

# THE N/NEWS

NO. 27 APRIL 1993

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
**NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY**  
AUSTRALIA



## STARTING POINT

*MANY THANKS: Once again local and overseas members have been prolific in their supply of material for the newsletter. Again it has been necessary to leave out some contributions. Apologies to those members whose material didn't make it into this edition. Please note that your contributions are greatly appreciated and will be used as space permits.*

*On a more positive note, with N/News no. 27 members will be receiving their copy of the latest monograph - Four Short Stories of Nisbet. We have been promising this monograph for some time now and it is good to finally get it out. I'm sure members will find the stories interesting and informative, and will join with the editorial committee in thanking the authors for their excellent efforts.*

## (NES)-BITS & PIECES

**AN EXCITING DISCOVERY:** These were the words used by William J. Nesbitt of Roselands, Ambleside, Cumbria, when he received material from Bruce Nesbit which showed a very strong possibility that William and Bruce shared a common ancestor - Robert Nesbit, born ca 1690, Peels, Northumberland, England.

Bruce writes: "It was on receipt of William's Biographical Information Sheet that our archivist, John Barth saw the connection and phoned me. I immediately wrote to William with a copy of my tree enclosed, and other papers which showed the 'link' - two brothers, John Nesbit b. 1710, and Thomas Nesbit b. 1723, both born at Peels, Northumberland; and their father Robert Nesbit b. ca 1690, also at Peels. William's line was through Thomas Nesbit and mine was through John Nesbit.

I was fortunate in that I started my family research early. It was in 1979, before family research became popular and P.R.O.s, Registers of B.D.M.s and County Archivists were able to cope with requests for information. Also I had dedicated ancestors who, as was the practice in those 'olden days', kept (accurate) records of family births, marriages and deaths in the family Bible.

From information contained in the tattered and faded pages of two old Nesbit family bibles (earliest entry 'Joseph Nesbit b. 1779, Harbottle'), and with the assistance of County Archivists in Durham and Northumberland and a professional genealogist (Mrs Gwen Harbottle), I was able to trace back to the Robert Nesbit mentioned above."

Material from A. Bruce Nesbit, 6 Kent Crt, Bundoora 3083, Victoria.

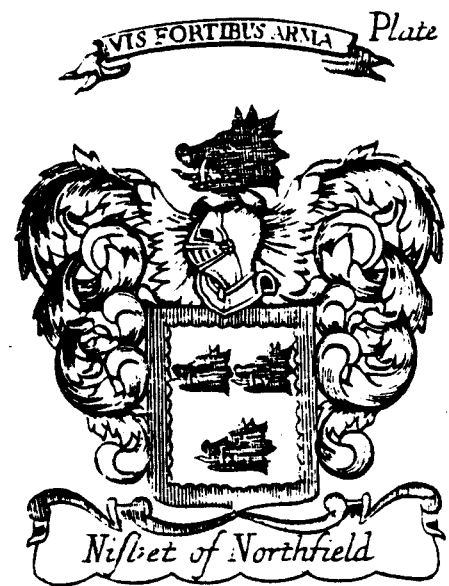
POSTAL HISTORY: The first piece of registered mail sent between Canada and New Zealand was a letter addressed to a Mrs Anna Nesbitt, Nelson, New Zealand. The letter was registered in Bradford, Ontario, and passed through Toronto, Windsor and San Francisco on its way to Nelson. The story of this letter and a photocopy was featured in 'Maple Leaves' (Journal of the Canadian Philatelic Society of Great Britain), Vol. 23 No. 1, January 1993.

Material from Dr Bruce Nesbit, 541 Mariposa Ave, Rockcliffe Park, Ontario.

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### THE COATS OF ARMS OF FOUR NISBET FAMILIES

These Heraldic plates have survived from a copy of Alexander Nisbet's 'System of Heraldry' published in 1722



Material supplied by Richard Kerr Nesbitt, President of the U.K. Branch of the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society, U.K., 1990.

## SOCIETY NEWS

**COUNTRY GATHERING, HANGING ROCK, 20.3.93:** On a pleasantly warm Saturday in March, thirty-eight N/Ns gathered for a 'picnic at Hanging Rock' (otherwise known as the fourth national gathering of the N/N Society, Australia). Members from various parts of Victoria were in attendance but, unfortunately, none of our interstate members could manage to make the trip this time.

As usual, the gathering was an outstanding success, especially the ever-popular 'Boar'n Games'. The gumboot throwing, horseshoe pitching and our own version of the Hanging Rock races, were keenly contested by young and old alike. The gumboot throwing competition excellent for spectator participation – the spectators were heavily involved in dodging errant boots flying at various angles from the throwing line. Fortunately, all survived (both competitors and spectators), although one gumboot was almost lost up a tree. A variety of prizes were awarded for the afternoon, with the Alexander Nesbit Memorial Trophy being taken home by Lyndell Watson.

I'm sure all present had a great day and would like to thank the organisers, particularly Gary Nisbet, who again arranged and managed the sporting activities. And now to start planning for next year's gathering ....

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**PROFILE:** In the interest particularly of interstate and overseas members, we thought it may be useful to provide 'pen portraits' of some of the people who manage the Society on our behalf. The first of these profiles is, fittingly, that of our President, Ian Milton Nisbet.

**Ian M.P. Nisbet:** Ian was born in Kew, Victoria and lived his early years in Balwyn, Nyah West and Croydon, Victoria. He completed his schooling at Box Hill High School. In WWII he served in the A.M.F. – A.I.F. 1941–1946, with service in New Guinea, and was discharged with the rank of Lieutenant.

Ian married Joy Ida Lillian Drinkmilk in 1946 and, after completing his studies, qualified as a chartered accountant and commenced practice in 1956. He is the proprietor of Ian Nisbet & Co. in Queen Street, Melbourne, and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia. Ian and Joy have two children, Lyndell (Mrs Peter J Watson) and Andrew. Ian is a keen sportsman and has been actively involved in sport and sports administration with cricket, lacrosse and squash. His present interests include his holiday beach home, boating, fishing and golf.

Ian has been a member of the Rotary Club of Balwyn for 12 years, including President 1980/1981 and Rotary District 980 Treasurer 1983/1984. He was appointed Member of the Order of Australia for service to commerce and to the community in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 1980. He is a member of the Melbourne Savage Club, the R.A.C.V. Club, the National Gallery Society of Victoria, Australia Institute of International Affairs, and Commonwealth and Sorrento Golf Clubs. And, most importantly, he is the founding and continuing President of the N/N Society Australia.

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**FROM OUR ARCHIVIST:** John Barth has been exceedingly busy with a few profiles of his own! John has been assembling the information provided by members in their own profiles (remember those forms we were asked to fill in upon joining the Society?) and is about to release the first edition of this herculean effort. Those members who were at the Hanging Rock gathering were able to see a copy of the profiles and were mightily impressed. The format of this publication will soon be decided upon – anyone who hasn't submitted their profile had better get it to John, and quickly!

**SPECIAL OFFER:** The information shown at right was received from Casey Nesbit (Vice President Nesbitt/Nisbet Society U.S.A.). Funds from the sale of Murdoch Nisbet's New Testament will go towards promotion of the N/N Society in the U.S. Interested members should send their orders to Casey Nesbit, 1690 W. Texas #5E, Fairfield, CA 94533, U.S.A.

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## THE NEW TESTAMENT IN SCOTS

BEING

Purvey's Revision of Wycliffe's Version

Turned into Scots by

**MURDOCH NISBET**

Circa. 1520

Taken from the books of the Scottish Text Society  
Edited by Thomas Graves Law, LL.D. 1901-1905 Vol. 1-3  
Commentary by Dr. Law Not included in this Volume

Reprinted for the Nesbitt / Nisbet Society  
Typing done by Casey L. Nesbit And Diana J. Nesbit

All proceeds will go for the promotion of Scottish Heritage  
and the Nesbitt / Nisbet Society

Cost : \$20.00 U.S. Plus \$2.50 for shipping within the U.S.A.  
\$5.00 for shipping outside the U.S.A.



## FAMILY SNIPPETS

This section is for brief snippets of news to keep members informed on the comings and goings of our extended family. Send snippets direct to the Editor, or scribble a note on your membership renewal form and Peter or Lyndell Watson will send it on. One line is all we need!

- \* Graeme and Catherine Nisbet are off overseas again (24.4.93 - 5.8.93) to Britain and Europe in the continuing search for their elusive ancestors. We look forward to hearing about their findings later in the year.
- \* Steven Nisbet, a well known organist in Brisbane, was featured in an organ concert at Brisbane City Hall, 2 February 1993. (Thanks to Mrs S Nesbitt, 80 Dorothea St, Canon Hill 4170, for a copy of the programme.)
- \* Apologies are due to Michael Nesbitt of Invernell who, in the last N/News, featured as Mark Nesbitt. At least the surname was correct!
- \* Wendy Nisbet (editor's daughter) graduates from the Australian College of Travel and Hospitality on 14 April 1993.

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## FEATURE ARTICLE

We are fortunate to have received a well written and illustrated article from the prolific Mark Nesbitt, Publications Secretary of the U.K. Branch of the N/N Society. In this edition of the N/News we feature the first part of Mark's article - **IN SEARCH OF THE NISBET FAMILY IN EDINBURGH.**

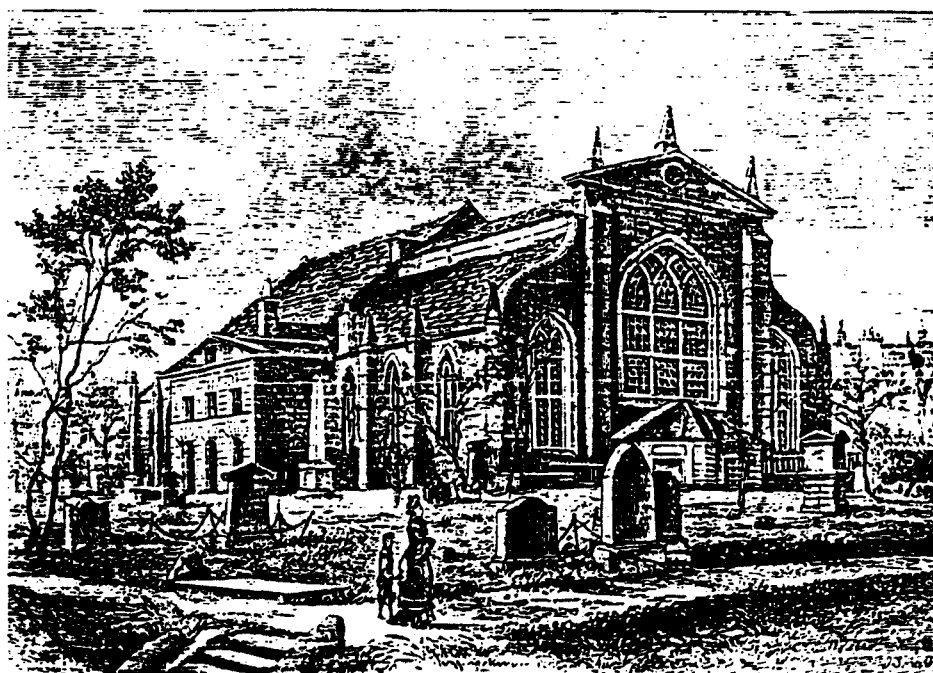
### INTRODUCTION

After the 1992 gathering, I took the opportunity to spend a few days wandering around Edinburgh on the Nisbet trail. As one would expect of a prominent Border family, there is ample evidence for their involvement in Edinburgh affairs. This is particularly so in the turbulent 1600s, and it is thus in the medieval heart of the city, and not in the wide streets of the Georgian New Town that most evidence of Nisbets will be found.

There are two main branches of the family represented by surviving buildings: the Nisbets of that Ilk, builders of Nisbet House in Berwickshire; and the Nisbets of Dirleton, later dividing into those of Dirleton, Dean, and Craigtinnie, the latter two occupying houses on the outskirts of Edinburgh. The civic records of the city record many other Nisbets; I've simply focused on these two families because their history can still be traced in standing stone.

### TWO GREAT ARCHIVES

What I didn't do is visit the two main repositories of genealogical information in Edinburgh, the General Register Office and the Scottish Record Office. The GRO (free leaflets from New Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YT. Tel: 031 334 0380) contains the civil registration records of births, marriages and deaths since 1855, and many earlier parish registers, and is the first starting point for anyone investigating their Scottish ancestry. A sophisticated computer system gives easy access to records and, by all accounts, justifies the fee and advance booking needed for use of the facilities. The SRO (HM General Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YY. Tel: 031 556 6585) contains the records of Scottish Government and much else, and is the place to go once you have identified ancestors whose lives you wish to follow up. The SRO does not charge fees, and publishes an excellent handbook "Tracing your Scottish ancestors: a guide to ancestry research in the Scottish record office" by Cecil Sinclair (HMSO, a bargain £5.95).



THE GREYFRIARS CHURCHES.

### ALEXANDER NISBET THE HERALD & GREYFRIARS KIRK

Ever since I first visited Edinburgh, at the age of 18, this has always been my first port of call. The Kirk of the Greyfriars, on the evocatively named Candlemaker Row, is situated in the old garden of the Greyfriars monastery, given to the city as a graveyard in 1562 by Queen Mary. The building of the church finished in 1620, and on 28 February 1638 it entered history when the National Covenant was first read and signed there. Many Nisbets are buried in the extensive, romantically overgrown churchyard, though none of their memorials survive.

In 1934, after the church had been extensively restored, to unite it with the adjoining New Greyfriars Kirk of 1721, Robert Chancellor Nesbitt arranged for the fitting of a memorial plaque to Alexander Nisbet (1657-1725), the eminent Heraldic writer. This was unveiled by John Buchan before a large gathering. Since 1987 the church has seen much new work, including a new organ and new seating. Overall the church has a lighter feeling to it, but still retains its historical atmosphere. The Nisbet memorial is prominently located inside, and a visit to this and one of Edinburgh's best-loved churches (open most of the time) is an excellent starting point to a Nisbet tour.



NISBET OF DIRLETON'S HOUSE

### NISBET OF DIRLETON'S HOUSE

82-84 Canongate

This imposing townhouse was built in 1624 for Sir John Nisbet, Lord Dirleton (1610-1688), an eminent lawyer and unpopular Lord Advocate, buyer of the Dirleton estate in East Lothian in 1663. This house, with its broad crowstep gable, is one of the oldest dwellings in Edinburgh. Unfortunately, after being purchased by the Edinburgh Corporation in 1949, part of the house collapsed while restoration works were in progress in 1953, and it was found necessary to rebuild the facade. However the original design was followed and most of the old stone reused, and this is still a handsome building. The two inscribed stones were incorporated by the original builders from an earlier building.

### ST GILES' CATHEDRAL High Street

The tranquillity of this ancient building contains a memorial to more tumultuous times: the Montrose Chapel. This contains the tomb raised by Charles II to this great, doomed Royalist soldier, and above it is a window glowing with shields and crests, a memorial to Montrose and his fellow officers. The coat-of-arms of Sir Philip Nisbet, uncle of Alexander the Herald, can easily be spotted in the upper left light.

The second part of this three-part article will feature in the next edition of the N/News.

## FOUND

### GEORGE RALPH NISBETT:

Arriving at Tairua, New Zealand, in the late 1930s, George Nisbett first got work with Harold Cory-Wright, and lived for a while in the little Cory-Wright cottage which still stands on the main road.

Many people can still remember George, and many and varied are the stories told about him. He was English, reputedly a remittance man, whose cultured speech suggested an aristocratic origin. He had a remarkable talent for telling stories, a gift for which he found full scope when he got the job of barman at the Sir John George Grey.



*George Ralph Nisbett*

There were times, however, when his propensity for storytelling may have worked against the interests of the management.

Customers would become so engrossed listening to George, that they would forget their drinks. In fact, the story is told of one prospective customer who, on entering the bar, became so absorbed listening to George's yarns that he left an

hour later without having ordered a drink!

Gradually the 'hotel' became completely surrounded and obscured by a wall of beer crates. Entrance was gained through a narrow gap between crates, while a smaller gap allowed a shaft of light to penetrate a small window. Seating for about four or five patrons was provided at the bar on a thick kauri plank, supported on more beer crates.

There were no fixed hours at the hotel---which did not matter, because most of the patrons knew where the key was kept, and could "open up" whenever they pleased. The rule was: "help yourself, enter your drinks in the book, and leave the bottles and the money on the bar". It was generally admitted that the hotel made more profit when George was absent, because there were no "drinks on the house", and the patrons were able to get on with their own business without the distraction of George's interminable yarns.

Don Laycock recalls that, when the till was full, George would stuff the money into a large envelope on which he had previously written, in his elegant hand, the name, "R.G. Morpeph", and then place it up on the shelf among the bottles. Another witness, who knew him well, claims that George was often known to buy bottles from small boys at the front of the hotel, pretending not to know that they had been picked up from behind the shed.

Tairua was a small community in those days, and George would have known everybody. There were scarcely any 'tourists', and the village population was the smallest it had ever been. The 1945 census gives the population of "Tairua Locality" as 73 (including 9 Maories), and there were only three admissions to the school that year. George Nisbett was not the only trusting person in Tairua at the time. Mrs Mary Beach, who ran the store would often leave supplies of groceries, including biscuits and sweets, in the old wharf-shed overnight.

During his stay at Tairua, George acquired several sections of land, which, at his death, he bequeathed to people who had been good to him. The Anglican community received a section, and the Catholics were given the section on which their present church stands at the corner of Bayview Terrace. In his later years George Nisbett worked for a while at the dairy factory under Ralph Dally. According to Ralph, he had no technical or mechanical skills, but was always a willing worker. Towards the end he lived in the old mill-manager's house on the corner of what is now Bayview Terrace. He died in Whitianga hospital on 25th January 1969.

From a local book on the logging town of Tairua on the Coromandel coast of New Zealand. Note: The Coromandel Peninsular which runs north and south is to the east of Auckland, but Tairua does not appear on any atlas in our possession. Material supplied to Pres. Ian M. Nisbet by M.G. McLean, Takapuna, New Zealand.

## NOTICE BOARD

(Upcoming events in the Local and Overseas Calendar for 1993)

April/July	Theatre Party (42nd Street).
19 May	Committee Meeting.
22 May	Education/Information evening - Margaret Hookey.
29 May	U.K. Gathering - probably in Edinburgh.
July	Newsletter 28.
18 Sept.	A.G.M. - Speaker to be announced.
Oct.	Newsletter 29.

### GENERAL COMMITTEE:

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**The Nesbitt/Nisbet Society is a Worldwide Clan Society**