

# THE N/NEWS

NO. 66 JANUARY 2003

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY  
AUSTRALIA



## STARTING POINT

*Welcome to this edition of the N/News. I wish all N/N members a happy and prosperous New Year in 2003. Our thoughts and prayers are extended to any members and their families affected by the current spate of bushfires raging across many states of Australia.*

*Since N/News 65 you will have received the AGM report & President's Address as well as an invoice for your 2002/03 subscriptions, where payable. Could you please assist the treasurer and the committee by responding with payment (& optional donation) as a matter of priority. This will best allow the committee to plan and budget for the forthcoming year. Please note that the annual subscription remains at the very reasonable rate of \$15 per member or couple (family).*

*The AGM saw a return of all committee members that were willing to continue in office, but many have tendered their intentions to stand down at the conclusion of this term. Please consider volunteering your active support.*

*This edition is a little late as my family and I have just returned from a short break touring and camping our way around parts of Tasmania. After touring Port Arthur, Sarah Island and even Ross Women's Factory I am glad that I did not live in such times and certainly view anybody that did so in a different light, especially if they "made their way" in spite of such a harsh system and conditions.*

*Ed.*

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## NOTICE BOARD

(Upcoming events in the Local and Overseas Calendar)

March 30	Ringwood Highland Games, Ringwood – see page 7 for more details
April	N/NEWS # 67
July	N/NEWS # 68

Note: the social calendar can be viewed on the homepage.

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## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Important new letters regarding Frances Nisbet, Lady Nelson

On 21 October Sotheby's auctioned the The Alexander Davison Collection in London. The collection of Nelson family items was uncovered by Sotheby's jewellery director Martyn Downer last year after he visited descendants of Alexander Davison, who live overseas, to research a diamond brooch. They had remained in the Davison family, who wish to remain anonymous, for almost 200 years. Mr Downer said the family "knew about their connection to Lord Nelson and were proud of that but never really assumed these objects had any real value".

Alexander Davison, who is buried at Kirknewton, was Nelson's friend, adviser and treasurer, in whom both the admiral's wife, Frances, and his lover Lady Emma Hamilton confided. Amongst many items of interest was lot 85, a "remarkable, highly revealing and significant series of some seventy-two autograph letters" from Fanny to Alexander Davison. Readers will know that Frances Nisbet was the widow of Josiah Nisbet, and had married Admiral Nelson in 1787. At first the marriage was happy, but Nelson's infatuation with Lady Hamilton was to cause Fanny much unhappiness.

The letters, expected to fetch £50,000-£80,000 were bought for £138,650 by the National Maritime Museum in London.

The information below is taken from the Sotheby's catalogue and website:

Frances ("Fanny") Nelson (née Herbert Woolward, 1758-1831), who would become Viscountess Nelson and Duchess of Brontë, married Horatio Nelson on the West Indian island of Nevis on 11 March 1787. By her former husband, Dr Josiah Nisbet (1747-81), she had a son, Josiah (1780-1830), who would himself become a naval captain. As late as 29 June 1797 Nelson could assure his wife of his "perfect love, affection, and esteem", and even in February 1801 could still be signing himself "Your faithful and affectionate Nelson and Bronte" Nevertheless, by late 1798, when the present letters begin, Nelson's relationship with Lady Hamilton had already begun to blossom; moreover, it had long been clear to him that his wife was unlikely ever to bear him any children of his own.

From December 1798 to late 1800 Frances writes to her trusted "friend" a series which it is now impossible to read without a sense of dramatic irony (since we know so much more about what was going on with Nelson at that time than she did, while it is also unclear what Davison himself knew and was obliged to hide from her). Her main preoccupations are her constant anxiety about her beloved husband ("My Lord"), her pining for him to come home, with alternating spells of mounting excitement at news of his coming and disappointment when he is yet again delayed, her isolation from the great events of the outside world involving her husband, and her impulsion to press Davison for ever more news of him as well as entrusting him to forward her own letters to Nelson ("give it to your friend"). She regularly laments the lack of letters from her husband and, hanging on to every scrap of news she hears, reports every letter received (such as one from Trieste in 1800, which she quotes from: "...You must expect to find me a Worn out Old Man...") and every bit of information heard at second hand (such as reporting on a letter received by Lord Spencer on 8 November 1798, or that she sees "letters from My Dear Husband in the Papers")

At other times she thanks Davison warmly "for some of the most beautiful China I have ever seen"; discusses frequently her plan to get a house in London, with all the attendant arrangements, asking Davison for advice on the matter ("...but this is supposing My pension is handsome (My Husband then speaks of Round Wood, but if we have Money a Neat House in London near Hyde Park, And if possible get good servants -- The King has elevated Me, and I must support My station..."); tends to other money matters with him ("...I would not cheat for the World..."), although expressing reluctance to "interfere in any Concerns of My Dear Husband", but with occasional hints at her sense of the inadequacy of Nelson's rewards "for being a Slave to the state" (though "I rejoice", she says, "the King of Naples is sensible of My Dear Lord's Conduct, he seems to have valued it properly"); reports her own occasional nervous illnesses ("...[I] had upwards of eight oz. of blood taken from [me]...", "...I have had spasms, which has again shook me very much..."); thanks him for receipt of the Nile medal Davison had struck ("...indeed The Medal is Elegant...it shall be an heir loom to my Son who will value it as it deserves...Keep My Dear Lords Medal, for I fully expect him..."); and asks Davison as a favour to get her sick housemaid ("a capital servant") treated in the Middlesex Hospital.

Conveying news of family and domestic matters she refers, among other things, to her son Josiah; the christening of a "little Hero" in the family; a visit by Sir Edward and Lady Berry; her own house ("...The Cottage looks all the better for Papering -- quite ready to receive My Lord..."); and arrangements for visiting London herself. On 18 November 1800 Frances also writes and signs a list of her precious items at Nerots Hotel, including diamond-encrusted pictures of the Emperor of Russia and King of Sardinia and box of the Grand Signior and "The King of Naples Picture beautifully set with diamonds anchor and a Crown".

Her references to Lady Hamilton at this time are few but telling:

...Lord Hood always expresst his fears "that Sir W. & Lady Hamilton would use their influence, to keep Lord Nelson with them: they have succeeded..."

...I have had the pleasure of receiving a line from My Dear Lord dated 11th. of Sept [1799] Palermo, he says he is tolerable, and hopes to run thro' the Winter by which time he thinks we shall have Peace -- Bronte he hears is beautiful but he has not time to go and see it he is never out of his Writing room and now and then in the Evening takes a Walk with Sir W & Lady Hamilton My Dear Husband desires me to send him a Gould Lace Hat, and a round one...

...Lady Hamilton's second letter, I have received. it mention[s] My Husbands recovery, she says `Our ever valuable friend was quite recovered when he left us...indeed he requird a great deal of good Nursing and Asses Milk Sir W. and Lady Hamilton's kindness, attention and real friendship, has been great indeed just such as yours...Lady H speaks very kindly of My Son -- Who promises to write when he has time...

With the coming of the year 1801, by which time Frances is fully aware of her husband's relationship with Emma Hamilton and Nelson has made what would be his final separation from her on 13 January, the tone of her letters becomes increasingly sombre. In February she learns from the newspapers of the arrival of her Lord at Torbay but gets no answers to her own letters there

...A want of confidence in keeping any thing from you, that mortifies me would bespeak a little mind, therefore I will relate to you a thing which seems nothing, but coming from Lady Hamilton I am certain some Mischief is brewing; After I left London she sent for Martinelli, and offered him her Butlers place, telling him...I am extremely surprised at Lady Nelson's leaving London at this time of the year...and parting with all the servants -- I cannot think the reason of it, to My knowledge Lord Nelson allows her 2000 a year and with that she might make a pretty appearance...it was the talk of the kitchen...None of us I believe like the servants to know our incomes...

From this time onwards, as the momentum of the drama accelerates, Frances's letters to Davison -- whom she had always used as a close and trusted confidant and adviser in any case -- become even increasingly outpourings of personal feelings, unhappiness and forlorn hope, as well as pleas for him to do everything in his power to restore to her the husband to whom she is as utterly devoted as ever

...I hope in God all you say will prove true -- My Mind has not recovered its Natural calmness -- [n]or do I think it ever will-- I am now distrustful and fearful of my own shadow...

On 24 July 1801 she quotes a long passage from a remarkable letter by her husband in which he rejects brutally her offer to nurse him ("...I fixed as I thought a proper allowance to enable you to remain quiet, and not to be posting, from one end of the Kingdom to the other..."), commenting: "you may suppose the consternation it threw me into: I own I never allowed Myself to think any change was wrought in my favor -- but I was willing and desirous to shew every attention which affection dictated"

On 15 March she is pleased at the news that her "Dear deluded Lord" met with his stepson, Josiah Nisbet, affectionately, though concerned that Josiah is still kept stranded, waiting for a commission on a ship. She also has much to say about the reactions of other members of the Nelson family to her predicament and the strain put upon them, especially upon the Admiral's old father, the Rev. Edmund Nelson ("good Mr Nelson"), whom she tells "that things did not appear in bright Colours at present still I had hopes all wou'd do well". The old man offers to help her, she says, by furnishing her house, and is greatly distraught by her separation from his son Horatio

After 1801 Frances's letters to Davison dwindle to a very few, chiefly about business and house matters. Following the death of Nelson at Trafalgar, Lady Nelson's five last letters in this series are written on black-edged mourning stationery. Among further requests for his compliance in connection with the deed of trust, they express her formal thanks to "the Patriotic Fund for their mark of consideration, and respect for My lamented Lord's memory" ("...I have seen Lord Hood who tells me there are no accounts of the Victory..."). On 14 December, she reacts sharply to Davison's coming to see her accompanied by his two sons, instructing him never to bring anyone with him on visits "without prior acquainting me, and I will then say what I think right", adding that she will wait longer in town "in hope of hearing the content of Will & Codicil".

This remarkably revealing series throws extensive light -- perhaps more vividly than does any documentation which has previously come to light -- on Frances Nelson's own personality, her emotions, her devotion to her husband, and her relations with the Nelson family, whose reactions to his liaison with Lady Hamilton are also highlighted. Lady Nelson, the wronged and virtually forgotten wife -- whose reputation has been totally overshadowed by that of her perennially glamorous rival in one of the world's most celebrated love stories -- becomes a major character in the drama in her own right. Her evident unfailing love for her "dear" husband, despite the brutality of his dealings with her (of which we have brief but vivid glimpses here), makes it clear

why she (allegedly) chose to destroy 'incriminating' letters by him which would have shown the national hero in a less than attractive light. Finally, the letters also show the extent of her appreciation of Davison and the warmth of their relationship -- supporting the view that he was in every way a very special and trusted friend of Nelson -- while, sadly, revealing the eventual cooling of the relationship because, not for the only time in Davison's career, a matter of apparent financial chicanery came to light.

THIS UNIQUE SERIES IS UNPUBLISHED AND UNRECORDED. It was quite unknown to Frances Nelson's 1939 biographer E.M. Keate (who characteristically lamented the "great difficulty" of finding "any records of Lady Nelson's life apart from her husband").

Mark Nesbitt, [marknesbittuk@yahoo.com](mailto:marknesbittuk@yahoo.com)

*The above article is reproduced from the Winter 2002 N/N Society UK Newsletter, Volume XVIII Number IV and was submitted by Clan Chief and N/N Society Archivist, Dr Mark Nesbitt (of that ilk). I, coincidentally, read the following useless fact the same day I had first read Mark's article. The snippet is taken from a publication of astonishing ailments, beastly bugs, crazy cures and fantastic facts entitled "Would You Believe It, Doctor?" published by Coronet Books 1977, p.101.*

The centrepiece of James Graham's Temple of Health, which opened in 1780, was his Celestial Bed. It was 12 ft long by 9 ft wide, supported by 40 pillars and topped with a dome containing 'balmy and ethereal spices' and lined with mirrors. The therapeutic force of the bed was provided by 15 cwt of magnets and a squadron of 'vestal virgins' including the future Lady Hamilton, Nelson's mistress.

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### (NES)-BITS & PIECES

*Ian Clarke submitted the following two articles. The first is in response to a mention of Randolph Cosby Nesbitt in the article "The Sinking of the Birkenhead" in N/News 65 and is taken from "The Register of the Victoria Cross" published by 'This England' in 1981.*

#### NESBITT

918

Randolph Cosby

Rank: Captain (later Major)

Unit/Force: Mashonaland Mounted Police, South African Forces

Other Decorations: -

Place/Date of Deed: Matabeleland, Rhodesia – 19 June 1896

Place/Date of Birth: Queenstown, Cape Colony, South Africa – 20 Sept. 1867

Place/Date of Death: Cape Town, South Africa – 23 July 1956

Place of Memorial: Ashes interred in Anglican Cathedral, Salisbury, Rhodesia

Town/County Connections: -

Remarks: -

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*The second is taken from "Roll of Honour" from the "Australians Remembered Map" published by HEMA Maps – Information Victoria. These are the Australian only deaths due to war.*

Sudan 1885	Total Deaths – 9
Nil N/N's	
South African War 1899 – 1902	Total Deaths – 606
Nil N/N's	
China 1900 – 1901	Total Deaths – 6
Nil N/N's	
World War I 1914 - 1918	Total Deaths – 61,720
Nesbit D.M. / J.W.	
Nesbitt A.D./ C. / R.W.T. / T.H. / T.H. / T.J. (2 x T.H.)	
Nisbet J.	
Nisbett E.J.	
World War II 1939 – 1945	Total Deaths – 39,366
Nesbitt J. / J.C. / V.C.	
Nisbet A.J./ D. / E.A. / G.J.M. / M.B.	

Malayan Emergency 1948 – 1960 Nil N/N's	Total Deaths – 36
Korea 1950 - 1953 Nil N/N's	Total Deaths – 339
Indonesian Confrontation 1962 – 1966 Nil N/N's	Total Deaths – 15
Vietnam War 1962 – 1972 Nisbet C.R.	Total Deaths – 520
Peace Keeping Operations	
Somalia 1992 – 1994 Nil N/N's	Total Deaths – 1
Afghanistan 2001 - onward Nil N/N's	Total Deaths – 1

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### NETWORKED N/N's

*The following is a series of excerpts from an article that appeared in the Herald Sun, Wednesday, January 22, 2003, p.30, entitled 'Paper archive on Net'*

"COLD North Wind Inc. and News Limited, the Australian division of News Corporation Limited have released on the Internet access to 20 more years of the Melbourne *Herald Sun*.

Known originally as the *Port Phillip Herald*, the first 20 years of the paper's archives – 1840-1860 – were digitised and made available last year.

Now the years 1860-80 - ..... – have been placed on the Internet for public access."

"The archives are accessible worldwide on the Internet and can be searched and viewed by keyword or date, unlocking a treasure trove of historical material.

The paper will digitise another 20 years in the next couple of months, bringing the online archive up to the Federation of Australia in 1901."

"The *Herald* archive is included in Paper of Record. This is CNW's website for access to the archives of a diverse collection of newspapers that captures the authenticity of historical newspapers by displaying a searchable, full-page digital image of the original document, as it was preserved on microfilm.

Paper of Record provides researchers of all ages the chance to rediscover the headlines of yesterday as they were first reported; search through volumes of birth, death and marriage notices; read the editorials of previous eras; and laugh at the ads of another time across a number of newspapers all in one website."

The site is:  
[portphillipherald.archivepublisher.com](http://portphillipherald.archivepublisher.com)

*This site should be of interest to all N/N members undertaking any genealogical research in Australia.*

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*Gwenda Nisbet, a keen eBay user (so I am told), submitted the following:*

I saw this item for sale on eBay, The world's Online Marketplace TM, and thought you might be interested.

Title of item: Noel Nisbet, ex Christies Sale.  
Flowers OIL  
Seller: britpic  
Starts: 19-Jan-03 08:20:11 AEDST  
Ends: 26-Jan-03 08:20:11 AEDST  
Price: Currently US\$3.75

Description: English School unframed oil painting dating to the mid 20th century. Unsigned, but bears a studio stamp to the reverse stating that it is by Noel L. Nisbet R.I., Studio 1984. I imagine this was the date of his studio clearance sale. The painting also bears a Christies Lot number sticker to the back. It is of strong quality and a good painting. Generally good condition. Image is 12.5 by 10 inches.

*Does anybody have any details on Noel L. Nisbet?*

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### **Subject: Artwork by Alexander Nisbet**

You can peruse artwork by Alex Nisbet, in colour and **subject to copyright** at:  
<http://www.alexnisbet.com/>

## SOCIETY NEWS

AGM 2002, held on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2002: Some 13 stalwarts gathered to forge the Society into 2003. All committee members were re-elected with several citing notice that this will be their final term, as they will be unable to continue beyond this term. An enjoyable afternoon of business, fellowship and "catching up" ensued. Thank you to our hosts, Ian and Joy Nisbet.

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Christmas Gathering 2002, held on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2002: Some 22 members gathered to celebrate Christmas in fine kinship. A great time of entertainment, feasting and revelry was had by all. The musical/singing program was led by Ms Loreta Hodson (soloist), who was accompanied by Ms Kaye Allen on the piano. Thanks to our generous hosts again, Ian & Joy Nisbet, and our gratitude to the social committee for organising the event and catering so generously, once again.

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## N/N's IN THE NEWS

*Whilst not quite in the news, this one was spotted on the television by S Nesbitt.*

While watching the ABC programme "Foyles War", I noticed in the credits the name of Gillian Nesbitt – Publicist.

Also in your last newsletter on page 6 there was an email from a Gillian Turner nee Nesbitt. Maybe this is the same person.

Regards, S Nesbitt

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## THE WANTED LIST

*The following article was spotted in the Herald Sun, 'classifieds', Friday, October 11, 2002, p.107 under the 'Connections' sub heading:*

"SEEKING descendants of Henry George Saunders (Collingwood F.C.), Hugh McDonald (Homebush Vic.), Thomas and Ruby Bennell (nee Morse) (Kew), Milley and Maude Nesbitt families (Archdale area Vic.), McKellar and Sutherland families (Allansford area Vic.), Guiney family (SA), Clara Ormsby family and brothers Bert, Reg and sister Eva Higgins (Maryborough Vic.), Ann Maria Matheson and sister Rachel Mouser (nee Lee) (St Arnaud Vic.) and the John James family (Maryborough Vic.). Seeking family history, info and photos. Contact Alistair Lee (03) 5244-5127."

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**Date:** December 15, 2002  
**Name:** Nancy F. McLaughlan  
**Email Address:** nandimac@lineone.net  
**Subject:** Katherine Nisbett

Katherine Nisbett (not sure of correct spelling) was my 3 x g grandfather. She married my 3 x g grandfather CHARLES McDOUGAL in 1859. Angus on 5th December, 1795. They had 8 children. Searched high and low for Katherine's parents or siblings, but so far had no luck.

Charles McDougal died in 1855, but Katherine must have died before the 1841 census as she is not listed along with some of the family. Have just found this site and think it is great.

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**From:** [congojimjune@optusnet.com.au](mailto:congojimjune@optusnet.com.au)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 18 December 2002  
**Subject:** Mary Nisbet

I have just been looking at the Nisbet/Nesbit Society pages. I am tracing my family history and would like to know if you can help me please.

My g g grandfather, George Rutherford married Jane Strangeways in Edinburgh 1859. On the marriage cert. Jane's parents were Christopher Strangeways and Mary Nisbet.

I would like to find out more about Mary, if I can. Jane was born in Millfield, Northumberland and George in Chatton, Northumberland.

This is all I have. Can you help with more on this Mary Nisbet?

Thank you  
Jim Congreve

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**GENERAL COMMITTEE:**

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**The Nesbitt/Nisbet Society Australia is a member of the Council of Clans**

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

**INTERNET SITE:**

<http://www.nnsoc.org.au>