

# THE N/NEWS

NO. 70 JANUARY 2004

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY  
AUSTRALIA



## STARTING POINT

*I take this opportunity to formally wish N/N members all the best in 2004.*

*"Dues are Due" notices for 2003/04 subscriptions were recently issued to Australian members and I would ask that you act promptly in responding to them. Some notices were issued with a note advising that the records from which I was working indicated that 2002/03 subscriptions may have been outstanding – it was not possible at the time to access the most current listings for a variety of reasons. Please accept my apology if your notice was one of the few that may have been inappropriately noted.*

*New Zealand members please find accompanying a note explaining our current considerations regarding options of servicing your subscriptions.*

*I trust that all members find this edition of the N/News informative, but also trust that you note that submissions from Australian and New Zealand members are requested and would be appreciated by both local members as well as our international counterparts. You might also note that our members of Irish descent are less well represented in the content.*

*So far nobody has taken up my challenge issued in N/News 69 - **Editor's challenge** – supply me with a translated version of the poem "Auld Nisbet's Bull", preferably with some bibliographical notes if possible – the challenge still stands!*

*I look forward to receiving your submissions and continued support.*

*Ed.*

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## NOTICE BOARD-D

(Upcoming events in the Local and Overseas Calendar)

Feb-April	Social Gathering – To be advised
April	N/NEWS # 71
May 15	2004 N/N Gathering, "Black Bull Hotel", Duns, Berwickshire, Scotland
July	N/NEWS # 72

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

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## 2004 N/N Gathering, Duns, Berwickshire

*The UK committee have now released full details of the programme, including advice regarding travel and accommodation. Presentations are to be delivered on Nisbet House restorations and Gunsgreen House Trust, as well as visits to these sites (grounds only at Nisbet House).*

*The Australian (& New Zealand) Branch of the Society do not currently have a representative. Should any member/s be so fortunate as to be travelling to the UK at about the date of 15<sup>th</sup> May, especially if able to attend this important gathering (now biennial – alternating with North American Gathering) then please contact the committee (president, chairman or secretary) for further details and discussion. On behalf of the N/N Society – Australia we wish the UK Branch every success.*

## (NES)-BITS & PIECES

*I recently received the UK Nesbitt/Nisbet Newsletter, Winter 2003, Volume XX, Number 4, and quote part of the UK President's Winter Message from page 1 as an introduction to the following article, which was lifted from page 2 of the same Newsletter:*

*"The N/N Society has joined the Friends of Gunsgreen House in Eyemouth. The house is a Grade A listed building dating from 1753. The architects were John and James Adam, 2 of the most famous 18<sup>th</sup> century designers ever to work in Scotland and England. The family history of the branch of the Nisbets who built the house has recently been established.*

*John Nisbet's "tea chute" is a unique survival from the days when the house was used for smuggling. The old doocot (i.e. dovecot) or signal tower is to be redeveloped and will be known as Nisbet's Tower.*

*We are privileged to have Professor Alistair Rowan, Chairman of the Trust, as a speaker at our Gathering. We also have Mr. Will Grimes, the architect responsible for the latest restoration of Nisbet House, who has kindly agreed to update us on the refurbishment since it was purchased by Magnus Laird as a private house."*

### **Nisbets of Gunsgreen House**

#### **Recent Historical Discoveries**

As building work has proceeded on the house our understanding of the history of Gunsgreen and of the owners of the property has been developing. When the Trust was set up the names of John Nisbet and of his brothers David and Patrick were not known. In 1998 a careful search of the title deeds identified each of the owners throughout the history of the house, and provided quite a lot of incidental information as well. This history has been set out in The Gunsgreen House Report. More recently, through the researches of Mrs Jan Conway, a fuller picture of the Nisbet family has emerged.

#### **The Nisbet Family**

The line of the Nisbets of Gunsgreen probably goes back to a merchant in Eyemouth, William Nisbet, who is known to have had three daughters (one of whom was married to Alexander Home of Sclaithouse in 1701) and at least one son, David. It is this David who was the father of John Nisbet of Gunsgreen. His wife's name was Alison Young and in the early years of the eighteenth century at least three sons were born to the couple: the eldest was William, called after his paternal grandfather; then David, born 22 October 1710 and John, the builder of Gunsgreen, born 2 November 1712. It is possible that there was a fourth son Patrick Nisbet who is recorded as a tenant at Gunsgreen in 1774. Much of the information of the Nisbet family comes from 'Testament of William Nisbet', proved on 30 August 1774. At this time both of William's brothers were living and acting as his executors. David Nisbet, junior, died fourteen years later, on 9 April 1788, aged 77, and John Nisbet, himself, seems to have died at some time in the same year or more likely in 1789, also aged 77. A tombstone in Eyemouth churchyard, now much eroded, is in memory of Margaret Nisbet, died 1812, and John, died in 1789. This may perhaps mean that the builder of the house was married to Margaret Nisbet, though the date of her death suggests either that she survived to a great age or that she was a good deal younger than her husband. By the time of his death John Nisbet was no longer the owner of Gunsgreen. It is known that the Excise Office had long had its eyes on the Nisbet brothers and it may well be that John fell foul of the law and was forced to sell up. There is no record to tell whether he had any children.

The elder brother, William, is better documented though his history bears little or no relation to the story of Gunsgreen. His wife was Elizabeth Ramsay and the couple had two daughters but no sons. Both daughters died before their father and he left a life-rent right and residency in the two tenements of houses, then possessed by him and by George Richardson, his tenant, to his widow, Elizabeth Nisbet. His daughters were Alison (who married William Henderson and had two children Jean and John) and Margaret (who married William Graham and had five children, who are listed in his will as Andrew, William, John, Isobel and Margaret).

The picture of William Nisbet's life, of a man owning property and interests in life-rents may illustrate the modest nature of Scottish society in the pre-industrial age. The Nisbets were merchants dealing in local produce and consumables but they were people whose lives were quite simple and uncluttered by the possessions of the modern, post-industrial age. John Nisbet was living in East Lothian, at Dunbar, at the time of his father's death in 1746. Presumably he moved to Eyemouth to look after the family's affairs shortly after that. With his brother William, he acted as an executor for his father's estate. He was 34 years old and probably already married.

The record of David Nisbet's property, drawn up at the time of his death, gives an itemised account of his possessions, the three horses which he owned - two old and one young - his cow, a cart, items of farm equipment and the contents and furnishings of the house that John Nisbet had grown up in. The picture which emerges is extraordinarily bleak with old utensils, old beds, worn furniture, three old paintings worth a penny each, and a broken clock. The house consisted of a kitchen, a shop with a little room off it, a 'Western Room above stairs', which may have been used as a parlour since it had 'seven old chairs' in it, a chest and a mirror (as well as a bed with green curtains) and a second bed in the closet off it. There was a Mid Room, three bedrooms and an attic above. Since everything is old and used, it may be that William and John Nisbet had removed the best pieces of furniture and other items before the inventory was made. Men who led a double life as merchants and smugglers would not have been above the art of adjusting the record of a parent's estate if it suited their purposes to do so!

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**Francis Nesbitt:** *Francis Nesbitt has been mentioned in N/News articles in the past, firstly as 'Francis Nesbitt McCron' in N/News 14, p.2 and then again as 'Mr Nesbit, Theatre Actor' in N/News 36, p.2 and again as a follow up in N/News 37, p. 1.*

*The following article was supplied by Ian Clarke, being an extract from "The Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835-1852, Vol I", page 477 (part) by Garry Owen, published in 1888 (500 only facsimile editions printed by Heritage Publications).*

#### FRANCIS NESBITT

Was and actor of considerable merit, who never settled down steadily for any time in one place. A theatrical meteor, shooting about between the colonies, of no steadfast purpose, bothering himself little as what the morrow would bring forth; a good fellow and well liked, it was regrettable that one of his undoubted ability should be so deficient in the brain ballast necessary for a fortunate trip through the world. An Irishman by birth, he found his way on the stage at an early age, and was for years a 'stock' actor in the Mother-country, his last 'Home' engagement being in Glasgow. On reaching Sydney, being unable to obtain theatrical employment there, he was glad to accept the baton of a policeman. In a short time he interviewed Mr. Joseph Simmons, stage manager of the Victoria Theatre. Simmons who played everything that was good, asked the applicant what he could do, and the reply was "any leading part," but he should like to open as *Rolla* in the tragedy of 'Pizarro'. Simmons, somewhat scoffingly, rejoined that *Rolla* being one of his specialities, the Sydney public would not recognize anyone else in it. It was decided, however, that the tragedy should be put up, and Nesbitt to play *Pizarro*. This impersonation is a very showy one, and, set off with Nesbitt's fine manly figure and splendid voice, Simmons, much to his own discomfort, was completely cast in the shade. The contrast between the style of the two performers was such as to exclude any professional comparison. In a few nights after, the public recognition which Simmons fancied he had exclusively for himself, was so impaired that he was not unwilling to change places with the new-comer. He remained for some time at a very moderate salary, but his Australian wanderings soon commenced, and he kept flitting from place to place until his death. On applying to Mr. Coppin for information as to Nesbitt's ultimate fate, he favoured me with the following ray of hallowed light shed over the untombed grave which Brooke found in the Bay of Biscay, when he went down with the 'London' steamer on his voyage from England to Melbourne in 1866:- "Nesbitt was of the same school of acting as Brooke, and very like him in voice, manner, and talent. I buried him at my own expense when I had the Geelong Theatre, before going to England. Upon my return with G.V. Brooke, I took him to see Nesbitt's grave, and gave him the history of his countryman. The result was that poor Brooke erected a headstone with the following inscription :-

"Erected in memory of Francis M'Crone Nesbitt, who departed this life 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1853, aged 42 years, by his fellow countryman Gustavus V. Brooke, as a last tribute to the genius of a brother tragedian."

*The following article was lifted from the UK Nesbitt/Nisbet Newsletter, Autumn 2003, Volume XX, Number 3, page 6.*

## **Archerfield House**

### **Plan for mansion bunkered**

Plans to transform a 17<sup>th</sup> century historic mansion visited by Sir Winston Churchill into a luxury golf clubhouse are set to be dropped.

Instead, Edinburgh pub tycoon Kevin Doyle is pressing ahead with moves to turn the historic Archerfield House, near Dirleton, East Lothian, into luxury flats as part of a massive £55 million golf course and hotel development. The restoration has won cautious backing from heritage watchdogs and local residents, who have long campaigned for the ruined mansion to be given a new lease of life.

Under the ambitious plans lodged with the East Lothian Council, Mr Doyle's Caledonian Heritable would convert the mansion into seven luxury flats – ditching a proposal to convert the house into a luxury clubhouse.

The flats would secure the long-term future of the mansion on the massive Archerfield Estate, where Prime Minister Herbert Asquith spent his summer holidays during the First World War and Winston Churchill also visited.

Last year, Caledonian Heritable asked East Lothian Council officials to re-negotiate planning permission for the development. It had agreed to pay a bond for the restoration of the Archerfield House, but then decided to phase the restoration.

### **Archerfield Estate was bought by Sir William Nisbet of Dirleton in 1633.**

Sir William built the mansion house towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and, in 1790, the interior was remodelled by Robert Adam. The house was the former home of the Duke of Hamilton and author Robert Louis Stevenson lived at nearby Marine Villa.

A wildlife haven, the area is home to numerous deer and on a clear day, it offers outstanding views across the Forth. Previous plans by American businessman John Ashworth to develop most of the estate fell through after he hit funding problems.

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## **SOCIETY NEWS**

**Christmas Gathering:** The Christmas Gathering was held on December 6<sup>th</sup> at the home of Ian M & Joy Nisbet. It was heartening to catch up with those in attendance, including our guest pianist, Mr Ray Sharpe, our guest piper, Mr Bill Walker and Major 'Digger' Griff Brooke plus several other guests. An enjoyable time was had by all, being capped off with a grand supper and monster raffle. Thanks once again to hosts Joy and Ian Nisbet, and members of the social committee, plus a special thanks to Lauren Nisbet for organising the parlour game.

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## **N/N's IN THE NEWS**

*On page 10 of the mX News of Monday November 24, 2003 in the "Nice one" snippet was the following article.*

Crocodiles in far north Queensland are about to give up thousands of years of secrets to satellite technology. Steve Irwin has spent the past few weeks at **Nesbitt River**, on Cape York Peninsula, helping wire crocs up to the satellite age. The research will play a fundamental role in understanding how crocs roam around their territory.

*Of course Steve Irwin is "the crocodile hunter" as seen on television throughout the world, and who is extremely passionate about his crocodiles – what an irony – bringing (supposed) prehistoric relics into the computer/satellite era.*

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**FEATURE ARTICLE**  
**(in two parts)**

*Continuing the article on Sir Alexander Nisbet RN, MD, with a further excerpt from his journal describing in detail the symptoms and treatment of one of the convicts entrusted to his medical care on the voyage aboard the convict ship "Asia", as transcribed by Ian Sutherland Ross. This article began in N/News 69, page 3, with an extract from one of Sir Alexander's journals recounting his general remarks on the voyage.*

**Case study of Julia Byrne**

Case 4 Jud. Byrne  
Agt. 25 F. Convict  
7 Oct Vesp. - At sea  
Synochus  
Cured 30<sup>th</sup> October

*Languor lassitude and debility, anorexia with headache and pain of back and limbs, thirst, skin hot, pulse quick, tongue dry. Complaint came this afternoon.*

*Fiat vas statum firmat vivis T. Cass A Pil Calom c Jalap*

*Mag "it si opus sit(?) Sulph Magnes. 3 grs was made.*

*(As soon as conditions permit, mix and administer Tincture of Cassia, Pills of Calomel with Jalap. ....? 3 grains of Sulphate of Magnesia)*

*Twenty ounces of blood was taken away before any visible effect was made on the system. After the blood letting the pulse having again risen with great heat of skin, she was sponged all over with cold vinegar & water.*

8<sup>th</sup> *Passed a tolerable night but does not feel much better, headache with extreme thirst continues. Pulse is reduced in both strength & frequency, skin cool and moist, tongue clean but dry. Pills operated very freely during the night, did not require her salts.*

*Cass Julep Antim per potio.*

*(Julep of Cassia and Antimony)*

*Vesp. Feels much better, headache easier less thirst. Skin warm and moist.*

*Cass. Calomel*

*(Cassia and Calomel)*

9<sup>th</sup> *Passed a tolerable night, feels much better, has still a slight headache, thirst moderate, pulse & skin natural, tongue clean & moist.*

*..... Sulph. Magnes. 3grs(?) Ant.(?) Julep*

*(3 grains Sulphate of Magnesia, Julep of Antimony)*

10<sup>th</sup> *Has had a very restless night and does not feel quite as well today headache & thirst much increased, with irritability of stomach, had two stools from the salts. Pulse quick, skin hot & dry.*

*Cass. Calomel ..... Ductus(?) Sulph. Magnes. 3grs(?)*

*(Cassia and Calomel ..... by tube? 3 grains Sulphate of Magnesia)*

Vesp *Feels much better headache gone, vomiting ceased, gums slightly inflamed with mercurial factor of the breath, skin warm & moist, pulse moderate, had several copious stools from the salts.*

11<sup>th</sup> *A return of the headache and increased thirst, gums tender with slight Ptyalism, pulse moderate, skin warm & moist, tongue cracked.*

*Julep Lemon*

*(Lemon Julep)*

Vesp *Headache continues with thirst and a diminished flow of saliva, tongue gums ulcerating, pulse 96 soft, skin sore*

*Cass. Sulph. Magnes. 3grs(?)*

*(Cassia. 3 grains Sulphate of Magnesia)*

- 12<sup>th</sup> Had a very restless night from the headache & soreness of the mouth but is now a good deal better, ptyalism more free and the gums have lost the ulcerated appearance. Had two stools from the salts, she took another dose this morning which has not yet operated.  
Mint Garg. Cons A. Hab. Vin 3gs(?)  
(Mint Gargua <gargle> Keep .....?... 3 gs Vinegar)
- Vesp A return of all the unfavourable symptoms, ptyalism checked the ulcerated appearance of the gums, mouth dry and without soreness, had an attack of epistaxis in the afternoon which was slight, pulse 96 firm, skin warm and moist.  
Cass. Status(?) Sulph. Magnes. 3gs(?) Vin. (?) Tinct. Ant.  
(Immediately gave 3 grains Sulphate of Magnesia. Vinegar. Tincture of Antimony.)
- 13<sup>th</sup> Little complaint now but the soreness of the mouth, ptyalism came on in the course of the night & gave immediate relief, headache gone pulse moderate & soft, bowels freely opened.  
Cons. Gargle (?)...  
(Conserva Gargle – maintain gargle)
- 14<sup>th</sup> Continues better, but is very querulous about the soreness of the mouth preventing eating.  
Cass. Decoct. Gent. ... in all.  
(Cassia. Decoction of Gentian ... in all?)

*This patient continued from this time to improve steadily, attention being placed in the state of her bowels and taking a potion of wine with tonics each day and using a diet of preserved meat.*

#### Notes on symptoms, treatment and medicines:

Synochus	constant fever
Anorexia	loss of weight
Tincture	an alcoholic extract of drug usually prepared by percolation or maceration
Cassia	from the species which yields senna – a laxative and carminative
Calomel	mercurous chloride – given as a laxative and applied topically as an anti-bacterial
Jalap	a drastic purgative and irritant
Sulphate of Magnesia	Epsom salts – rapid and powerful purgative
Julep	a sweet drink variously prepared; esp. a liquid sweetened with syrup or sugar and used as a vehicle for administering
Antimony	irritates gastric mucosa and stimulates vomiting. An emetic or expectorant
Ptyalism	excessive flow of saliva
Julep of Lemon	used to relieve thirst
Mint Gargua	mint gargle – produces a degree of analgesia, accompanied by local vasodilation
Vinegar	many uses – diluted forms as anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and also as an expectorant
Epistaxis	nose bleed
Decoction	an extraction of water-soluble substances in a drug made by boiling for 10 mins. in distilled water
Gentian	used as a bitter tonic to stimulate gastric secretion and improve appetite

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### NETWORKED N/N's

**Scots of Victoria Website:** *The Scots of Victoria (Coordinating Group) website can be found at: [www.latrobe.edu.au/scotsofvictoria](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/scotsofvictoria) where details of up to about 150 Scottish Organisations in Victoria might be found.*

*The Scots of Victoria, in discussion with the Celtic Club, has negotiated the lease of an office to establish the 'Scottish Community Resource Centre'. The aim of this 'Resource Centre' is to provide a point of contact for members of the public to access information about the Scottish community – the various Scottish organisations and their activities. It is (to be) located at 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, The Celtic Club, 320 Queen Street, Melbourne and will be open Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday each week between 10am & 3pm. The telephone number is yet to be advised.*

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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**

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