

ABERDEEN CITY AND SHIRE

Routes to your North East Roots:

Researching Family History in Aberdeen City and Shire





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Getting Started

Part of the fun of tracing your family history lies in exploring all the many and varied sources of information that are available. Knowing where to find these sources is also half the battle!

To build up a full picture of your family history and to understand the communities and times of which your ancestors were a part, you will have to investigate a number of different research avenues.

The purpose of this guide is to give you an initial steer on this journey, acting as a directory to the organisations and institutions in the City of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire which hold original records or secondary sources of information that you may find useful in the quest for your ancestors.

Interspaced with the directory entries are five 'ancestral stories'. These have been written using the original sources held at some of the repositories that feature in the directory. All of them have a common theme of travel, particularly appropriate in this Year of Homecoming.

If you are visiting the north east of Scotland to research your family history, we recommend that you do as much preparatory work as you possibly can. This will allow you to get the most out of your visit.

Take the time to gather facts about your ancestors - names, dates, places, relationships, occupations, for example. Search out any birth, marriage or death certificates held by family members, as well as family records such as diaries, school reports and photographs.

These are the key facts that will help signpost you to further useful sources. Always note where you found information as you may want to go back and ask again. Try to put all the information you have gathered in the form of a small family tree so that you can sort out various relationships in your own mind.

This booklet is also available online at: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/familyhistory/registrars.asp



Aberdeen City Council, Registration Office for Births, Deaths and Marriages

**St. Nicholas House,
Upperkirkgate, Aberdeen AB10 1BA**
Search Room: (01224) 522033
Email: searchroom@aberdeencity.gov.uk
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk

Monday to Friday: 09:30am-16:30pm
(Closed 12:30-13:30 for lunch).

To guarantee an appointment, it is always advisable to book at least 2 days in advance. If you are traveling any distance, we recommend booking at least a week in advance to avoid any disappointment.

- » Access to birth, death and marriage registers for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Kincardineshire.
- » Computerised access to all registration documents for the whole of Scotland from 1855 to the present date.
- » Computerised access to the Old Parochial Registers of births and marriages from 1553 to 1854 covering the whole of Scotland.

The Aberdeen City Registrar's Office at St Nicholas House, Upperkirkgate, offers family history searches from Monday to Friday. An Assistant Registrar is available to assist searches but an appointment is essential as space is limited. The cost is £10 per person per hour plus £5 for computer access (optional). Bookings should be made by calling the searchroom number shown above.

Aberdeenshire Council Registration Offices for Births, Deaths & Marriages

Aberdeenshire Registrars can offer you help and advice on tracing your Scottish ancestry.

At our computerised full-time offices, Registrars have access to the indexes and digital images of:

- » All Scottish births, deaths and marriages since the start of registration in 1855
- » Census records from 1841 to 1901
- » Old Parish Records
- » Burial records in Aberdeenshire are held by some of our Registration Offices and by Landscape Services, Gordon House, Inverurie

The fee is £10.00 per hour and the Registrar will conduct the search one to one with their customer. This allows customers access to registration records and due to a local agreement with the Burial Grounds Service this may include a search in the burial ground records where these exist locally.

Copies of scanned images of historical records can be purchased for 50p each. The definition of "historical records" constitutes births that occurred over 100 years ago, marriages over 75 years, deaths over 50 years, census records and Old Parish Record's. Recent records can be viewed when searching in the registrars and the information written down, but should you wish to purchase an extract then the cost would be £9.00 each.

Aberdeenshire Council Registration Offices for Births, Deaths & Marriages

ABOYNE (Full-time)

t: (01339) 886109

e: aboayne.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

ALFORD (Full-time)

t: (01975) 562421

e: alford.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

BALLATER (Appointment only)

t: (01339) 755535

BANCHORY (Full-time)

t: (01330) 822878

e: banchory.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

BANFF (Full-time)

t: (01261) 813439

e: banff.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

BRAEMAR (Appointment only)

t: (013397) 41349

ELLON (Full-time)

t: (01358) 720295

e: ellon.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

FRASERBURGH (Full-time)

t: (01346) 513281

e: fraserburgh.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

HUNTLY (Full-time)

t: (01466) 794488

e: huntly.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

INSCH (Appointment only)

t: (01464) 820964

INVERURIE (Full-time)

t: (01467) 628011

e: inverurie.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

MAUD (Full-time)

t: (01771) 613667

e: maud.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

PETERHEAD (Full-time)

t: (01779) 483244

e: peterhead.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

STONEHAVEN (Full-time)

t: (01569) 768360

e: stonehaven.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

TURRIFF (Full-time)

t: (01888) 562427

e: turriff.registrar@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

General Contact Information

Email: registrars@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Web: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/familyhistory/registrars.asp

Birth, Marriage and Death Records Before 1855

Prior to 1855 family history becomes more of a challenge as the records become increasingly patchy and you will need to cast your net wider to find the information you are looking for.

Before Civil Registration became law, most records of baptisms, marriages, proclamations and burials were made in registers of the local Church of Scotland parish church. The Old Parochial Registers (OPRs) relating to Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire have been microfilmed and the main local libraries have copies of these films relating to the whole area, as does the Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society. All local Registration Offices also have access to digitised images of the OPRs as well as indexes for baptisms and marriages for Scotland. Digitised versions can be accessed online at www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk

The International Genealogical Index (IGI), available on microfiche, is also useful for helping to identify relevant records in the OPRs.

For deaths before 1855, again use the OPRs for the appropriate parish, however it is worth noting that death entries before 1855 give little or no genealogical information.

For the non-established Church denominations: Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Protestant Non-Conformists (Free Church etc.), Society of Friends or Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists and Unitarians. Many of the records (and/or photocopies) are held at the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh although it is worth checking with Aberdeen City Archives and Aberdeen University as some of these records are held locally.

Birth, Marriage and Death Records After 1855

1855 is a key date for genealogists tracing their Scottish roots, as this year saw the introduction of civil registration of births, marriages and deaths as a legal requirement.

All of the local Registration Offices in Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire also have computer access to the birth, death and marriage records for the whole of Scotland from 1855. All of the offices will be pleased to supply certified copies of relevant records for a small fee. Alternatively you can visit one of the Registrar's offices to utilise their facilities and access the records from there. The Registrar will assist you with your search but do please book an appointment beforehand.

Online access to birth, marriage and death certificates is also available at www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk for which there is a charge. Access is restricted to births that took place over 100 years ago, marriages over 75 years ago and deaths over 50 years ago. Vouchers providing discounted access to scotlandsppeople are available from Public Libraries.





Census Records

Census returns can be a treasure-trove of information as they record the entire household at a given address along with their occupations, the relationship to the head of the household and their place of birth. While censuses have taken place every ten years from 1841 (with the exception of 1941) there is a one hundred year closure period on these records so those that are available span the period 1841 -1901. These are available on microfilm and are held at all the main libraries and at the Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society. All local Registrars also hold digital images of census records and again, you can access digitised versions online at www.scotlandspople.gov.uk

Other Records & Sources of Information

Records of births, marriages and deaths coupled with the census returns will hopefully provide you with an outline of your family tree. If you want to put flesh on this skeleton, however (as well as finding a few “skeletons in the closet”, perhaps) it will be necessary to explore the many other sources of information that are available.

The North East of Scotland is fortunate in having a number of excellent museums, archives, local studies centres and voluntary organisations that are run by knowledgeable staff who are happy to advise you with your research.

These repositories, their contact details and a brief guide to their holdings are listed in this booklet: some, like the Gordon Highlanders’ Museum and the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses, have their own special area of interest while others, such as Aberdeen City Archives, hold material dating back many centuries, drawn from a wide variety of sources.

Aberdeen & North East Scotland Family History Society

158-164 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 5BD

Tel: (01224) 646323

Email: enquiries@anesfhs.org.uk

www.anesfhs.org.uk

Monday to Friday, 10.00am to 4.00pm, Saturday, 9.00am to 1.00pm

Tuesday & Friday, 7.00pm to 10.00pm

Closed on local and public holidays



The Society, founded in 1978, has a large and well-equipped research centre. Among the sources available for family history are:

- » Old Parish Registers on microfilm.
- » 1841-1891 censuses for all Scottish parishes, and some for 1901.
- » Eight networked computers have quick links to the main Internet genealogy sites
- » A library containing around 5,500 titles relating to local and genealogical history.
- » Bookshop open to the public.
- » Friendly and knowledgeable volunteer staff members are always on hand to guide new researchers in their first steps.





Aberdeen City Archives & Aberdeenshire Archives

Town House, Broad Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1AQ

Tel: (01224) 522513

By prior appointment: Wednesday to Friday, 9.30am to 4.30pm

**Old Aberdeen House,
Dunbar Street, Aberdeen, AB24 3UJ**

Tel: (01224) 481775

**By prior appointment:
Monday to Wednesday,
9.30am to 4.30pm**

Email: archives@aberdeencity.gov.uk

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives



Aberdeen City Archives provides public access to historical records relating to Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire at its Town House and Old Aberdeen search rooms. Among the sources available for family history are:

- » Burial records for the main city cemeteries before circa 1900 (Town House).
- » School records including admission registers for almost 500 schools in the North East of Scotland (Old Aberdeen House).
- » Poor relief records including applications from individuals for support, covering the counties of the North East (excluding Aberdeen City) circa 1845-1929 (Old Aberdeen House).
- » Church records for the 'City churches' of the Church of Scotland, many of the congregational churches and a number of Episcopalian and Methodist congregations in both the City and Shire.
- » Electoral Rolls, with gaps, for the City and other counties in the North East of Scotland (Town House and Old Aberdeen House).
- » Tax Lists listing inhabitants of the Burgh of Aberdeen from 1795-1860 (Town House).
- » Valuation Rolls listing properties and inhabitants of Aberdeen City and the other counties of the North East, with gaps, from 1855 – 1989 (Old Aberdeen House).

Emigrants



“Sailed today on Allan Liner “Numidian””

This is the way that a chapter in many a Scots life would have ended and a new one abroad would have begun – travelling on a ship to a new country. Places like America, Australia and

New Zealand offered many Scots an escape from poverty, and a fresh start with the promise of new opportunities and the chance to make their fortune.

Elspet Jane Niddrie’s story is not a typical one, even though her new life started with a steamship journey that had been taken by many thousands of people before her. When she sailed for the United States of America in 1912 she was only 4, and left behind her a dying mother and an adult half-sister who was unable to care for her.

As her mother’s illness had progressed it must have become clear to the Parish Council dealing with the case that a more lasting decision needed to be made for Elspet’s future. The natural solution was for the child to be sent to her aunt, Jane Lemmon (née Niddrie) who had emigrated to the USA with her husband in 1904. But first the Council had to get her agreement.

It was probably at this time that Elspet’s photograph was taken so that a copy could be sent to her aunt with the request to adopt her niece. Another copy was stuck into the Register of the Poor, allowing us to put a face to the name in the record of her case.

Looking at her smartly dressed image there is no hint of Elspet’s background or the reasons behind the photograph being taken. It would be easy to assume that she had no cares in the world if the photo were not included within her Poor Relief record.

Whether it was the photograph, Elspet’s circumstances, or the fact that she was family, something persuaded her aunt to agree to the Parish Council’s request. And so this chapter in Elspet’s life ended with the Inspector of the Poor writing in her record

“20 November 1912 Passage paid to Boston USA and sent to Aunt...sailed today on Allan Liner “Numidian””

There is no record of whether Elspet ever returned to Scotland, or whether she ever met her half-sister, Margaret, again. Her mother, Sarah Niddrie (née Lynch) eventually passed away in 1914, followed 16 years later by her half-sister Margaret. Elspet herself appears in the USA Federal census of 1920 with her aunt’s family in Massachusetts, but does not appear there under the name of Niddrie or Lemmon in any later censuses.

We can only hope that her life continued with better fortune than it had begun with.



Aberdeen City Libraries – Local Studies

**Central Library, Rosemount Viaduct,
Aberdeen, AB25 1GW**

Tel: (01224) 652512

Email: localstudieslibrary@aberdeencity.gov.uk

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ACCI/web/site/Libraries/NS/Lib_localstudies.asp

Monday & Wednesday, 9.00am to 8pm

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 9.00am to 5pm

The Local Studies Department provides both current and historical information on all aspects of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Banffshire and Kincardineshire. Family history sources include:

- » Old Parish Registers of baptisms, marriages and deaths up to 1854
- » Census Returns from 1841 to 1901
- » International Genealogical Index of births, christenings and marriages for Scotland
- » Monumental Inscriptions and Burial Records for various churchyards
- » Transcripts of a number of Episcopal Church records
- » Aberdeen Post Office Directories from 1824 to 1982
- » Parish and local histories, biographies and family histories
- » Local newspapers dating from 1747 to the present day
- » Historical photographs including buildings, streets and harbour scenes
- » Maps of Aberdeen from 1661 to the present day; current and historical Ordnance Survey maps
- » Electoral registers (with gaps) for Aberdeen from 1909, Aberdeenshire from 1918 and Kincardineshire from 1953
- » Valuation rolls (with gaps) for Aberdeen from 1965, Aberdeenshire from 1859, Banffshire from 1877 and Kincardineshire from 1862
- » Free access to the Ancestry Library Edition website
- » Sale of discount vouchers for the Scotlandspeople website
- » Historical postcards of the city



“To Mak’ a Brig”



In May 1926, nine-year old Ruby Grant, her brothers and parents, William and Annie Grant, left Aberdeen Joint Station for Liverpool to board the SS Pakeha which would take them to Sydney.

Grant and eight other stonemasons had been recruited on highly attractive 5 year contracts to help prepare the granite masonry for the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Ruby’s family was headed for Moruya, a small township 200 miles south of Sydney, where Middlesbrough-based Dorman, Long and Company, the bridge contractors, had opened up a quarry to supply the granite for the bridge’s pylons. The Moruya enterprise constituted a substantial proportion of the bridge’s estimated cost, but John Bradfield, the Australian engineer and driving force behind the bridge’s construction, wanted pylons, and wanted them made of granite.

When the Grants reached Moruya, they must have felt at home: the management team which had been in place since early 1925 was very much an Aberdeenshire affair: for example John Gilmore, the quarry manager, was from Harthill near Kemnay. Dorman Long provided a temporary township of 70 wooden houses, two blocks of bachelor accommodation, a shop and post office, a recreation hall, and the New South Wales Education Department built a school.

‘From the moment I saw the place, I knew I was going to love it,’ wrote Ruby of her first sight of ‘Granite Town’. Not so her mother!

As she gazed at the paraffin lamp with tears in her eyes, she exclaimed, *‘What have we come to?’*

For the next 5 years William Grant and his fellow masons dressed blocks of granite to drawings outlined by the masons’ foreman, Bill Morrison.

Each piece was numbered to help the masons up in Sydney.

The Grants bought a camera to record their time in Australia, and fifty years later, Ruby wrote a wonderful book of her experiences, *Granite Town Memories*, a copy of which is at the Aberdeen City Library. Picnic outings, sawing wood, treks into the bush, Australia’s unusual flora and fauna, swimming at Moruya Heads, school days: all are recorded with enthusiasm by Ruby.

The villagers organised concerts and Scottish dances in the recreation hall: ‘How furiously those folk could dance’, wrote one young Australian apprentice.

And they brought the Doric: ‘Many locals reckoned an interpreter would have been handy. We grew to like it, and some of us even tried to speak it!’ wrote the quarry clerk. John Bradfield described how, following a visit to the quarry in 1926, one small girl told him she had ‘come a’ the way fae Scotland to mak’ a brig.’

By 1931, the Bridge was nearing completion, and the quarry began to run down. The Grants and most of the recruits eventually returned to Aberdeen, though some stayed on, and a few even returned to Australia.

But their contribution has not been forgotten. Years later, Mary Gilmore, the quarry manager’s wife, wrote: *‘This forgotten community leaves behind it in Sydney the beautiful granite pillars of the Bridge as a memorial.’*



Aberdeen Maritime Museum

Shiprow, Aberdeen, AB11 5BY

Tel: (01224) 337700

Email: info@aberdeenships.com

www.aberdeenships.com

By prior appointment: Tuesday to Friday, 10.00am to 4.00pm

**Museum opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10.00am to 5.00pm;
Sunday 12.00 to 3.00 pm**

The Aberdeen Maritime Museum provides access to historical records relating to Aberdeen's maritime history. The following may be of particular use to genealogical researchers:

- » Good, though incomplete, range of Lloyd's Registers of Shipping from 1778 to 2004.

The later volumes, from 1850 onwards, are more detailed including information on engine size (where applicable), master's name and owner. The registers are arranged alphabetically by vessel name so it is not possible to search by master, owner or builder. Although the vessel's master is usually listed, there is no other information on the crew. Most of our maritime collections relating to vessels built in Aberdeen are available online at the Aberdeen Built Ships website www.aberdeenships.com

- » Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 1913 – 1967 contains a vast amount of information on British built ships.

It should be noted that we do not have the following records:

- » Passenger lists
- » Crew lists
- » Information on Masters and Mates
- » Personal details of individuals
- » Ship plans, other than those indicated on the website



Aberdeen University Special Libraries & Archives

King's College, University of Aberdeen, AB24 3SW

Tel: (01224) 272598

Email: speclib@abdn.ac.uk

www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/

Monday to Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm

Collections of printed and archival materials including:

- » Institutional records of graduates, alumni and officers for King's College (founded in 1495), Marischal College (founded in 1593) and when these two institutions joined together in 1860 to become the University of Aberdeen. Also records of the Colleges of Education (1874-2001) including the Church of Scotland and Free Church Training Colleges and also the College run Demonstration/Practising schools.



- » Printed collections: The Local Collection includes family histories, town histories, local plans and maps, reports of local institutions and journals of local societies. Also, newspapers including the Aberdeen Free Press, the Aberdeen Herald and a complete run of the Aberdeen Journal.
- » Archival collections: including family and estate papers, record of local businesses, societies, trade unions and personal papers. Notable estate papers include the Earls of Fife, Gordon of Buthlaw & Cairness and Fraser of Philorth.
- » Ecclesiastical records of the Scottish Episcopal Church Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney including registers of baptisms, marriages and deaths.



Aberdeenshire Heritage – HQ Building

Station Road, Mintlaw, Peterhead, AB42 5EE

Tel: (01771) 622807

Email: museums@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/heritage/

Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 4.30pm

(note – Mondays by appointment only), closed Aberdeenshire statutory holidays

Aberdeenshire Heritage's HQ building houses the central stores for the service's reserve collections of artefacts, archives and photographs, which reflect the history and natural history of Aberdeenshire.

The photograph collection is strongest in images of the Peterhead, Inverurie and Banff areas, dates varying from 1860s to 1950s.

A variety of miscellaneous archival records are held; those of particular interest to genealogical researchers include:

- » A selection of business records relating to Crosse & Blackwell and Cleveland Twist Drill in Peterhead, as well as some rural trade and farming businesses.
- » A small number of whaling journals kept by crew members of Peterhead whalers.
- » The Arrivals/Sailings registers of Peterhead Harbour Board, 1865-1935.
- » The prisoner of war diaries of Thomas Ainsworth who was held at MARLAG und MILAG NORD camp from 1941 to 1945.
- » A major archive relating to the Troup and MacDonald families from Huntly, descended from the preacher and author, George MacDonald. This archive includes original manuscripts, correspondence, photographs and other memorabilia.
- » There is a good, though incomplete, run of the Transactions of the (Royal) Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland from 1872 to 1968.





Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service - Local Studies

Meldrum Meg Way, The Meadows Industrial Estate, Oldmeldrum, AB51 0GN

Tel: (01651) 871219 / 871220

Email: local.studies@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/libraries/information/local_studies.asp

Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

Saturday, 9am – 4.30pm

The main reference collections, with resources for local and family history, are held within the Local Studies Department in Oldmeldrum. There is also a collection of relevant material available in every Aberdeenshire Library.

Family history resources include

- » Old Parish Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials up to 1854
- » Census records (1841 – 1901) for every Aberdeenshire parish
- » International Genealogical Index (microfiche) of births, christenings and marriages for Scotland
- » Monumental Inscriptions for various churchyards
- » Transcripts of Episcopal Church records for some parishes
- » A number of business directories
- » Parish and local histories, biographies and family histories
- » Local newspapers from 1747 to the present day
- » Historical photographs and postcards
- » Maps of the counties of Aberdeen, Banff and Kincardine from the 19th century to the present day
- » Discount vouchers for the Scotlandspeople website available for purchase
- » Computing facilities, including free Internet access, for residents and visitors
- » Printing and copying



There are local collections of microfilm and the IGI on microfiche available at Banchory, Ellon, Fraserburgh, Huntly, Inverbervie, Inverurie, Kemnay, Macduff, Peterhead, Stonehaven and Strichen Libraries.

A comprehensive collection of OPRs and Census records for every Aberdeenshire parish is held in the Local Studies Department, Oldmeldrum.

The fee'd farm labourer



In 19th century Aberdeenshire, the life of the agricultural labourer was hard and uncertain, hired for a six-month term at a feeing market at whatever wage he could negotiate. A hired labourer had no control over his

own destiny or the work he was hired to do. Whether or not he was kept on after the initial term was a decision for the farmer, meaning that travel between farms was a regular feature of a labourer's life.

One such agricultural labourer was Alex Mitchell, who worked on 14 different farms in Aberdeenshire until he was 23 years old.

Born in the parish of Premnay on 1st July 1842, on the farm tenanted by his grandfather, Alex was the only child of James Mitchell, a farm labourer, and Jannet Milne.

Jannet died when he was two. In 1849 his father remarried and moved away from Premnay, leaving his son at Wester Edingarioch where he is listed in the 1851 census with his aunt Margaret Roy and her family.

Alex was still in contact with his father though and lived with him part of the time. In May 1855 they went together to the local feeing market at Pitmachie, Oyne, to look for work for Alex.

Here, Mr Abel of Pitmeddan Farm hired him for a fee of £1 for the six-month term to look after his six cows and one bull.

At the end of the term, Alex returned with his father to Pitmachie Market. This time he was fee'd to George Davidson, Cockmuir, Rayne to look after his cattle, at a fee of £1 10/- for six months, then to Peter Glennie, Cairnhill, Culsalmond, herding cattle at a wage of £2.

The more experience he gained, the more confident he got, and he started looking further afield for work. So for his next positions Alex went to the larger Inverurie market where he gained work at 2 more farms increasing his wage to £4.

After these posts he tried Insch market where he was fee'd to work at Johnston, in the Parish of Leslie at a wage of £4 10/-. This fee was more successful as he stayed for three half years, with his wage later increasing to £6. His job "title" throughout the time reflected his wage increases, starting as the "little loon on the farm", later becoming the "big loon," with more responsibility.

Over the next few years, Alex went to Alford market and was employed at six other farms in surrounding parishes, until he became a coachman for William McCombie in Tough.

After this he moved to the Borders to become a coachman for Sir James Suttie. It was while working here that he married and had a family of his own.

At the end of his life, he looked back on his labouring days and told his story in "*The recollections of a lifetime*", a copy of which is held by the Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service. Here he described his life as a labourer, including the farms he was fee'd to, the people, the countryside, the customs and events, his work, and of course, his travels.



The Gordon Highlanders Museum

St Luke's, Viewfield Road, Aberdeen AB15 7XH

Tel: (01224) 311200

Email: museum@gordonhighlanders.com

www.gordonhighlanders.com

February & March: Tuesday – Saturday 10.00am – 4.00pm

April to October: Tuesday – Saturday 10.00am – 4.30pm

Sunday 12.30pm – 4.30pm

November: Tuesday - Saturday 10.00am - 4.00pm

Research enquires must be made in writing via email, fax or post. A dedicated team of volunteers is committed to undertaking research on your behalf. Two tiered service available - see website for details. Public access to archives is limited and by appointment only.

The Gordon Highlanders Museum is home to the regimental treasures of the world famous Gordon Highlanders. Visit the recently upgraded museum to view the spectacular and interactive displays containing original film footage, narrated archive and oral histories.

Archives include:

- » Personal papers, diaries and press cuttings
- » Medal rolls 1787 – 1911
- » Gallantry rolls 1787 – 1994
- » Roll of honour WW1 and WW2
- » Battalion war diaries 1914 – 1918
- » Photo albums 1880 – 1994



No. 8080 Private John William Milne



An account of No. 8080
Private John William Milne
1st Volunteer Service Company,
Gordon Highlanders
South Africa, 1900

'All is quiet before the dawn, except the soft zephyrs that stir the veldt in its sleep, and the hoarse croak! croak! of the frogs down below. The sentry on duty is alive to the situation as he gazes into the impenetrable gloom, grasps his steel tipped rifle, the blood thrilling through his veins, and dim visions begin to float before his eyes. Such are the feelings of a soldier on his lonely vigil, before the sun has graced the land.'

The Army provided an extraordinary opportunity for Scots to travel abroad; thousands of young men who had never left the borders of their communities found themselves transported to far-flung corners of the British Empire.

In January 1900 twenty-one year old John Milne, motivated by patriotism and a sense of adventure, enthusiastically answered a government call for volunteers to serve in South Africa. He joined his local regiment, The Gordon Highlanders, in Aberdeen. During his service overseas with the Regiment he kept a diary chronicling his

experiences, from daily camp routine to the excitement and danger of combat.

This diary provided the basis for a detailed article he compiled after the war for the Mutual Improvement Association of which he was member, part of which is quoted above.

The Second Boer War (1899 – 1902), or South African War, was a bitter and difficult war for Britain. It took nearly half a million men of virtually every Regiment and Corps of the British Army to defeat an estimated Boer force of 55,000. The Gordon Highlanders saw a great deal of action. The Regiment won six Victoria Crosses, the highest decoration for courage on the battlefield, during these years.

Private Milne was present at the battle in which one of the Regiment's most famous Victoria Cross holders won his award. On Monday 30th April 1900, at the Battle of Mount Thaba, Captain Ernest Beachcroft Towse and a party of 12 men found themselves surrounded by the enemy. Called upon to surrender, Towse refused, ordering his men to fix bayonets and charge. Half were killed by enemy fire as Towse led from the front, wounding the Boer leader with his rifle before being struck by a bullet that blinded him in both eyes.

Milne survived the Boer War and years later went on to fight once more for his country, this time at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. He died in 1951, aged 73.



Museum of Scottish Lighthouses

Kinnaird Head, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, AB43 9DU

Tel: (01346) 511022

Email: info@lighthousemuseum.org.uk

www.lighthousemuseum.org.uk

Opening hours for the Museum are seasonal, please check our website for further details. Access to the archives is by appointment, contact the Director on the numbers above.

The Museum of Scottish Lighthouses has a large collection of lighthouse archives relating to the work of the Northern Lighthouse Board in Scotland and the Isle of Man, as well as some information about the Stevenson's lighthouse work across the world. The collection includes photographs of keepers and their families from the 1960s-1980s as well as many of the original Returns books which the keepers used to record lighting up times, weather, wrecks, and any other item of interest. Among the sources available for family history are:

- » Light keeper service records
- » Visitor books from various lighthouses
- » Returns books, including meteorological, light, supplies and letter books, from various lighthouses.
- » Personal memoirs and oral history testimony from keepers and their families.
- » Photographic archive including all lighthouses in Scotland and the Isle of Man.
- » Information on other sources held by other institutions; although currently under-represented, there are plans to develop this in the future.



Northern Health Services Archives

Victoria Pavilion, Woolmanhill Hospital, Aberdeen AB25 1LD

Tel: (01224) 555562

Email: grampian.archives@nhs.net

www.nhsgrampian.org

By appointment: Monday – Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm

Northern Health Services Archives provides public access to historical records of hospitals and health organisations in the north-east of Scotland. Records of particular interest to family historians include:

- » Hospital administrative and staff records containing information on managers, medical, nursing and other healthcare staff.
- » Financial records with details of individuals connected with local hospitals as benefactors, subscribers or donors.
- » Hospital admission registers and case notes.
- » Records of the three poorhouses that were transferred to the National Health Service in 1948.
- » Records of the local National Health Insurance committees set up to regulate medical services for insured workers, which include some details of early 20th century general practitioners.



Researchers should note that records containing confidential personal or medical information are normally closed for periods of 75 or 100 years.

Hazards of travel

Scots travelling in the 18th and 19th centuries could encounter all kinds of hardship and hazard. As well as ordinary illness and injury, there were riding and coach accidents, shipwrecks and even assault and robbery. While some travellers needing medical attention were treated by local doctors, others, including John Royston, sought hospital care.

John was a sailor on the brig *Mary*, one of many ships that sailed from Aberdeen and Peterhead to Greenland and the Davis Straits, to take part in whaling and seal-fishing. The ships' crews were away from home for many months and John's medical notes give us some idea of the conditions that the sailors often had to endure.

He was admitted to the Aberdeen Infirmary in November 1847, when the *Mary* arrived back from the Arctic. Four months into the voyage, some of the crew had developed scurvy and John was the first to show symptoms:

His hand first grew stiff, hard and swollen, he found he was unable to straighten his legs as formerly; his knees were bent when he walked and when he moved the affected limbs he felt a sharp cutting pain in them. His right thigh then became affected in a similar manner and he observed the outside of his right knee present an appearance as if it had been bruised and pit deeply on pressure.

While this would have made working difficult, worse was to follow:

He then began to have a very disagreeable taste in his mouth; his gums got swelled, livid, painful when touched and used to bleed profusely on the slightest pressure. His teeth became loose and he could scarcely eat any of the ship's provisions, a little soaked biscuit or boiled rice being all that he could masticate. ... on the way home he began to emaciate and get very weak and could rarely venture from his hammock a slight exertion sometimes making him faint.

On arrival in Aberdeen John applied to be admitted to the Infirmary. He had the classic symptoms of scurvy, a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C, and common in sailors whose ships did not carry vegetables or lime or lemon juice. He told the Infirmary doctor:

... the ship's mess consisted of salt provisions, tea, coffee and the vegetable farinacea. They had no succulent vegetables on board, either fresh or pickled. They carried no lemon juice with them but used instead of it vinegar which however was only served out to those sick of scurvy. The men had a daily allowance of grog but got no beer.

In hospital John was prescribed red wine and was given plenty of vegetables at meal times. On 18 November, barely two weeks after admission, he was discharged 'cured'.

The *Mary* sailed for Greenland in 1848 and again in February 1849. This time she failed to return, being lost with all hands. It is not known if John Royston was then still one of the crew.





The Robert Gordon University Archive

**Records Management Department,
The Robert Gordon University, St Andrew Street, Aberdeen AB25 1HG**

Tel: (01224) 262788

Email: recordsmanagement@rgu.ac.uk

www.rgu.ac.uk/rm/general/page.cfm?pge=53147

Access is by appointment only. Please contact the Records Services Officer for further details.

The Robert Gordon University Archive (1864 – c.2000) provides public access to the business records of The Robert Gordon Institute of Technology (RGIT) and its predecessor and successor institutions. Among the sources available for family history are:

- » Teaching staff financial records from Robert Gordon's Technical College (1896 – 1961)
- » Student records, including registers of attendance and fees cash books from Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon's Technical College and the School of Domestic Science (1886 – 1969)



Researchers should note that the University's Art and Heritage Collections in the Library (www.rgu.ac.uk/library/collections) provides access to the University's holdings of artwork and historic artefacts, including student drawings, photographs and oral history recordings from Gray's School of Art and the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment.



Smaller Organisations:

Family History Society of Buchan

Arbuthnot Museum, St Peter's Street, Peterhead, AB42 1QD

Tel: (01779) 481819

Email: fhc@fhsb.org.uk

Web: www.fhsb.org.uk

Monday 11:00 - 13:00

Tuesday 11:00 - 13:00

Wednesday 11:00 - 13:00

Saturday 11:00 - 13:00

By appointment only Saturday 14:00 - 16:30

The Family History Society of Buchan was set up in 2008 to promote the study of genealogy and family history within the historic area of Buchan. It does so from its new Family History Centre within the Arbuthnot Museum in Peterhead. We have a growing membership from all over the world, who have free use of the Centre which is staffed by volunteer helpers.

Our facilities include census films, fiches, computers with internet access, and a small library. Membership of the Society is £10 per year, with details of how to join on our website.

Many of our members are working to preserve records here in the north east; and 2009 will see the publication of our second CD-ROM of Memorial Inscriptions from Peterhead graveyards. We also have a growing collection of local photographs, copies of which can be purchased.





The Salmon Bothy, Portsoy

Links Road, Portsoy, Banff, AB45 2SS

Tel: (01261) 842951

Email: contact@scottishtraditionalboatfestival.co.uk

Web: www.salmonbothy.co.uk

Winter: Thursday to Monday 11:00 – 4:00pm

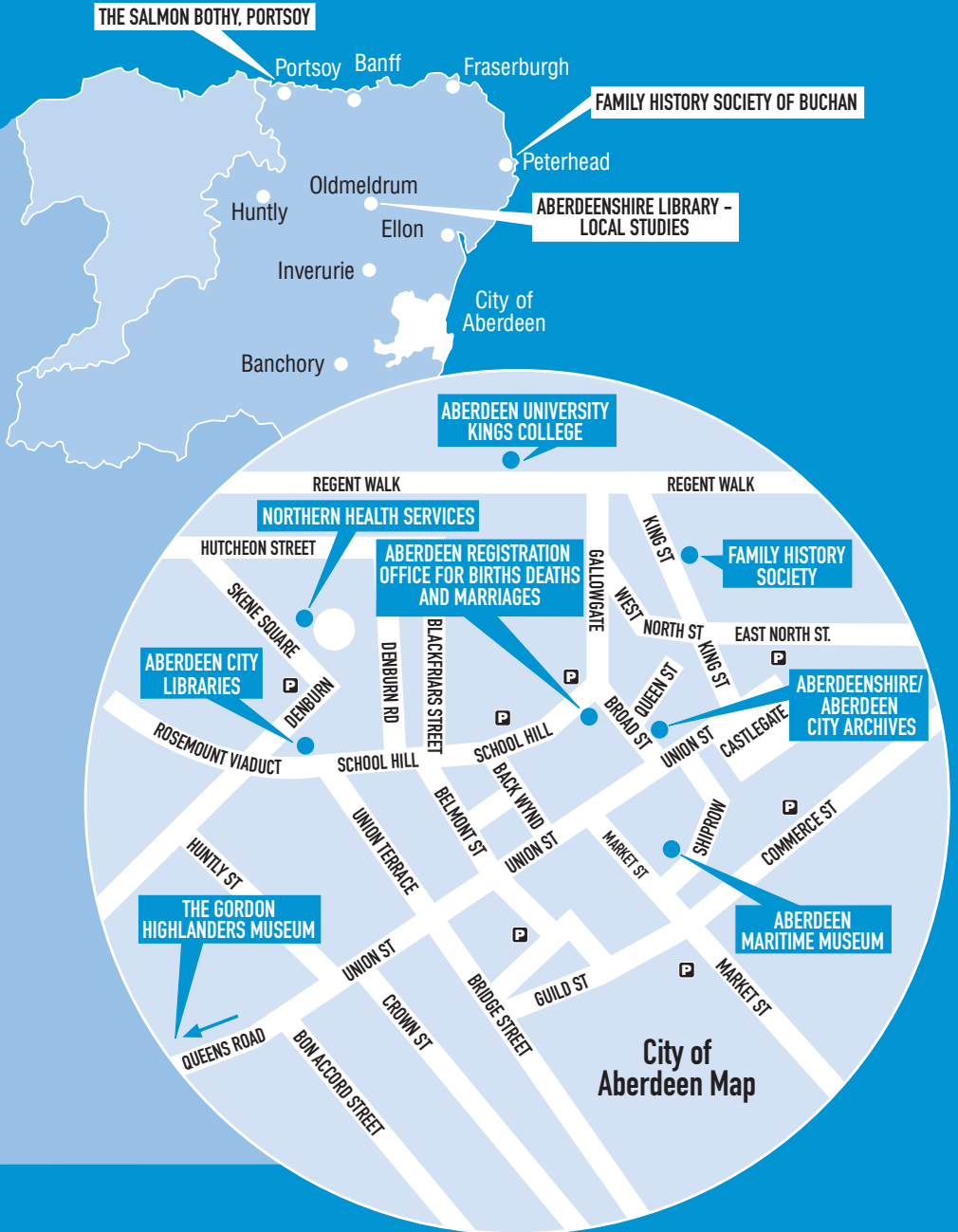
Summer: All week 11:00 – 5:00pm

Also by appointment

The beautifully restored Salmon Bothy at Portsoy includes a fascinating museum featuring the history of Portsoy harbour and of the town and surrounding area, plus a section dedicated to Scotland's once significant salmon fishing industry.

The building also features a performance area – “Upstairs at the Bothy” – in which an ongoing programme of presentations, exhibitions and workshops takes place. The Bothy also includes full computer facilities for genealogical research and with its trained team of volunteers it provides an excellent facility for visitors to explore their roots. The museum's content is also being developed to provide written and pictorial local family history.

Map of Organisations







Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/homecoming