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EDITORIAL

Too much Deep Thinking had allowed me to miss noticing that our last issue was the 50th Journal produced by the Society and the 25th under the co-editorial batons of myself and John Durham. It must be said that it was John's Deep Thinking that woke this statistic up and sent it out for an airing. We feel that the magazine ought to have been printed with gold and silver inks in celebration but it wasn't, so there we are until number 100.

Computer wide-area networking draweth closer, ever closer. Bob McGlashan does a lot of work in genealogy with various societies from his home in Leeds and took my timorousness to task in wishing to be rich enough to afford to dip my toes in where others surf. He pointed out that a modem can be had for a good deal less than £100, and most people already have telephones, so if you've a computer gathering dust what are you waiting for, come on in the water's lovely. I'm afraid it will be a while before you can email me at Jonathan@fhhs.org.uk but I'll have a comms server at the office soon and who'd notice if I had my own little number hidden inside? The new laptop our salesman at the office has just received has a mouse (or rather trackball) the size of a small button in the middle of the keyboard and a built-in modem that looks as if the cable had swallowed a pigeon's egg and I want it. (Looking back at that terrifically well-written paragraph I cannot but marvel at the use of English words and allusions which would be almost totally unintelligible to my grandfather, who may no longer run his wheelchair in these circles of the world but once upon a time he set up, taught in and ran for decades a secretarial college of great renown in Dublin.) (Of course, now that I think of it, the paragraph would also have been unintelligible to my mother who graduated from that college and even to me until very recent times indeed! Bob will supply translations to anyone who asks.)

We have received an article on the Ben Bhraggie statue of the first Duke of Sutherland for future publication, so if this is a subject that raises your emotional hackles I would be very interested to hear from you. Also, the year starting August 1995 is full of 250th anniversaries of BPC and his jaunt to Scotland to fetch back the English (yes, that's what I said) throne for his daddy and ultimately for himself. Have you family memories of these people and times? We might as well join in with the rest of the media and publish our own parts of the story.

Talking of publications, the last copy of the Register of Members' Interests was sold at the beginning of August. Within a week a new version was at the printers and is now on sale. It's layout has been completely redesigned resulting in a 64 page A5 booklet weighing in at 90gm and costing £2.50 compared with the 22.5gm and £2.80 of its predecessor.

During the fine weather this summer we have been able to check the monumental inscriptions at Avoch, Fortrose and Killearnan cemeteries and all three are to be printed soon. Our new co-ordinator Lucille Campey has written a short piece on what the current situation is in relation to the publishing of monumental inscriptions in the Highlands. Sandy Gillies surveyed Fodderty cemetery a few years ago and I'm slowly typing it out to match our St Clementis and will soon be checking it for publication within the next year. As usual the poignancy of family losses even centuries ago still comes through the faded carvings on old red sandstone, new black Indian marble and especially the pink Tarradale stone of most of the older ones from around here. One I would like to find the story behind is: "266666 Private W Campbell, Gordon Highlanders, 11 Nov 1918 aged 27" because it was the very last day of the first war that was world-wide, and the day still used for memories by so many even though nowadays we are officially supposed to relegate the thinking about wars and poppies and our own soldiers to the nearest Sunday to that date.

DEATH IN THE FAMILY

by Rosemary Bigwood

(Talk given to the Society 25th April 1995)

The subject of my talk this evening sounds rather like the title of a detective novel - but perhaps that is not so far out. All of you who have carried out research on your families will have found that in fact you do need to be a detective - to mistrust anything and everything that you are told - to weigh up evidence and look for clues under every tree. Of all the events of human existence, from the point of view of the family historian, death is without doubt the most important. Marriage may not happen or may not be recorded: birth can be overlooked as is shown by a letter written in the eighteenth century by a Grant of Ballindalloch: "Mrs Drayton returns thanks for congratulations: it was a trifle not worth mentioning - a daughter which I did not think of consequence enough to say had increased my family." But death is a matter to which personal, family and social response has always been made: a matter which concerned the church and in which law was frequently involved, and the implications of the reactions and interactions of individuals and authorities has resulted in a mass of records of enormous value in reconstructing the past. I want to look at these records from various perspectives. What do they tell us? To what sort of people do they apply? Do they tell the truth? Can they provide clues to other lines of enquiry?

Starting with the personal angle - what are the records which reflect this? It is usually possible to find quite a lot of memorabilia at home such as old black-edged letters of condolence. These often present a challenge in identifying the people mentioned: "Dear Uncle - we were very sorry to hear the sad news from you this week: Mother tells me to tell you that she is very sorry for you the way you are left ..." Relatives may be referred to with initials as 'Aunt H' and one then has to do detective work by perhaps looking at the address or searching for other clues to decide to whom reference is being made. In this particular letter the writer not only signed her full name but there was also a date and an address which led to an entry in census returns.

Newspaper cuttings may have been kept, recording a funeral, the names of the mourners or an appreciation of the career of the deceased. This is treasure trove indeed - except that frequently I find that the date of the newspaper has been cut off and this again may involve one in searches to try to find clues as to the date from other pieces of news on the page.

Some families are fortunate enough to have a family Bible in which the births and deaths of past members of the family have been recorded with extra information given which may hint at a family drama or sketch in the family's place in history. A family Bible of a Hunter family which I was shown had the following entries: 'John Hunter born 1 May 1765, enlisted into 18th regiment and died in India about 1798: Mary Murray Hunter born 9 August 1771, died of a broken heart about 1801: Robert Hunter born 14 August 1820 and died in America.' The entries on this page of the family Bible covered the period 1705-1841 and clearly many were made from the memory which may account for a common feature of such volumes - that they do not always tell the truth and many dates are not correct. There may be other problems of interpretation. One well-kept family Bible listed all the children of a farmer's family and a later generation were able to document all the persons mentioned except for one - named Matilda - whose birth and death dates were given. It was only after subsequent research through the family papers and account books that the mystery of the unknown ancestress was solved. Matilda was the family cow!

Gravestones also do not always convey accurate information, though in the case of recorded inscriptions this may be due to difficulties in reading them. An 'g' for example may easily be

worn and can be taken as a '3'. Like Bibles, the details may sometimes be inscribed long after the event. However, where inscriptions can be found for a family they are obviously of great value. Several generations may be listed on one stone or on nearby ones, occupations may be stated or can be guessed from the craft designs - the tools of the hammer man, the wool-shearer of a waulk-weaver, the press of a dyer. The work that is being done throughout the whole of Scotland in recording all gravestone inscriptions is invaluable and one looks forward to the day when every burial ground has been done. Many of the recorded inscriptions are published in abridged form which is certainly necessary but one should always go and see the original if possible as the detail may put 'flesh on the bones'. A study of epitaphs can be a most interesting one. The local schoolmaster, session clerk or minister may have supplied the text of some of the epitaphs: others appear to have been used quite widely in slightly varying forms. One can guess that often there was someone who fancied themselves as a composer of verse. In the baptismal register for Monquhitter in the early nineteenth century, the session clerk has written a verse of really terrible doggerel on each page:

Time paces on though silent swift

And man poor sinner is driven adrift

Back to the source from whence he rose

And thence from hence there is no man knows.

Man's life is a vapour and full of woes

He cuts a caper and down he goes. etc. etc.

In 1619 the kirk session of Brechin took steps to control what were considered to be unsuitable epitaphs: "The Session considering that monie abuses are admittat in making epitaphs be zoning men in this cite affixing on burial stanes anie thing they ples, partie ridiculous and partie ontrew, ordain that no epitaph shall be put on any monuments without the approval of the session."

In many places even where no stone was erected or has survived, there may be lair records. Lairs were family plots often handed down from generation to generation and not infrequently the subject of dispute. A lair book for Kilsyth has in it correspondence recording arguments on such matters. A certain John Clelland for instance agreed to resign his rights in the family burial plot on condition that his younger brother would maintain it. Later, John Clelland declared that it "is a pure fiction" that he had renounced his rights in favour of his brother and nephews. Some lair books which may be found either at the cemeteries or sometimes with kirk session minutes, contain potted genealogies, recording the names of the heirs to the lair and who was buried there. Testimony was taken in Clackmannan in 1668 as to who lay beneath an unmarked stone. "John Wightman deponet that he knew that John Quhyt's ancestors lay under that stone belonging to the Quhyts lying towards the west end of the kirk, to witt his great-grandmother Agnes Clark with Margaret Blackwood his grandmother." This information would take some lines of the White ancestry back well into the 1500's. There was another interesting entry in Clackmannan kirk session records of the seventeenth century recording a case in which a man was accused of throwing down grave stones and cursing. His defence was that he had just laid his hand on the stone and it fell over. One can well understand from this how many memorials may have disappeared over the centuries.

When one reads the following entry in the Kirk Session Minutes for Peterhead dated 4 November 1804, it is perhaps surprising to find that so much information about graves and lairs has survived. "The Session finding that there was no Sexton or Grave digger for this

Parish (James Hay having been carried to prison in Aberdeen and it being uncertain what his fate might be) ... they appointed Thomas Milne to be Grave Digger. And in order to enable him to discharge this office properly they appointed an advertisement to be read on the next Lord's Day to the parishioners in town and country to meet with him at the Church Yard to point out to him the places of interment of their different relatives ... and they ordered Thomas Milne to keep a correct register of all the burials during his continuance in the office and likewise enjoined him to make as correct a plan as possible of the Churchyard.

Fortunately, from 1855 onwards one is not reliant on tombstones or lair records for information about the dead. Death certificates in the Scottish Statutory Registers are full of information and with the technological advances of computerised indexes available in New Register House, searching for relevant entries has become very much easier. Marital status, age, occupation, residence and parentage are all details given on these certificates, as well as causes of death and the name of the informant, usually a relative. And a chance to consult an 1855 death certificate should never be missed. In this first year of statutory registration more detail was included than at any other time. Extra information includes a note of how long the deceased had lived in the area, where he or she was born, where buried and names and ages of all children and whether alive or dead.

The contents of these certificates are interesting and valuable not only from the point of genealogy but also in a study of social history. One can see the scourge of tuberculosis in many families, the deaths of young children through teething or fevers, the spread of an epidemic of diphtheria, smallpox or whooping cough women dying in childbirth, the death roll of a mining disaster and it is surprising how many people in the second half of the nineteenth century died under the wheels of a train!

The accuracy of information given on certificates is a matter for individual assessment. One should always look to see the relationship of the informant to the deceased: if a grandson called upon to give the maiden name of his great-grandmother, it is hardly surprising if sometimes the details subsequently prove to be in error. Ages were always a matter for vagueness in an era when it was not necessary to know this to get an old age pension or bus pass, and there can be cover-ups such as declaring that parents of the deceased were married when in fact this union had never taken place.

Before 1855 tracing records of death is a different matter since the burial records of the parishes are the least well kept of their registers. Sir John Sinclair in his *'Analysis of the Statistical Account'* in 1825 deplors the chief causes of the lack of records - the number of burial places in a parish (designed to avoid taxes on burial), deaths at sea not noted and burials in remote areas where people bury their own dead, the desire of people to be buried with their ancestors often involving burial in a place distant from their residence, the fact that registers may often only concern an account for the hire of the mortcloth (not used by everyone) and the common knowledge that there was no obligation to register a death.

Where there are burial registers for a parish they are often disappointing sometimes giving so little information that it is difficult to determine the relevance of the entry. "10 June 1799 - Widow Campbell 2s. (for the hire of a mortcloth) - nothing can be gained from such an entry. On the other hand in some areas there is a goldmine in these records. The burial records of some of the Fife parishes read like newspaper articles in their reports of disasters at sea. In Colleslie, Fife, one finds the following information on Thomas Garrick: "Died 1793. He was in the practice of walking to Rossie and the other adjacent houses within a few months of his death. Was a soldier in the Duke of Argyle's Regiment in 1715. Married his second wife, a stout woman of about 50 years, in his 99th year, who died about 2 years ago."

In Swinton, Berwickshire I came across the following entry in 1817: "Mortcloth for the funerals of Miss Herriot, Ladykirk, and her maid servant who were both drowned in the river, the former while bathing, the latter in attempting to rescue her from perishing in a deep pool into which by accident she had fallen." (Note that the lady is named, her heroic servant is not) And in Kilmouchar in Fife in 1796 there was a dramatic account of a "melancholy accident" when two brothers went out to shoot pyots, and the musket "burst in pieces" severely wounding the younger boy. The entry in the register then describes in gruesome detail the measures taken by the doctors which were unavailing.

The parish register in some places becomes rather like the local newspaper and in the Dunfermline Burial Register of 1689 there is a lengthy account of the death of John Tod who reputedly died having been given poison in a drink of warm ale by his wife who had been having an affair with the servant of the house. The neighbours became suspicious and both the wife and her lover were arrested and hanged. Their illegitimate child was sent to the parish of Newburn to be brought up.

The study of funerals is an interesting aspect of social custom and attitudes. I expect that many of you will have read the two vivid accounts of early nineteenth century funerals in Speyside described by Elizabeth Grant in *'Memoirs of a Highland Lady'* - the wake of the hen wife's husband whose body was set up in his coffin while the company set to dancing so energetically that the body fell over, alarming the guests. The other funeral - of Captain Grant - was performed with more decorum. There are often condemnatory references to funeral celebrations in kirk session minutes. In 1748 a man in Croy called his neighbours together to show their sorrow on the death of his mother by dancing through the whole night to the music of a fiddler. The kirk took a dim view of this method of showing grief, especially since the dancing took place on a Sunday night, and the fiddler had to appear before the congregation on six successive Sundays to show his penitence. In 1675 there was a presbytery visitation of the parish of Moy and the minister was asked whether he laid any "restraint upon pyeping, violing and dancing at Lickwacks." He answered "Not as yet" - a response which was not considered satisfactory and he was ordered to censure such offenders.

It was usual for drink to flow freely at such times and it is said that during the 16-mile journey to Flora Macdonald's funeral in Skye, 300 gallons of alcohol were consumed and there are a number of tales told of coffin bearers becoming so inebriated on their way to the grave that they arrived at their destination without the body! The result of so much drinking was that often the funeral ended in a fight and Dr Norman Maclean tells the story of a woman who after the funeral of her husband exclaimed: "Johnnie is buried, and not a bloody head in the churchyard; shame is on me, for they will be saying of me that I spared the whisky at my husband's funeral."

Providing a good funeral was clearly important to people of all ranks of society and many records of what was spent on such occasions have survived in the edicts of executors. Before 1823, the Commissary Courts were responsible - among other duties - for dealing with the confirmation of testaments and the appointment of executors in cases of intestacy. These duties were taken over by the Sheriff Courts after this date. The Commissary Courts were the Church courts, established before the Reformation but continued in nearly their same functions after this time. Family historians will be familiar with the registers of testaments kept by these courts but few people use the other records of the Commissaries (kept in the Scottish Record Office.)

One of the most useful classes of commissary records are the Edicts of Executory and in a great many cases there are surviving Edicts when there are no recorded Testaments. When someone

An example of another dispute was over a claim by one member of a family in Berwickshire that she and her husband had looked after her aged widowed mother, Jean Frame or Smith and had therefore been granted a disposition with regard to her property. She claimed that she should be appointed executor to administer her mother's estate. This was then contested by two sons and a daughter who thought that they were being excluded from their inheritance, their sister and her husband having ingratiated themselves with the old woman, and the result was much interesting genealogical information. The judgement of the Commissary Officer hearing the case was that it was "a hubbub about nothing" as the terms of inheritance had already been laid down by the testament of William Smith, Jean's husband.

If you find that an ancestor died intestate but leaving children who were still minors, you should certainly see if there was an Edict of Executory or of Tutory. The Commissary official was responsible for appointing tutors who by law were the two nearest of kin to the children on the father's side and the two nearest of kin on the mother's side, and thus one is given some valuable clues in tracing the two sides of the family.

When someone died testate, leaving a letterwill, disposition, trust or other deed in which he conveyed his or her wishes as to the settlement of the estate, this is clearly a bonus. Such documents will probably mention many members of the family (though remember that some persons may be omitted as black sheep or provision may have been already made for them) and it is always intriguing to detect underlying family dramas. In 1767 the testament of Edward Orr, a Campbelltown merchant, was registered in Argyll Commissary Court. In his letterwill he appointed his son Robert to be his executor "in regard he has at sundry times advanced large sums of money for me, to pay off my pressing debts and has become security for money I borrowed for extricating me of my difficulties and has behaved himself dutiful and obedient towards me." To Helen his youngest daughter he left his best feather bed, pewter plates and flagon, a mourning gown, stockings, shoes and buckles. His elder daughter, however, had clearly made a bad marriage: described as wife of James Finlay, sometime sailor in Campbelltown, she was left £5 sterling, a web of cloth, mourning gown, shoes, coat, stockings and buckles. She had already received her portion "on account of her situation and state of health" but her father now provided that she should have a "free house fit for her accommodation for her during the time she lives without cohabiting with her husband who left her destitute and a heavy burden upon me since his departure." He also made a bequest of £5 to his grandson, son of James Finlay, "to assist him in setting up in the way of his trade when his apprenticeship is expired with the whole of my check shirts, four of my white shirts, all my body cloaths and stockings and my silver watch - only to be paid in the event of his pursuing his trade carefully and behaving well and not otherwise." It seems as though there was some doubt as to whether bad blood might have been carried down from James Finlay into the next generation.

There is plenty of scope for tracking down testamentary dispositions. The first place to look is in the Commissary Court Registers of Testaments which are all indexed up to about 1823. After that date it is necessary to look in the section of the relevant sheriff court dealing with what is still termed 'Commissary Business' and to look for 'Inventories of Defuncts' or Wills. These too are all indexed, either in print or manuscript and from 1876 things become simpler with annual printed lists of confirmations covering the whole country which will tell you whether someone died intestate or testate and if so where the will is registered. There are, however, a number of other places where a will may be found. As it was a legal document, it could be registered in any court competent to record deeds and you may find it in the Register of Deeds (otherwise known as the Books of Council and Session) - a vast series covering the whole country and really inaccessible unless you strike a period of years which are indexed - in the Sheriff Court Register of Deeds, in a Burgh Register of Deeds, in a Register of Deeds of

died intestate, those who wished to administer the estate of the defunct would ask that an Edict should be pinned to the church door and read aloud "immediately after forenoon divine service" charging "the executors, testamentors, spouse, bairns if any there be," and intrumetters with the goods and gear of the deceased to compare before the commissary or his deputies at a certain time and place. The documentation that might then be collected can be divided into three parts - details of the appointment of executors, an inventory of the movable goods and gear of the deceased and the claims of creditors for what was owed to them from the estate of the dead person.

One of the most common claims was for funeral expenses and we thus have evidence of what was laid out on these occasions for people of all classes of society. An account of the funeral expenses of Robert Condy in Airth, Stirlingshire in 1729 - a man of moderate means - included £5 payment for the making of the coffin and the wright's wife seems to have added to the family business by supplying drink for the funeral - ten pints of ale and some brandy. There was money for the hire of the mortcloth, for ringing the bell and making the grave. The baker was paid for baking of three pecks of meal; tobacco and pipes were supplied; linen had to be bought for grave clothes and there was a further account for another 20 pints of ale. Finally, there was payment to the doctor for his sick-bed attendance.

Further up the social scale one finds the bills for the funeral of Robert Stewart of Ardvorch in 1751 which included the supply of wine, rum, veal, biscuit, cheese, seed cake, cloves, snuff, corn for the gentlemen's horses, a suit of clothes and payment to a mourning piper.

Inventories of movable goods (anything that was not land or property) provide a fascinating insight into the lives of our ancestors. These inventories occur in recorded testaments and may also be found with the Edicts. Those in the registered testaments usually list all the farm stock of country dwellers, what grain they had sown and sometimes farm or trade implements. Grain is usually valued to the "third or fourth corn" indicating that the expected return for each seed sown was only three or four fold. Sometimes there will be a description of furniture in the house or clothes and other personal possessions. Often the impression is given that nothing is of great value - the horse will be old or lame and the chairs and tables broken. This of course was to reduce the claim of the Commissary Officer who demanded his "quot" or tax on the net value of the estate. Other more detailed and specialised inventories may be found with the Commissary Court Records. For example, George Milligan was a surgeon in Moffat, Dumfriesshire in 1736 and in a petition to sequestrate the effects of the defunct to settle his debts, an inventory was made of the supply of drugs in his shop with a list of all his utensils - bottles, pill pots, sieves, basins, plaster knives, pestle and mortar, scales, spatulas, funnels and "two old dispensatories." It is an interesting insight into medical history of the time. Another inventory I looked at was for the stock of a general store in Tarbet, Argyll in 1819. This included a wonderful variety of goods - buttons, nails, combs, knives, razors, ink powder, fish hooks, shawls, gunpowder, hats, shirts, stockings, Jews harps and needles.

From a genealogical point of view, the matters in the Edicts concerning the appointment of executors and sometimes of curators for minors are the most important. The edict will in fact usually provide the same information as a testamentative and name the executor or executors, usually related to the deceased, and may act as a supplement to the Register of Testaments. In some cases there was a dispute over who had a claim to be appointed and these documents produce a wealth of details about a family. When Dugald Campbell of Shirvane died, a case was heard in Argyll Commissary Court in 1737. His three granddaughters claimed to be appointed executors, a claim contested by Dugald's two daughters, aunts to the granddaughters. In the evidence many of the family ramifications were spelled out.

the Commissary Court or in a register kept by one of the Franchise Courts of Regality, Stewarty or Bailiary. In some cases - particularly with the sheriff court and commissary court registers of deeds, loss of registers may be filled by bundles of warrants which were the original documents later copied in to registers. A daunting - but perhaps challenging - prospect.

How does one decide where to look first? The answer is that it is always wise to take the easiest road first - check registers where there are indexes. After that, it is a case of assessing where and when the ancestor lived and in what class of society he moved. The most local records - for instance the burgh register of deeds - is likely to be the least bulky and therefore the easiest to search.

Settlement of inheritance was quite often a matter for dispute and such a case may be heard in the Court of Session - the highest civil court in Scotland. I was once dealing with a family who contested a will - one side of the family claiming that their aged mother was completely in her right mind when she died - a regular attender at the kirk, interested in all that went on around - while the other side described the old lady as in her dotage, needing attendance all the time and quite incapable of signing any document intelligently. A fascinating picture of family life and of an ancestor but someone was not telling the truth and perhaps the whole affair was of most value in depicting the character of the contestants. Court of Session cases are not always easy to locate - you do need to know a fairly exact date when it was heard - but if the proceedings can be found, they may be very informative.

Another Court of Session case devolved around two bankruptcies and a family trust. The father, who was a businessman, left a trust in favour of the various members of his large family. He had got into financial difficulties and his son, who managed the business in place of his father, got into deeper water. Claims were made of misappropriation of funds by the son and as evidence all the minute books concerning the administration of the trust were produced in court and full details were given there of several generations of the family. These productions - bound volumes submitted as evidence in court - are all listed in a book entitled 'Court of Session Productions 1760-1840' and are an excellent source of information about the business and personal affairs of numerous persons.

Another side of the impact of a death in the family concerns the inheritance of property - of land. In Scotland, records of land ownership have been kept since 1617 in the General and Particular Registers of Sasines and for some areas there was an earlier record - the Secretary's Register - for the years 1599-1609. The burghs, too, kept registers of sasines concerning lands within their precincts. Many people dismiss this source material as being unlikely to apply to their ancestors who may not have been wealthy or influential but it is surprising how often comparatively humble people were concerned with ownership of land. This could be the result of inheritance but there are innumerable cases where a laird or other landowner was short of cash and in return for a loan of ready money from a tenant or tradesman, he would arrange for a mortgage on his property.

In connection with the ownership of land, there are a series of other records relating to it, such as Retours - or Services of Heirs - whereby an heir had to prove his right to inherit. These returns were registered by Chancery who had empowered the local sheriffs to hold an assize to examine the claim of the heir. In cases where the inheritance was passing to perhaps a grandson, the record would fill in the intervening generations. Burghs also were entitled to keep registers of retours. Entails on estates may in some cases be another valuable source as they may list innumerable branches of a family, arranging for the inheritance of an estate to one person, with a series of clauses starting "whom failing."

These are only some of the sources where records may be found relating to a death in the

family. Communion Rolls, collections of family papers, army records, war memorials, insurance schemes, undertakers books - death may be documented in innumerable ways. T. S. Eliot once wrote: "The purpose of life's journey is to return to the place you set off from and see it as if for the first time." So in tracing our family history, we can go further, researching through death to the life of earlier generations.

DINGWALL AGAIN
by Jonathan McColl

Jonathan could do with some help here. This marriage lintel was found just off Tulloch Street in Dingwall not far from St Clement's, suggesting that it might have been local but it alternatively could have come from a demolished house from anywhere within fifty miles whose remains might have been bought by Mr Grant whose yard and business this rough car-parking area once was. The thing was just sitting there doing nothing and a friend thought it would make a good garden step, asked around, got given it and took it home where it languished for a while until the time came to cut it short and do the needful. Then it was turned over and the carving found in beautiful condition and very little worn. They didn't make a step out of it!

Its size is about 1600mm x 400mm x 100mm thick. The MK's are run together so to my mind must be read as MCK's. Letters in brackets are assumed. The repetition of the anchor motif might suggest a merchant or seafaring family but I have been told probably refers to the 'Anchor of Faith'. My latin may be poor but my artistry is rotten so please accept my descriptions instead. Can you explain the symbolism, improve the latin translations and maybe suggest who the Maighstir R McK was who married Miss E McK?

O TAST[E] AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD. BLESSED IS THE MAN
TH[AT] TRUSTETH IN HIM [This extends along the top from end to end, except for the
last three words which didn't fit and were tucked in below]

DEVS PROVIDERIT [God will have provided]

BE HARMLESS AS DOVES [split vertically by emblem of a dove, left half above a
quatrefoil, right above a pot or pendulum]

1 M 6 7 2
R M K E M K

[split vertically by following latin motto, itself split by anchor emblem]

QUAM VELUT ANIMAE ANCHORAM HABEMUS [How appropriate that our souls
are as anchors ??, left half above a star, right half above a horizontal crescent]

ANCHORA SPEI [Anchor of hope, around anchor emblem]

VINCIT AMOR PATR[IS] [The Father's love conquers?? around blazing sun over
winged heart]

THEY SHALL MOUN[T] UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES [split vertically by previous
emblem, left half above the same pot/pendulum, right half above an erased symbol, by
symmetry perhaps another quatrefoil]

REVEREND JAMES DEWAR OF NAIRN AND REVEREND ALEXANDER DEWAR OF AVOCH

by James Mackay

My query in the November 1994 issue of the Journal as to the origins, parents or siblings of Alexander DEWAR, a Minister in Avoch, has given rise to a fascinating picture of two brothers who both became Congregational Ministers and great men in the Highlands. The information has had to be picked up from numerous sources, some of them fairly obscure. Interestingly, I have also discovered why the Avoch Register is so erratic where it concerns the Congregationalists.

The father of James and Alexander Dewar was Peter Dewar, a mild and even-tempered farmer in the Parish of Weem and a tenant of the Breadalbane estate, who died in approximately 1816. As the Memoirs of James Dewar, written in February 1843, states that "His aged mother also survives" then I assume his mother to have been the Margaret Dewar aged "85" present in his household in the 1841 Nairn Census.

James Dewar was born in 1780. Being the eldest son, James had the dominant role in managing the farm, but was converted early in a great religious revival that swept through Breadalbane in 1800. He commenced attendance at Robert Haldane's Theological Seminary in Edinburgh in 1802 and was sent to Nairn by the 'Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home', arriving on the 8th November 1804. He remained in Nairn as the Congregational Church Minister until his death on 10th December 1842.

He was a great friend of the famous Doctor Grigor of Nairn whose biography was published in 1994. The Nairnshire Telegraph of 1861 reports that when Dr Grigor laid the foundation stone of the new Congregational Church he referred in his speech to "Mr James Dewar who came to Nairn in 1804 and remained until his death on December 10th 1842 ... I knew him well and it became my duty to attend him in his last illness, contracted in the discharge of his visiting work during a heavy visitation from the prevalence of typhus fever in this town. He was a simple-minded Christian man, without selfishness or guile and whose heart beat strongly and warmly with love to the brethren and his fellow men."

James Dewar married Katherine Stewart, also of Perthshire, on 25th October 1806. Sadly, she died aged only 29 in December 1813. They had at least three children, Peter (called Patrick on occasion) in 1807, James Alexander in 1809 and Elizabeth in 1812, but prior to the death of his wife he had the additional misfortune of losing "their two youngest children." He married again in autumn 1828. His second wife was Catherine Carnochan and they had two children (Elizabeth in 1831 and James Alexander in 1837). In the 1841 Census, he is found living in Cumning Street, Nairn with his mother and his second family.

Alexander Dewar was born in the Parish of Weem on 13th May 1785. Being converted by his elder brother James when he was fifteen or sixteen, he followed him into the Congregational ministry, entering the same Seminary in 1803 or 1804. On completion of his studies in June 1806, Dewar was sent by the 'Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home' to Inverness, having walked the 150 miles north, he preached in Inverness and neighbourhood from July to October.

In Strathteam, the farmer in whose house he lodged and on whose farm he preached was turned out of his farm for allowing Dewar to preach after the Laird had warned him against it, and Dewar himself was threatened with jail for his presumption in preaching against the Laird's will. He arrived in Avoch at the end of October and remained in Avoch as the Congregational

Church Minister until his death on 30th August 1849. The long and touching obituary (which is singularly sparse in hard facts) is to be found in the Inverness Courier of 11th October 1849.

Alexander Dewar married Madelona Fraser of Ardersier (according to Avoch OPR) or Madlina Fraser of Campbelltown (according to his obituary) on 12th March 1817 in Avoch. Like his brother's first wife, she died relatively young at the age of 36 on 28th December 1830. They had three sons, Alexander, Peter James and Aeneas and three daughters, Margaret McBean?, Rose Ann and Flora Madlina.

His portrait shows him as an earnest but good-natured man, with piercing eyes looking out from under hooded lids. Apparently there was sometimes "a roughness about his voice and a want of flexibility about some of the organs of utterance, occasioned, I believe, by much out-of-door preaching during his summer excursions in the Highlands."

Both Gaelic speakers, each year James and Alexander went on great and often arduous walking tours of the most remote parts of the Highlands and Islands. Alexander Dewar wrote about his 1836 tour: "I preached in a tour of five weeks, forty-seven sermons in thirty-six stations in thirteen different parishes, walked four hundred and fifty-nine miles and had ten thousand one hundred and ninety hearers."

They had a very different time with the ministers in their area. James Dewar in Nairn had a friendly relationship based on mutual respect with both the minister of the Established Church and the Secession Church. Alexander Dewar in Avoch had a long-running battle with the Reverend James Smith of the Established Church. This conflict explains the erratic entries relating to Congregationalists in the Parish Register.

Alexander Dewar himself wrote in his Testimony: "We have had our trials in Avoch for attachment to Congregational principles, so much so that we had to apply to the Civil and Ecclesiastical Courts for redress; for example - the children whom I baptised would not be inserted in the Parish Register like others, but were put under the designation of irregular baptisms, so that my own children's names are in two distinct parts of the Register, but I compelled them by the law of the country to put the names of all I baptised into their proper place. Even a burying place I could not procure for my family until I compelled it the same way, such was the antipathy of the parish Minister at that time.

The next step taken was to refuse to baptise the child of any person who heard me, unless they would sign an obligation not to hear me, but attend the Parish Church. I got Lord Cockburn's opinion on this, but found I could do nothing. The consequence was that every head of a family in the parish except four declared they would forever leave the parish Kirk and cleave to me, if I would baptise their children. This however, I could not do. The result was that a very few did sign this obligation but the great body refused, and when a child was born, the parents would say, such is his or her name let it be baptised when it may, so much was this the case that after a time there were in many families four and five children who had not received that rite, and the parish Minister went through the village exhorting them to come and get it performed but to no purpose; this was a great change, for formerly the utmost anxiety was manifested to get the children baptised very shortly after birth."

Reverend Smith is further indicated in Donald Sage's entertaining "Memorabilia Domestica" thus: "He was low in stature, had a short neck, a large head, shaggy eyebrows and a fearful squint. He was temperate in drinking, but his ravenous appetite for savoury meat was the means of shortening his life. Money-making was the ruling passion of his soul." Sage pulls no punches in describing examples of his meanness and his inadequacy in dealing with the

