



Moray & Nairn Family History Society

# NEWSLETTER

Edition 4

June 2010

**W**elcome to the fourth edition of the Moray & Nairn FHS Newsletter. We hope you will enjoy reading it and tell your friends about MNFHS. Our membership continues to grow, and, on going to print, stands at 43.

**Contacts:**

**Chairman:** Bruce B Bishop

**Secretary:** Janet M Bishop

**Treasurer:** Kenneth A M Nisbet

**Diary**

**Saturday 10 July 2010**

Western Front Association Meeting, Gallery, Elgin Library, 2.30 pm  
Dr John Bourne, University of Birmingham: "Firing and Hiring on the Western Front"

**Saturday 4 September 2010**

Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS, Moray/Banff Branch Meeting, Elgin Library, 2 pm  
Discussion Forum

**Saturday 11 September 2010**

Western Front Association Meeting, Gallery, Elgin Library, 2.30 pm  
Richard Everett, Postcard Collector: "The Seaforth Highlanders in Postcards"

**Saturday 2 October 2010**

Nairn Family History Fair, Community Centre, Nairn, 10.30 -4.30. Hosted by MNFHS in conjunction with Scottish Genealogical Research

**Saturday 16 October 2010**

Western Front Association Meeting, Gallery, Elgin Library, 2.30 pm.  
Mark Finneran, Machine Gun collector: "Imperial German Army Machine Gun Usage and Tactics"

**Saturday 6 November 2010**

Western Front Association Meeting, Gallery, Elgin Library 2.30 pm  
Derek Bird, Branch Chairman: "Lambs to the Slaughter: The 50<sup>th</sup> (Northumbrian) Division at Ypres, April 1915"

**Saturday 20 November 2010**

MNFHS Meeting, Nairn Community Centre, 2 pm. All welcome.  
Jenny Rose-Miller: "A Tour of Historic Nairn"

**June 2010 Meeting**

**T**he June meeting took place in Forres Community Centre, where we had a most interesting talk from Fiona Watson, Northern Health Board Archivist, on *Health Service Records for the Family Historian*. The talk covered the type of records available, including hospital records, asylum records, poor house records and staff records. The speaker demonstrated the wide variations in information available, some institutions having a very simple admissions register, while others gave much more detailed information, such as case notes. The Admission Registers for the asylums were of special interest in that they gave considerable information, not only on the patients but also on the family.

Personal visits to the archive can be made by appointment. Please contact the archivist, Miss Fiona R Watson at Northern Health Services Archives, Victoria Pavilion, Woolmanhill Hospital, Aberdeen, AB25 1LD, Tel: 01224 555562.

[www.nhsgrampian.org](http://www.nhsgrampian.org)

**Moray & Nairn FHS Website**

**D**oug Stewart will be taking over as webmaster from June 2010. Please contact him direct with news items for the website at the following address:

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

**P**lanning is going well for the Fair, with the following standholders having booked to date:

Moray and Nairn FHS  
Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS  
Lanarkshire FHS  
West Lothian FHS  
Buckie Fishing Heritage  
Highland Council Archives  
Guild of One-Name Studies  
Highland FHS  
Am Baile  
Moray Burial Ground Research Group  
J & B Bishop Publishing  
Janet Bishop, Genealogist  
Scottish Association of Family History Societies  
The Nairn Bookshop  
Yeadons Bookshop  
Grampian Books  
Highlanders Regimental Museum  
David Hirst Postcards

We have an interesting line up of speakers:

**Charles Burnett**, The Ross Herald: "*Heraldry for Genealogists*"

**Dr Bruce Durie**: "*Land, Law and Latin*"

**Kenneth Nisbet**: "*Nairnshire in The Great War 1914-1921*"

**Jean Shirer**: "*Getting Started on your Family History*"

There will also be a panel of experts available for consultation at certain times throughout the day.

It is not necessary to book for the talks in advance.

**Admission:** £ 1.00, at the door

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## Article

### Does death come on horseback?

**M**r John McKain, minister of Birnie, was found hung in his chamber on the morning of Christmas Day 1703.

A letter (National Archives of Scotland CH12/12/1244), written in the hand of Mr John Wilson, with an annotation by the Honourable Archibald Campbell, refers to his death:

"December 24 1703.

A man standing at the back of the town of Forres

in Murray saw a man black in visage riding on a coarse horse with a broad-brim'd hatt hanging down on his shoulders and a long cloak to his heels in the evening, and as he pass'd by him asked if that was the way to Birnay and if he could reach it that night, the country man answers that it was and he might reach it. After he had pass'd by the man had a shacking in his bodie he knew not wherefore. Further on the way four miles to the eastward from that, at Manachtie (*now Monaughty*) a country village in the parish of Alvis (*Alves*) he is seen in the same manner by 15 or 16 young men playing at the football and the gentlewomen daughters of one Greenhill standing at a door looking on. He asked again at them if this was the way to Birnay, the answered yes, and subjoining, ye must be a stranger that knows it not, he asked again can I reach it this night, they answered yes, he added he must be their this night for there is great work to be their. After that he rode from them a kind of horror seized the young woman that spake to him and she repaired in the house and says if ever I faced the Devil it is just now and since she is pofsefsed with such a fear that she is afeared to go out of her house at night or to be in a room alone. After he had pass'd by them they saw him ryde through a mosse which they thought impassable. The nixt morning Dec<sup>r</sup> 25 Mr John McKain Presbyterian Minister of Birnay, was found in his chamber hanged in his bridle with his hands tyed behind his back \*, He had been all his life a man of ane unblameable life, being much inclined to melancholie, and had some tyme before this communicated to some of the brethren that he was tempted to such a thing and had been advised to earnest prayer he confess'd that he had prayed till he was werrie (*but*) was not heard. This is attested by these that were there and other witnesses and others who had heard it from their mouth.

\* The door being bolted within".

**Bruce B Bishop**

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## Members' Queries

**I**n 1820 three brothers; Alexander, Archibald & James Murdoch (sons of James & Isabel Murdoch) enlisted with the Hudson Bay Company (I have a copy of the agreements they signed) for a period of five years. I have copies of some of the logs listing their activities in Northwest Canada. In the May 30, 1822 Cumberland House records show Alexander, Archibald and James were employed at this location. This is the last record we presently have for James. 1822 HBC employee records show James Murdoch as a "freeman" posted to Lower Red River. In 1825 when their term was up,

Alexander & Archibald returned to Scotland on the Prince of Wales, and settled in Hopeman where Alexander married Elspet Gallon. My questions are: were there others from Moray who enlisted with the Hudson Bay Company in 1820; did James ever return to Scotland?

**David Murdoch (19)**

In 1834 Archibald returned to Canada, and this time settled in the Province of Quebec. In 1834 he married Mary Ann Bain who was part of the group that came out on the same ship. Were there other families who travelled in the same group?

**David Murdoch (19)**

The third puzzle I have is the Calder Family. The story goes: "John and James Calder came from Nairn in Morayshire Scotland. At the end of the 1700s times were hard in Scotland and they travelled to Paisley to learn a trade. When they got there, they found everyone speaking English, so they learned weaving and English. When they eventually came to Canada in 1827 and subsequently moved to Dalesville they found everyone speaking Gaelic. So he did his weaving and brother James taught English."

Do any of our members know where I could go to check any of these items? If there is anybody researching these families locally, I have a lot of information including pictures of what happened to them in Canada.

**David Murdoch (19)**

*If you think you can help with the queries above, please contact the member direct.*

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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

**NEW**

The Parishes of Morayshire. Register of Burials 1879-1952, **Forres Churchyard**. Compiled by Stuart Farrell and Bruce B Bishop. 23pp, ISBN 978-0-9564490-4-7, £ 2.75

**SEE THE BOOKSHOP ON THE WEBSITE**

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## **A Brief History of Moray and Nairn**

### **Part I**

#### **Prehistoric Times**

**A**t these early times the lands which were later to become the Province of Moray were covered by the great 'Atlantic Forest', with the hillsides, apart from the highest tops, being covered by extensive pine forests which changed in character as the altitude decreased down to the oak, alder and beech woods of the lower lands, bordering onto the swampy coastline of the estuaries of the Findhorn (the Erne), the Lossie and the Spey. The lands of Coveasa and Roseisle were separated from the mainland by the sea loch later known as the Loch of Spynie, and to the east the Loch of Cotts lay between the mouths of the Lossie and the Spey.

There are some indications of Stone Age settlements, either permanent or temporary, in the general area prior to about 2000BC, mainly based on the finding of flint arrowheads and scrapers. It is evident therefore that prehistoric man either visited or inhabited the area at this time.

Through the Bronze Age, with its waves of immigrants from the Low Countries, generally settling along the coastal fringes of Scotland, the evidence for permanent settlements is still quite limited in comparison to other parts of the country, the marshy nature of the coastline may have been a factor in this.

By the Iron Age the cooling climate had put an end to any thoughts of habitation at the higher levels. The higher ridges of land in the Laich of Moray, however, may have proved ideal for a primitive form of agriculture and animal husbandry, the basic necessities of life being provided by the still very extensive woodland and forests, the sea for fishing, the innumerable wild

fowl which must have frequented the marshlands, and the light soils of the Laich. The earliest permanent settlements may well therefore have formed along these ridges, such as at Birnie and Alves.

The arrival of the Celts, farmers, warriors and artisans, meant that the early native population would have needed to defend their livestock and farms from the new arrivals, who, however, were very quickly assimilated into the local population, probably in quite a peaceable way.

### **Roman Times**

Following the defeat of the Celts at the Battle of Mons Graupius in AD84, the Emperor led expeditionary forces into the north of Scotland, including Moray, but there is no evidence that any permanent bases or settlements were ever established, except possibly at Burghead (Ptoroton), and maybe at Birnie. It appears that this very limited presence of any Roman troops in the area made very little cultural impact on the local population, but following the general southward withdrawal of the Romans in AD121 it is likely that there was still a minimal contact maintained between Rome and Moray. During the period AD 200 – 220 there seems possibly to have been a further increase in Roman activity in the area. The only Roman finds in the Elgin area are an Alexandrian coin of Galerius found in a garden in Elgin and some Roman glass found at Lochside on what would have been the shore of the old Loch of Spynie. There have also been finds, including hoards of coins, at Birnie during the ongoing excavations there conducted by Professor Fraser Hunter. This may indicate that at some stage of the Roman period the local landowners were in the pay of the Romans.

### **Pictish Times**

During the later years of the Roman presence in Britain, the Picts began to make their presence felt, and by the end of the 5th century they dominated Scotland north of the Forth. They had replaced, or integrated with the earlier Celtic culture, and in fact some sources consider that the Picts were the Celts by another name. The earlier Celtic way of life was replaced with the Pictish culture, either because of the destruction of the Celtic way of life by the Romans, which seems unlikely, or because of the more advanced civilisation which the Pictish way of life brought to the area. The Picts worshipped pagan gods, but were craftsmen and artisans of the highest order, as evidenced by their sculptured symbol stones which are found throughout Moray.

The first Pictish settlements would have been quite small, often no more than three or four extended family groups, thriving on a mixture of subsistence agriculture and a hunter-gatherer economy. There were few routes of communication in the area at this time, the Romans never constructed roads as in the south of Britain, and this was an area of forest tracks and dryways across the marshland. The nature of the coast and the rivers, with the shallow waters of the coast would also have made the sea and the rivers an effective means of communication between the settlements.

By 500AD Scotland appears to have been divided into four kingdoms, with Morayshire being a frontier between the Picts and the Scots, and therefore often a battleground. By this time, however, more permanent settlements were beginning to emerge, during the 6th century there are indications that Forres, lying at the mouth of the River Erne or Finderene [later the Findhorn] was the most important town in the north. It had a strong merchant base and considerable trade with other ports around the coast, and possibly even across the North Sea to Norway, Denmark and the Baltic. At this time the sea would have extended almost to the northern edge of the town, and may even have lapped against the base of the Castle Hill at high tide. The small trading vessels of this time did not need harbour facilities, as it was possible to load and unload them on the beach or in small inlets such as the mouth of the Burn of Altyre [now the Mosset Burn].

In 535 Toncet, the King's Chancellor, "*causit divers merchantis of the Towne of Fores in Murayland (as then the chiefest towne of all that countrie) to be accused of treason. Efter sundrie wrangles and oppressions done to him (The Chancellor of King Coranus) in the king's auctoritie callit afore him certane merchantis of Forres in Murray and for small or wane causis put them to deith as misdooris. Syne confiscat thair guddis to the kings behwffe.*" How much faith can be put in these early writings will never be known, but they certainly represent the earliest documentary sources referring to the merchants of Forres.

From this time onwards the Culdee Church, following in the footsteps of St Columba, St Ninian and other Irish missionaries, was beginning to establish itself in Scotland, with some of the Pictish leaders, followed by their people, embracing the new Christian faith. The missionary preachers, in the process of converting the Picts from their former Pagan beliefs, were also acting as a civilizing influence of the people

of a region which had degenerated socially since the end of the Roman era.

The major climatic deterioration during the period 535 – 542 AD, probably caused by the eruption of the Pacific volcano Krakatoa, and the subsequent large amounts of atmospheric dust, led to very cold winters and cool dry summers, which would have caused the developing systems of agriculture to come under severe threat and lead to great hardship for the people. After this short spell, however, the climate returned to normal, and the agricultural developments continued apace.

In 663 the Synod of Whitby marked the beginning of the influence of the Roman Church in Britain, and there was a gradual spread of the Catholic faith throughout the 7th century, although the earlier missionary-based Culdee Church may have retained a presence in the more remote area until the 10th century. There is evidence that the Picts concentrated their major settlements around the major rivers, hence the development of Elgin near to what was, at that time, the mouth of the Lossie at Calcots, Forres near the mouth of the Findhorn, Nairn at the mouth of the River Nairn, and Inverness at the mouth of the Ness. At this time the Province of Moray extended from the Spey in the east almost to Lochaber, and Inverness and Nairn were considered to be towns within the Province.

In the year 843 the Pictish tribes in the north and the Irish “Scots” of Dalriada were amalgamated under the leader of the Scots; Kenneth MacAlpin; the first King of Scotland. This union may have been partly a response to the ever-growing threat from the Norsemen who were already beginning their occupation of the Northern Isles and the north of mainland Scotland. The members of the loose-knit alliance under King Kenneth seemed to have formed various alliances among themselves, and Moray itself had claimants to the Scottish Throne. The Gaelic language brought from Ireland by the Scots was now becoming widespread throughout Scotland, and the Pictish name for the area “*Fiddich*” was now replaced by the Gaelic “*Moray*”. By the end of the 9th century the establishment of Moray as a province of Scotland was complete, with its head, the Mormaer of Moray, becoming a major figure not only locally but in the affairs of Scotland as a whole.

**Part II will follow in the next Newsletter in November 2010**

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## Moray Miscellany

### Elgin Rifle Volunteers, Pluscarden and Kellas

**D**uring the renovations of a cottage in Miltonduff, the target practice registers were found in the roof space. An attempt was made to identify these volunteers, by using the 1881 census (LDS version on CD), and the results are as follows:

### Soldiers Identified in Target Practice Register 1873

Pte James Harrold, Inchellan Croft  
*Born ca 1821 – Elgin Landward*

... Alexander Ogilvie, Newton, Dallas  
*Born ca 1848 – Dallas*

Sgt John Gallon, Croy Farm, Pluscarden  
*Born ca 1835 – Elgin Landward*

Pte John Fraser, Barnhill Farm, Pluscarden  
*Born ca 1824 – Elgin Landward*

Pte Robert Hardie, W Foresterseat, Pluscarden  
*Born ca 1849 – Elgin Landward*

Pte John James, Mill of Kellas  
*Born ca 1827 – Dallas*

Pte John McKenzie, Bodnafluch, Dallas  
*Born ca 1826 - Dallas*

Pte Robert Milne, Bodenstalker, Kellas  
*Born ca 1849 - Dallas*

Pte William Findlay, Foresterseat, Kellas  
*Not found on census*

Sgt Henry Thomson, Crossley, Pluscarden  
*Born ca 1827 – Elgin Landward*  
*“Instructor of Rifle Volunteers”*

Pte William Hay, Edinvail, Dallas  
*Born ca 1832 - Dallas*

Pte William Shiach       ... ..  
*Not found on census*

Col Sgt Alexander McKissack, Crossley, Pluscarden  
*Born ca 1828 – Elgin Landward*

Pte Robert Skene, Cots of Rhiniver, Dallas  
*Born ca 1841 – Dallas*

Cpl John Barron, Badymichael, Kellas  
*Born ca 1829 - Dallas*

Pte John Cruickshank, Coldhome, Dallas  
*Born ca 1851 – Dallas*

Sources: Helen Hughes, Milntonduff & 1881  
Census, LDS

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## Nairnshire Monumental Inscriptions

### Ardclach MIs

The team has almost completed the recording of the MIs at Ardclach Churchyard. It is hoped that the publication will be out in time for the Nairn Family History Fair in October. Keep an eye on the website!

Here are a few photos.



Ardclach in May



Hard at work



One of the more modern stones in Ardclach





Luckily, as you can see, the weather has been good on the days we've been out! Of course, we may not always be so lucky, but if you are interested in joining the team for a future churchyard, please be in touch.

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### From The Archives

#### Survey of the Shop Tax of 1787-88 (NAS E326/4/6) Compiled by Stuart Farrell

##### Elgin - 19 Oct 1787

| Name                         | Shop value £5-£9 | Shop value £10-£14 | Duty    |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Dr Thomas Stephen            | £6               | -                  | £0.2.0  |
| William William jnr          | £5               | -                  | £0.11.8 |
| Provost Stephen Meikle       | £6               | -                  | £0.2.0  |
| John Forsyth Mercht          | -                | £10                | £0.6.8  |
| John Brander & Co            | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8  |
| Provost Duff Mercht          | £6               | -                  | £0.2.0  |
| Dr Dougal                    | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8  |
| Baillie John Ritchie Mercht  | -                | £10                | £0.6.8  |
| Baillie Alexr Brander Mercht | £8               | -                  | £0.2.8  |
| Baillie John Jamison Mercht  | £6               | -                  | £0.2.0  |
| Baillie James Simpson Mercht | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8  |
| William Innes Mercht         | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8  |
| William Robertson Mercht     | £6               | -                  | £0.2.0  |
| Mrs Robert Petrie            | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8  |
| Mrs Archld & James Craigs    | £6               | -                  | £0.2.0  |
| Messrs Robertson & Forsyth   | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8  |
| Provost John Forsyth Banker  | £8               | -                  | £0.2.8  |

##### Forres - 20 Sep 1787

| Name                        | Shop value £5-£9 | Shop value £10-£14 | Duty   |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------|
| William Carnaby             | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8 |
| James Anderson Senn         | £7               | -                  | £0.2.4 |
| Doctor Dougall              | £8               | -                  | £0.2.8 |
| John Gordon Esq             | -                | £12                | £0.8.0 |
| John Hoyes                  | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8 |
| Alexander Forsyth Esq       | -                | £12                | £0.8.0 |
| Baillie William Hoyes       | £8               | -                  | £0.2.8 |
| Thomas Eddie                | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8 |
| Doctor Strath               | £5               | -                  | £0.1.8 |
| John Gordon's Banking House | £6               | -                  | £0.2.0 |

The next Newsletter will be published in November 2010. Please submit articles for consideration to the