

THE HISTORY
OF
THE BANFFSHIRE FIELD CLUB

1880 - 2015



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Front Cover:

The old Banff Academy building housed the original Banff Museum before transfer in 1902 to the present site in High Street, Banff. Thomas Edward, a founder member of the Field Club was the original curator of the Museum.

THE BANFFSHIRE FIELD CLUB
1880 – 1980

A SHORT HISTORY

Monica G. Anton

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If I have omitted anyone, my apologies.

M. G. Anton.

February 1980

1. THE BEGINNING

On 10th June 1880 a few men met by invitation in Boyndie House, Banff, the home of James Spence. Among them were Thomas Edward, the naturalist, John Horne, of H.M. Geological Survey, William Cramond, schoolmaster of Cullen, Rev. John Milne, King Edward and Rev. Aeneas Chisholm, parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Banff. The guiding spirit behind this meeting seems to have been Fr. Chisholm, who, after a conversation with Provost Dr. Ross of Inverness, a keen member of Inverness Field Club, decided to consult with other learned gentlemen in Banff with a view to forming a Club there. At this informal meeting a provisional committee was chosen with James Spence as Secretary. He was asked to call a general meeting as soon as 25 members were recruited. These were quickly found and the first meeting of the Banffshire Field Club was held on 26th June in the old Sheriff Court House. Members were so enthusiastic that it was decided to hold an excursion to Gamrie in July and to delay indoor meetings until the autumn. That summer, two more excursions were held to Fyvie and Cullen. John Horne, the geologist, led the Gamrie trip, Rev. John Wilson gave them the history of Fyvie and William Cramond, then at the threshold of a great career as an historian, took them round the antiquities of Cullen. While the party was on the Castle Hill they 'appreciated the view with the help of a very powerful telescope constructed by Mr. Valder of Macduff'.

The first Constitution of the Club still exists and consists of some 15 rules. Members could be 'of either sex' though no ladies were brave enough to join for some time. The annual subscription was 5s. for Ordinary Members, 2s. for Juniors and Ladies were admitted 'without payment'. A year or so later, however, 4 ladies were admitted at 2s.6d.; rules even then had to be changed sometimes! The first AGM of the Club took place on Monday 25th October 1880 and was chaired by Sheriff W.G. Scott-Moncrieff, Banff Castle, the first President of the Club. James Spence was secretary, and John Yeats treasurer.

In 1882 the Club was invited to take part in the joint meeting of the Northern Association of the Literary and Scientific Societies in Inverness. Fr. Chisholm and John Horne were asked to read papers. Fr. Chisholm was then Parish Priest of the Church of Our Lady of

Mount Carmel in Banff. Later he became rector of Blairs College, Aberdeen and finally Bishop of Aberdeen. He was President in 1890.

In August 1883 the third Annual Joint Meeting of the Northern Scientific and Literary Societies was held in Banff and the local Club may be said to have arrived on the national scene. The first meeting was held in the Museum, then part of the Academy, and according to the Transactions 'flags floated over the building, and over the portico was 'Welcome' in large letters'; after inspecting the chief features of the museum the party divided, one group visiting Duff House, by kind permission of the Duke of Fife, and the other touring the town with John Yeats, Sheriff Scott-Moncrieff and Rev. John Milne of King Edward. While examining St. Brandon's in High Street, John Yeats remarked that George Gordon, Lord Byron, when a boy in Banff had been to tea with the Misses Abercromby there. There was evidently a difference of opinion, for the boy expressed regret that he was not able to throw Miss A. over the balcony! There are many other stories about Lord Byron! In the evening the party met in the Academy for the reading of papers by members from the various visiting societies. Afterwards all repaired to the Fife Arms Hotel for supper, presided over by Alexander Ramsay. There were representatives from Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Inverness, Ross-shire and Nairn. Next morning, Banff was astir at an early hour - the museum opened for business at 6 a.m.!

By 8 a.m., Low Street presented a scene of "unwonted animation, hundreds of spectators having turned out and lined its pavements, while carriages in great variety of form and dimension, everyone drawn by at least a pair of capital horses" were driven along smartly to take their places in the procession, under the careful supervision of Mr. Hutchison (of the Fife Arms Hotel) himself. It must have been a wonderful sight to see everyone rushing for a place in the carriages "determined not to be the hindmost and to fall into the hands of a certain gentleman". The party went first to view the old Church of Boyndie then to Boyne Castle, Portsoy, the Old Kirk of Cullen and finally to Cullen House. They were shown round by Mr. Thomson of the Estate Office (by kind permission of the Earl of Seafield). Afterwards a business meeting of the Club was held on the lawn and

the carriages took the guests back to Banff or to the nearest railway station. The Club must have been well pleased with its first Northern event. The N.A.L.S.S. came back to Banff many times but never, surely, in such style.

2. NOTABLE PEOPLE IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CLUB

Banff was indeed fortunate to have so many learned scholars in the late 19th century. Thomas Edward, the naturalist, was a member of the Club for a few years before his death in 1886. He gave only three papers but his talk on *The Protection of Wild Birds* contained many criticisms of the Bill which went through Parliament in 1880. The Club decided to print Mr. Edward's paper and to distribute it to other societies in the hope that pressure might be brought upon Parliament to amend the Bill. Each Member received a copy of the paper and a desire was expressed that all the meetings of the Club should be on permanent record. An arrangement was made with the Banffshire Journal to print copies which would be free to members only. It was possible, then, for members from outside the town to keep in contact with the affairs of the Club. As late as 1910, there were more members in the country areas than were resident in Banff. After Mr. Edward's death a handsome memorial was erected in Banff Cemetery and a commemorative plaque, commissioned by Alistair Tayler of Glenbarry, was placed on the wall of his house in Deveronside.

Rev. Dr. Walter Gregor, an original member was, in turn, teacher and minister, a combination of careers quite common then. He was born in 1827 near Keith and started his teaching career in Macduff while still a student of Divinity at Aberdeen University. Licensed by the Presbytery of Turriff in 1855, he was fortunate that there was a vacancy in Macduff and so he was teacher and minister. In 1863 he was appointed to the Church of Pitsligo where he remained until his retirement in 1895. He died in 1897. According to William Barclay in his *Schools and Schoolmasters of Banffshire* he was one of the most distinguished scholars of his time in the North of Scotland, in the spheres of Philology and Folk-Lore. His *Banffshire Dialect, with a Glossary of Words not found in Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary*, was published in 1866 for the Philological Society. His writings for the Club were mainly on Folk-Lore and there are interesting articles of The

Horseman's Word, The Goodman's Croft, Folk Riddles, and The Horse in Scottish Folk-Lore. Dr. Gregor was President in 1884.

John Yeats was, at various times, secretary and treasurer of the Club from 1880-1923, when he retired to his native Cabrach. Born in 1832, he was first a teacher, turning afterwards to law, working in Edinburgh and later in Banff. In recognition of his long service, the Club presented him with his portrait, now in Banff Museum, and an armchair made from a beech tree in Duff House grounds. He died in 1926 aged 94.

Rev. Dr. W. S. Bruce, the long-serving minister of St. Mary's Church in Banff was a member of the Club for many years. His first article was in July 1882, when he read a paper on the *Flora of King Edward*. His last came in 1930, when his subject was *Birds and Their Habitats*. He was President in 1885.

Mr. Alexander W. Farquhar, schoolmaster in Gamrie, was the last to teach in the old parish school in Gardenstown and the first headmaster in the new school at Bracoden. He remained there for 32 years, retiring in 1903. He was President of the Club in 1893 and took a special interest in the history of the area, leading many excursions to Gamrie Bay and the old Church and Churchyard.

Dr. William Cramond of Cullen was one of the Club's most famous members and when the Club began, was schoolmaster there. He was born in Fettercairn in 1844 and became Head in Cullen in 1871. His most important work, two volumes of *The Annals of Banff*, were printed by the New Spalding Club in 1891. In the following year he received the Freedom of Banff. Among his many books are *The Church and Churchyard of Cullen*, *Guide Books to Cullen and Grantown*, and *The Records of Elgin*, the second volume of which was edited by Rev. Dr. Cooper of Glasgow and Rev. Stephen Ree of Boharm. In 1905, Dr. Cramond received a Civil List Pension of £80 'in consideration of his antiquarian researches'. He wrote many papers for the Club, mostly on the history of Macduff, the Rothiemay Papers, the Hammermen of Banff and the Records of Banff Sheriff Court. Mention must also be made of Rev. Dr. Milne of King-Edward, Rev. James Davidson of the Episcopal Church in Banff, Rev. William Temple

of Forgue, Rev. George Sutherland of Portsoy and Mr. Thomas Gurnell of Huntly, all of whom played an important part in the early years of the Club.

Rev. Dr. Walter J.B. Richards of London deserves a special word. His first contribution to the Club was in 1883 when he gave a paper on *The Antiquity of Man*. His subjects were mostly scientific and for more than 20 years he was a regular contributor to the Transactions.

3. THE END OF THE CENTURY

In August 1890, the Northern Literary and Scientific Societies again met in Banff. Almost 100 people gathered in St. Andrew's Hall 'for the reading of papers'. Geological specimens were shown from the large collection in Banff Museum, where Mr. Lemmon had become curator on the death of Thomas Edward. Mr. Cramond delighted the company with a description of a box 'which had lain in the Town Hall for nearly 50 years' and which was found to contain 34,000 separate letters, papers and documents, some going back to pre-reformation times. Most, however, dated from 1750-1843 and consist of business letters to and from the Duke of Fife, letters from all ranks of society, 'down even to the very lowest type namely the anonymous' and love-letters marked 'strictly private'. Mr. Cramond then gave a history of the postal service before 1840, when a uniform charge of 1d per ½ oz. was made. Some of the letters in this collection must have been franked and would be of great value today. Next day, members travelled in five brakes to view the antiquities of the Royal Burgh and its environs. The gentlemen were able to walk to Cullycan and Hell's Lum, while the ladies waited in the conveyances. Perhaps they were unused to rough walking! During the last few years of the century some familiar faces left the area or died but the pattern of the Club remained much as before, i.e. monthly meetings throughout the winter and excursions in the summer. Travel was sometimes by train, and on other occasions by carriage or private conveyance; there were a number of trains on the coastal route but progress was rather slow. The average speed was 16 m.p.h., allowing for 'shunting at all stations'. In 1899 the Club travelled to Inch and Dunnydeer; last September (1979), the Club made a similar excursion. In the account of the 1899 excursion, the members left Banff on the 8.37 train from

Banff Bridge Station but, in spite of the perfect weather, the choice of day was rather unfortunate - it was the day of the King-Edward Flower Show, and no local members would give up the gala day of the year! However, some more people joined the train at Fyvie, and a contingent from the Buchan Field Club made the numbers look almost respectable. Mr. Grey, President of the Buchan Club, addressed the company and asked the Banff Club's help in taking a statistical survey of the shape, sizes, colour of hair, etc. of the heads of the people in the district. Several members promised their help. (The Buchan Field Club was founded by the Banff Field Club secretary, James Spence, who had left Banff for Peterhead in 1885.)

4. THE NEW CENTURY

Early in February 1900 the Club learned of the death of James Spence, one of the founder members. He was a teacher and historian and had written a book on *Ruined Castles* (Edinburgh 1873). Even after leaving Banff he took a keen interest in the Club and returned many times to read papers and to lead excursions. But, as one member died, there were many others on the sidelines waiting to give their literary and scientific donations to the Transactions. One of these, Garden M. Hossack, Sheriff Clerk, had been a member for many years but his first venture into print came late in 1900 when he wrote an extremely witty piece on *Reminiscences of a Sexagenarian*. A native of Banff's Seatown, he had much to write on early Victorian social life and customs. In 1907 he brought out *Further Reminiscences*. Both are well worth reading today and have, indeed, proved best sellers. Mr. Hossack died in 1909.

In 1901 the N.A.L.S.S. met in Elgin when one of the speakers was Dr. W. Mackie, geologist. He it was who, in 1912, discovered specimens of the oldest known land flora in the Rhynie Chert Zone. Another notable name occurs in 1906 William G. Craib, described as 'student'. He started his long career as a botanist by reading a paper on the *Flora of Banff*. His 'magnum opus', *The Flora of Banffshire* was published by the Banffshire Journal in 1912. In it he acknowledges the inspiration given by Professor Trail's *Flora of Buchan*, and the encouragement given by John Yeats, secretary, and James Grant, treasurer. William Craib left Banff for Kew Gardens, later becoming

lecturer in Forest Botany at Edinburgh University and, finally, Professor of Botany at Aberdeen University. He died in 1933, having added significantly to the study of botany in the county of Banff. Apart from his main work he contributed three supplementary lists of Flora and verified some of the old records. In June 1904, Mr. James R. Barclay (brother of William Barclay) reported on *Some Old Banff Wells*. He had been asked to research this subject by John Yeats and he provides an interesting picture of the water supply in Banff before the Banff Water Company was formed in 1847, bringing water from St. Comb's Well in Alvah into the town, The inhabitants had 'very few facilities in the way of a water supply, depending almost entirely on a few old street wells and draw wells scattered about the town'. Many of these wells became trysting places and popular places of resort; 'during the cool of a summer's evening'. One of the most important wells was the King's Well, then situated within the premises of Mr. Paton, engineer, Kingswell Lane. Tradition says that it received its name from King Malcolm IV who was certainly in Banff in 1163. In 1695 William Scott, goldsmith, was appointed to collect money from the inhabitants to 'eddiefie' the well. This must have been done well, for when in 1896 the Police Commissioners gave permission for the removal of the well, 'the structure of the well defied demolition and remains a silent witness of what the 'edification' of a well meant, 2 centuries ago'. William Scott is given in Cramond's *List of Hammermen of Banff* (1903). His son, also called William, was a goldsmith from 1693-1741. According to J.R. Barclay there was a well in the sunk area of the house opposite Mr. Paton's. The water ran through below the bowling green of the Town and County Club, and had an overflow well in the back premises 'now occupied by Mr. Murphy, fruiterer'. In this close there used to be a large mound of stones and when the property was taken by a Captain of the Coastguards, he found on clearing away the mound that 'there was discovered a complete set of the utensils for the working of a whisky still!' Other wells were in the field between Boyndie Street and Seafield Street and at the Gallowhill. Interested readers will find more information in Mr. Barclay's article (04/2).

James Grant, M.A., LL.B. was at this time Town Clerk and later became County Clerk. He was the son of William Grant of Balvenie, a name

well-remembered today as the creator of 'Standfast' whisky. One of his early papers was on *George Thomson, the Friend of Robert Burns*. Thomson's father, Robert, was in 1762 appointed to teach the English language in the school in Banff, 'according to the new or English method'. George, then aged 5, was educated at the Grammar School, later going to Edinburgh, where he was Principal Clerk to the Board of Trustees for 60 years. In 1792 he formed the idea of collecting every existing Scottish melody. Eventually he produced 6 volumes of Scots songs and engaged well-known authors to contribute words. Burns alone contributed over 120 poems. Thomson then secured the services of composers such as Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart to provide accompaniments. The Edinburgh Review pronounced them to be 'wholly unrivalled for originality and beauty'. George's claim to fame was not yet over, for one of his daughters married George Hogarth, W.S. and their daughter married Charles Dickens. Dickens came to Banff in 1858 to give a reading from his works, quite unaware that his wife's maternal great-grandmother lay in the old cemetery. Grant's main contribution to the Transactions, however, lay in the field of history. He wrote on Agriculture in Banffshire, Roads, Literature, the old Scots Navy, the French invasion of Scotland in 1708, etc. On returning from military duties in 1918, he gave his last paper on *Land Valuation in Banffshire* and a copy of the Valuation Roll of 1690. He died the following year, being described in the Transactions as 'a man of marked ability . . . cut off almost in the prime of life'. His parents survived him by some years and his wife died as recently as 1969. All now lie in Banff Cemetery, commemorated by a handsome tombstone of red sandstone bearing the motto of the Grants - 'Stand Fast'! How many people have seen the name 'James Grant' in the Foundation stone of Block B, of Banff Primary School?

5. EXCURSIONS 1900–1914

In 1901 William Cramond conducted members of the Club, which was meeting at Banff, on an excursion to Gordon Castle, Fochabers. The party assembled in the 'Public Square, Buckie, at 10 a.m. (slightly later than the Meeting of 1883!). The party started in brakes from the Commercial Hotel and halted first at the mouth of the Gollachy Burn, where the botanists found an unusual variety of flowers. All then

stopped at Mr. John Dawson's Tweed Manufactory (sic) and were amazed to find such a place at such a spot. Mr. Thomas Wallace, hammer in hand, gave a lucid exposition of the geology of the Gollachy Burn. The party then went to Mr. Thomson's farm at Gollachy, where, after inspecting his collection of specimens from the Tynet Burn, they were 'suitably entertained'. Eventually the party arrived at Fochabers from where they walked to Gordon Castle, admission to which "by favour of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon" had been arranged by George Muirhead, Factor. (I think that George Muirhead had previously been factor for Lord Aberdeen, as he had led an expedition to the Castle of Gight in 1892). Inside Gordon Castle the party examined the spacious rooms with their artistic treasures, including pictures by Raeburn, van Dyck and John Alexander, the painter of many members of the Gordon family. They then went over the grounds to the old town of Fochabers where the 'cross and joughs' are still to be seen. George Muirhead had already a reputation as the author of *Birds of Berwickshire* and appears in the Transactions as late as 1920, when he remarked on *A Strange Bird*.

In 1939 there was a disastrous sale at Gordon Castle in order to pay death duties. Everything came under the hammer of Messrs. Anderson & England of Elgin. The portraits of members of the Gordon family were sold for a song and though some have been traced others remain unaccounted for. A correspondent in Jersey is most anxious to find a portrait of Lord Charles Gordon and Ann Fraser, both painted by John Alexander.

Subsequent excursions in the early 1900s are few and far between. Either the weather was not suitable or they had visited the locality before. In 1903 the Club had excursions to Fyvie and the Enzie, led by James Buie, architect of Portsoy. Mr. Buie had written for the Club since 1895 and the name is in the Portsoy area to this day. The next excursion was to Macduff at a Joint Meeting of the N.A.L.S.S in 1906, when the members were taken to Tarlair, King-Edward, Plaidy and Turriff by Dr. John Milne of King-Edward. Other Joint Meetings of the N.A.L.S.S. introduced members to Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness, where they didn't see the Monster and again to Gamrie in 1910, where, led by John Yeats, they viewed the beauties of the gardens at

Troup House and the guillemots, kittiwakes and puffins at Troup Head. Tea was taken at Gardenstown, the story of which has been told by the late Principal Geddes, schoolmaster of Gamrie in a poem contributed to the Banffshire Journal in 1856. The old church of Gamrie, was: 'old and grey with years, when Elgin and Roslin were young'.

In June 1901 the Transactions reported the meeting of the N.A.L.S.S. held in Elgin and among the list of guests appears the name William Barclay, Duncan Street, Banff covering the event for 'The Banffshire Journal'. This was the beginning of a connection with the Club which lasted for almost 40 years. William Barclay was born in Banff in 1869 and his father was a compositor with the B.J. The young lad followed in his father's footsteps, beginning as a message boy and proceeding by way of reporter under Alexander Ramsay, the first editor, to sub-editor, assistant editor and, finally, in 1909, to editor when Alexander Ramsay died. When William Barclay retired in 1946, the two editors had between them given 101 years of service to the B.J. It is a record which will surely never be surpassed. He was also the local correspondent for 'The Scotsman' and, in 1941, he was made Hon. LL.D. of Aberdeen University. Indeed the Club had altogether 8 Presidents who had been given this honour - surely another record! According to the 'Evening Express' he was the fastest writer of shorthand in Scottish journalism. I am indebted to Mr. A. Rowe, Banff, his son-in-law, for all the information about Dr. Barclay and for being able to consult his valuable book of newspaper cuttings collected by Dr. Barclay. One excerpt serves to show his speed in shorthand. Lloyd George once visited Banff and gave an oration of some one and a half hours' duration at the Plainstones, speaking at no mean speed. William Barclay wrote every word down and it was printed in full in the next issue of the B.J. His daughter, Mrs. A. Blackwell, has given the following picture of her father. 'Second only to his family, his whole life and love was the B.J. and walking the countryside. He covered hundreds of miles on foot, or in a horsedrawn gig, accompanied often by one of his family. I have vivid memories of fearfully hanging on in the back seat! The passenger was always allowed to sit at the Reporter's table at whatever event he was covering for his paper. He wrote at home almost every evening, surrounded by books. Woe

betide anyone who broke the silence! A humble man at heart, he was very proud, not only of the Honorary LL.D., but of a 'phone call he had from the Editor of 'The Times' to congratulate him on getting a scoop for the B.J. When he came home that day, he said in his usual Doric, 'Fa d'ye think wis on the 'phone this foreneen?' 'The Heid Man a' the Times, no less'. Thus was 'The Times' and its editor put in proper perspective relative to the B.J. During his long career he was offered some of the 'plum' jobs in Scottish journalism but refused to leave his native town. During his 'Afternoons off in Banff and Moray' I accompanied him on a few of the walks, and the information which came from him, so casually, was an education in local history. His *Schools and Schoolmasters of Banffshire* was really a great feat of research, and entailed much concentrated work. He had an unfulfilled ambition to write a history of the Lairds and Estates of Banffshire but before he could write it on the scale he envisaged, the fire had gone out and he was unable to continue'. His contributions to the Transactions were many and various; the first article appeared in 1906, when he wrote on '*A Suppressed Speyside Parish*', being an account of Dundurcas, at one time part of the Parish of Rothes. 1907 saw William Barclay on *A Pilgrimage to St. Wallach in Glass*. To write this paper he walked all the way from Huntly - a distance of some 9 or 10 miles and thought nothing of it. 1908 saw him in the Kingdom of Fergie, where he was present at the Jubilee of the opening of St. Margaret's Church. In each subsequent year he produced at least one paper for the Transactions and his last paper is reported in May 1935, when he wrote on *The Extinct Urus*, a unique Banffshire find. This was an account of the skeleton of the species 'bos primogenitus', found on the farm of Bogton, Fordyce, tenanted by Mr. George Masson. During his long career he was helped by his wife, Elizabeth Bruce Watson, who not only acted as his secretary and amanuensis but was, herself, instrumental in collecting and arranging all the material published by the Club from 1880-1924. These carefully labelled packages lay undisturbed until 1976 when we started to index them all. Mr. Barclay gets a special mention in the Transaction of 1926. His historical researches into the parishes of Banffshire were carried out with care and scholarship. In 1917 he wrote a special article on the centenary of Dufftown and, in 1932, a long paper on the parish of Alvah. He turned also to the history of Banffshire's great fishing

resources but was just as much at home with farming matters. In 1930 he produced *An Aberdeenshire Farmer's Diary*; this covered the years from 1768-1815 and was the property of John Allardise, tenant of Lower Plaidy, Turriff. It deals not only with farming life but provides an interesting commentary on social and economic problems in Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. The diary was just in time to record the destruction of the Deveron Bridge in 1768. 'The spate rose higher than the oldest man could remember, all the barley and corn on low haugh ground was carried off by the uncommon deluge. There was over eight feet of water in the lower flat of Duff House, and the inhabitants of the lower part of Banff had to quit their houses, and were rowed in boats to the old church stile within 20 yards of the Plainstones. The immense quantity of corn, hay and wood stopped the arches of the bridge, and with the amazing onrush of water, that fine structure, about 4 p.m., was borne down and totally demolished'.

The weather during the time of the diary was a constant topic and seemed to be, if anything, worse than now. In 1814, for example, the Deveron was frozen over for 42 days and a loaded wagon could pass over the ice in safety. John Allardise also notes the presence of 1200 troops being reviewed in the parks of Boyndie in 1801. These were the Banffshire Volunteers, raised to fight the French. Mr. Allardise describes Napoleon as 'that restless bloody Bonaparte'.

6. THE CLUB, THE MUSEUM AND THE LIBRARY

As the Club had a long association with both the Museum and the Library, it may be appropriate to give a brief sketch of their histories. In 1810, five boys, L.W. Forbes, Alexander Smith, James Robertson, James Ogilvie and William Bartlet met to form a library where they could hold meetings for literary discussions. By 1836 they had collected over 2000 volumes and by 1890 there were more than 6000 volumes. Then, in 1828, an Institute for Science Literature and the Arts was founded by Sheriff Pringle and Rev. James Smith, Rector of the Academy. This Society was dissolved in 1875 and their collections of specimens etc. were given to the Museum, at that time in the large central room of the Academy. When the Free Library Act came into force in 1899, it was decided to build a new Museum and Library in High Street on the site of the house known as 'The Turrets' or 'Banff's

Lodgings'. The new building was erected in 1902 and all the books, specimens, etc. were transferred. The site was given by George Cumming and Andrew Carnegie donated £1000. Another £500 was received for the old Museum building, presumably from the Education Authority. The Town Council had taken over the running of the Museum in 1875 and had asked the Club for the co-operation in its management. Over the years the Club gave a good deal of financial help and in a more practical way, arranged for several cases to be made by Mr. A. Munro, house-carpenter, 'under the supervision of Mr. Smith, cabinetmaker, a member of the Club and also of the Museum Committee of the Town Council'. There must have been a fair amount of old rubbish in the Museum, for, in the Transactions of 1882 it is stated that 'the Club repaired to the Museum to inspect the cases of specimens. Thomas Edward discarded a large number of rocks but all the fossils and minerals were kept'. Mr. Edward had his first exhibition of a Natural History Collection as far back as 1845 in the Trades' Hall, Low Street, on the occasion of St. Brandon's Fair, when he was assisted by Rev. James Smith of Monquhitter and Rev. Walter Gregor of Pitsligo. Dr. Gregor had been a member of the Institute for Science and was also, for a time, curator of the Museum. Thomas Edward was curator for more than 30 years. In 1885 a complete classified catalogue of the rock specimens was prepared by Dr. John Horne, H.M. Geological Survey. In 1898 it was reported by William Forbes that 'the Banff Museum stood head and shoulders above many other Museums'. William Forbes, John Yeats and Peter Burnett, cabinetmaker and naturalist, were appointed 'Counsellors' to the Town Council. In the same year the Museum Committee 'from causes over which they had not control, were too long in getting to work. They can meet only in the evening, and it is only for a short time in the summer that the light is good enough to do any effective work'. The Club met many times in the old Museum or in the Rector's Room and when the new building was completed, the Club met in the Reading Room. By then the opening hours of the Museum and Library were 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. - 8 p.m. every day. No doubt the lighting was better, to enable the counsellors to continue their work of arranging and classifying the many objects which were continually being donated to the Museum.

William Forbes of Macduff in his address as retiring President in 1898 showed many examples of ancient weapons and implements all carefully labelled with the locality in which they had been found. He also mentioned the 'Langman Tap', where in 1886 a fine urn was found, filled with calcined bones. At that time the Longmanhill barrow was thought not to have been disturbed. He also notes a skeleton and urn being found on the farm of Afforsk. On demitting office, Mr. Forbes was appointed a delegate to the N.A.L.S.S. which were to meet in Banff in 1901. In the following year J. Tennant Gordon, Chief Constable, reported on stone cists found on the Hill of Foulzie, King-Edward by John Wright. They were submitted to Professor Reid of Aberdeen University for identification and given to the Museum by Alexander McRobert, the owner of the land. Photographs of the finds appear in the Transactions in 1902. In 1903 Mr. William Hendry, Cairnton, Fordyce, gave several sepulchral relics from Travancore to the Museum. At the same meeting Dr. Cramond of Cullen donated a bundle of Rothiemay Papers and a gage (sic) for measuring the height of horses! One wonders where these and many other items given by the Club are now. In December 1910 a paper contributed by Charles Beard of Liverpool University was read by James Grant on *The Scottish and European Arms and Armour in Banff Museum*. The collection ranged from the Deskford Boar's Head, ornamented stone balls peculiar to this part of Scotland, bronze leaf-shaped swords, and a number of examples of later broadswords armour etc. The collection was thought then to be quite unique in Scotland. It is a tragedy that so little remains now. It is fully described with photographs in the Transactions of 1910. William Forbes' collection of Geological specimens was presented to the Museum as the 'Forbes Collection', and was housed in two large glass cases. Peter Burnett who had supervised the transfer from the old building was for long an honorary member of the Club and after his death in 1904 it was decided to purchase his natural history collections. £100 was raised, of which Lord Mount-Stephen gave £50, the Club £10, and the remainder by public subscription. In 1907 the final arrangements were made, and the Burnett Collection passed into the hands of Francis George, then Town Clerk.

7. THE CHANGING ROLE OF A COUNTRY MANSION

When the Club visited Duff House in 1883, they were welcomed by the Duke of Fife and members saw the valuable collection of paintings by Titian, Vandyke, Velasquez, Reynolds, Raeburn and Jameson. Many of these paintings and portraits were sold at Christie's when the House and lands were presented to the Burghs of Banff and Macduff. The author of *Banff and District*, Allan S. Mahood, (B.J. 1919) was a doctor when Duff House was a sanatorium between c.1914-1920. The editor, Mr. Edmund I. Spriggs M.D., F.R.C.P., wrote the preface to Mahood's book, still an excellent guide to the area if the reader is fortunate enough to find a copy! Dr. Mahood's contributions to the Club were mainly ornithological, his most important paper being *The Birds of Banffshire and Speyside*, published in 1918. By December 1921, Dr. Mahood was back in Tiverton, Devon, but maintaining a connection with the Club by his paper on *Waxwings in the North*. He was President in 1917-18 and his son, Allan, and wife were also members. Dr. Spriggs, the head of the sanatorium, was also a member of the Club, although not appearing in print. His two children were drowned off Banff Links in 1919. A. J. Leigh B.Sc., was also on the staff and started a Meteorological Station in 1914 under the auspices of the Town Council and Duff House Trust. The station sent daily reports to the Meteorological Office in South Kensington, London. In 1916 he wrote a paper on *The Weather of Banff* in which he described a year's study of the local climate, comparing it most favourably with that of the South Coast of England. No doubt it was good for business! In 1920 he gave a paper on *The Cold Spell of November 1919* when, on November 12th, snow fell to a depth of 22 cms. (8½ ins.). On 14th November the temperature dropped to a minimum of 5°F. This reading does not compare, of course, with the -17°F. recorded at Braemar in 1895, but it must have been pretty cold for Banff!

Another member of Duff House staff was Oscar A. Marxer, a Dutchman, who gave a talk on X-rays. Mr. William Barclay, in his vote of thanks, referred to the fact that X-rays had been discovered by Röntgen in 1895. 'Holland was very generous then in giving away her discoveries, but he feared she was not so generous today in at least one of her exports'. (Laughter) Some time after 1920, Duff House became an hotel and I am indebted to Mr. Bob Millar for showing me

some old postcards of the Hotel in its heyday. These will be on show in the Museum in July 1980 along with other mementos of the period. During the last few years Duff House has been in the care of the Department of the Environment and it is gradually being restored to its former glory.

8. THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918

It might have been expected that the Club would falter during the War but, in fact, business went on much as usual although no excursions were held. John Malcolm Bulloch, editor of 'The Graphic', made many visits to Banffshire from 1907-37 and was President in 1914-15. He was, of course, the acknowledged authority on the House of Gordon and its many branches. At the joint meeting of the N.A.L.S.S. in Banff in 1914, Dr. Bulloch addressed the members on 'The Value of Howkin', a witty speech, full of interesting comments about educational methods. His conclusion was that the Club was doing for adults what schoolmasters were doing for children i.e. bringing them knowledge not only from a bygone age but encouraging them to look at the mysteries of the physical world all round them. The excursion after this meeting proved to be the last until 1920. The members, in a fleet of nearly a dozen swift motorcars, left Banff in a rain plump, and under lowering skies; ere the Slacks of Tippetry were reached, the sun shone out brilliantly. 'A pleasant stop was made in Aberchirder, where they admired the fountain, presented to the burgh by its first Provost, William Auchinachie on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and the Cottage Hospital, built and endowed by the liberality of Elizabeth Rose Innes of Netherdale. The party then moved on to Auchintoul House, occupied by Col. Morgan-Payler, who kindly allowed them to view the house, garden and grounds. At Huntly they were met by Miss Gray of the Brander Library and Mr. Kelly, Aberdeen, who showed them round Huntly Castle. The day was not yet over, for the party then travelled to Glass, where William Barclay gave some 'Flying Notes' on the Parish and on the old Church and Churchyard of Wallakirk. After visiting Beldorney House, the members went to the Cabrach, lunching at Milton of Lesmurdie with Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. Everyone must have been hungry after such a long morning! In the afternoon a paper on

the history of the Cabrach by Mr. Taylor was read by Miss Anderson. She records that in the early 19th century 'every house had its private still and that in one year alone, 80 people had been discovered to be engaged in illicit distilling, including an ancestor of John Yeats, secretary of the Club!'

From the Cabrach the party went to Auchindoune Castle and Mortlach Church, finally ending a long day at Balvenie House, where Major and Mrs. James Grant kindly provided tea. This excursion is described in the Transactions: 'Success will mark it as with a white stone in the annals of the Club'. Perhaps everyone was only too aware of the storm clouds gathering over Europe on that sunny day in July. Apart from his extensive writings on the House of Gordon, Dr. Bulloch did much 'howkin' into the histories of the old Banffshire Volunteer Regiments from 1798-1808. The Volunteers were first raised in 1794 but it was only from 1798 that the pay-rolls were preserved in the Public Record Office. Indeed Dr. Bulloch had to get special permission to examine them in April 1914. His paper of November 1914 contains the names of every man, from Officers to Privates, Surgeons to Drummers who enlisted during those years - all from Banff. His *Territorial Soldiering in the North East of Scotland 1759-1814*, published by the New Spalding Club (1914), contains lists of the Muster Rolls of the whole county. The Club published separately *The Gordon Highlanders and The Gordon Highlanders Peninsular Roll of Honour*, both attractively bound in Gordon tartan.

An expert on Folk-Lore, Rev. R.H. Calder of Glenlivet, gave some interesting talks between 1914 and 1922. In his paper on *The Brownie*, he tells of local superstition regarding this strange, yet helpful creature. It was said that many a 'trachled farmer's wife would be ever so thankful to have such a servant'. The last representative of the tribe lived evidently at the farm of Auchnarrow in the Braes of Glenlivet, and was called Meg Mholach, or Hairy Meg. She had the ability to conjure up kebbucks of cheese when unexpected visitors arrived! King James VI also had some words to say on the Brownie in his *Daemonology* of 1597, describing it as 'like a rough man, haunting divers houses without doing any evil, but doing, as it were, necessaries turns up and down the house'.

Mr. Calder's next paper was on *Fear't Places*, in which he describes the Greenmire between Ballindalloch and Tomintoul. He gives no reason for the terror inspired by this place but suggests that as it is almost certain that illicit distilling was carried out in the area of the Cartach Burn, it would have suited the smugglers to have the place regarded as 'fear't'. Most parishes seem to have similar stories. In 1929 Mr. Calder, then in Stonehaven, gave a gift of 100 guineas to the Club, £100 to be invested in Government Stock and the remainder to be used in defraying the cost of printing the Transactions; truly a most generous gift! The Club still has this Stock and over the years the interest has amounted to a tidy sum.

9. THE CLUB 1918 - 1939

After the War, some new names appear in the Transactions; William Adam, Morayhill, William Alexander, chemist, previously Provost of Banff, Rev. D. C. Mackay of Preshome and Dr. Alexander Grant, Medical Officer to Banffshire Education Authority. Mr. Adam wrote of James Wales, artist, whose painting of Banff hung in the Council Chamber, and followed this with a scholarly paper on *Silver and its Hall Marks* in which he traces the history of the silversmith with particular reference to craftsmen working in Banff from c.1670-1836, when the local Assay Offices were abolished, along with their distinctive Town Marks. The Town Mark of Banff varied according to the craftsman; the mark of William Scott in 1670 consisted of 'W.S.' and the letters 'ABC', but he also used 'Banf' as a mark. His son William used a fish about 1720, as did John Keith and an unknown maker, 'S.A.'. The Museum has a small quantity of Banff silver but we should welcome some larger pieces for our exhibition. Mr. Adam also showed the Alvah Quaich and a pair of Communion Cups made by William Scott.

William Alexander was President in 1919 and gave, as his retiring address, a talk on Scottish Ballads. The secretary, John Yeats, in his annual report in November 1920 remarked that one could not help wondering how, after 40 years as a member, he had not broken out into song before! However, after the meeting, Mr. Alexander delighted the members with a long discourse on *Scottish Dialect and*

Story. One example will suffice to show his pawkey sense of humour: 'A preacher going through the churchyard with one of his Elders after service remarked to him: "Wasn't it dreadful to hear the Laird snoring so loud during the sermon?" "Perfectly dreadful", was the answer, "he waukened us a' ".

Fr. D. C. Mackay of Preshome, in 1920, gave an informative talk on *The Bagpipe in Peace and War*, tracing its history from c 1000 B.C. where they were found carved on a Hittite slab by Professor Garstang, to ancient Greece and Rome. Chaucer's Miller could play the bagpipe: 'A bagpipe well could he blow and sound and therewithal he brought us to the town'. Rosslyn Chapel, built by the Earl of Orkney in 1446, has a figure of an angel playing the pipe, as has also Melrose Abbey. An old Dutch Missal in King's College, Aberdeen, has an illumination of an angel playing the pipe on the night of the Nativity. Queen Victoria set a hallmark on Scottish pipers by appointing Angus Mackay as her first piper in 1837, Fr. Mackay ends his talk with a history of the great McCrimmons, hereditary pipers to the MacLeods of Dunvegan. The Transactions do not state if the talk was illustrated!

Dr. Alexander Grant, in his first Presidential Address of December 1921, did give an illustrated talk on *Banffshire Composers of Strathspeys and Reels*, when 'two of the finest musicians in the North, James B. Paterson, Bracoden, on the piano, and James Henry, Macduff, violin, entertained the large company present'. Some readers may remember them. In his talk Dr. Grant mentions some little-known composers and performers. Everyone has heard of James MacPherson, hanged in Banff in 1700: some may even know the name of William Marshall of Fochabers (1748-1833), but has anyone heard of Isaac Cooper of Banff? Dr. Grant quotes the following interesting advertisement of 1783: 'Isaac Cooper, musician in Banff, returns his most grateful thanks to those who have employed him in the musical way, and begs leave to inform them that he still continues to teach the following instruments, viz.:- the harpsichord, violin, violincella (sic), psaltery, clarionet (sic), the pipe and taberer (sic), the German and Scots Flute, the Fife in the Regimental Style, the Hautboy (oboe), the Irish Organ Pipe and the Guitar'. Truly a remarkable musician. He is buried in the old Churchyard. He did, in

fact, compose many strathspeys and reels, among them 'Miss Forbes' Farewell to Banff', 'Lord Banff's Strathspey', 'Mrs. James Duff', etc. He published *30 New Strathspey/Reels for the Violin or Harpsichord*. The price was 2s. 6d. and they were sold by James-Imlach, Banff, bookseller, and also by Robert Bremner's shop in Edinburgh. Imlach may indeed have printed the book, as he seems to have been the same James Imlach of *The History of Banff*. Other composers mentioned by Dr. Grant are Robert Petrie, Charles Grant, (father-in-law of Dr. C. S. MacPherson, Rector of Banff Academy, 1902-24), James Paterson of Longmanhill, Alexander Walker of Rhynie, Fr. William Loggie of Buckie, William Martin, James Watt, Pennan, James S. Paterson of Longmanhill, William Chalmers of Gamrie, James Henry of Longmanhill and Macduff (one of the performers) and Rev. Fr. George Gordon of Dufftown. Needless to say, the votes of thanks to Dr. Grant, Mr. Paterson and Mr. Henry were given with enthusiasm.

In 1922 there was submitted an account of the building of Banff Bridge in 1774-80, designed by John Smeaton and built by James Kyle of Banff, ancestor of Bishop Kyle. (Who knows Kyle's Close in Banff?) The bridge was built to replace the structure which was carried away in the violent flood of 1768. This early bridge was built only in 1763-65. The new bridge cost £4548:14:11 and a considerable amount of rubble from a nearby quarry contributed 'to the smallness of expense for so large a building'. It was opened in 1780 and received its first severe test in the Muckle Spate of 1829 but stood firm. It was widened in 1881 and further strengthened when the new road was built. A stone with the date 1778 may still be seen on one of the parapets facing the sea. Smeaton's estimates and plans were given to the Museum.

1923 saw the appearance of Alistair N. Tayler of Glenbarry, an historian of national repute. His first paper was on Capt. John Urquhart of Craigston and the history of the family. John was born at Knockleith in 1696 and was educated possibly in Banff, as Mr. Tayler quotes a reference to his having 'escaped being crushed under a horse in a storm of snow, going to Banff in 1709'. He was 'out' in the '15' on the side of the Old Pretender, James Stuart, being at the Battle of Sheriffmuir. During his life he had many escapes from danger

ranging from being bitten by an otter in 1699 to a malignant fever in Naples in 1734. He was born into the Episcopalian Church but became a Catholic. His Lenten resolutions were severe and, if he adhered to them, he must have led a very upright life. He died, in 1756 and is buried in the family grave in King-Edward. Alistair Tayler went on to give many interesting lectures to the Club from 1923-37. His sister, Henrietta, helped him in many of his writings and together they wrote a book on *Banffshire Jacobites in the '45*. In 1926 Mr. Tayler talked to the Club on *Some Banffshire Jacobites*. The President, Sheriff John W. More, remarked that Mr. Tayler had to restrict his paper because, Banffshire being full of Jacobites, it was impossible to deal with them all!

Other papers dealt with *Some Banffshire Wives*, *The Lords of Banff*, *The Ogilvies of Boyne*, *The Gordons of Troup*, etc. After his death in 1937, his sister continued to write for the Club until 1939. Her last paper was on the *Abercrombies of Glassaugh*. I have been unable to trace her writings since then, perhaps some reader can help? Another well-known and well-remembered historian made his debut in 1925. Dr. W. Douglas Simpson, librarian of King's College, Aberdeen University, was a frequent visitor to Banffshire until 1960, when he led an excursion to Findlater Castle. He had made sketch plans of the castle in 1932, specially for the Club, along with Nigel Cowan. His first visit to Banff was at a Public Meeting in the Seafield Street Hall, when he spoke on *The Ancient Castles of Scotland*. In 1928 he returned to talk on a favourite subject, *The Penetration Lines of Christianity in Scotland*. While not denying the influence of Columban disciples in the North, he made strong claims for the recognition of Sts. Drostan, Colm, Fergus and Modan. In the same year, he was one of the speakers at the Joint Meeting of the Field Clubs from Banff, Buchan, Elgin and Deeside. I have a programme of that meeting in my possession and it makes interesting reading today. For example: 'The Aberdeen party will reach Inverurie by motor and thence continue to the Newton Stone, on which a description will be given by Mr. F. C. Diack'. Alas, Mr. Diack's interpretation of the strange writing on the Newton Stone has not been followed by any other historian and it still remains a mystery, or perhaps a 19th century hoax. Dr. Simpson spoke on the 'Maiden

Stone' near Pittodrie, now in the care of the Department of the Environment.

Mr. James Cruickshank spoke on *The Romans in the North East*. Dr. Simpson had very strong views on the Roman excursions in Scotland and held a very firm theory that the Battle of Mons Graupius was fought within sight of the battlefield of Culloden. Modern archaeologists place the battle near the Knock Hill but Dr. Simpson's theory remains as a good alternative. A detailed timetable of this excursion states that 'The exclusive charge for members without transport would be 2/6d'. The teas for chauffeurs were '1s. each'. The article is signed by J. F. Tocher of the Buchan Field Club, C. S. MacPherson of the Banff Club, A. Miller of the Moray Club and J. B. Philip of the Deeside Club. After his visit to the castles of Boyne and Findlater in 1932, Dr. Simpson came back in August to talk on Spynie Palace and Elgin Cathedral. His talk was not printed then but I have a photo-copy, kindly supplied by Aberdeen University, in his own handwriting. In 1933 Dr. Simpson led an excursion to Kildrummy Castle and, later in the year, to Auchindoir, Rhynie and Essie. On July 13th 1935, he led a most enjoyable outing to Rothiemay Castle, where a large company was welcomed by Col. and Mrs. Forbes and Miss K. Forbes, still a member of the Club. This was also the first occasion on which the re-discovered foundations of St. Drostan's Church were on view. During the afternoon, Dr. Simpson was presented with a case of Banff Silver teaspoons as a wedding gift. He returned to the Club each summer until the war and, in fact, the last meeting in August 1939 was an excursion to Dundargue Castle and Pitsligo Church and Castle, led by him. Tea was served at the Bellslea Hotel, Fraserburgh and, afterwards, the President, Sheriff John W. More, thanked Dr. Simpson for once again coming to the Club's annual outing and hoped they might all meet the following year. Dr. Simpson's reply provides a fitting end to 59 years of existence. He said that he came to the Club with a good deal of personal pleasure. 'The Club was a solid body. Year after year he saw the same faces and he respected the Club enormously for the valuable work it did in publishing its Transactions and bringing something of the wealth of places of historical interest in the North East to public notice'. In addition to the papers mentioned above, Dr. Simpson also wrote on the Castles

of Boyne, Findochty, Blairfindy, Drumin, Kildrummy and Balvenie and on the estates of Park and Carnousie. Most papers have detailed sketch maps or photographs and are still available today. May I end this tribute to Dr. Simpson on a personal note. I was privileged to attend his evening classes in Aberdeen University from 1950-55 and these classes were the highlight, not only of my week, but of that of many other amateurs in the fields of Archaeology and Local History. Every Tuesday, some 200 people attended his class, held in the Anatomy Theatre in King's College. The demand for seats was so great that one had to be seated by 7.10 p.m. Sometimes the smell from 'The Drain' was so great that students fainted in the gallery but Dr. Simpson continued as if nothing had happened. In the summer months, he led us on many excursions in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire. It was impossible not to be affected by his enthusiasm. His lectures were liberally illustrated by slides and sketch maps.

Sir Thomas Innes of Learney was a frequent visitor to the Club in the thirties and gave his first paper on *The Barony of Crommey, in Marnoch*. At that time Sir Thomas was Carrick Pursuivant to the Lord Lyon, King of Arms and a well-known expert on Heraldry, having published his *Scots Heraldry* the same year (1934). In his introduction, Sheriff More said that what Sir Thomas didn't know about 'lions rampant' and 'tigers couchant' and that sort of thing, wasn't worth knowing! He returned in 1935 to talk on *The Regality of Strathisla* and in successive years he dealt with *The Hays of Delgaty*, *The Old Mansion House of Edingight*, and his own Castle of Kinnairdy. His family had acquired the Castle in the 14th century, when Janet de Aberkerder, daughter of Sir David de Aberkerder of that ilk, married Sir Alexander Innes of that ilk. In 1704 the estate was sold to Thomas Donaldson of Elgin. A descendant of that family placed the estate on the market and it was bought by Patrick Duff of Hatton, who in turn passed it on to Lord Fife in 1705. It remained in Fife hands tenanted by Dr. Smith, and later, James Andrew of Chapelton and his daughter, Mrs. George Troup, until 1923, when it passed back into the family of Innes.

In 1923 Rev. Dr. J. J. McPherson of Forglen, following in the footsteps of Dr. Gregor of Pitsligo, many years before, delivered a paper on *Folk*

Beliefs in North East Scotland. In the course of his paper, he told of the 'burry man' in Buckie and Fraserburgh, who, 'dressed in a flannel shirt, covered with burrs, was carried through the town in a handbarrow (Buckie), and led on horseback in Fraserburgh!' This was supposed to improve the fishing, and according to Dr. McPherson, the custom may have reached our shores from overseas. On Hallowe'en, he states that in Aberdeenshire, lads went from house to house saying 'Gie's a peat t' burn the witches'. On the River Witches, he has this interesting saying: 'when Aberdeen F.C. play Heart of Midlothian, they throw coins into the river for good luck'. I wonder if Alex. Ferguson's players know of this old custom! Another popular belief was concerned with 'streaking the plough', when the plough was first put into the soil after the harvest. About an hour after the plough was at work the 'guid-wife', or principal female servant, proceeded to the field with bread, cheese and home-brewed ale or whisky. The salutation to the man between the shafts was 'Guid speed the wark', to which he replied, 'May Guid speed it'. The ploughman then partook of the cheese and ale and a piece of oatcake was given to each horse. In 1932 this custom was still known by some people. A similar ritual attends the Clyack sheaf in certain districts today.

At the end of 1932 Dr. McPherson wrote on *The Records of Forglen*, a paper of great merit. In 1933 he returned to read a long and interesting paper on *The Famine Years of 1693, 1700, 1741 and 1782*. The staple diet of the labouring classes in those years was porridge, milk or beer, sowens, kale and brose. The period from 1693-1700 was the worst on record and was spoken of as 'The Ill Years', 'The Hungry Years', or depending on one's politics, 'King William's Years'. It was said that people came from Angus to Moray to buy grain and oatmeal. In some parishes, the Kirk Sessions were authorised to allow the deserving poor who were able to walk, to go through the parish soliciting alms. An Act of Parliament in 1672 allowed the Church to issue badges of lead, brass, copper and even of cardboard to 'deserving paupers'. In Forglen, however, none received a badge to beg. During this period many Scots emigrated to America and the West Indies seeking a better life. During the bad year of 1782, for example, the snow began to fall on 15th September and 'the oats and barley (sic) ripened no more'. The Government came to the rescue in

1783, with two free consignments of meal, set free by the cessation of the American War and also provided large supplies of pease from the same source to save the people from famine. However, in spite of weekly distributions of food, hundreds died from starvation in the Highlands. Elgin Town Council, in 1783, accepted a loan of £500 from the Bank of Scotland to purchase corn for the inhabitants. According to Dr. McPherson there were some beneficent results from these famine years, viz. 'It almost stopped drunkenness', or, 'It caused a great diminution in illegitimate births'. As late as 1800, there was a disturbance in Macduff, caused by the high price of meal and the Volunteers were called out to maintain order at the Harbour, as the local pilots refused to take the meal-carrying vessel into the harbour. The four local Companies of Volunteers turned out but some men refused to serve and the Companies from Boyndie, Alvah and Forglen took their places and unloaded the vessel. For this, they were regaled with as much broth, beef and bread as they could eat for twopence - a feast indeed! The paper by Dr. McPherson was greatly appreciated by the members.

The last paper of note was contributed by George C. Jamieson in 1937, when he gave a history of *The Surnames of the North East*. At this time he was Principal Teacher of Classics in Banff Academy but was en route for the Rectorship of Mortlach High School. His long paper dealt with the history of surnames from the arrival of the Norman Barons in England, although the practice does not seem to have become widespread in Scotland until the 14th century. Apart from place-names, the earliest surnames in this part of Scotland are, Barclay, Hastings, Marshall, Lindsay, Hay, Melville, Pollock, Cumming and Gifford: these names were given in a Charter issued by William the Lion (1165-1214) and most of them are in the North East at the present time, Marshall is an occupational name, while Gifford ('big cheek') is a personal peculiarity. Mr. Jamieson's paper is of immense value to students of surnames. The appendix to his paper consists of a glossary of surnames found in the North East at that time.

10. THE BARREN YEARS 1939 - 1958

The meeting of the Club on August 1939 proved to be the last for a number of years; I cannot find the reason why the Club ceased

operations at the outbreak of the War. Presumably, the decision to disband¹ was taken by the Committee and I append their names in the hope that someone, somewhere may know the answer. The last AGM was held on January 24th 1939 and the office-bearers were: President - Sheriff J. More; Joint Secretaries - William Simpson and F. L. Braid, Mr. Braid also holding the post of Treasurer; ex-Provost J. R. Gordon, Miss Walker, Chapelhome, Miss Robertson, George Wilson, James Kessock, Procurator-Fiscal, William Adam and Miss Watson were members of the Committee. Messrs. Laurence Watt (Clydebank), William Barclay, Dr. Murray, Dr. Allan Mahood (Tiverton) and Dr. C. S. McPherson (former Rector of Banff Academy) were re-elected Vice-President. Laurence Watt died later in the year.

11. RE-FORMATION

On October 4th 1958, a public meeting was called in Cullen to form 'The Banffshire Society'. Membership rose quickly to 203 adults and 4 juniors. Papers and funds belonging to the Banffshire Field Club were handed over to the Society. After this inaugural meeting the members were shown round Cullen Old Church and Cullen House, led by Rev. J. T. Guthrie. The first AGM was held in Banff Academy on May 6th 1959. Office-bearers elected were: Chairman: Lt. Col. J. E. Cumming, Glenrinnes Lodge, Dufftown; Vice-Chairman: Rev. J. T. Guthrie and J.M. Simpson, Earhill, Banff; Hon. Secretary: James McNaught, (Director of Education); Hon. Organising Secretary: A.W.R.C. Huie and J.A. Brown of Rathven, Hon. Treasurer. Sir George Abercromby, Bart., Lord Lieutenant of the County was invited to accept office as Hon. President, and W. S. Duthie, M.P., Sheriff W.R. Walker, former President of the Field Club and Alexander Rattray of Burntreble were asked to accept office as Hon. Vice-Presidents².

A sub-committee was formed to discuss the details of 'The Banffshire

¹ *Field Club records show that members continued to pay subscriptions, so it is perhaps more accurate to describe the Club as having been suspended, rather than disbanded. (August 2015)*

² *The original text has inconsistencies in the titles given to some of these posts. Corrections have therefore been made in the name of consistency and to comply with the 1958 Constitution. (August 2015)*

Society Prizes' to be given for studies in botany, natural history and biology. By this, the Society hoped to encourage participation from the schools and so to attract more young people to join. A proposal was made to initiate a series of publications on the lines of the Field Club's Transactions, and also to prepare a Bibliography of books and papers relating to the county. An Index to the Transactions had already been prepared by Mr. A. Christie, County Librarian. By the end of 1960 it was reported that an offer had been received to print the 'Proceedings'. Several meetings and excursions were held that year and the Society was delighted to renew its acquaintance with Dr. W. Douglas Simpson of Aberdeen University when he led an excursion to Findlater Castle. There were interesting visits to Fordyce and an exploratory visit to Gauldwell Castle with Dr. Simpson to see if some 'digging' could be done. Indoors, the Society had talks from Miss A. S. Robertson of the Hunterian Museum Glasgow University, Mr. A. Scott of Scottish Malt Distillers, Elgin, followed by a visit to Ben Rinnes Distillery. Mr. J. Grant Roger gave a talk on *The Natural History of Southern Banffshire* and Dr. K. Walton, Aberdeen University, spoke on *The Geography of the Coastal Region of Banffshire*. He was to have returned in October 1961 to lead an excursion to Cullen, but fog prevented him from reaching the area!

Altogether, the Society had made a good start; membership was high and the Committee had gone to considerable trouble to arrange interesting lectures and outings. 1962 was described as the most active since the Society was formed and new ground was broken by a visit to Orkney, in association with Orkney Field Club. Ten meetings were held that year and a new feature was the appearance of mid-week outings, particularly to places of botanical interest where some field work could be done. Dr. Victor Gaffney, Edinburgh, led an excursion to Shielling sites at Inchrory. Dr. Gaffney had made a special study of the Tomintoul area and the Society was keen to print his *Guide to the Tomintoul area*.

In 1965 Col. T.R. Gordon-Duff was asked to accept office as President, on the death of Sir George Abercromby. Sheriff W. R. Walker and Alexander Rattray had also died but Sir William Duthie was still with

us as Vice-President³. During the summer of 1965 a joint meeting was held with the Deeside and Inverness Clubs, when they visited Elgin Cathedral, Pluscarden Priory (now raised to the status of an Abbey), and Birnie Church. This meeting had been postponed from 1964 because of the Typhoid epidemic. The same summer saw a visit to the 'dig' at Cullycan, led by Mr. R. Cairns and Mr. Colvin Greig. Some members took part in the excavations there for a number of seasons. In view of the successful re-birth of the Society, albeit under another name, it is sad to report that in 1966 the minutes cease abruptly. The last meeting on 25th June seemed to be successful; a draft programme was arranged for the following season and it was stated that there was enough material to begin publication of the 'Proceedings', including Dr. Gaffney's book. The Schools' projects were proving attractive to young people and it is difficult to find the real reason for the Society's sudden demise. Perhaps the retiral of Mr. James McNaught as Director of Education and secretary of the Society had a good deal to do with it. He became Secretary in 1958 and was tireless in his work for the Society during the next few years.

12. RENAISSANCE OF THE BANFFSHIRE FIELD CLUB

On Saturday 21st September, 1974, a public meeting was held in the Parish Church Hall Cullen, chaired by Rev. J. T. Guthrie. Approximately 80 people attended, for the purpose of deciding whether the Banffshire Society should be (a) dissolved or (b) revived in the same form that it had followed before or (c) transformed into a Field Club, with a shift of emphasis from "the social to the practical". Mr. K. Wood, Director of Extra-Mural Studies at Aberdeen University, addressed the meeting on the subject of Field Clubs and their aims. He identified six major functions of Field Clubs, which may be summarised thus: (a) the sharing of information on a regular and dependable basis, both within the local group and between groups of a similar nature; (b) the broadly based education of the public and visitors on natural and local topics; (c) the conducting of field work for research workers who hopefully, would make a contribution of specialist knowledge in return; (d) the provision of information and advice to those concerned with local planning; (e) help,

³ Posts variously described in the Minutes as Hon. President and Hon. Vice-President. (August 2015)

encouragement and the provision of outlets for both the gifted amateur and the young; (f) the preservation of local knowledge by the production of publications and the formation of local collections.

These aims agree more or less completely with the 1880 Constitution! During the discussion following Mr. Wood's talk, it was decided unanimously to form a group on the basis indicated above. There was some concern, as I recall, that the term 'Society' might denote that social class would enter into requirements for membership! However, on a show of hands it was decided to re-form as The Banffshire Field Club. After more than 90 years, the wheel had come full circle. The previous committee resigned and in their place were elected Rev. J. T. Guthrie, Chairman, Mr. G. McKenzie and Mr. E. Kellock, Vice-Chairman, Mr. R. A. Harris, Hon. Secretary, Mrs. J. E. Harris, Hon. Organising Secretary, and Mr. K. C. Sandison, Hon. Treasurer. The funds from the Society were transferred back to the Club. Over the next few years, the Club had many interesting talks and outings. We are fortunate in having 'gifted amateurs' like John Edelsten on Ornithology and Ted Kellock on Geology to lead the members on excursions and to give slide shows. One innovation has been the institution of Members' Nights, where people came along and showed something of interest. In 1975 a new constitution was drawn up and approved by the members. In the same year, Mr. and Mrs. Harris left the area and they were thanked for their excellent work. Mr. E. Herd, Keith, was appointed interim secretary and his appointment was confirmed at the AGM in 1976. During that year, the Club had a strenuous outing to the Ladder Hills from Glenlivet to Strathdon, a visit to the Culbin Sands, a walk from Inchrory to Loch Builg, a visit to the Agricultural Museum at Adamston, Huntly, and talks from Mr. D. McKay on *Collecting and Recording Marine Molluscs*, Mr. J.A. Baxter, Macduff on *Collecting Rubbish*, and a most interesting discourse from Mr. A. Fenton of The National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland on *Farming in the North East from the Early Days*.

Mr. Alan Meldrum, the new Chairman, was appointed in 1976, succeeding Mr. Ted Kellock, Knock. 1977 saw the usual full programme of talks, film shows and outings, arranged by Mrs. P. Gordon-Duff, organising secretary and well publicised by Mrs. Teddy

Milne, Press Secretary.

In April 1978 the Club was delighted to welcome members of the Inverness Field Club who spent a weekend at Cullen exploring the geology, botany and prehistory of the coast, led by Mr. Kellock who, together with Mrs. Kellock, provided a very welcome cup of tea on a very cold afternoon! It is hoped that the Club will pay a reciprocal visit to Inverness in the near future. Also in May, some members went to a weekend course at Tarradale House to study Seashore Animals and Plants and a visit to Castle Fraser was arranged by the Banffshire Coast Conservation Society. In August, a small party travelled to the Tore of Troup on a bitterly cold day, to see the geology and botany of this unusual part of Banffshire.

Away from the sea the weather was almost warm, but the party had to make a quick retreat as a bull was seen in an unfenced area and it was thought indiscreet to proceed farther! A walk from the Upper Cabrach down the Deveron Valley brought out the brave, as also did the outing to the Tap o' Noth in late August to see the remains of the vitrified fort and to pick blaeberrries. In September a joint meeting was arranged with Moray Field Club to view the excavations at Portknockie, led by Mr. Ian Ralston and Mr. Kellock. At the AGM on 25th November 1978, there was a small attendance, as the first snow of the winter had fallen! Mr. John Edelsten, Portsoy, was elected Chairman, Miss J.G.C. Scott, Enzie and Mrs. Priscilla Gordon-Duff, Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Alan Meldrum as interim organising secretary. A handsome donation was received from the President, Col. T.R. Gordon-Duff.

These notes bring the Club almost up to the present day, except for the history of the Transactions which deserves a separate paragraph. During the last few years, we have been most fortunate in our choice of venue for indoor meetings and the Club would like to thank Cullen Bay Hotel; the Institute, Keith; the Mill, Tynet; Banff Springs Hotel; Mr. and Mrs. John Edelsten, Portsoy; Mr. and Mrs. Herd, Keith; Mr. and Mrs. Meldrum, Keith and Mr. and Mrs. Sandison, Aberchirder, for their most kind hospitality.

13. THE TRANSACTIONS

As mentioned before, the Transactions came into being as a direct result of Thomas Edward's comments on the *Protection of Wild Birds Act* of 1880. Alexander Ramsay, editor of the Banffshire Journal for 62 years, and a keen member of the Club, undertook to print the accounts of the meetings and excursions in pamphlet form for free distribution to members. The expenditure account for 1880-1881 shows that £5.11s.6d. was spent on printing. James Spence, Secretary, in his report stated that the Transactions should provide 'a selection of the most valuable papers, bearing upon the physical, historical, literary and archaeological condition of the district'. Over the years, many thousands of pamphlets accumulated and they were eventually stored in the Reading Room of the Library in 1927. Complete sets from 1880-1926 had already been sent to the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, Aberdeen University Library, and to the Public Libraries in Aberdeen and Glasgow. These were also bound into a number of handsome volumes by the Banffshire Journal. With the cessation of the Club in 1939, the Transactions remained in the care of the Library until the Club was re-formed in October 1958, when they were transferred for safekeeping to James McNaught, the new secretary and Director of Education for Banffshire. On Mr. McNaught's retiral, the Transactions were removed to Cullen, in the care of Rev. John T. Guthrie, and eventually to Portsoy Library which had an extensive collection of books on local history etc. In 1976 the librarian, Mrs. Jean Wilson, suggested that the Club should remove the Transactions from Portsoy as re-organisation was imminent and a fear was expressed that they might disappear from Banffshire forever.

A Committee was formed consisting of Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. B. Williams, Portsoy, Miss J. G. C. Scott and Miss P. Buckton of Enzie, and Miss M. G. Anton of Banff, with the task of arranging and cataloguing all the material. It was daunting work, but a complete Index was prepared by early 1977 and sent to various libraries by the summer. The Club hoped to sell some of the extra papers, to provide funds for printing further Transactions. Within a few weeks orders began to pour in from all over the country. Libraries wished to have their collections up-dated and many Banffshire expatriates saw our advertisement in the Banffshire Journal. The Club was also fortunate in having the co-

operation of the national press and some monthly magazines so that within a short time orders were coming in from places as far apart as Jersey, Cardiff and New York. Some of the more popular items were quickly out of print but with the kind help of Banff and Buchan District Council, business was continued. One of our customers, Dr. J. A. Gibson of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Kilbarchan, kindly provided many copies free of charge, beautifully photocopied by Rank Xerox of Glasgow. Valuable help was also given by the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and Aberdeen City Library in providing missing copies. There are still copies available and we hope to have them on show in Banff Museum in July 1980.

14. THE CLUB 1979 - 1980

The AGM of the Club was held in Cullen Bay Hotel on Saturday 3rd November 1979 with Mr. John Edelsten, Portsoy, in the Chair. The Secretary, Mr. E.A. Herd, Keith, and the Treasurer Mr. C. S. Sandison, Aberchirder, submitted satisfactory reports and accounts of the year's activities. Preparations are now in hand for the celebration of our centenary in July 1980. After 100 years of existence, and notwithstanding a couple of breaks in 1939 and 1966, the Club is in good heart and looks forward with confidence to the future.

Monica Garden Anton,
Banff.
February 1980

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William Cramond.

James Imlach.

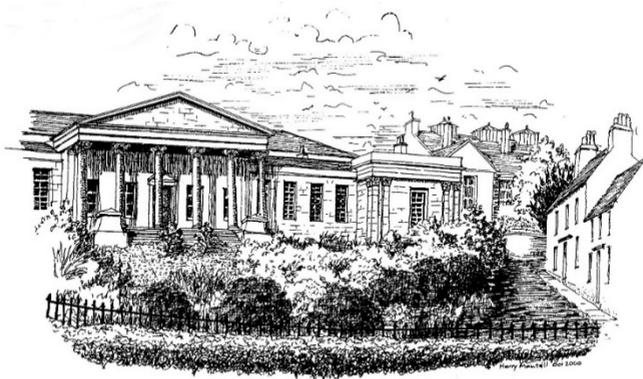
A. E. Mahood.

William Barclay.

THE BANFFSHIRE FIELD CLUB
1980 – 2015

A SHORT HISTORY UPDATE

Roy Milligan



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Ian Hamilton of Leopard Press for the photograph of Phyllis Goodall from her book of Doric poetry, *'There's been bonny days'*.

The *'Banffshire Churches'* book launch photo is used courtesy of Scottish Provincial Press, owners of the *'Banffshire Advertiser'* title.

John Rennie for help in tracing the above copyright holder.

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Sheena Thain for the photograph of the Bennachie outing.

David Fowler for the photograph of Harry & Kathy Hawkes.

1. 1980: CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

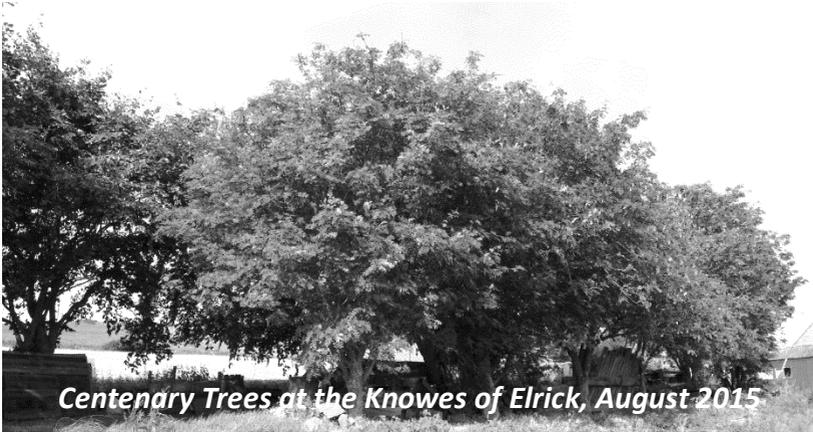
The preceding History of the Club was completed and printed in time for the Centenary Dinner in July and was published by the Museums Service of the North East of Scotland Library Service (N.E.S.L.S.). Printed in advance of some of the activities planned to mark the centenary, it falls upon this update to give a full account of the special events of that year. Some of the following details are taken from Monica Anton's report on the Centenary Celebrations.

The Centenary Year started on Thursday, 3rd April, when committee representatives, John Edelsten, Chairman, and Monica Anton, Vice-Chairman, met in the newly landscaped Duff House Gardens to



plant a single *Prunus Amanogawa* or 'Lombardy Cherry'. The location was made available by Banff & Buchan District Council with the assistance of Gil Carling, Director of the Leisure and Recreation Department, who also arranged for the tree's future maintenance. The planting was assisted by John Kinsella, Head Gardener.

Later in the month of April, 24 trees were planted by a work party led by Clifford Sandison, Treasurer, who had secured a plot of ground at



the Knowes of Elrick, close to the junction with the Cornhill to Aberchirder road. 12 rowans and 12 red oaks were planted and survive in only two rows, suggesting that some have been cut down to create a parking area between them. Just about half of the original trees remain. Sadly, they are now surrounded with an accumulation of timber and scrap metal.



The principal event was a Centenary Dinner at the Banff Springs Hotel on Friday, 18th July. Members came from Huntly, Rothiemay, Keith, Enzie, Dufftown, Portsoy, Cullen and Banff. The chairman, John Edelsten, welcomed the assembled company and introduced three guest speakers: Ms Jocelyn Chamberlain-Mole, Museums' Organiser of the N.E.S.L.S., who spoke on the role of the Museums Service in 1980; Sandy Gordon, former Provost of Banff, who gave a witty talk on 'A Boyhood in Banff'; and Ted Kellock, Vice Chairman, who spoke about the planned outing to Gamrie on the following day. This walk was arranged to re-enact the original 1880 excursion led by John Horne. In his talk, Ted mentioned his indebtedness to the writings of

John Horne, who was a founder member of the Club and an officer of H M Geological Survey. A sketch map of the proposed walk was drawn up by Ted and distributed to members. On the Saturday, members met at Gardenstown in beautiful weather and were led by Ted Kellock, Phyllis Goodall and John Edelsten. The walk took the party along the shore path to Crovie, observing interesting geological structures, a particular interest of Ted Kellock, and also the plant and bird life. Some members preferred a less strenuous walk and divided into groups to walk round the village and harbour. Unfortunately, a thick mist rolled in from the sea, obliterating everything in a few minutes. On the return of the party from Crovie it was decided to carry on with the original programme and visit the old Church of St John. Some brave souls walked along the shore and up the cliffs to



The old Church of St. John, overlooking Gamrie Bay

the Church, while others took cars round to the Den of Afforsk. Monica Anton gave a short history of the Church and Churchyard, the 'Bloody Pits' and the 'Danish' invasion.

It would not have been appropriate to celebrate the Centenary of founding of the Field Club without marking its long association with the Banff Museum. With the assistance of Jocelyn Chamberlain-Mole of the N.E.S.L.S., a special exhibition was arranged in the Museum for the summer months with contributions from members.

The outings that year, in addition to the Centenary event, included a walk to Melrose Bay, a walk between Scalan, Glenlivet and the Wells of Lecht, a walk from Drodland to Drybridge, and visits to Haddo House, and to Kinnairdy and Crombie Castles.

2. MEETINGS, OUTINGS and EVENTS

The long, narrow shape of the County of Banff suggests Keith as a centre of population and natural meeting place. For some years meetings were held in a variety of locations in an attempt to even out travelling but this led to some winter meetings in less than ideal surroundings, with the lack of heating often an issue. The Keith Community Centre, adjacent to Keith Grammar School, was finally chosen and proved to be ideal until increasing charges forced a move to the St Rufus Church Hall in Keith.

The monthly meetings have been the basis of Field Club activity since its foundation and the Club continues to meet on the second Saturday of the month, with the usual break in the summer. Since 1981 the Field Club has only had three Organising Secretaries, and following Phyllis Goodall's 16 years in the post, the organising of the annual programme of outings and meetings was taken over by Helen Hunter in 1997, and by Dr Alistair Mason in 2009. The Club is indeed fortunate in being able to enjoy an ongoing and very varied programme of talks and outings each year.



A well-attended Outing to Bennachie in 1988

Monica Anton, author of the 1980 Centenary History, is standing in the front row, just left of centre with glasses and darker hair.

Excursions in the 1980s were held each month from April to September. Locations visited during that decade included Fyvie, Huntly, Kildrummy, Balmoral and Craigston Castles. Activities varied from an ascent of Ben Rinnes, achieved by 8 hardy souls, and a 'tombstones evening' at Monymusk. Typical of the 'hands-on' approach at that time there was an outing to Alvah Cemetery to clean

the ancient monuments, an activity now rather frowned upon and best left to experts. Other walks included the Speyside Way, Glen Dullan, Bennachie, Loch Avon, and the Slackdale Nature Reserve. Talks covered 'Wild flowers', 'Heraldry', 'Watermills in the North East', 'Banffshire Bridges' and 'The Restoration of Beldorney Castle'. There was also the 'History of Grange Parish', 'History in the Grampian Landscape' and two slide shows given by Club members.

Committee discussions took place in 1984 proposing a competition in schools to promote verse in Scots. In 1989 there is the first mention in the Minutes book of the intention to publish Donald Findlay's book on '*Banffshire Churches*' that year, which was not achieved until 1994. That gap in time meant that none of the original sub-committee are featured in the book launch photograph shown on page 45. Two Club members produced many of the line drawings; Edwin Herd, Minutes Secretary in the early 1980s contributed two, and most of the remaining drawings were by Douglas Summers, a former Vice-Chairman. This proved to be a popular publication and has long since been sold out. Publication of a second edition of this book, updated by Alistair Mason, is planned for 2015.



'Fungi Foray' to Arndilly woods near Craiggellachie in Sept 1991. Led by Robert Gifford (left)

The first half of the 1990s saw Phyllis Goodall continue with a varied programme to such locations as Pluscarden Abbey, distilleries in Glenlivet, Beldorney, Duffus and Gordon Castles, Spynie Loch, Glenlivet Estate Office, Ballindalloch Castle and Towie Barclay, the

latter apparently visited twice in the Club's founding year of 1880. There was a walk from Whitehills to Portsoy, another ascent of Ben Rinnes and a search for fungi near Craigellachie (illustrated). Indoor meetings were equally varied and included Dr Allan speaking on the origin of place-names from his book 'The Celtic Heritage of the County of Banff', Captain Mair on his seagoing travels, with John Rennie providing videos of outings and events at the October AGMs. Guest speakers covered the 'Romans in N. E. of Scotland', 'Aspects of Trees', the 'Life Cycle of the Honey Bee', 'Hill Forts in Grampian', 'Moths & Butterflies', Dr. Bill Hossack spoke on 'The Salt of the Earth' and 'Order out of Chaos', with Elizabeth Beaton giving the first of two talks on Buildings in Banffshire.

After 16 years as Organising Secretary, Phyllis Goodall handed over to Helen Hunter in 1997 after completing that year's programme. Helen arranged a varied programme over the next 12 seasons until 2009, with visits to Leith Hall, the Barnyards of Findlater, Brodie Castle, Elgin Biblical Garden, the Buckie Drifter, Rothiemay, the Keith & Dufftown Railway, Fyvie Castle and Elgin Museum. The Club also visited Pitullie Castle, and Blackhill Garden in Lhanbryde, purchased by the retired tea-planter Thomas Christie. Members also tried dowsing at Knock farm. Talks covered 'The Hays of Rannes' and 'Fiddle and Violin Construction', 'Elgin Reptiles', 'N. E. Scotland in the '45', 'Enzie', 'The Speyside Way', 'Banff Museum', 'Building Traditions and Traditional Buildings' and 'The Work of the Boyndie Trust'. Marion Nagahiro gave two talks in 1988 on 'N E Stone Circles' and the 'Picts and the early History of Banffshire'. Club members contributed with Isobel Shanks and Phyllis Goodall both giving talks on the Cabrach, and Caroline Leggat gave an illustrated talk on a 'Journey to the South Pole'.

In 2003 a new Constitution for the Club was introduced to comply with the stricter controls on Registered Charities issued by the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). The financial year was altered to begin on 1st January, with the AGM moving from October to April from 2004 onwards.

On 20th September 2005, the Club celebrated the 125th anniversary of its founding with a lunch at the Banff Springs Hotel. Chaired by our Convener, James A S McPherson, CBE, FSA Scot, JP, there was an

audio-visual presentation, 'Tribute to Thomas Edward', by Dr David Findlay Clark, OBE, DL, who also showed his film about the 'Blackpots Tile Works' at Whitehills, sadly demolished by 1979.

In 2008, the Field Club received the very generous sum of £1,000 from the estate of Club member and former committee member, Dr Mary Martin, who had died in 2006. After some discussion about how best to use this bequest, it was decided to purchase a digital projector,



laptop and screen for the use of speakers at meetings. This equipment replaced the Club's slide projector and is able to provide up-to-date facilities for our guest speakers, plus the ability to show videos of local interest in digital format.

Also in 2008, the Field Club was invited to contribute a short article for the Banff Preservation and Heritage Society's '*Book of Banff*'. This article was written by our Publications Secretary, Caroline Leggat, who provided an excellent summary of the Field Club's history and activities. Included was the photograph on page 38 of the outing to Arndilly Woods near Craigellachie on a search for fungi, led by Robert Gifford, then a senior pupil at Banff Academy.

In 2010, Moray Council raised the charges substantially for the Keith Community Centre and new premises were sought. In 2011 the Field Club moved to the St Rufus Church Hall in Keith. That move also meant that we had control over the provision of tea and biscuits, and the Club owes a great debt to both of the Mrs Milnes and others for

efficiently providing that service at minimum cost and with considerable savings compared to the previous arrangement. During two bad winters meetings had to be cancelled, and it was decided to delete the January meeting and compensate by bringing forward the first meeting from October to September. The current programme consists of indoor meetings in the calendar year from February until the AGM in April, and then from September to December.

Although assuming Office from Helen Hunter in 2009, Dr Alistair Mason inherited a programme already arranged for that year. Alastair has successfully continued to maintain the high standards achieved by his predecessors in what the author considers to be a very demanding committee post. From 2010 outings were arranged for the Speyside Cooperage, the Falconry Centre near Huntly, Castle of Park, Fordyce, Cullen, Glenglassaugh Distillery and Marnoch Old Kirk. Knockando Woolmill was visited twice as the restoration of this

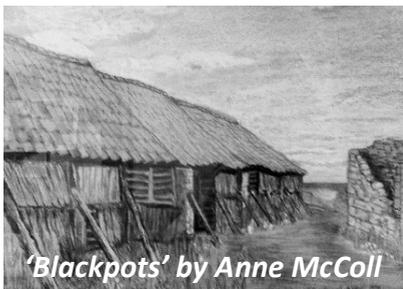


very rare woolmill had not quite been completed on our first visit in 2012. This was remedied in 2014 with a repeat visit with the machinery in place and in working condition. Indoor meetings covered the usual wide range of interesting topics such as 'Herring Lassies', 'Volunteering in Nepal', 'Charlie the Smithy', The Moray Burial Ground Research Group, 'The Keith & Dufftown Railway', 'Deskford', 'Clocks' and 'The New Testament in Doric' amongst others. A slide show entitled 'A South American Journey' given by Helen Hunter's daughter, Nicola, was the last meeting that Helen felt able to attend before her untimely death within the following year.

In recent years, only two outings take place between May and July.

Rising transport costs have resulted in subsidies to keep the cost of coach outings to acceptable levels. To comply with the Charity Regulators guidelines on charity expenditure, outings are now 'Educational Field Trips' in the spirit of the original excursions described in many of the Transactions.

In 2014, the 200th anniversary of Thomas Edward's birth was marked by a wreath-laying ceremony at his grave in Banff cemetery during the May outing. There was also an unveiling at the Boyndie Centre of a pastel drawing of the now demolished Blackpots Tile Works, Whitehills.



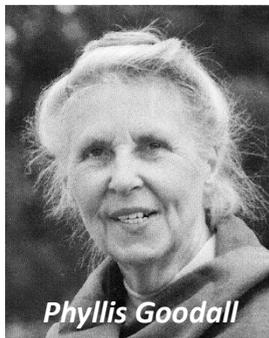
This 1976 picture by local artist Anne McColl, a former art teacher at Banff Academy, was gifted to the Field Club on condition that it was displayed at a location accessible by the public. The Boyndie Centre was suggested by our then Convener, Jimmy McPherson, and the picture now hangs at the entrance to the restaurant.



For the 2015 season, the June field trip visited the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at Chapeltown of Glenlivet with its beautifully preserved interior. The bus then took the party within a mile of the former Catholic seminary at Scalan, the origin of a walk in the Club's centenary year to Glenlivet and the Well of Lecht; walks are now certainly less ambitious. High tea was in Tomintoul. The July field trip

was again by bus, this time to the Highland Folk Museum in Newtonmore, with high tea at the 'Wee Puffin' in Grantown-on-Spey, returning down Glen Avon.

3. NOTABLE COMMITTEE MEMBERS SINCE 1980



In 1981, Phyllis Goodall was elected as Organising Secretary, continuing for 16 years until 1996. The photo of the Bennachie outing on page 37 gives a hint of the organising required during this period. Phyllis subsequently served as Chairman and Vice Chairman for 5 and 6 years respectively, Minutes Secretary for 2 years and Committee Member for 3 years, giving a remarkable total of 32 years to the Club.

In 1990 Monica G. Anton became the first recorded Publications Secretary, responsible for the Transactions archive and Club Library. Miss Anton had already been instrumental in keeping the Club's archive material intact after it had been stored in different locations and survived two breaks in the life of the Club. Monica wrote the former part of this history of the Club for its Centenary in 1980. She held the Office of Publications Secretary for 10 years until 2000, Chairman for 1 year, Joint Vice Chairman for the previous 6 years and Committee Member for 4 years, a total of 21 years.

After Monica's death in 2000, Caroline Leggat continued to deal with Transaction sales and the Club library as Publications Secretary for 9 years until 2008, with great thoroughness and enthusiasm. Caroline was also Minutes Secretary for 6 years, Joint Vice-Chairman for 3 years and Committee Member for a further 5 years, totaling 23 years.

Another notable long-serving committee member was Helen Hunter, taking over from Phyllis Goodall as Organising Secretary for 12 seasons from 1997 to 2008. Helen continued to make all of the arrangements with speakers for indoor meetings and for the two summer outings with great efficiency and attention to detail. She continued with a further 3 years as a Committee Member.

Mention should also be made of the service given by Miss J Cairns, Treasurer for 12 years and Mr K C Sandison, Chairman for 3 years and Treasurer for 3 years. Mrs K Whiteford served as Treasurer for 8 years. Mr J McPherson CBE., was our Convener for 5 years and with his legal

background, re-drafted our Constitution in 2003 to comply with the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator. Dr N Allan was Vice Convener for 7 years with a further 7 as an Ordinary Committee Member. Other Office Bearers serving for 3 or more years were Mr J Edelsten, Mr E Kellock, Captain A Mair, Mr J Rennie, Miss K Scott, Mr D Summers, Mr A Meldrum, Mrs Jaffray, Miss M Greig, Mrs D Gray, Mrs S Thain, Mr J Philip, Mr E A Herd, Mr G Swann and Miss M Grant. The post of Honorary President fell vacant on the death of Col. T R Gordon Duff in 1987. A proposal to appoint Capt. Flett in that role was not fulfilled due to his death shortly afterwards.

Due to the adoption of an amended Constitution, the posts of Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively became that of Convener and Vice Convener from 2003 onwards.

Kathy Hawkes became Minutes Secretary in 2006, serving diligently for 8 years until 2013 when Liz Jones willingly agreed to take over. In 2010 Harry Hawkes was elected Convener after serving as Treasurer since 2006, the latter post combined with his Convener's role until Alison Smith agreed to become Treasurer despite her many other commitments. Harry continues to ably serve the Club as Convener and has made a valued contribution to keeping the Field Club active.

At the 2015 AGM, a proposal was made to award Honorary Life Membership to Phyllis Goodall and Caroline Leggat, the only two survivors of the four long-serving members mentioned above. This recognition of their great contribution and commitment to the Field Club over so many years was approved by an appreciative committee.

Over many years, these dedicated Office Bearers and committee members have ensured that the finances of the Club are in a healthy state and sufficient to consider supporting the publishing projects described in the following chapter. Mention should also be made of the many individuals, who as certified accountants, or with financial qualifications and experience, have freely given up their time to audit and approve the Field Club's accounts for each AGM.

4. PUBLICATIONS

The Publications archive consists of the papers read at Club meetings and known as the Transactions. They were published between 1880



Launch of 'Banffshire Churches'.

***Standing: Dr Mary Martin, John Rennie,
Caroline Leggat; Seated: Kate Scott,
Captain Alexander Mair (Chairman)***

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and 1939 and originally distributed free to members. In 1994, the Club undertook the publication of *Banffshire Churches* by Donald Findlay which is now out of print. It has been felt for some time that there was scope for the Field Club to both re-publish existing work and to re-issue collections of related Transactions as a way of making better use of our archive material. Field Club funds are also quite adequate, along with other sources, to assist in the printing of suitable new publications, as the high cost of low volume print runs is a major barrier to individual authors. Their considerable

research material can then be made accessible to a much wider audience. In 2014 a sub-committee of four members was formed with John Aitken as co-ordinator to look at the possibilities.

The options identified were:

1. Re-publishing existing books such as *Banffshire Churches*;
2. Re-issuing selected Transactions of related subjects;
3. Publishing new or existing work from members, or others;
4. Publishing some of the extensive material from Wm. Cramond, a former school teacher at Cullen and contributor of many excellent Field Club Transactions.

5. THE ARCHIVE and INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The printed Transactions of the Field Club are only offered for sale if there are more than 3 copies of the title in the archive - some only exist as a few photocopies and some are completely missing. In 2010, the Publications Secretary started the process of digitally scanning and re-printing Transactions where there were less than three in the archive, or from bound copies when they were missing. On receipt of an order for a copy, the original paper is scanned and then processed by optical character recognition ('OCR') software which produces an editable text file. Any existing errors can be corrected, and the small 7pt font of the originals increased to between 10pt & 11pt, which is much easier to read. The digitized Transaction can then be re-printed in A5 format and in-house. At 1st August 2015, the number of previously out-of-stock Transactions available for re-printing and sale is in excess of 80. Income is modest and does not reflect the time spent on this process. However, once created, these Transactions are easily reprinted and made available on-demand.

The Club currently has a website which was designed and implemented using 'Google Sites'. This arrangement does not incur any web hosting charges, but it cannot accept online sales. As the website remains our main source of orders for Transactions, this is one area which requires development to enhance any overseas sales of Transactions and for sales of any new publications.

Although complete sets of bound copies of the Transactions remain on loan in Banff Library and the Moray Council Local Heritage Centre in Elgin, there are no complete bound sets held in the Club archive. However, following a listing on an online auction site in 2012, four bound volumes of the Club's Transactions were purchased for £100 covering the period 1903-1914. Banff Preservation and Heritage Society has a similar, but complete, set of bound copies which belonged to Wm Barclay, editor of the Banffshire Journal. It is hoped that a complete bound set will become available in the future and allow the Club to add to the archive material.

6. THE FUTURE

Membership over the past 10 years or so has rarely exceeded 30 members and during his five years in office, Jimmy McPherson's AGM Convener's Report usually included an appeal for each existing member to introduce one new member. The Field Club is in the same position as many other Clubs and Societies of all types; the lack of younger members to compensate for those loyal members we lose over the years. The Club has always been fortunate in having enough members willing to offer to serve on committee and to do their best to ensure that the Club has a viable future. Attendance at talks and outings is also encouraging despite a membership at the time of writing of just over 20. The lack of numbers is always compensated for by the keen interest and enthusiasm shown by our members.

Roy Milligan,
Publications Secretary,
Banff.

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