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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Editorial P 1

A Highland Soldier and Written Family Legend P 2-3

The History of Fishing in Caithness P 4-8

An Early Electoral Advance in Caithness P 9-14

The Whyte Photographic Collection P 15-18

Member's Research Interests P 19-20

Queries (334-352) P 21-24

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Another year in the Society's history is put to bed with this issue of the Journal. My co-editor and I hope you enjoy it as much as the previous ones with praise about which several readers have swollen our heads. The threat of even more intimate doings of my family set many of you to writing and has helped enormously; although several of us McColls are getting together and maybe a collective article will come forth one day. Be warned!

Captain Gray is welcome again, this time demonstrating the need for a not-too-receptive approach to records, and Angela Finlayson finds a bit of Caithness bother of the sort which brings history alive for me. In her covering letter Angela admits to being yet another member (the 6th) to be descended from David Nicolson and Mary Coghill, who married in 1751 in Wick and whose gravestone can be found in Bower cemetery (see p 15 of Vol 8 No 2). If any more join the group we may have to arrange a mini clan gathering.

Twice more the committee has demonstrated its usefulness with condensations of lectures from the 1989 series with which I hope the speakers would not be too unhappy. Ross Noble's discussion on the joys of early photographers reminded me that old film stock was made using di-nitro-toluene, only a step away from tri-nitro-toluene or T.N.T, and people are surprised to find it unstable?

Here is a warning from one member. Beware of the advertisement for 'MacKenzie Families around the World', a mail order publication of HALBERT FAMILY HERITAGE of Ohio. It appears to consist mainly of entries extracted from telephone directories and the like and is of little or no genealogical value.

A report on the proceedings of the last Annual General Meeting appeared in the previous Journal. Those of you who read it from cover to cover (all I hope!) will have noted that an increase in the annual subscription rates was approved. **The new rates which you will find on the inside of the back cover come into effect on 1st September.**

Enclosed with this Journal most of you will find a reminder to pay your new subscription. If you have not received one you will either have paid in advance or be one of the 74 members who pay by Bank Standing Order. Most of these orders are actioned on 1st October each year. **If you are paying by this method it is essential that you notify your bank of the increased amount due before that date.**

The end of any year means the beginning of another. We all make up an active Society so I look forward to meeting many of you in person and by letter in the 1990/91 session. We're successful, so the Past has a good future!

A HIGHLAND SOLDIER AND WRITTEN FAMILY LEGEND

Captain (Retd) E.A. Gray

James Armstrong was believed to have been born in Glasgow in 1857. He emigrated to Canada as a young man, and the 1891 Census of Montreal shows him and his wife as resident there. According to legend, he had served earlier in the 72nd (Duke of Albany's Own) Highlanders. The 'evidence' for this was an old poster advertisement now held by a descendant. It reads:-

WAR IN "AFGHANISTAN & EGYPT"

MR JAMES ARMSTRONG

Late of the 72nd Highlanders, will deliver a Lecture on the above subject, under the auspices of the Good Samaritan Lodge, I.O.G.T., in the

CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL ROOM
CONGREGATION ST., POINT ST CHARLES.

Tuesday, May 15th

Doors open at 7.30, Chair taken at 8 p.m.

THE BATTLE AND CAPTURE OF "PIEWAR COTTLE", THE BATTLE OF CHARAZAR, THE CAPTURE OF ASNAI HEIGHTS.

The great March from Cabul to Kandahar under General Lord Roberts, K.C.B.

The great Battle of "Tel-el-Kebir", Egypt, under General Lord Wolsey, K.C.B.

In connection with the story of his Soldier life Mr Armstrong will tell how he became a Good Templar in India.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

General Admission, 10 cents.

As any newcomer to family history will soon learn, facts that appear to have been established in the past must never be trusted until they have been thoroughly checked and proved. This is one of the principal canons of our craft, and it applies particularly when researching the career of any old soldier of bygone days. Not only were many capable of spinning a good yarn to their descendants, but sometimes the writers of their tombstone inscriptions or obituaries either made genuine mistakes or were guilty of embellishing the facts of their service. However, there exists many other factors of which the researcher of any soldier should have an awareness, and the case of James Armstrong illustrates just one example.

Most good military histories will testify that in 1880 the 72nd Highlanders was one of the three British regiments which marched 320 miles in 20 days through the dust and rock-strewn, mountain gorges of Afghanistan in the withering heat of an August sun to the relief of a tiny garrison which was besieged at Kandahar by an overwhelming force of tribesmen. It may likewise show that the 78th Highlanders (or Ross-shire Buffs) were also in Afghanistan at the time, but were neither in action nor part of the relief column.

On the face of it, combined with the fact that the 72nd Highlanders, albeit under a different title, had served at Tel-el-Kebir in 1882, the announcement of Mr James Armstrong's lecture seemed to show that he must have possessed some knowledge of the events in Afghanistan and later in Egypt. The most certain information concerned his former regiment, which was so clearly stated and no one would dream of questioning.

But the truth is that James Armstrong never served with the 72nd Highlanders. Old War Office records reveal that he enlisted in the 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment in 1877 and was transferred to the 78th Highlanders in the following year. Soon afterwards he went with them to India and served in Afghanistan in 1880 while the epic march to Kandahar was taking place.

So how is the apparent mistake in James Armstrong's regiment explained? Is it a printer's error? I think not. I believe the reason for it is not so difficult to fathom. One of the consequences of Viscount Cardwell's reforms of the army in 1881, was that all except the first twenty-five foot regiments and two old rifle corps, which already possessed two or more battalions, were paired to form two-battalion regiments.

The 72nd Highlanders was paired with the 78th to form the Seaforth Highlanders. The 72nd became the 1st Battalion and the 78th its 2nd Battalion. If they die, traditions die hard in the British Army. So, for many years after 1881, it seems probable that the Seaforth Highlanders would have been known as 'The 72nd' or, more fondly, 'The Old 72nd', notwithstanding that its second battalion was the descendant of the old 78th.

By the time of the Egyptian Campaign of 1882 the Cardwell reforms had taken effect and the 78th Highlanders had become 2nd Seaforth. James Armstrong was among those of two of its companies which went to Egypt and were attached to 1st Seaforth in time to fight at Tel-el-Kebir. The muster returns of the army discharge depot at Gosport evidence his discharge from 2nd Seaforth in 1884. Proof therefore exists that he had never served in the 72nd Highlanders, later 1st Seaforth, as the poster proclaimed. Some may think this just a technicality. On the contrary, it is very important and illustrates the need to be wary of the printed word, no matter how exact, in order to be able to find and research the service of a foot soldier who served during the implementation of the Cardwell system.

THE HISTORY OF FISHING IN CAITHNESS

By Iain Sutherland

(Condensed from talk given to the Society 28th November 1989)

The herring industry concerns the whole north of Scotland, more than just Wick at its centre of development over hundreds of years of trial-and-error by governments both Scottish and British. The Vikings had a huge processing plant at Freshwick and archaeologists have found mounds of fish bones ten feet thick just north of Wick.

Legislation by the Kings of Scotland from 1120 referred to the herring, up to the first positive step to foster the fishery taken by James VI in about 1588. Until then Scotland was mainly agricultural with little manufacturing or fishing, the population being only half a million.

The shoals of fish were quite obvious from the shore with the sea teeming with whales, birds and foreign fishermen, catching enormous quantities and none coming ashore to Scotland. It is on record that in the Kessoek (by Inverness) when the tide went out the herring were seven feet deep on the shore.

James VI set up a job-creation scheme wherein all 'stark idle men' were made to go to sea. Life with England was becoming more settled, there wasn't the same demand for armies, people were not being killed at twenty, so many people were finding themselves unemployed. The alternatives were the salt pans, unpleasant as it desiccated your skin, or down the coal mines, extremely dangerous.

A hundred years later in its dying years, the Scottish Parliament gave a subsidy called a bounty, but on the boat not the catch. You qualified if you built a herring 'buss', or 'pink' which was about the size of a modern fishing boat 60-80 feet long. The snag was that to build one you needed capital, and if you hadn't the capital you didn't qualify for the bounty, so only a handful of people could afford a buss and qualify. Most of this activity took place around Arbroath to Eyemouth on the east coast and the Firth of Clyde on the west.

Then came 1745 and the legislation came good. In 1750 and then in 1756 laws were passed taking bounty off the boats but giving instead tax concessions to companies. Snag; you needed capital to form a company. Then in 1786, shining like a beacon through all the gloom, the Society for the Improvement of the Fisheries, later known as the British Fisheries Society, was formed, composed almost entirely of men from the North of Scotland. One member was William Johnson who changed his name to William Pulteney when he married the daughter of the Marquis of Bath whose family name that was. Another became the Provost of Wick which was a key factor in Wick being chosen for the main investment by B.F.S.

Go around Ullapool and Wick and you will see streets named Argyll, Dempster, Breadalbane, Sinclair, Grant, Brown - all members of the Society; and the streets in both towns are the same.

By now, the regulations had been changed and the bounty was now on the catch; however you caught your barrel of herring you got your bounty of half a crown.

The bounty was there but it still cost up to £7 to build a boat, a lot of money at the beginning of the 19th century, so the Society made the money available at 4% interest over ten years. They put up their own money being a philanthropic Society and they never really made any profit at all. The theory was to use subscribers' capital to build harbours and recover the money, and maintain them through dues of a farthing in the £ for fish landings.

Following the setting-up of the B.F.S. in London, they looked around for somewhere to use the money, so they sent out surveyors along the coasts.

Herring are found close to the coasts because they are surface-feeding fish and cod are bottom-feeders. Herring spawn sticks to the bottom like glue and cod feeds on it; cod spawn floats and herring eat that. So where you find one you'll have the other and the great herring spawning grounds between Sinclair Head in Caithness and Golspie in Sutherland are only two to five miles off shore.

The first B.F.S. settlement was Stein in Skye but Pulteneytown was the one for Wick and the first surveying was done by John Rennie, the brilliant surveyor and engineer. All the Society's servants make the Roll of Honour of Civil Engineering; Thomas Telford, Mitchell, Rennie.

Rennie came to Wick on August 6th 1792 to survey and make a recommendation as to whether a harbour was possible. The bounties had been going for a time but there were no harbours as far as Fraserburgh, they caught herring in their small (15-20 feet) boats and landed it anywhere they could. They would have only one net made of hemp, heavy, thick and coarse and it rotted easily. A catch of 500 herring was good fishing. (A modern purse-seiner can take 250 tonnes of herring with a crew of twenty).

To land them, they wore 'cribbers', baskets made of woven heather branches, and carried them on their backs, clambering across broken rock or beach shingle or stretches of kelp, very difficult underfoot. Most of this work was done by the women who would then gut the fish and salt them in the small barrels of the time.

There were 47 pubs, dancing classes, debating societies, amateur dramatic clubs, orchestras, choral societies and these were in the 1820's and 30's. Wick had the largest Gaelic speaking congregation in the world: 1700 people in the kirk with three ministers addressing them! This annual migration went on until the railway came in 1875 when they need only walk as far as Lairg and take the train to Wick.

Robert Louis Stevenson couldn't describe the scale of activity in Wick, a thousand fishing boats coming like a flock of birds with their brown sails and the whole town exploded into life when they arrived. Wick was pre-eminent in the fishing industry for a hundred years; Fraserburgh took its place for the next 50 and now it is Peterhead's turn but the timespan is shortening, shortening all the time.

The first innovation to affect the stocks was the cotton nets. Cotton is about one third the weight of hemp but that means you can carry three times as many nets; but then you need a bigger boat to hold three times as much fish!

Captain Washington reported on the Wick Harbour disaster of 1849 when 37 men died in half an hour because of a sudden storm. (He is the man who designed a small jacket with brass buttons and named it after H.M.S. Blazer). His conclusions that the disaster was due to the small, heavily laden boats having no decks off which water could run, led to the recommendation that new ones should be decked.

The first new boat to replace the old 'Scaffies' (short for 'Scavengers') was a half-decked one called the 'Baldie' after the Italian hero Garibaldi who was in the news at the time. Later, the boats were fully decked and the master builders around St. Monance and Anstruther in Fife produced the great 'Fifie' with a much greater carrying capacity.

Then in 1879 William Campbell of Brandburgh designed a new boat to combine the best of both Scaffie and Fifie and called it 'Zulu' after the wars against Cetewayo which were going on just then. The first were called 'Nonesuch' and 'Cetewayo', and I believe a bit of the latter is in the River Lossie yet!

From there it was only a matter of time till steam engines were fitted and on July 4th 1899 the 'Content' WK 54 appeared in Wick, the first steam drifter to work from Scotland; it was only 53 feet long with a funnel in front of the bridge like the puffers. The second, 'Fit-o-Dee', appeared the next day. Both had been built in Yarmouth.

By 1910 the Scottish fishing industry had 800 steam drifters. It was the most expensive thing a fisherman could have, but it enabled him to go to sea in nearly any weather and it led to the introduction of winter fishing.

John Rennie reported favourably and they proposed to buy the land from Sir Benjamin Dunbar, later Lord Duffas. It would support a thousand people and they planned the town's finest details, everyone would have a garden; there would be a meal mill and a flour mill and the community would be self-supporting. They bought five hundred acres in 1801 and the harbour was planned for 300 boats. They finished in 1810. By the time they started, about a hundred boats were using Wick Bay, notorious with an east wind. The harbour cost £14,449, within the budget but by now too small. The Clearances were getting under way and supplied the thousand people.

The abundance of the fish was such that you could almost walk on them! By 1820 there were 700 boats trying to use the harbour and people came even from Fraserburgh; you could sail across in twelve hours easily. The congestion was tremendous but other boats were beginning to earn more money too and take it back with them to their private harbours, non B.F.S., along the coast at Lossiemouth. Scottish herring achieved a reputation for quality second to none. Any foreign buyer or curer, German, Polish, Russian, knew it!

Telford himself came to Wick in 1830 and drew a new plan for a harbour to hold another 400 boats, firstly to relieve the congestion and secondly because the harbour was silting up so that it was impossible to move cargo boats at low tide with only four feet of water. They introduced a system whereby the cargo boats lay in the bay and used barges to take the cargo in and the herring out; but this was hopelessly inefficient because the weather rarely allowed it.

James Bremner of Keiss, near Wick, worked for Telford (he was also the man who took over the 'Great Britain' from Brunel) and had the job of extending the harbour. It was very difficult as it had been well built of stone. They began in 1826 and by 1830 had the quays built in the end sections of stone walls infilled with blue clay mixed with rubble. They were just curving the end round when a ferocious storm did £25,000 worth of damage in one tide and the whole thing collapsed within three days of completion.

They finished in 1833 by which time 800 boats were using the harbour. These boats were about 25 feet long and could hold about 1000 fish and there were four men to a boat. It was reckoned that for every fisherman there were five people employed ashore between the gutters and coopers and the evicted people, who walked across the north of Scotland from Storr, Elphin and Lochinver to Wick for the sixteen weeks of fishing and then walked back again. The fishing always began on the third Monday in June and they came in three droves of about 800 people. Remember the town was designed for a thousand people but had to absorb another 2000 lodgers and the fishermen and fish workers coming to Wick from other places,

AN EARLY ELECTORAL ADVANCE IN CAITHNESS:
'THE AFFAIR OF BOWAR' PUT VOTES OF THE PEOPLE ON RECORD IN 1739
by Angela Finlayson

Records naming ordinary people who voted on local kirk issues in early Eighteenth Century Scotland are not common, certainly not in Caithness. It was not until a century later that widespread protest against the rights of Patrons and Heritors to impose unpopular Ministers on parishes culminated in the Disruption of 1843 and, even then, it is generally only the names of the better known 'Men' that have survived.

It is all the more remarkable that, when in 1739 such an issue divided the tiny parish of Bower, a committee put on record in the Minutes of Caithness Presbytery, not only the names of Heritors and Elders but also those of some 200 'heads of families' and parishioners or 'recendentors' who gave in their votes through a complex system of 'Proxies'.

In this connection it should be noted that until 1690 the nomination of parish Ministers had rested with 'Patrons' - in rural areas generally the principal landed proprietor. The 'Convention Parliament', however, when establishing Presbyterian government, also ruled that, when a vacancy occurred, the Heritors (who as local land-owners were responsible for providing the church, manse, glebe and minister's stipend) and the Elders should make a nomination for the approval of the congregation. And, although patronage was restored by the British Parliament in 1712, Presbyteries were still disinclined to proceed with ordination or induction without a 'call' from the congregation.

'The Affair of Bowar' as it came to be known, occupied the Presbytery Committee from October 1738 until May 1739, finally reporting that: 'such members of the committee as were present represented that what between their Fatigue in attending previous meetings and the roughness of the weather it was impracticable to meet to revise the Minutes'.

Their 'Fatigue' is readily understandable. The previous Minister, Hugh Corse, had died in July 1738. He had been widely popular, noted for his habit of asking employers to allow workers in the fields to sit down while he read the Bible to them and prayed with them and a substantial number of parishioners wanted his son, John Corse, to succeed him. A majority of the Heritors, however, favoured Alexander Oliphant.

One of many complications was that the Patron, Sir James Sinclair of Dunbeath, initially supported Corse. So, through his Proxie, William Sinclair of Dunbeath (probably his son), he seemed to be championing the people. Unfortunately, his support seems to have been rather to their disadvantage, giving the Heritors excuses for disputing moot points in the mode of his intervention. Henderson, in 'Notes on Caithness Family

This was the most prosperous time the fishing industry in Scotland had ever seen. Everybody made huge amounts of money because not only were they catching a lot of herring but there was the industrial expansion in Russia and Germany creating a demand there.

In the 1930s the slump hit. The steam drifters which had cost £3,000 to build in 1904-6 you could buy in Fraserburgh for £60 in 1934, coaled up and ready for sea. A scheme was introduced whereby people could convert steam to motor engines, but they never adapted properly.

The two wars finished the herring industry. Dietary habits having changed, salt herring no longer being prominent except in Russia and Germany. The last time the Scottish fishing fleet went to sea in a traditional drift-netting way, before purse-seiners took over, was in 1969, only twenty years ago, but Wick itself was out of it by 1953.

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New Zealand genealogists have formed a Scottish Special Interest Group as a focus for research into their Scottish genealogy and family history. The group was formed at the New Zealand Society of Genealogists' annual convention in Auckland at Easter to foster an interest in and promote research into Scottish genealogy. The secretary is Mrs Paula McCall, 37 Hakanoa Street, Grey Lynn, Auckland, New Zealand

Many Scots have emigrated to New Zealand over the years. Two of the earliest and most notable groups to do so comprised a New Zealand Company venture in 1848 to set up a Free Church settlement at Dunedin, led by the Rev Dr Thomas Burns, a nephew of the poet Robert Burns; and another led by Norman McLeod from his native Assynt, in Sutherland, first to Nova Scotia, then to Australia, and finally in 1854 to Waipu in northern New Zealand.

Overseas guest speakers at the convention included Anthony J. Camp, Director of the Society of Genealogists (London), and David M. Mayfield, Director of the main L.D.S Family History Library at Salt Lake City, Utah.

< < < S I R A Y S > > >

Marriage dated 20th April 1877 - Glasgow.
to the form of the Church of Scotland, by Rev. Robert Blair, Minister of St. Columbas. A. SUTHERLAND, age 33, 87 Thistle Road, Stationer's Packer, Batchelor & Elizabeth GUNN, age 30, 556 New City Road, Domestic Servant, Spinster. Parents: William SUTHERLAND (Farmer) & Adamina McDONALD. George GUNN (Farmer - deceased) & Mary SINCLAIR. Witnesses: Angus SUTHERLAND & Catherine MACKAY.

History' (1884), says that Sir James 'appears to have been a man of violent and somewhat unscrupulous character', quoting instances of his intemperate behaviour in other public affairs in the same period. It could be that he was motivated less by interest in Corse and the people than by feuds against some of the pro-Oliphant Heritors.

The Minutes indicate, without substantially clarifying, something of the intricacies of the arguments that raged, particularly over who were entitled to vote. There were separate lists of Heritors and Elders as well as arrangements whereby 'heads of families and parishioners' recorded their votes through papers presented by Proxies.

In the background were allegations that some Heritors had been unduly influencing their tenants' votes. It was also claimed that one Heritor should be disqualified because of 'his nature of disaffection to His Majesty's Government and the established Church in this Nation' and another because he was said to have been seen 'drinking the Pretender's health in the year fifteen'.

These two latter assertions, which constitute the only direct references to national events, pertain to two Sinclairs. Apart from two Dunbars who favoured Oliphant, the other seven land-owners whose entitlement to vote as Heritors was sustained were all Sinclairs, some being pro-Oliphant and others pro-Corse. Since such land-owners are relatively well documented in other sources of Calthness history, no attempt will be made here to disentangle their complex part in the Affair of Bowar.

There is greater interest to be found in the discussions on the entitlement of individual Elders to vote, as well as in occasional references to 'the tempers of the People' and in the procedures whereby the votes of the latter were recorded.

The difficulty about the Elders was that the original list of those ordained nine years previously - on 14 September 1730 - had been lost and some later Bowar Session Minutes had either been lost or were 'inconsistent'. So, doubts were expressed as to whether all the current Elders had been properly ordained and whether one at least had not been subsequently turned out of the session for misconduct.

Blame for lack of reliable records was laid on the previous Session Clerk and schoolmaster, Hugh Ross, who had since left the parish to become schoolmaster in Thurso. He was compared (summoned) to appear and 'in great confusion answered that he did not make up Bowar Session Minutes but often referred to his memory and that he thinks he gave the late Mr Corse many of the Minutes before he left the parish and what is now become of them he cannot tell'.

When questioned about the reasons why one of the Elders, George MacBeath, might have been expelled, Hugh Ross replied that MacBeath had been addicted to swearing and there were other reasons which he 'cannot mind'. Three Elders, James Findlayson in Clayach, John Henderson in Garsay and David Waters in Brabsterdoran, were asked if the session turning out of George MacBeath was intimated to the Minister. They declared their ignorance of that, adding cautiously that 'it might have been done only they had never heard of it'. George MacBeath protested that, although he had been absent from session for most of eight years, this had been on account of illness.

In regard to this and other discrepancies it became clear that Hugh Ross had in fact rewritten sections of the Bowar Minutes, using 'dashings and sullings' in an attempt to conceal the fact that the paper was fresher and the ink brighter than the original Minutes. Moreover, one of the Heritors, Patrick Dunbar of Bowermadden, by recalculating the dates, was able to show that some days of the week entered did not tally with the days of the month. The Presbytery then decided that Ross deserved a very severe censure and decreed that this should be read from the pulpits of Thurso on the next Lord's Day and 'from that of Bowar the first Lord's Day that there is a sermon there'.

(Some further light is thrown on this incident by David Stephen who, writing 'Cleanings in the North' in 1891, claimed that, after a quarrel with the Heritors, the Bower Sessions Clerk had burned Session Minutes, including baptism and marriage records: the subsequent career of Hugh Ross as a schoolmaster in other parishes appears also to have been extremely stormy.)

It was considered impracticable to ordain new Elders and a proposed method of proving the ordination of Elders by witnesses was rejected as being 'very uncertain and must be very tedious as it was highly improper at this time considering the tempers of the People present in that Place'.

Eventually, it was agreed that 'because tis too late being after 10 of the clock on Saturday's night' the list of Elders produced by James Smith, the current Session Clerk, should be sustained, that is, the 20 who had been ordained on 14 September 1730, including George MacBeath. Later still, the Minutes note that 'it now being past 12 of the clock upon Saturday's night the committee could sit no longer to call the heads of Families after public intimation that they should attend the Presbytery to meet at Thurso on Tuesday next and there to claim their votes'.

At this subsequent meeting Mr William Sinclair of Dunbeath gave in six papers, which were referred to as Proxies, each empowering him to vote on behalf of a number of named people. The preamble to each followed a standard formula with minor variations, the first stating 'We all Parishioners and

heads of families in the parish of Bowar being incapable thro
our present circumstances and situation to attend the
Presbytery to give our vote for a Minister ... We fully empower
you Mr Sinclair of Dunbeath to attend the said Presbytery when
and where they shall meet and in our name to call vote and make
choice of Mr John Corse Preacher of the Gospel to be our
Minister and that you require the said Presbytery to put him
upon Trials in order to his speedy settlement amongst us
signed at Thura 29th March 1739, Daniel Forbes Notary Public
before these witnesses, John Sinclair and William Sinclair,
sons to Thura'.

The wording of the other Proxies varied only slightly. Thus,
the second: 'We all Heads of families and recedentors in
the parish of Bowar do hereby empower you to vote in our
name and call Mr John Corse to be our Minister and to do
everything that we ourselves would have done in order to his
speedy settlement amongst us'.

The third: 'We all Residents and heads of families
do fully commit to you our full powers to call Mr John
Corse to be our Minister and to do everything in order to
his settlement amongst us'.

The fourth: 'We Parishioners and heads of families do
fully empower you for calling and getting Mr John Corse
.... settled our Minister'.

The fifth: 'We Heads of families do hereby empower you
.... to do everything that we would have done for calling and
getting Mr John Corse our settled Minister'.

The sixth: 'We Heads of families do hereby empower you
.... to do everything that we would have done towards the
calling and settling Mr John Corse as our Minister'.

The Minutes report that 'The foresaid Proxies being read were
sustained and appointed to be recorded. Adjourned to the
second of April'. The subsequent sequence of events is not
entirely clear from the Minutes. Another Proxy, this time in
favour of Oliphant, bearing 116 names, was entered as having
been signed on the same day as the others, 29th March, yet
appears in the Minutes a few folios further on during
discussions taking place on 12th April.

On that day it is noted that 'The Presbytery proceeded to the
Election of Mr Oliphant and the Minutes of moderation having
been read it appears from thence that there are for Mr Oliphant
Six Heritors to Three and Ten Elders to Ten and therefore we do
hereby declare the Election of Heritors and elders to be in
favour of Mr Alexander Oliphant. Upon which Messieurs Gibson,
Sinclair and Pope dissented Adjourned till five of clock
this afternoon Hora Quinta post meridian all parties
present the Presbytery proceeded to call for the People.

Accordingly compared Patrick Dunbar of Bowarmadden and gave in
the following Proxy which being read was ordered to be
recorded and the tenor of which was as follows: 'We
Parishioners and Heads of Families in Bowar Parish Do hereby
empower you Patrick Dunbar of Bowarmadden to appear and act for
us in the Choice of and call to Mr Alexander Oliphant and
that you do everything in our Name towards his settlement
amongst us as our Minister signed James Campbell Notary
Public, Hugh Campbell, Ranaid Murray witnesses dated at
Bowartower March the twenty ninth 1739'.

Altogether 116 names appear in this Proxy as against a total
of 107 from the other six. However, by the 16th April, the
Presbytery was describing 142 families as 'converting to
Oliphant and of these ten only are objected to and ... 156
declaring for Corse but offering no objections against Oliphant
of which 156 upwards of 123 are objected to'. There is no
explanation as to who these voters were or on what grounds
there were objections to such large numbers. Perhaps it was
argued that some were not family heads and others may have been
considered not to be regular church attenders.

The total numbers cited on this last occasion would have
amounted to nearly 300. Using Webster's figure of 1286 for the
total Bowar population sixteen years later, and taking five as
the average household size, it seems possible that, in addition
to all family heads, a substantial number of other adults had
voted. It is tantalising that no names were recorded this time
nor was the procedure explained whereby people were counted.

For genealogists and social historians the 223 names on the
seven Proxies are probably of more relevance. No locations
were given but it might be that the six pro-Corse Proxies were
made up of neighbourhood groupings. The totals of persons
signing were respectively, 13,14,58,5,10, and 7, so perhaps the
third Proxy would cover the most highly populated area.

Sixteen of those in the pro-Corse Proxies were women and
fourteen of those in the pro-Oliphant Proxy. Included in the
third Proxy were ten family groups, signified only by an 's'
added to the common surname and comprising three to six members
- no clues as to relationships are given, unfortunately. The
fifth Proxy consisted entirely of four family groups. The
pro-Oliphant Proxy included fifteen family groups.

Some names occur more than once but, given the practice of
naming children after parents and grandparents, this is not
surprising. Surnames include many current in Bower at the time
of Manson's list in Horne's 'The County of Caithness' (1907)
and still to be found in current directories. Although the way
in which individual Elders voted in their ten to ten division
is not recorded, the locations of these twenty are listed.

THE WHYTE PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

by R. Ross Noble

(Talk given to the Society 19th December 1989)

Those of you who live in Inverness will remember Whyte's Photographic Studio and its Manager, Mr Hartley. He approached the Council in 1985/6 saying it was time he retired and could we do something about the studio? I looked into the background: the firm was founded by David Whyte in 1860 who built the complex in which the premises remained until 1986. The Whyte family continued in ownership for 42 years and then it changed hands several times, the most recent owner being Mr Hartley, once a member of staff, who bought out his employer in 1960.

He approached Peter Reynolds, a member of the H.F.H.S. Committee, but feeling he wasn't the person to cope with it and being a colleague of mine, he asked me to do something about it. I saw Mr Hartley - "How many are we talking about, ten thousand?" "Oh, much more than that!" We agreed on his figure of thirty thousand negatives and started to see the ones in this corner and that, and by the time we actually bought the collection I knew there were nearer fifty thousand. By the beginning of this year we had done a major assault on sorting out the collection and we are at one hundred and forty thousand and rising!

The documentation for the collection is far from complete. It is good from 1920 on, but there is virtually none for 1905-1920 because Whyte's had a fire and a lot was destroyed. Before 1900 it reappears in the form of notes around the sides of the glass-plate negatives which you can learn to read.

When the Highland Regional Council was asked to take it over there was a certain reticence: we had old photographs, the major collection of the Highland Folk Museum, but we numbered ours in thousands, not tens of thousands. We persuaded central government to give a grant which helps, but there was a buyer in Germany who was the turning point, and to keep the collection in the Highlands we had to move fast. Mr Hartley stuck to his original estimate of 30,000 (on paper) and this and the rest was what we paid for.

We had a couple of weeks to get them out of the premises which the new owner was desperate to get into. In a very short time we set up eight people in a Community Service Project, one giving work and some form of retraining to long-term unemployed. We felt this could be useful for anyone with an interest in documentation, because there would be a lot of it, or in photography and its technical aspects.

We started moving the collection out on the first working day of the New Year and we were sure we were seeing, not double or treble but quadruple, as more and more of the negatives piled out. All the pre-1950 ones have been gone through and reboxed;

Alexander Oliphant was duly inducted in September. According to David Stephen, who had the story from oral tradition, parishioners blocked the door to the church and the lairds broke a window through which he had to enter; the people then looked upon him as an intruder quoting: 'He that entereth not in by the door into the sheep fold but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber'.

A further story from Stephen refers to Patrick Dunbar, who had been prominent in the settlement, as having a bad fall from his horse in the swamps of Belster on his return from the scene of operations. Some time later, on his death bed, Dunbar was visited by Oliphant but rejected his ministrations saying: 'Get away from me, Sir, I want nothing about you. Since the day I put you in the church of Bower it would have been better for me if I had fed you at my chimney nook'.

However that may have been, Oliphant remained in the charge until his death in 1778 when he was succeeded by his son, Donald Beaton, writing in his 'Ecclesiastical History of Caithness' (1909), compares both with the previous Minister, commenting: 'Neither Mr Oliphant nor his son who succeeded him left such pleasant memories of ministerial zeal and fidelity as Mr Corse; rather the reverse'.

Although the voices of ordinary people may not have ultimately proved effective in 'The Affair of Bower', their spirit and 'tempers' at least ensured that their names were kept on record at a time when this in itself was no mean achievement.

Note:- The writer (member no 186) is willing to check through these lists for anyone researching their forebears in Bower.

< < < S T R A Y S > > >

From Lincolnshire Settlement Examination ref: KSB 1740 Michaelmas (misc. 1740/1).
Daniel MACFARSON, vagrant born Roven, Inverness. examined 1740.

From Lincolnshire Settlement Examination ref. Stickney 13/-/53. James LOGAN a Scotchman s/o John late in 42nd Regt. of Scotch Highlanders. examined 1807.

From Kesteven Quarter Sessions, Lincs.
Roderick DINGWELL late a soldier in Gen. Ogglethorpes Regt. of Foot in South Carolina removed from Harbling to Dingwell, Ross, Scotland 1758.

Unrelated Certificates Index (A.N.S. Collection).
Niel or Neil McFADYEN born Coll, Arl, Scotland, married Flora McFADYEN born Coll, Arl, Scotland on 22 Feb. 1859 in Bolwarra, N.S.W. or Maitland, N.S.W.; birth of son John registered in district of West Maitland N.S.W. in 1862; died 30 Dec. 1888, Boggabri N.S.W. aged 59.

the ones in any danger of being scratched were wrapped in acid-free tissue and put into acid-free boxes, a major task on its own. Over the last three years the documentation has all been computerised and about 20,000 negatives have been reprinted.

What value are they? They have been made available to the public by publication in the local papers so people are coming to see us saying: "Can we have one of those, please?" In the last six months the project has started to earn an income in this first way of reaching the people, not the best, nor the way we intend in the long term.

So, how are we tackling it? Early on we prepare a sheet to document the photographs. We give every one, or groups of them, an identity number, then work out how many negatives are of the same subject or group. This could be twenty or twenty-five for a wedding, for example, where the photographer has taken a whole range of photographs; we can also have a group of earlier negative numbers because if they got a new order for an old photograph it was a new job with a new job number. We sometimes make a copy-negative if the original won't last much longer, by making a contact print and photographing it on modern film, so there is a copy negative number. The negatives' size can be as big as a glass plate or as small as the mini colour negatives of the 1960's not much bigger than your thumbnail.

So we record the condition, make a print and give it a number. Then we try to find who the client was, what the subject was and where, who the people are in it. At the bottom (of the entry form) are the 'object', 'activity', and 'classified interest' spaces; into these the team analyses each picture. The 'classified interest' could be a 'shop front' with the content 'shoes', one 'object'; the 'activity' is 'shopping' and so on.

Then each picture is given a Social History and Industrial Classification (S.H.I.C.) number, a form of Dewey Decimal system for history which has been developed over the last six years by a group of curators who are trying to make it a national system. The 'classified interest' could have an 'engineering' or 'transport' number or whatever so that you can correlate the numbers far faster on a computer than strings of text. Even if it is a wedding photograph and happens to have a bulldozer sitting on the edge which the photographer didn't mean to get in, it is of historical value.

This is all done by the project team and the information fed into a computer, the result will form a catalogue of all the photographs and will be kept in Farraline Park for you to use and one day on the computer there. We have now catalogued every photograph between 1875 and 1880, we haven't any 1861s which is a great pity, and we have stopped the major catalogue at 1940.

We found that at least 80% of the photographs are of people, so we have a fantastic record of the population of Inverness-shire on computer. A lot of you sitting here will have had your picture taken by Whyte, perhaps at your christening or wedding; we will have you on record in our computer. Other examples are the officers of the 3rd Cameron's 1908; Inverness Town Council 1902; Greenlee's shoeshop 1932 and the Henderson wedding in 1903.

If even 10% of the seventy thousand or so negatives we have catalogued so far are not of people they have things going on in them, including scenic views of the town, some of which have changed: the Caley Hotel; flower girls collecting for the R.S.S.P.C.C.; the Auto Cycle Union course reliability trial about the turn of the century; Egin at the same time; commissioned work for the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board on all the early dams; Captain Fresson's original photographs from Highland Airways, including his aerials taken while flying hanging out of the 'plane.

This collection ought to be in the public eye, so why is it not? Firstly, the size of the collection took us by surprise. Secondly we have had computer problems. Our first was acquired when we thought we had 30-50,000 negatives and we ran out of disc space very quickly. The second broke down and was too costly to repair and then we were told of a new generation of microchips. We ordered them in April and they haven't arrived yet. We are still running the "temporary" computer we have had since March 1989. Thirdly...

Think back to the days when a picture house was on every second street corner. One problem with them until the Second World War was that they kept going on fire. We know now that the film used from 1925-1935 in both America and here was on a base of cellulose nitrate, highly unstable and inflammable. It was banned in 1938/9 as the cause of all those fires.

We had lots between 1925 and 1945 because Whyte's was not going to throw away film that had been paid for. We contacted Kodak to ask what to do about it. "Good Lord, is there still some cellulose nitrate about? It might blow up tomorrow, or catch fire overnight! How many have you got, fifty, a hundred?" We said "Thirty thousand!"

Work stopped until our colleagues from Health and Safety made sure we weren't putting staff at risk, so once again there was a hold-up. The 30,000 are proving highly stable as the damp darkroom atmosphere they were kept in was perfect for cellulose nitrate, but they are becoming less so once we moved them to the air-conditioned acid-free controlled environment designed for our computer.

Are we going to copy as many as possible and simply destroy them, or do we save them knowing that one day they might just

MEMBER'S RESEARCH INTERESTS

- 775 Miss Vari Grant MacGregor, 76 Abbotshaven, Balintore, Tain, Ross-shire IV20 IXV
- 776 Ms G Dingwell, 10271 Algonquin Drive, Richmond, B.C., Canada V7A 3A5
Looking for ancestors of Roderick John DINGWALL, who sailed from Ayr to Cape Breton Island, Canada in 1828. Known children were Roderick John, Effie and Mary. Ancestors believed to have come from the Dingwall and/or Inverness area.
- 777 Mr Hugh Naughten, Hill House, 83 Lower Road, Fetcham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 9HG
Researching the name NAUGHTIE/NAUGHTY in the Forres, Dallas and Elgin areas pre-1780.
- 778 Miss Eileen I Godfrey, 100 Wincott Drive, Weston, Ontario, Canada M9R 2P4
Interested in the name FRASER in Inverness pre-1850. William Cameron FRASER emigrated to Canada approximately 1850. His son William Lawrence FRASER was born just prior to or possibly during the voyage. Miss Godfrey has been unable to find the ships passenger list to verify which FRASER family this was.
- 779 Mr Gordon McBain, Flat 1, 64 Kensington Gardens Square, Bayswater, London W2 4DG
Research concentrated in the Inverness area from 1700 into the names McBAIN/McBEAN, REID/REED and YOUNG.
- 780 Mrs C I Roxborough, P.O. Box 288, Morrinsville 2251, New Zealand
William MCKENZIE emigrated to New Zealand in 1873 along with his parents, brothers and sisters. In the same year Alexander ROBERTSON, whose parents were Murdoch ROBERTSON and Margaret McLEOD also emigrated. Both families came from the Lochbroom and Inverness areas, and the period of research is 1700-date. A Donald Murrahaig MCKENZIE a widower with twin daughters, who served with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in World War II, had a sister Catrin living in Portree, Skye.
- 781 Mr David & Mrs Isobel Ferrier, 20 Dunnet Place, Thurso, Caithness KW14 8JE
Fortunately living close to one of their areas of research. In Wick TAYLOR and in Keiss SWANSON/MOWAT/DAVIDSON covering the period from 1800. Research at a distance for the name FERRIER in Farnell/St Vigeans from 1700-1850.
- 782 Mrs Clara N Campbell, P.O. Box 198, Empangeni 3880, Natal, South Africa.
Two known areas of research relate to URQUHART in the Davidson's Mains & Cramond areas of Edinburgh, and CAMPBELL in possibly the Greta area of Dumfries. Both for the period 1760-1850. The unknown concerns James TOLMAY, who arrived in South

go poof! Or do we compromise somewhere between? Technology is taking off so fast that in a couple of years we could laser scan every one and put them on a floppy disc (it can be done now, but the cost is too great) then get rid of the originals.

We don't have the Community Programme any more but the Council was very committed and very excited and the two team leaders have become permanent members of staff of the H.R.C., so the Whyte Project has two full-time employees and groups of employment trainees coming and going all the time. They come in for computer experience, or to do documentation, or darkroom work, or to do a bit of printing. We get paid for taking them on so it keeps the project solvent.

The project has not reached the stage when you can all go dashing up and start researching. I hope that over the next year or eighteen months the first proofs of the catalogue will be in Farraine Park. Peter Reynolds will be in charge of it so your Society will get access to it as fast as anybody.

< < < S T R A Y S > > >

Fraser Cemetery, New Westminster, B.C.
(south side) - Jessie Sutherland BUDGE born Caithness, Scotland died Jan. 15th 1914 aged 72 years; (west side) - John BUDGE 1846-1916; Mabel BUDGE 1889-1916; (north side) - Jessie GUNN, wife of John BUDGE 1855-1896; Christine E. BUDGE 1890-1965; "I do believe I will believe that Jesus died for me"; (east side) - Margaret A., daughter of John & Jessie BUDGE 1884-1901.

St Mary's Parish Church, Hayes, Kent.
Inscriptions taken from plaque inside church.
Williamina Barbara TRAILL of Hayes Place, daughter of James TRAILL of Ratter, Sheriff of the County of Caithness. b. July 22 1785, d. August 9 1862.
James TRAILL of Hayes Place and Ratter, son of the above named James TRAILL of Ratter. b. May 1794, d. October 16 1873; Janet Sinclair TRAILL, daughter of James TRAILL of Ratter, b. March 21 1798, d. January 17 1857.

Graveyard at Robe on the south coast of Australia.
The following inscriptions were photographed by Lorna MacEchern, Struanlea, 12 Moffat Road, Dumfries and noticed in a letter she sent to the Inverness Courier. If anyone recognises a relative they should contact Ms MacEchern who is happy to pass them on.
In loving memory of Donald McBAIN, born at Alvie, Inverness, Scotland 20th Nov. 1836, died at Mt. Benson, Sth. Aus., 1916 (or 1918) JANE beloved wife of the above, born Glasgow, 11th March 1854, died 28th Oct., 1937. Sacred to the memory of Alexander McBAIN, born in Inverness-shire, Scotland, and late of Mt. Monster, who died at Mt. Gambier, July 9th 1882, aged 40 years. Also GEORGE WILLIAM LINDSAY, infant son of the above, who died near Robe, May 19th 1870, aged 5 months.

