

# NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY

Australia



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NEWSLETTER NO. 5.

OCTOBER 1987.

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## STARTING POINT

(Latest News and Views from the Editorial Staff)

**MANY THANKS:** At the start of the second year of the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society - Australia, it is an appropriate time to thank those people who have made our first year such a success. Without the tireless efforts of the various office bearers and members of the different committees we could never have progressed so far. Undoubtedly, special recognition must be given to our founding President, Ian M. Nisbet, who almost single-handedly guided the rest of us through the formative stages of the society. Together with his wife Joy, Ian gave freely of his time and hospitality to members of the society on innumerable occasions. I'm sure all members will join in thanking Ian for his exceptional efforts throughout the year.

**QUESTIONNAIRE:** Remember those questionnaires that were sent out with Newsletter No. 4? Well, some of you haven't, because we haven't received them back yet! Please dig them out, fill them in and send them back as this is the only way we have of finding out what many members want. So far the response has been fair, with 38 out of 111 questionnaires returned. How about doing your bit to boost these numbers!

By Ian T. Nisbet

## (NES) BITS AND PIECES

(Snippets of General Interest By N/Ns, For N/Ns and About N/Ns)

**GWEN NISBET SCHOLARSHIP FUND:** An article in the Melbourne Sun newspaper of 1/8/1987 which referred to the Gwen Nisbet Scholarship Fund of The Victorian College of Arts, prompted investigation. The Gwen Nisbet (as I suspected) is our Gwen Nisbet; a foundation member of the Society, wife of the late K.F.N. Nisbet and mother of our past treasurer, Gavin M. Nisbet. Editor.

The scholarship was set up in perpetuity in 1976 at The Victorian College of Arts by friends who had worked with her in establishing the Astra Chamber Music Society. When Gwen retired after twenty-five years as Chief Executive Officer a committee was formed to raise funds towards the Gwen Nisbet Scholarship Award.

The Patrons of the Society were:

The Hon. R.J. Hamer, E.D., M.P.  
Mr. John Hopkins, O.B.E.  
Miss Linda Phillips, O.B.E.  
Lady Viola Tate  
The Hon. Vernon Wilcox, C.B.E., Q.C.  
Dr. Eric Westbrook.

The dean and council of the Victorian College of Arts Music School select a student each year to receive the award which in 1977 was \$1000. In ten years its value has risen to \$2,600. Money is raised by direct giving and fund raising functions.

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NEWSLETTER NO. 5.

(1)

It is now in the hands of a management committee consisting of adult children of the original committee. They are: Mrs. Marjorie McPherson, Mr. Trevor Baldock, Mr. Neil Williams and Mr. Gavin M. Nisbet.

Over the last three years it was decided to also establish a smaller award, for a first year student at the college. This year it was \$800. Material supplied by Gavin M. Nisbet.

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OUR 14 WEEK "OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE": After 11 weeks of "back-packing" and "Eurailing" through Europe we crossed the English Channel, hired a car and somewhat dampened (weather not spirit) spent three weeks touring England, Wales and Scotland. Unfortunately our itinerary, though flexible, did not allow us to make it to the Naval Club Meeting of the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society of the U.K. in May. We were however able to call on Dick Nesbitt, the U.K. president in Alresford. After months of endlessly changing faces and places it was wonderful to be made so welcome by a virtual stranger solely on the basis of the affinity afforded through the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society. Our genealogical research had not developed to a stage to allow research in Scotland, so we opted for a sight-seeing tour of the U.K. Based on what we saw and those we met in the Border District we would encourage any members contemplating attending the Nesbitt/Nisbet Gathering at Ferniehirst Castle and environs next year to do so and take advantage of an important facet of the society - fellowship, both in Australia and with our overseas associates.  
By Gary and Merryn Nisbet.

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N/N PLACES: Here are some Nesbitt places in Canada.

NESBITT - A Hamlet south of Brandon. The railway reached this point in 1891. The Hamlet was named after John Nesbitt Kirchoffer a senator who represented the Brandon Constituency from 1892-1912. He promised a Town Bell if a station was named after him. Unfortunately he died before the bell was purchased.

NESBITT LAKE - Northeast of Athapapuskow Lake. After Flight Sergeant Gordon B. Nesbitt, R.C.A.F., a casualty of World War 1. From the Department of Cultural Affairs and Historical Resources, Manitoba, Canada.

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PROUD GRANDFATHER: Jack Nesbitt of Paynesville is in the news again. Jack became a grandfather for the first time on July 22. Congratulations to daughter Vicki and husband Chris Birchall (also society members) of North Clayton, Victoria, on the birth at the Moorabbin Hospital of their daughter Erin, who weighed in at 3.54 kg, (7 lbs 8 1/2 ounces).

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NEWSLETTER SPONSOR: During a recent telephone conversation with Dot Nesbit we discussed the various genealogical societies of which there are nine within Australia, who are receiving our newsletter. I bemoaned the fact that expense prevented postage to overseas societies. Dot kindly offered to sponsor the postage of our newsletter for one year to the Public Library at Londonderry in Northern Ireland and the Scottish Genealogical Library at Edinburgh.

Thank you Dot for the thoughtful gesture. Are there any other members who would like to sponsor a society or library of their choice and help expand our circulation? The cost of postage to the U.K. is \$1.00 for each newsletter. If so please indicate the name and address of the society or societies you favour,

make out your cheque to the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society Australia and post to our treasurer, Peter Watson. Editor

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DONATION: On the right is a copy of a hand-washed print of Nisbet House by Liz Holmes of Paxton, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Berwickshire. Mona Mountier of Wynnum Queensland purchased the print at the Naval Club meeting in May and has donated it to the N/N Society.

Nisbet House is situated in the Borders area in the south-east of Scotland and has a very interesting history which was covered by our guest speaker Janet Gibson on May 22nd, 1987.

Thank you Mona for your contribution to our increasing store of N/N memorabilia.



## SOCIETY NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: The events of 27 June 1986 culminated in the First Annual General Meeting for the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society - Australia, conducted at 26 Walnut Road North Balwyn on 19 September 1987. Twenty eight attended.

Delivering the chairman's address, Ian M. Nisbet paid tribute to Bruce Nesbit for his initiative and untiring efforts in convening the Interest Meeting which led to the establishment of the Australian branch of the N/N Society and saw its membership reach 111 in the first year.

Recognition was paid to the wise council and support of Richard K. Nesbitt and Bill Kelsey in the establishment of the society which reflected its international nature. These links between the overseas N/N Societies has been further strengthened by personal contacts of N/Ns on overseas visits.

Recognition was duly paid to the efforts of the Newsletter Editor and his committee in the high standard of the newsletters and the importance the newsletter plays in communication between N/Ns. The President also thanked the retiring Treasurer Gavin Nisbet.

Following the election of office bearers (see page 8 for updated list) John Barth presented an entertaining talk on researching Scottish family history from sources available within Australia.

John is the author of the recently released publication "Scottish Family History Volume 1" - A research and source guide with particular emphasis on how to do your research from sources available within Australia. In addition to gearing up for the release of volume 2, John is currently seeking information on all Scottish immigrants to Australia - truly an ambitious project. Please contact me if you wish to assist.

Following a vote of thanks, all in attendance enjoyed supper and a chance to purchase an autographed copy of John's book.

By Ian G. Nisbet, Secretary.

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WORKSHOP/FORK TEA: A small group gathered at the home of Ian G. and Lesley

NEWSLETTER NO. 5.

(3)

Nisbet at 1 St. Johns Parade, Kew on August 8. A variety of dishes were provided by the members and while they were being prepared drinks were served by our hosts. During and after eating, the evening developed into more of a relaxed social gathering than a workshop. Lyn McFarland brought along her archival material which was perused by all, and our newsletter editor presented files, which due to cost and space, are not published in our newsletter. Among them were the U.K and North America membership lists. It is intended that these lists will be available to interested members for a small fee to cover printing and postage. Gary and Merryn Nisbet were quizzed on their "OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE" (see their article on page 2).

It was a very enjoyable evening; many thanks Ian and Lesley.

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GATHERING 1988: As mentioned in Newsletter No. 4., we can look forward to the "Gathering" on 28th May at Ferniehirst Castle Scotland.

Ferniehirst Castle is the ancestral home of the Kerr family, and is owned by the Marquis of Lothian, Chief of the Kerrs and Baron of the Nisbet Estate.

It is an unrivalled example of a sixteenth century Border Castle and has been pounded by the storms of border battles, being demolished and rebuilt three times between 1490 and 1540. Today it has been remodelled to serve as a conference centre.

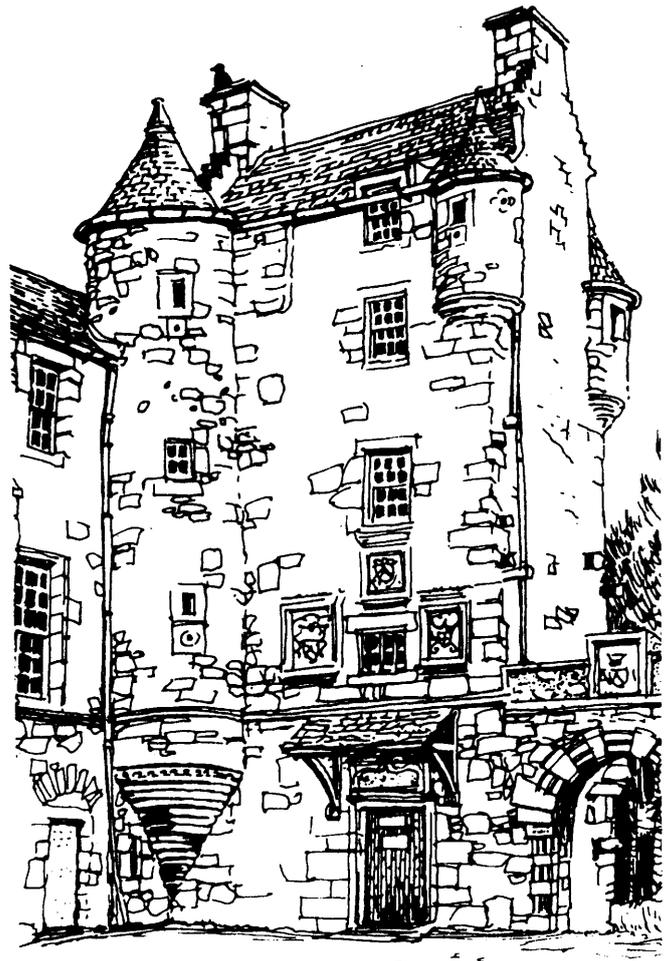
The castle sits perched on a rock above the River Jed, some two miles south of the town of Jedburgh. Jedburgh is certainly in Nisbet Country, for some 2.5 miles north are the hamlets of West Nisbet, Nisbet, East Nisbet and also Nisbet Hillhead, Nisbet Moor and Upper Nisbet. To the north west is Melrose, where Melrose Abbey (of the Charter of Thomas de Nisbet) is located.

This is probably one of the finest and most beautifully located of scottish abbeys. The abbey was frequently pillaged and destroyed. It has been carefully restored and is well worth a visit. The heart of Robert the Bruce is said to be buried beneath the eastern windows.

To the north-east of Melrose is the town of Duns.

Jedburgh itself, is praised as one of the most attractive towns in the Downlands. Here, too, is an abbey of red sandstone, twice burned and saved and seven times damaged. It was founded in the twelfth century by King David I. Here many important people were welcomed - Malcom IV, David's grandson, who died in the nearby castle in 1165, and also Alexander III whose marriage to Jolande was celebrated in this abbey in 1265.

That's not all in Jedburgh. There is the house of Mary Queen of Scots and the house where "Bonnie Prince Charlie" slept, at the corner of Blackhills Close, when he was en route to England and the 1745 uprising.



This area is saturated with history, blood and death, defeat and victory. There is much to see, all a bonus to our Clan Gathering on 28th May next year.

Now is the time to make your plans to attend. Check with your travel agent and develop flight plans - to and from! For information regarding local lodgings write to the Tourist Advice Bureau, Abbey Place, Jedburgh, Scotland. Advise your contact person of your intention to be with us at the first gathering since Glasgow, 1983.

This is an edited version of an article by Bill Kelsey (N.A. and U.K. Newsletter Editor) which will appear in his October newsletter and is reproduced with his permission.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

In this newsletter we present the first part of a three part article which will undoubtedly be of widespread interest to N/N members. It is called "The Nisbets" by J.W. Nisbet and first appeared in the March 1972 edition of "Scotland's Magazine". It is reproduced unedited with permission from the Scottish Board, but due to its length, it will be spread over three issues of the newsletter. We are sure you will find it worth waiting for!

### THE NISBETS

by

J.W. Nisbet

WITH the Berwickshire of Duns the name most closely associated in the recent past has been Jim Clark, winner of a host of international motor car races, twice world champion and the first honorary burgess of the Burgh of Barony. But before his tragic death in 1968 a memorial had also been erected for another famous son, John de Duns Scotus, celebrated ecclesiastic and philosopher who seven centuries ago was known throughout the civilised world as "The Subtle Doctor". Nor has it been forgotten that about the same time and in the heart of the Merse (marshland) there existed the family of Nisbet, a name with many spellings and probably derived from two words - Nesse, Naes or Naesse, indicating a headland or cape, and Byth or Bit, signifying a dwelling or particular place. In those far off days its home was the Castle of Nisbet, a stronghold which withstood many forays and raids. But in the seventeenth century it was reconstructed and became known as Nisbet House. This was the result of the efforts of the eldest son of Sir Philip Nisbet of that Ilk, Alexander, who in 1609 had married the wealthy Katharine, only daughter of Robert Swinton. For many years his family flourished. But, when the Covenanters triumphed in 1641, Sir Alexander ceased to be Sheriff of Berwickshire, was forced to leave Scotland and, with three of his five sons, joined the Royal Forces. Major Alexander Nisbet, the fourth son, was killed at the siege of York in 1644. Philip, the eldest son and heir, was a distinguished officer and Governor of Newark-upon-Trent. He fought gallantly under the leadership of the Marquis of Montrose. But on 13 September 1645 after the battle of Philiphaugh he was taken prisoner and, shortly afterwards, executed in Glasgow. Robert, the third son, rose to the rank of colonel. After Carbisdale he was captured and condemned; and he suffered capital punishment in Edinburgh in 1650. Meanwhile, Sir Alexander, the father, had incurred heavy debts in supporting the Royal cause. In the end, after imprisonment first in Jedburgh, then in Duns, he was compelled to surrender all his property to his creditors, in particular John Kerr, ancestor of the Sinclairs. That was in 1642. For some years he lived frugally in Ireland, and in spite of two partitions to the Crown after the accession of Charles II, he never regained his estate.

Adam, his youngest son, had established himself as a writer in Edinburgh; and in 1653 he married Janet, daughter of Alexander Aikenhead. The only surviving male issue was the famous Alexander Nisbet, born in Edinburgh in 1657

and eventually acclaimed as the "ablest and most scientific writer on heraldry in the English language". Although in 1682 he graduated M.A. in Edinburgh University and trained for the legal profession, he became increasingly absorbed in heraldry. In 1722, having made a thorough study of Scottish, English and European theory and practice, he published his authoritative System of Heraldry, Speculative and Practical, with the True Art of Blazon. In 1725 he died at Dirlerton and was buried at the old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh. And it was there that honour was done to his great work in a ceremony held in May 1934. Before a distinguished audience, John Buchan the The Lord High Commissioner of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, paid his tribute to Nisbet the Herald; and he unveiled an artistic plaque to the memory of "a great gentleman and a great scholar".

Alexander Nisbet considered the original purpose of heraldry to be "not merely show and pageantry as some were apt to imagine, but to distinguish persons and families" and to trace the history and achievements of their ancestry. Arms as "hereditary marks of Honour" or "silent names" were carefully defined, the extraordinary vocabulary of the subject was reviewed, and much attention was paid to heraldic birds and beasts. Thus the swan was "the symbol of a learned man and one that knew best how to condemn the world". The Boar... "betokened a man of bold spirit, skilful and politic in warlike fates" - a word Nisbet used for "feats", and to the Herald's own family it was specially significant. The ensigns armorial were "Argent, three boars' heads erased Sable", with a helmet above the shield, surmounted for crest by a "boar passant Sable" and in an Escrol over the same the motto "I byd it". For some branches, as for the Nisbets of Cairnhill, Carfin and Greenholm, the legend was "Vis fortibus arma".

Of course, in order to identify members of the clan or family and to distinguish friend from foe, the early Scots wore brightly coloured dress, developing into tartan plaids and kilts. Although mainly a Highland custom, it also affected the Lowlands, partly as a protest against the Union of the Crowns. After the Jacobite risings it was banned. But the restrictive legislation was repealed in 1782, and the old Nisbet tartan was revived.

### **WANTED** (Members Searches)

For descendants of John Nisbet (my great grandfather, b. c1830) who arrived in Tasmania on 24th of July, 1855 on "White Star" from Falmouth, Cornwall. He was a joiner/carpenter. The Shipping Arrivals showed him as being aged 26, Presbyterian and a native of Scotland. He married Catherine Charlotte Rodman, in 1868 at Hobart. Catherine was born ? England c1836, d. Launceston Tasmania 1st Nov., 1908, . They had six children all born in Tasmania.

J.N. Douglas, b. 13th Feb., 1869, m. Martha Helena Olson 21st Apr., 1902;  
Charlotte Cecelia, b. 25th Aug., 1870, m. John Simpson 7th Jan., 1903;  
Madeline Mary, b. 20th Jan., 1873, m. Gilbert Everard Moore - my grandfather;  
Nigel Harold, b. 15th July, 1875, m. Jane Keogh, 13th Sept., 1910;  
Alice Eunice, b. 25th Mar., 1878, m. ?

Janet, b. 7th Apr., 1882, m. ?

J.W. (? J.N.) Douglas Nisbet had a son b. 26th Feb., 1907 at Auburn Victoria.

Contact Mrs. P. Letch, 171 Townshend Road, Subiaco, Western Australia, 6008.

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"My great Aunt Sarah Ewart married James Nesbit of Horsley Northumberland England in the 1870s or 80s. I am writing hoping to make contact with descendants of Sarah Ewart Nesbit".

Contact Mrs. G. Hood of M.S. 537, Kingaroy, Queensland 4610.

## FOUND

WHOSE ANCESTOR: The following information was supplied by Shauna L. Hicks of Brisbane, Queensland and no doubt there are numerous descendants of Eliza and Matilda Nesbit in Australia.

Eliza Nesbit, b. c1830, m. Thomas Johnston at Knockbridge, Co. Cavan Ireland, 1856. Emig. Queensland 1859. Eliza Nesbit Johnston had 14 children. Matilda Nesbit, b. 1836, Co. Cavan Ireland, m. John Gaynor at Co. Cavan, 1856. Emigrated to Brisbane Queensland c1856. Matilda Nesbit Gaynor had 8 children.

### NOTICE BOARD

(Upcoming Events in the Local and Overseas N/N Calendar)

- 1987 Nov. 5 Executive Meeting.
- Dec. 5 Christmas End of Year Celebration.  
Venue and type of event to be notified later.
- 1988 Jan. Newsletter No. 6. (Closing date for material Dec. 1, 1987).
- Apr. Newsletter No. 7. (Closing date for material Mar. 1, 1988).
- May. 28 International Gathering at Ferniehirst Castle near Jedburgh in The Borders in Scotland's S.E. We will be asking members of their intentions in our January issue of the newsletter so that catering may be arranged.

## OBITUARY

Mrs. Nellie Nesbitt. Members will be saddened to hear of the death of Nellie Nesbitt, grandmother of N/N member Donald Nesbitt. Nellie would have turned one hundred years of age on October 22nd; unfortunately she did not quite reach that milestone. Our sympathy to the many members of Nellie's family.

## STOP PRESS

If you have received a pamphlet during the past weeks from "Family Heritage Pty. Ltd." introducing "The Book of The Nesbits or Nisbets in Australia", please be warned! Nick Vine Hall, writing in DESCENT, the Journal of the Society of Australian Genealogists, denigrates the publication. The original publishers, Haslingers of the U.S.A. sold their Australian book rights to Halberts and returned to America after many problems with textual changes required of them by the Department of Consumer Affairs. As from 7 April 1987, letters to prospective customers are being despatched from 23-27 Marquet Street, Rhodes, N.S.W., 2138, over the name Ruth Truscott. If you send your money, you will most likely be disappointed. From 'Descent' The Journal of the Society of Australian Genealogists Vol. 17, Part 2.

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NEW MEMBERS: Please add these names and addresses of new members, to the supplement which was included with Newsletter No. 4.

NEWSLETTER NO. 5.

(7)

117 CADZOW, Barbara and Kevin, 7 Clyde St., St. Arnaud, 3478, Victoria.

Also our first new member for 1987/88

171 LETCH, Mrs. Pippa M., 171 Townshend Rd., Subiaco, 6008, Western Australia.

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In the same supplement, the suburb of our past treasurer Gavin M. Nisbet was shown as Glen Waverley; please alter to read Mount Waverley. Editor.

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CLAN GATHERING: Descendants of William Watson Nisbet and Sarah Smith are gathering at Wedderburn Race Course on Sunday November 8th, 1987.

For further information contact W. Nisbet, 9 Lucas Street, Reservoir, 3073. Ph. (03) 478 9706.



GENERAL COMMITTEE:

PRESIDENT Ian M. Nisbet, A.M., 26 Walnut Road, Nth. Balwyn, 3104, Vic., Aust.  
SECRETARY Ian G. Nisbet, 1 St. Johns Parade, Kew, 3101, Vic., Aust.  
TREASURER Peter Watson, 30 Mitchell Road, Box Hill North, 3129, Vic., Aust.  
N/L EDITOR Bruce Nesbit, 6 Kent Court, P.O. Box 84 Bundoora, 3083, Vic., Aust.  
ARCHIVIST Lyn McFarland, 275 Glenlyon Road, East Brunswick, 3057, Vic., Aust.  
Dr. Ian T. Nisbet, Mr. Gavin M. Nisbet, Miss Karen Nisbet.

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Mrs. Merryn Nisbet, Mrs. Lesley Nisbet, Mrs. Elyse Glasson, Miss. Diana  
Dimattina, Mrs. Barbara Leslie.

REGIONAL OFFICERS:

Mr. George Nesbitt 110 Ardross Street, Ardross, 6153, Western Aust.  
Mr. Brian S. Nesbitt 4 Crowther Place, Curtin, 2605, A.C.T., Aust.  
Mr. James E. Nisbet 53 Yeo Street, Cremorne, 2090, N.S.W., Aust.

CONTACTS:

U.S.A.:  
Mr. William B. Kelsey 1113 Amherst Road, Panama City, Fla., 32405, U.S.A.  
U.K.:  
Mr. Peter W.W. Nisbet 7 Stafford Place, Weston-super-Mare, Avon, BS23 2QZ Eng.  
AUSTRALIA:  
Mr. Ian G. Nisbet 1 St. Johns Parade, Kew, 3101, Vic., Aust.

The Nesbitt/Nisbet Society is a Worldwide Clan Society