the Gordonstoun lands as an obviously unsuccessful bribe from the father of Janet Kandach, in the hopes of preventing his daughter being called before the session. The bridge over the River Lossie was completed that year, probably only a footbridge near to the farm of Hillockhead, but thanks to human nature there was at least a way to get to the kirk dryshod.

Were some of the people who financed the bridge ever tempted to go and carve their initials into the woodwork - we will never know. In the Great Moray Flood of 1829 the whole structure was swept away down the river, and all traces of it vanished. Only those few lines in the Kirk Session Minutes tell the story of the Dallas fornicator's bridge!

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**Discovering Davidsons in Moray & Nairn**  
By **Nick Hide, Clan Davidson Association**

I am not a native of Moray & Nairn; my ancestral roots are from across the Moray Firth at Cromarty.

In recent years, I have concentrated my long distance research efforts into the Black isle references but at the same time other references were piling up in a file entitled “**Moray & Nairn: To Do**”. I hardly dared to start on this file because I didn’t really know the region. Eventually I jumped in with both feet and started from scratch.

Many of the reference seemed to indicate a level of contact between families at Cromarty and the small ports along the Moray/Nairn coast. I began to realize that the sea road between these communities was probably more important than the much longer land route. I started with a printed reference to **Mr Thos Davidson of Forres**, included in a Newspaper cutting dated 1837 which I found at the Findhorn Heritage Museum, and to a portrait plus brief career description of **Adam Davidson**, which I found in a book in the Nairn Museum. In my eyes one represented the maritime perspective, and the other the landward.



Portrait of Adam Davidson

Application for farther particulars may be made to  
Mr Wm. LOBAN,..... Inverness.  
Mr THOS. DAVIDSON,..... Findhorn.  
Mr WILKINSON,..... Cromarty.  
Mr K. M'KENZIE, Jr.,..... Invergordon.  
Mr P. CHRISTALL,..... Burchlea L.  
Mr JOHN TOD,..... Stotfield Point.  
Mr Wm. BROWN,..... Banff.  
Mr C. R. COLMAN,..... Downe's Wharf,  
London, and Office, 61, Charing Cross.

However, the most important part of the initial research was to understand the geography and the landscape before I did anything. For many years, I had simply driven straight through the area along the A96 trunk road. Moray & Nairn had simply been part of my transit route between two important areas of Davidson research; the Black Isle and Aberdeenshire. I bought a new set of maps and turned off the main road, and made a major effort to explore and understand the area both from the landward and the coastal perspectives during a series of research trips over two years. This exploration has been an eye opener. Everywhere I looked I found Davidson references.

Forres, July, 1837.



INVERNESS AND LONDON STEAM PACKET.  
THE MORAY FIRTH AND LONDON STEAM PACKET COMPANY'S Magnificent and Powerful Steamer,  
**DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND,**  
WALTER STRACHAN, Commander,  
IS APPOINTED TO SAIL  
FROM INVERNESS FOR LONDON.  
Tuesday Morning, Aug. 1st, at 1 o'clock.  
Friday Morning, Aug. 11th, at 1 o'clock.  
FROM LONDON FOR INVERNESS.  
Sunday Morning, August 5th, at 3 o'clock.  
And to call off Forres Point, Cromarty, Invergordon, Findhorn, Burchlea, Stotfield Point, and Banff, going and returning.

The parties ordering Goods will oblige by being particular in desiring them to be sent to  
**DOWNE'S WHARF;**  
And unless particularly marked otherwise, they will be shipped by first Vessel, whether Steamer or Smack.

Application for farther particulars may be made to  
Mr Wm. LOBAN,..... Inverness.  
Mr THOS. DAVIDSON,..... Findhorn.  
Mr WILKINSON,..... Cromarty.  
Mr K. M'KENZIE, Jr.,..... Invergordon.  
Mr P. CHRISTALL,..... Burchlea L.  
Mr JOHN TOD,..... Stotfield Point.  
Mr Wm. BROWN,..... Banff.  
Mr C. R. COLMAN,..... Downe's Wharf,  
London, and Office, 61, Charing Cross.

N.B.—Applications for Shipping Live Stock requested to be made 14 days before the time for shipping, and in writing, to Thos. Davidson, Findhorn, only.

Findhorn, July 4, 1837.

I found the network of local libraries and museums and many helpful staff. I travelled miles on the back roads in all seasons and weathers [and still do] to find historic kirks and graveyards, and local war memorials. I scoured national and regional libraries/archives for literally anything on this region. At the same time, I was building up a group of friendly contacts who treated my ignorance with humour, encouragement and great patience. Best of all was to discover groups of dedicated local researchers and archivists who have completed much fine research in recent years. In particular, I would highlight the Moray Archives, the Nairn and Elgin Museums, and the Moray Burial Ground Research Group, and the many private individuals who have kindly shared so much and made this ongoing project so much fun.

In the space of two years, this region has changed from my “**To Do**” status into the one of the most important for my research into Davidson family

history. My search into what I thought would be two quite distinct Davidson families has mushroomed into a single, connected, multigenerational family spread around the world. Many of the descendants still hold with their Davidson surname; many others are just as proud of the connection. I currently hold equivalent of two large lever arch files of documentation about this family, now collectively known as the “**The Davidsons from Findhorn**”, as a result of discovering that the family had built the dominant Findhorn house which still exists today as the Royal Findhorn Yacht Club.



This building was originally completed as home by John Davidson, Thomas Davidson's father, who played an important part in the creation of Findhorn as a port in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This historic landmark building was probably more than a home. It became the business headquarters and staging post for the passengers using the harbour.

Thomas & Adam Davidson were actually first cousins. They knew each other well. I have discovered family portraits, private collections of letters, historic buildings, wills and testaments, family monumental inscriptions, and a wealth of links with the Davidson families from the Black Isle across the Moray Firth as well as a major network of families across Moray and Nairn. This Sea Road mattered far more than I initially realized, but so did the hinterland in Moray and Nairn where the farming and merchant networks in and around the small towns developed. Later descendants soon grasped the opportunities for further advancement offered via emigration or through the Army, and in particular the Indian army.

Thomas Davidson [1792-1870] took on part of his father's shipping business based on Findhorn, and later became a banker for the new Forres branch of British Linen Bank. Adam Davidson [1801-1875] was a solicitor and Town Clerk for Nairn for many years and also inherited some of his father's interest in farming at Cassieford

I have discovered a cache of family letters written by Adam Davidson and his sisters living in Nairn. These letters were addressed to their brother and his family in Tasmania in the period 1830-1850. The Tasmanian family were also receiving letters from another brother in India. This private archive only holds copies of the letters received in Tasmania but what a detailed insight they give. Full of family detail, crisis and gossip, land and wool prices, bank failures and the fearful consequences, travelling and postal procedures.

As I researched deeper into this large widespread Davidson family, I discovered that the brother in India had been in merchant partnership with my Davidson ancestors [from Cromarty & later Tulloch] in London and was married to a Barkly daughter whose ancestral roots also went back to the Black Isle. The Barkly family had also been in partnership with my Davidson ancestors. A daughter of Thomas Davidson had married a shipmaster from Cromarty.

Along the way, many other Davidson families with Moray and Nairn connections have come across my viewfinder, and their records have been added to the Clan Davidson records.

The Davidson family who built and lived at Tarland House, Nairn, descendants of the Tillychetly, Dess, and Inchmarlo Davidson family from Deeside in Aberdeenshire. This fine house in Nairn still exists today, but as flats.

John Davidson [of Drumhall] near Cromarty was linked by marriage to a Falconer family from Nairn. He managed to join the East India Company in 1759 as a teenage clerk known as writers. He later rose to become, briefly, a Governor of Madras in the 1780s. Part of his family journal written in India in the late 1780s survives, well conserved and very readable, in the India Office collection at the British Library in London. This contains a wealth of reference to Nairn and Morayshire. Family portraits from the same period also still survive in private collections.

I have quantities of interlinked Davidson family records from the parish of Ardclach to be researched. This includes interlinked data about many crofting families, many of whom were later to emigrate. Likewise, there are many Census, Monumental Inscriptions, and Testaments from across the region, which have still to be researched.

Frequently I get sidetracked. My Davidson ancestors from Cromarty were linked by marriage to a part of the Dunbar family from Nairn & Moray, who

later formed one of the great pre-steam age shipping companies based in London. History about the wider Dunbar family is widely available but sometimes it is the treasures one finds in the most unexpected places which can really open the doors. I found some unpublished family manuscripts in the archives of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets which provided a fascinating insight into the life and career of Duncan Dunbar and his commercial career in London.

Summing up; I still have much to learn about the area, but at last I feel I know my way around, and can understand some of the family Davidson history which is now emerging from the records. If any reader of the item wants to share any Davidson family information please feel free to contact me at any time. I will willingly share anything from my growing files.

Nick Hide  
website: [www.clandavidson.org.uk](http://www.clandavidson.org.uk)

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## MEMBERS' INTERESTS

John Welsh (6) has submitted a complete record of the UK Frigge/Fridges to Highland Archives, Inverness, and Elgin Local Heritage Centre. He has also recorded it on [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) His records have also been sent to Findhorn Historical Society. At present, John is working on USA records, and, when complete, they will also be submitted to the same depositories.

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Membership renewals are due on the anniversary of your joining date. We will send you a renewal form, by email, or by post, if we have no email address for you. Subscriptions remain at the same rate as last year. We hope you will all renew. It is necessary for subscriptions to be paid in sterling, either by cheque, bank draft, or by direct transfer into the MNFHS account (details on renewal form). Please do not send Postal Orders from overseas, as these cannot be processed through the UK banking system, for some reason. When we have a much larger membership, we will look at alternative payment methods.

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