



Moray & Nairn Family History Society

NEWSLETTER

Edition 40

October 2021

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

MNFHS Chairman's Report

I do hope that this finds you a member of the Moray & Nairn FHS have not been too affected by the ongoing covid-19 crisis.

Challenging times, Elgin Archives have reopened but are limitations on access to some materials. So research goes on very slowly. Currently working on various publications so hopefully by early new year we will have new titles available.

On the subject of the newsletter, I would welcome any comments on the current layout. Columns of text are not easy to read on mobile phones or even on i-pads. Only one member commented on my request in the last newsletter to whether old layout should stay or change to text laid out horizontally and so easier to scroll through. So hence this new style. Its easier to produce and hopefully easier for all to read no matter how you view it.

Saddened to hear that the 2022 SAFHS Conference proposed to be held in Dundee next April has been cancelled, but will take place as a Zoom Conference.

To all take care,
Stuart Farrell
Chairman

The next Newsletter will be published in February 2022. Will members please submit articles to the Editor: newsletter@morayandnairnfhs.co.uk

MNFHS Publications

SEE THE BOOKSHOP ON THE WEBSITE FOR ALL TITLES AVAILABLE

Special Offers to Members!

Elgin Poor Registers 1841-1891 in 3 parts £6 each now £12 for set of 3.

*Forres Gazette Pre-1855 Deaths Parts 1-3 and Elgin Courier Pre-1855 Deaths Parts 1 & 2
Was £6 each now £3 each*

Pre1855 Auldearn & Nairnshire Deaths Was £5 now £3

Limited offer only – Free Postage & Packing on above offers.

Moray Miscellany

Fraser Story

We can start with my grandfather, Alexander Geddes Fraser (AGF), born 26/12/1870 to Ann Geddes, of Cottonhill, Deskford at Greenhill Deskford, Banffshire (now Aberdeenshire). His biological father was John Fraser – Ann and he were not married and Ann's pregnancy was the subject of several meetings at Fordyce Kirk session, e.g. on 3/10/1870. I have the original birth certificate which has important pencil notes about the location of John Fraser. Within a few months, Ann had to give up her baby and was moved to West Linton in Lothian where she was employed as a laundry maid. I wonder how this was arranged – perhaps the local minister? She eventually married James Laing locally and had a son, George Alexander. She died in 1912

Here is the first coincidence: The baby, Alexander Geddes Fraser was adopted by William Milton and his wife Catherine Fraser (married 1854) William was born in 1830 and brought up in the Fordyce area. In 1861 he was a tenant crofter at Blinkbonny, Deskford but became the crofter at Rottenhillock Deskford where my father was brought up. Catherine Fraser was born in Inverness in 1832, the daughter of Catherine Mackenzie and John Fraser. The OPR shows that Catherine Mackenzie was a widow at the time of her daughter's birth, so John Fraser must have died in the preceding nine months from 1/7/1831. John and Catherine were married in Ardersier (Fort George, Inverness) 22/12/1819, he being Cpl in 7th RV Bn.

On the death certificate for Catherine Mackenzie (John's wife) in (26/4/1893), reported by her daughter Catherine Fraser (married name, Milton), John is stated to have been "sgt in 92nd Gordon Highlanders" The Gordon Highlanders centre in Aberdeen have no information on John. Perhaps some could be got from the National Archives at Kew, London

Did Willie Milton and wife Catherine adopt AGF because of kinship with either Alexander or with his wife Janet Fraser? It should also be noted that the couple had previously adopted another child, Anna Pirrie, born Rathven 1857, but if there is no connection, why did they wait for 13 years before making another adoption?

AGF's biological father John was the son of Peter Fraser (1), married to Margaret Leslie, crofter at Glen of Newmill, Keith, Banffshire. This is only about 4 miles over the hill of Altmore from Rottenhillock (above). Peter (1)'s father was Alexander Fraser and mother was Janet FRASER (2nd coincidence!) This information is from the death certificate of Peter Fraser (1), provided by his son, Peter (2). The certificate states that Fraser was Janet's maiden name, with the implication that they were married. There are, however, several marriages in the Inverness area at that time of an Alexander Fraser marrying a Janet Fraser. No entry is found in the OPR of Peter Fraser being born to Alexander and Janet – nor are any siblings found.

The death certificate of Peter (1) Fraser, with son Peter (2) as source, states that Peter was born in Inverness. However, in the Census of 1851, Peter's birth place is given (presumably from Peter himself) as Moray, Elgin. The 1841 Census affirms that Peter was born in the county where now resident (Banffshire). However the 1861 Census gives Inverness. Confusing! My preference must be to go along with Peter's 1851 selection of Moray, though for years, I had assumed Inverness to be correct.

Coincidence #3. The census of 1851 shows Peter (1) with his family at the croft at Glen of Newmill, Keith. Remarkably, the immediately adjacent croft is worked by another Peter Fraser, (Peter (3)) with his family.

About 25-30 years ago I visited the area of Glen of Newmills and chatted to the farmer at the adjacent farm of Groalpan.- he would have been about 80 years old at the time. He told me that when he was a boy the track to the neighbouring crofts was known as "Fraser Street". Can there be a connection here? Peter(3)'s grandfather was William Fraser who with his wife Margaret Watson had a family of 6, viz., Jean (b.1749), James (b.1752), Margaret (b.1754), Peter (4)(b.1756), Eliabeth (b.1759, and John(b.1761), all born in Rafford, Moray. Peter(4) is, of course, the father of Peter (3).

James (above) had a family of 6 with his wife, Jean FRASER (another coincidence!), including Alexander(1) Fraser, b. Rafford 1795. James' brother, John, also had a son, with his wife Elizabeth Spence/Spens, named Alexander(2) b.Alves 7/1/1790.

Peter(1) Fraser i.e. my grandfather AGF's grandfather was born about 1812/13 so his father, Alexander, may have been born about 1790. That fits quite well with the births of the two above mentioned Alexanders. So could one of them be the father of Peter (1)?

The death certificate of an Alexander Fraser, died aged 82 in 1877 and so born 1795, states that he was the widower of Janet Fraser. It also states that his parents were John Fraser and Janet Fraser. However, the Alexander (1) (above) was the son of James (not John) Fraser and Janet Fraser. The death was registered by Alexander MacLellan, grandson of the deceased Alexander, presumably married to a daughter of Alexander. He was the son of Janet Fraser and William MacLellan, born in Auldearn 1921. It would seem that the grandson was not familiar with the given name of his Fraser grandfather. Alexander (2) Fraser, besides being born in 1790 (too early!), was the son of John Fraser and Elizabeth Spence, so not the father of Peter (1).

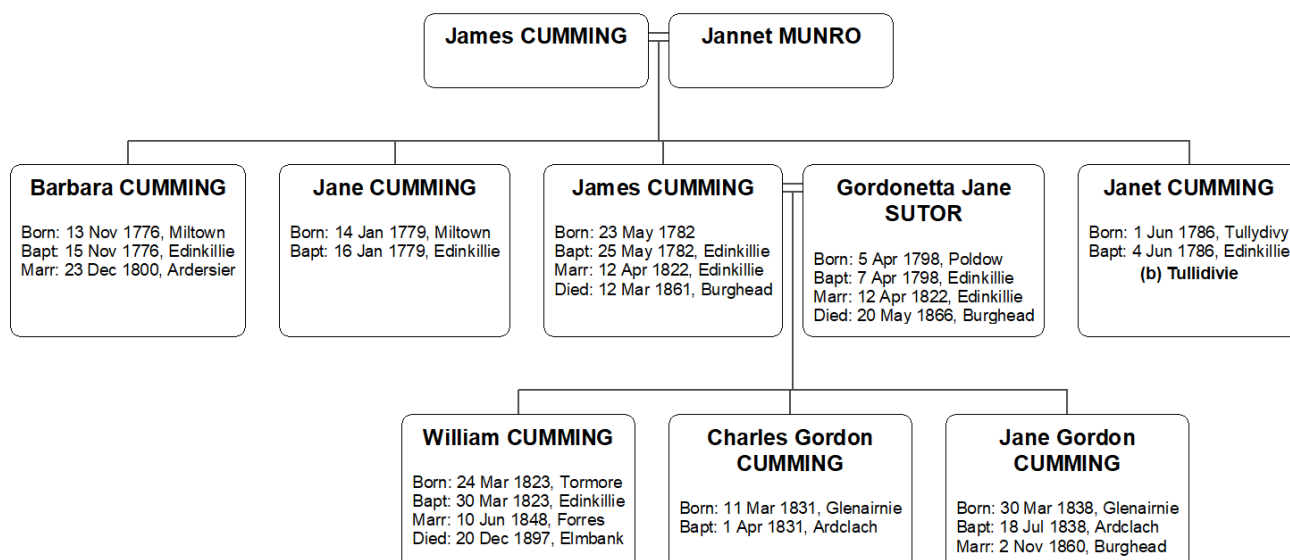
It is apparent that Peter has been a traditional name in this branch of the Frasers, the first recorded being Peter Fraser, married to Jean Smith, with their family in Rafford, Moray early in the 18th century. The brother of our John Fraser, father of AGF was another Peter Fraser, who emigrated to United States. No further Peters on that line.

Contributed by Doug Fraser

Moray Miscellany

The family connections of Jannet Munro, born 1759

I am the great-great-great-grandson of William Cumming, the eldest of nine known children. The names of his paternal grandparents appear on the 1861 death certificate of his father. James Cumming and Jannet Munro appear to have had three daughters and one son, and although no marriage record has been found, the baptismal records for the four children all indicate that James and Jannet were married.



Virtually every online tree – including, until recently, my own – shows James’s parents as being James Cumming and Barbara McNortterer, who married in 1749. The only evidence cited for this appears to be that the eldest child of James and Jannet was also named Barbara. However, this would mean that the family did not use a traditional naming pattern, and a cursory look at the parish registers shows that there were many Cumming families using a small selection of forenames. In a similar manner, there is a possible baptism for Jannet Munro (baptised in 1752 to father Alexander in Aitnach, Edinkillie), which is generally regarded as the correct entry, but no corroborating evidence has been found. Without further evidence it was impossible to make any definitive progress on the parents of either James Cumming or Jannet Munro.

However, further documentary evidence did already exist, although it had been neglected. Oral history provided by an online contact, combined with a Y-DNA match discovered in 2020, also proved critical. The rest of this article is a summary of what has been discovered after considering:

- the baptismal records for Barbara, Jane, James, and Janet.
- the family being centred upon the parish of Edinkillie, Moray
- a piece of oral tradition which claims that Barbara (born 1776) *“was of the gentry. According to family tradition she was disinherited by her family because she fell in love with her music teacher. He was considered below her station. As a girl she rode a pony to school, a sign of opulence and station.”*
- the middle names chosen for two of William’s eight siblings. Jane Gordon was probably named for her mother, Gordonetta Jane, but why did Charles also receive the name Gordon? Until now, no reason has been suggested.
- the naming pattern James and Jannet *may* have used for their children
- a Y-DNA test the author completed.

This article attempts to weave these strands into a coherent whole.

The DNA test & Edinkillie Parish

I completed a BigY-700 test with FTDNA, and three of my four closest matches are with Cumming males, implying that my paper trail showing Cumming ancestry is accurate. The

complex details of the research resulting from my closest match are a story for another day. For the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to say that there is excellent evidence that my Cumming line goes back to the family of Presley and Relugas in the parish of Edinkillie. The implication is that there may have been some wealth on the Cumming side, which agrees well with the account of Barbara having had a pony and a music teacher – these would not have been common in eighteenth century Moray.

The Baptismal Records

Transcriptions of these records are shown below, all of them being from the parish of Edinkillie:

Barbara lawful daughter to James Cumming & Janet Munro in Milntown was born 13 Nov 1776 and baptised 15 Nov 1776. Witnesses: Mr Elison & James Miller of Tillydivie.

Jane lawful daughter to James Cumming & Janet Munro in Milntown was born 14 Jan 1779 and baptised 16 Jan 1779. Witnesses: Mr Elison & Peter Cumming.

James lawful son to James Cumming was born 23 May 1782 and was baptised 25 May 1782. Witnesses: Mr Elison in Milntown and Mr Biue in Relugas.

Janet lawful daughter to James Cumming & Janet Munro in Tillydivie was born 1 Jun 1786 and baptised 4 Jun 1786. Witnesses: Thos Cumming & Alexander Cumming at Milntown.

It is plain that ‘Mr Elison’ was significant to the family, as well as being a man of some importance in his own right. Elison (however spelled) was a rare name across the north-east of Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries. Records occur with these frequencies:

	Baptisms	Marriages
Moray	8	9
Nairnshire	1	0
Banff	0	0
Aberdeen	0	1

Mr Elison almost certainly belonged to Moray. Indeed, all eight baptismal records there are for the parish of Kinloss, and at least five of those are siblings born between 1711 and 1727. None of those children married Cummings, but the parents’ marriage record states:
15 Jul 1710. Parish of Kinloss. Testimonie being received from the Kirk Session of Raffurd that John Elison in this parish and Jean Cumming in the parish of Raffurd were matrimonially contracted their proclamations were appointed to go on.

It seems probable that one of the two sons of John Elison and Jean Cumming grew up to become the ‘Mr Elison’ of the baptisms. They were:

Alexander, baptised in Kinloss, 1717

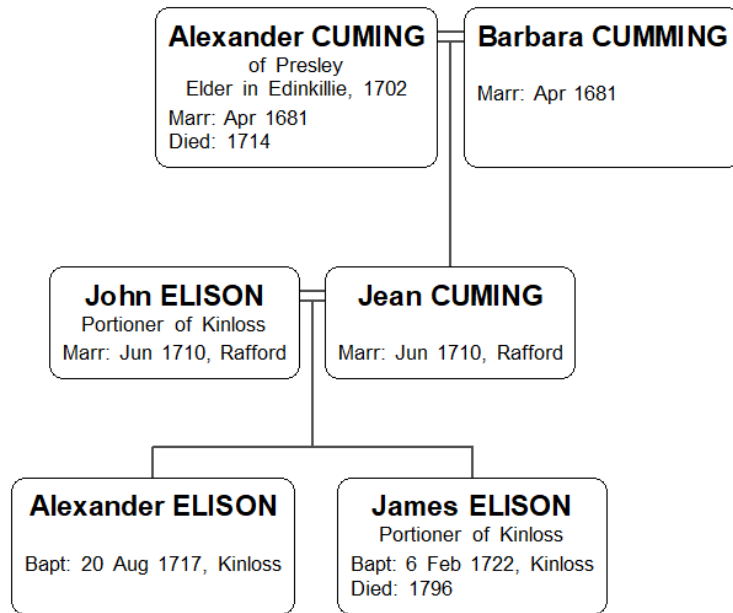
James, baptised in Kinloss, 1722

There is a 1785 Edinkillie baptismal record which described one witness as ‘James Ellison in Kinloss’. This is only three years after ‘Mr Elison’ witnessed the baptism of James Cumming. John Elison, husband of Jean Cumming and father of ‘Mr Elison’ is mentioned in a 1714 will left by ‘Alexander Cumming of Presley’:

... Jean Cumming second lawfull daughter to the said umqle Alexr Cumming of Presley ... and he did assign her said provision to and in favour of John Elison portioner of Kinloss her husband ...”

This establishes a documented connection between Mr Elison (who witnessed the

baptisms of my relatives), and the Cumming family of Presley (to whom I am connected, as evidenced by DNA). A simplified pedigree is shown below:

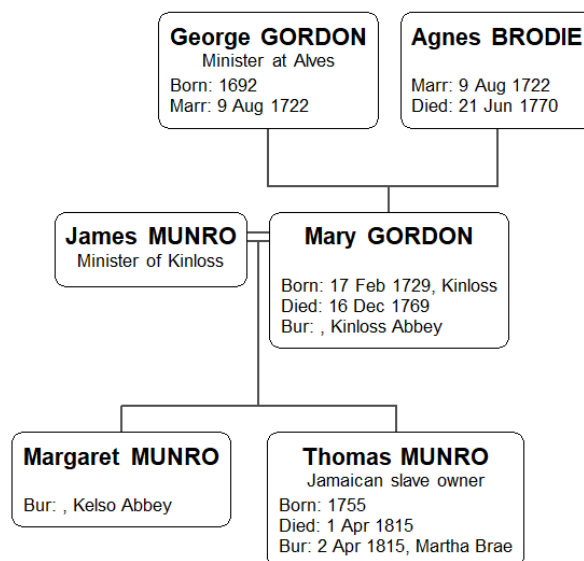


James Elison died in 1796, and left a will of his own.

Naming patterns for children

If my ancestors James Cumming and Jannet Munro followed the traditional naming pattern for their children then their first daughter – Barbara – would have been named for her mother’s mother. However, searching for a marriage between a male Munro and a Barbara has been fruitless. It is of interest, then, that James Elison named his housekeeper in his 1796 will. She was a Barbara Munro. Who might she have been?

On the basis that James Elison’s housekeeper may have been of a moderately well-known Kinloss family, the search went in that direction. An internet search for “Munro Kinloss” immediately turns up references to Thomas Munro, a planter in Jamaica, who died in 1815. A little further research reveals the following family:



Thomas's mother, Mary Gordon, was buried at Kinloss Abbey. Her memorial (translated from the original Latin) reads as follows:



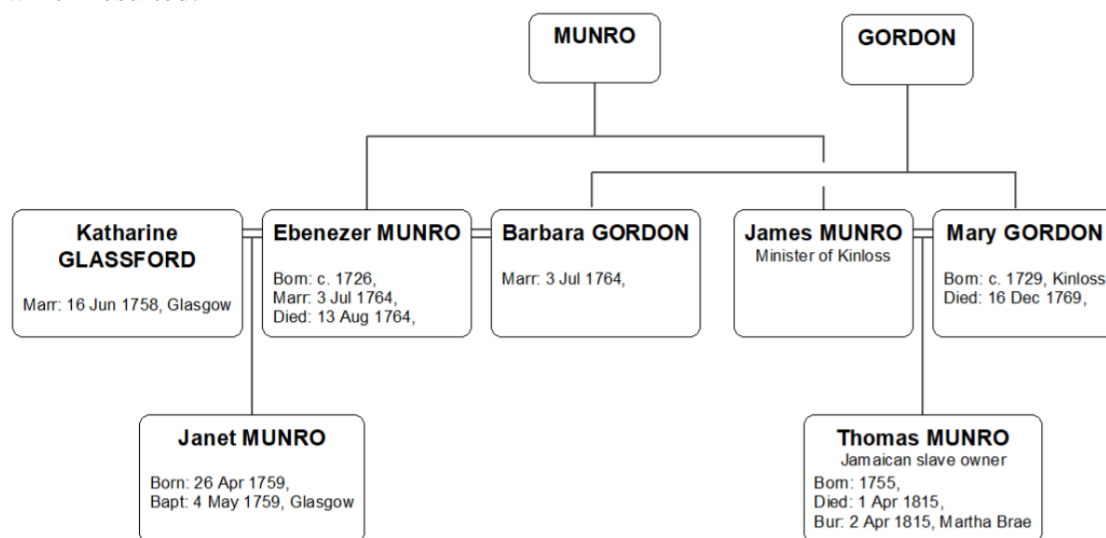
Photograph © GariochGraver.

'The hour comes when the dead shall hear his voice and issue forth from their tombs.

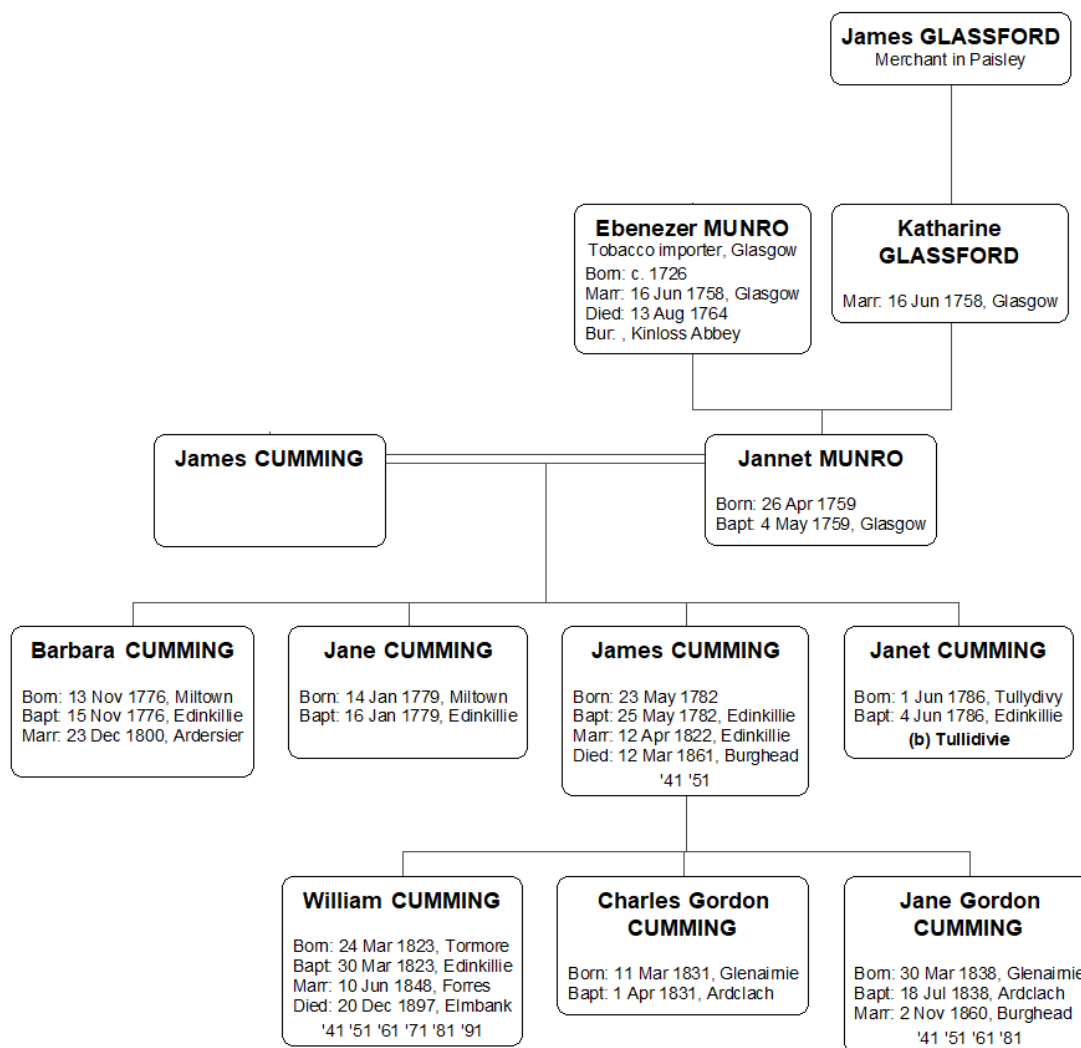
*The Reverend Mr JAMES MUNRO,
Of The Gospel, ordered this dwelling for the dead
because his wife MARY GORDON, departed this life on the
16th day of December 1769, aged 40, is buried here.
Alas, how the house was made desolate on that day!
With what wailing all (? the house) resounded when*

*such a mother beyond compare was snatched away!
 And because his brother german
 EBENEZER MUNRO, a citizen of Glasgow
 reputable and outstanding lies here as well,
 who married BARBARA GORDON sister of
 Mary on the 3rd day of July 1764 and, alas,
 died on the 13th of the following month aged 38.
 He left four orphans of his former marriage whom
 his faithful widow took into her care. With a mother's
 affection this noble sister was at hand with aid,
 a consolation to the household of Mary on the
 day of affliction and she willingly undertook the
 hard task of rearing her sister's little ones.*

Using the evidence of the memorial in conjunction with further research, it has been found that Ebenezer Munro had four children (Janet, Margaret, Thomas and John) by his first wife, Katherine, sister of an immensely wealthy Glaswegian Tobacco Lord, John Glassford. Katherine died and Ebenezer remarried – his second wife was Barbara Gordon. Five weeks later Ebenezer died, leaving his new wife with four young step-children, but appointing his brother Rev. James Munro of Kinloss as the children's tutor. This would only have been feasible if Barbara took the children back to Kinloss soon after Ebenezer's death. Five years later Barbara's sister Mary also died, leaving children of her own. Barbara took them under her wing as well, resulting in the accolade of 'noble sister'. The simplified pedigree below illustrates the relationships which resulted.



It is therefore proposed that Janet Munro, born in 1759, was the woman who married James Cumming. She was only seventeen when she had her first child, Barbara, whom she named after her step-mother Barbara Munro. Mr Elison, for whom Barbara Munro was housekeeper by 1796, may have been a surrogate grandfather-figure to Janet and her siblings, and so he was a witness at three of the baptisms. Perhaps he even provided the means for Barbara to have a pony!



The clinching argument in all this is the sudden and otherwise inexplicable use of the middle name 'Gordon' in the 1830s – it is another remembrance of the remarkable Barbara Munro nee Gordon, the second wife of Ebenezer Munro. This synthesis of 18th century parish records, oral history, traditional naming patterns and modern DNA technology has led to a much fuller understanding of my Munro line.

The author would be very pleased to hear from anyone who believes themselves descended from this or any other Cumming line from Edinkillie. He can be contacted at cummingwj@hotmail.com.

Contributed by Member William Cumming

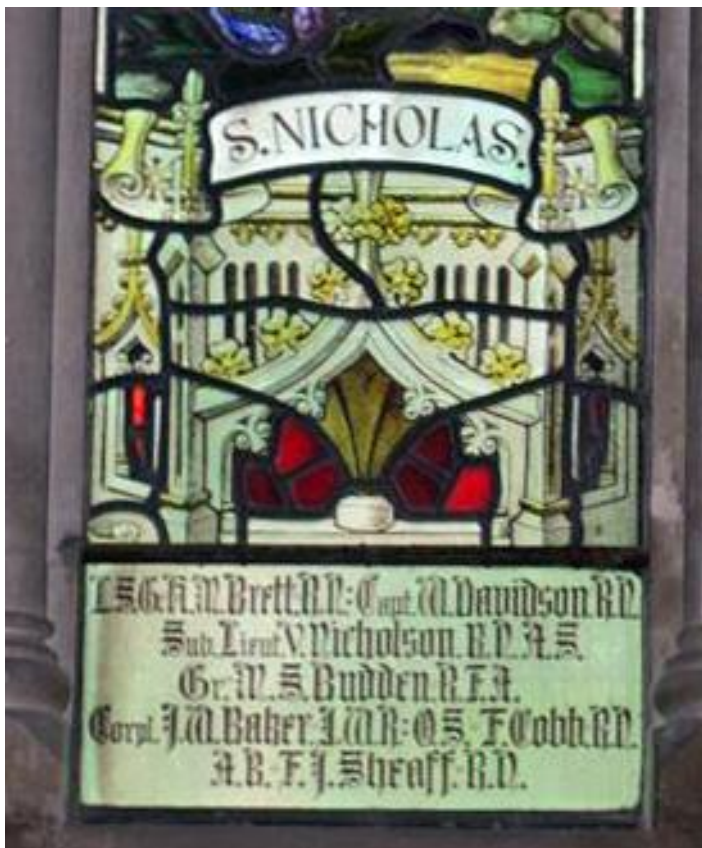
Nairnshire Miscellany

Skipper William Davidson, from Nairn, remembered on the Isle of Wight.

Inside the ancient parish church of Shalfleet, Isle of Wight is a very large 3 panel stained glass memorial window with the names of some of those linked to the parish who lost their lives in the First World War. Amongst those listed is one *Capt W. Davidson RN*. Intriguingly there is no casualty record for such a member of the Royal Navy.

After much research we believe we can now identify who we believe this Davidson was. He was **William Davidson RNR**, the skipper of the Nairn based drifter *Great Heart* [also spelt *Greatheart* or *Great Hart*] which was requisitioned by the Royal Navy in June 1915 for minesweeping duties as part of the Dover Patrol operations. Large numbers of drifters and trawlers and their crews were requisitioned by the Royal Navy for such minesweeping duties during the war. The skippers and the crews were taken on as members of the RNR [Royal Navy Reserve] under the emergency regulations. Many were already members of the RNR, but not doubt others were not given much choice in the matter.

On 24 Sept 1915, whilst on net duty, streaming anti-submarine buoyed wire netting, the *Great Heart* was sunk by explosion off Dover about 2 miles off the entrance to Dover Harbour. Sadly William Davidson and all his 7 crewmen were lost.



So far, we have not been able to establish why William Davidson was commemorated at Shalfleet. There is the possibility that the Royal Navy based some of the drifters and trawlers at nearby Yarmouth. The incorrect labelling of the inscription in the memorial window will not be the first time such errors have been discovered on parish war memorials. His name was listed correctly on the Royal Navy Memorial at Portsmouth and on the Nairn town war memorial.

William Davidson was born in 1868 at Ardersier, the son of James Davidson & Elspet Smith. This Davidson family was part of the close-knit Ardersier community of inter-related fisher families. William Davidson married Isabella Jamieson in 1894 and raised a family of 7 children at Nairn. William was not

only skipper of the *Great Heart*, he was also part owner. After the end of the war, we understand some members of the family migrated to Canada.

Friday 24 September 1915

GREAT HEART (may be spelt Greatheart or Great Hart), Admiralty drifter, 78/1911, Inverness-reg INS233, hired 6/15 as net drifter, Admiralty No.1395, Dover Patrol, Skipper William Davidson RNR, with a *Belgian coast* bombardment force including monitors and a large group of drifters, sailing to shell targets around Ostend and Zeebrugge. On net duty, streaming anti-submarine buoyed wire netting. Sunk by explosion off Dover (He - about 2 miles off entrance to Dover harbour; in 51N 01.20E), cause unknown at the time, but probably own mine (He/un - mine laid by UC.6, Matthias Graf von Schmettow, two days earlier), went down quickly; Skipper and 7 ratings lost. Admiralty yacht Sanda was lost next day as part of the bombardment force.

Reported in the *Nairn County Press and Advertiser* of 2nd October 1915 of the following:
'Loss of Drifter "Greatheart" – A telegram was received in Nairn on Sunday evening from the Admiralty stating that the local drifter, "Greatheart" had been lost, and that the skipper, Mr William Davidson, Park Street, Nairn, had lost his life. A later message stated that the body of Robert Finlayson, Nairn, one of the crew, had been recovered. The drifter is believed to have carried a crew of nine, five of whom belong to Nairn. The vessel was blown up outside Dover, and a further message stated that Wm Bochel, one of the crew from Nairn had been picked up by a Lossiemouth drifter in a seriously injured condition and conveyed to an hospital in Dover. The other members of the crew belonging to Nairn, are James Storm, who was married, and Wm Allan, engineer, son of Mr W Allan, aerated works. The names of the other members of the crew are unknown in Nairn, and are believed to be strangers. The drifter was owned by Skipper Davidson, Mr R Finlayson (drowned) and Mr A M Ian. Much sympathy is expressed for the relatives in their sad bereavement. On Friday Mr Bruce, Chief Constable conveyed official intimation of the sad event to the bereaved families in Nairn. The widows will receive 26 weeks separation allowance from this date, and thereafter each will be entitled to a pension.'

Obituary in the *Nairnshire Telegraph* of 5th October 1915 records the following:
'The Loss of a Nairn Drifter – The Nairn Drifter Greatheart, engaged in Admiralty Service, which was recently sunk, had on board, as stated last week, six men belonging to Nairn, namely, Skipper William Davidson, Robert Finlayson, William Bochel, John Storm, William Allan (engineer), and Alexander Sutherland. The only one saved is William Bochel, who is in hospital and getting on well.

Skipper William Davidson and part owner of the drifter, was one of the ablest and most intelligent men among the seafaring population of Nairn. He was not native born, but had resided at Nairn for many years, and had associated himself with all interests of the place. He was highly respected by all who knew him. He leaves a widow and several of a family.'

Contributed by Member Nick Hide.

Nairnshire Miscellany

Nairnshire Mirror Marriages 1853-4

Published fortnightly by Charles MacWatt with office in Church Street, and who resided in Douglas Lane, Nairn. The paper's last issue was on the 11th of October 1854 and was absorbed into the *Nairnshire Telegraph*.

4 Jan 1854 - On Thursday, the 11th Augt, at Woolloomooloo, Sydney by the Rev. Mr Salmon of the Free Church of Scotland, Mr **William Fraser**, Compositor to **Anne**, daughter of Mr **James Watson**, Spirit Dealer, Auldearn, Nairnshire, Scotland.

18 Jan 1854 - At Falcheam, Glengarry, on the 12th inst., by the Rev. Francis McBean, Fort Augustus, Mr **Donald Cameron**, Kilfinnan to **Wemyss**, third daughter of Mr **James Rhodes**, Tacksman, Falcheam.

1 Feb 1854 - On the 24th ult., at Brodie Cottage, Morayshire, **Donald Alexander MacLeod**, Esq. H.E.I.C.S. late of the Bengal Medical Establishment to **Charlotte**, eldest daughter of **Edward H Woodcock**, Esq. late of the Madras Civil Service.

15 Feb 1854 - At Nairn on the 19th inst., Mr **Evan MacPherson**, Contractor, Elgin to **Ann**, youngest daughter of Mr **John Bain**.

15 Feb 1854 - At Bogdoin, on the 27th ult., **John Mackenzie Ferguson**, Conon Village to **Jessie**, youngest daughter of the late **James MacCallum**, Achnanault.

15 Feb 1854 - At Skelbo, near Dornoch, on the 10th ult., by the Rev. G. R. Kennedy (on their way to Australia) Mr **Alex Mackay**, lately Merchant and Postmaster, Rogart, Sutherlandshire to **Grace Matheson**, Milliner and Dressmaker, Bonar Bridge and daughter of Mr **John Matheson**, Skelbo.

15 Feb 1854 - At Ettles Court, Church Street, Inverness on the 8th instant, by the Rev. Dr MacDonald, High Church, Mr **William Deedman**, Charleston, South Kessock to **Agnes**, second daughter of Mr **Donald MacLeod**, Merkinch, Inverness.

15 Feb 1854 - At Drumgask, on the 2d ult., by the Rev. Mr MacLeod, Laggan, **John Meldrum**, Esq. Fospel, Invershie to **Betsey**, fifth daughter of Mr **Allan MacDonald**, Middleton.

1 Mar 1854 - At Mid Fleenas, Parish of Ardclach, on the 23rd ult., by the Rev. William Barclay of the Free Church, Auldearn, Mr **Aeneas Tulloch**, Farmer, Blairmore, Cawdor to **Jane**, only daughter of Mr **Alexander Rose**, Farmer, Mid Fleenas.

15 Mar 1854 - At Roysvale Cottage, Forres, on the 9th inst., by the Rev. James Keith, Mr **John Murdoch**, Coach Proprietor and Postmaster, Forres to **Bathie**, eldest daughter of Mr **George Smith**, Watchmaker there.

29 Mar 1854 - At No.2 Lauriston Lane on the 22nd inst., by the Rev. Dr Hanns, the Rev. **William Welsh**, Minister of the Free Church, Broughton, Peebleshire to **Christina**, eldest daughter of the Rev. Dr **Guthrie**.

29 Mar 1854 - At No.5 Roxburgh Terrace, Edinburgh, on the 23rd inst., Mr **Robert Pullman**, Dundas Street, Kingston, Glasgow to **Elizabeth**, eldest daughter of the late Mr **Archibald Hamilton**, Leather-Merchant, Edinburgh.

29 Mar 1854 - At Dunbar, on the 21st inst., **George Bowhill**, Farmer, Bransmills, to **Janet Kellie**, youngest daughter of the late Mr **A Nisbet** of Dunbar.

29 Mar 1854 - At Whitehall, Grange, on the 15th inst., by the Rev. J P Miller, Carnoustie, the Rev. **Robert Dewar**, Missionary, Canada to **Ann Primrose**, third daughter of the Rev. **James Miller**, late of Huntly.

29 Mar 1854 - At Cardow, Knockando, on the 7th inst., by the Rev. W Asher of Inveravon, **Wm McWilliam**, Esq. Mains of Cullmill, Inverness-shire to **Isabella**, youngest daughter of the late Mr **Cumming**, Distiller, Cardow.

Contributed by Member Stuart Farrell