

NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY

Australia



NEWSLETTER NO. 7.

APRIL 1988

STARTING POINT

(Latest News and Views from the Editorial Staff)

STATE OF THE NATION: I'm sure many members are interested to know how the society is going in terms of membership now that we are well into our second year. Unfortunately our numbers have dropped a little - we presently stand at 103 fully paid up members. Previous members who did not renew their subscriptions were mainly from states other than Victoria. It is important that we are an Australian society, not just a Victorian society. To this end the committee is making efforts to boost the level of interest in other states, particularly N.S.W. where there are many known N/Ns, but only 21 members. It is especially important that non-Victorian members publicise the society so that active branches can be set up and all members can enjoy the full privileges of the society. Hopefully our numbers will soon eclipse the high levels achieved in our first year!

Dr. Ian T. Nisbet.

NEWSLETTER CIRCULATION: We are pleased to inform members that our humble newsletter is being sent to 8 Australian genealogical societies and twelve libraries in Scotland and Ireland, as well as the North American and U.K. branches. Clearly members who enter searches in the newsletter are sure of worldwide exposure. Rupert Murdoch, eat your heart out!

Dr. Ian T. Nisbet.

(NES) BITS AND PIECES

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

STUDY TOUR BY DR. IAN G. O'BRIEN: We mentioned in our Newsletter No. 4 of July 1987 that A.C.T. members Ian O'Brien and his wife Lorna, were off on a six months jaunt to England Europe and Scandinavia.

Ian, who holds the position of Principal Lecturer in Biomedical and Chemical Technology at the Canberra College of Advanced Education was on a study tour based at Southampton. In a letter dated 6th March 1988 he told me of his trip. This is a very lightly edited version of that letter.

Ian said, "The trip was a great success in many ways. My scientific research went off well, we got around quite a bit to see parts of the U.K., Europe and Scandinavia which we missed on our last trip and we both made significant progress in our family research".

Ian and Lorna both had an interest in the Shetlands; Lorna is a descendant of the Taits of Fetlar and arrangements had been made to meet Andrina Nisbet who lives on the central island, Yell. They spent time with Rena (which she prefers) and her parents, and learned of the history of Shetland and the Nisbets there. Rena believes that a lost relative may have emigrated to Australia last century.

"It was coincidental that the husband and wife owners of the guest house where we stayed were both related to Lorna and had extensive research on the Taits. They related interesting stories, and we were shown several sites where Lorna's ancestors had lived, back to the 1500s; and the remains of some of their dwellings back to the late 1600s. It is difficult to describe the beauty

of the whole place since it is so different from anything we know. There isn't a tree anywhere, so one can see for great distances; almost all places have a sea view. All I can say is that you must see it to appreciate it.

In the Scottish Highlands, I discovered what I believe was probably the reason for my great grandparents, John and Janet (Jessie) Graham leaving to come to Australia, about 1850. There was a particularly brutal 'clearance' of the crofters from the valleys of their area, Glencalvie - Ross shire, during that period."

Ian went on to say that he was amazed at his ignorance of those events in Scottish history. He is of the opinion that during his primary and secondary education in Victoria the episode was given little prominence. He continues, "I was able to visit the site where my great great grandparents were married in 1819 which was quite near the place where the Marquis of Montrose (James Graham) had been betrayed and defeated by Cromwell's supporters, near Boner Bridge just before his final defeat in 1645".

On returning to Southampton Ian contacted Richard Nesbitt of Alresford, President of the U.K. N/N Society. He says of Richard, "Lorna and I were impressed by the kind hospitality and generosity of time spent showing us around the locality. One memorable place was the site of a battle just out of Alresford where a significant body of Cromwell's forces were under grave threat from a Royalist army. Bad discipline by the latter and the use of superior artillery by the former caused the 'tactical withdrawal' of the Royalists. Richard explained that had the Royalists won, they would have proceeded to London and would almost certainly have defeated Cromwell. The battle was therefore potentially very significant .

Richard asks that whoever comes to see him should arrange to stay some days - preferably a week - so that he has time to talk about the N/N Family, to show the memorabilia, and the locality. I also would advise it, since he has a lot of interesting things to say."

Note: Miss Andrina Nisbet of Shetland dedicates her leisure time to her personal genealogical research; to work for the genealogical society; to assisting the N/N Society and to the preservation of the Old Haa of Burravoe, the oldest building on the Isle of Yell which dates from 1637.

Andrina is the Regional Secretary for Scotland.

Editor.

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N.S.W. N/N BIRTHS, DEATHS, & MARRIAGES INDEXES: Thanks to the endeavor of James E. Nisbet of Cremorne, N.S.W., we now have the N.S.W. N/N BDMs up to 1905. The earliest entries are as follows: John Nesbitt, b. 1830, father, adult, Reg. No. 3100/12; Henry K. Nisbet, d. 1847, Reg. No. 157/32; Susan Nesbit m. James Richards 1833, Reg. No. 21/126.

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JEDBURGH OR BOST: Maree, the daughter of society members Dom and Betty Dimattina of Box Hill North, Victoria, and her friend Pina Lazzara will attend the May 28 Gathering at Ferniehirst Castle, Scotland.

Maree and Pina have flown out on a six months world tour via Honolulu, across the U.S.A. to London. While in England they will hire a car and visit Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Then follows a 'tour' of Russia, Scandinavia and Europe.

Also making the trip to Jedburgh are members Peter and Beryl Nesbitt of Corlette, N.S.W. Peter is originally from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northumberland and will attend the gathering with his parents and cousin Gary D. Nesbitt and wife Kathleen who live in the U.K. On behalf of the society we wish all 'bon voyage'.

NISBET VILLAGE

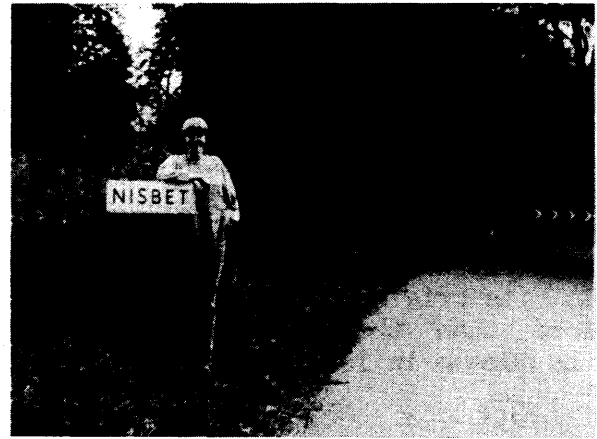
The village of NISBET which consists of about a dozen slate roofed cottages, a church and telephone box is situated 3 miles N.N.W of Jedburgh in "The Borders" (an area in S.E. Scotland) about twelve miles west of the English border.

In the area are/were East Nisbet (now Allanbank), West Nisbet and Upper Nisbet. There is also Nisbet Hillhead, Nisbet Mill, Upper Nisbet Moor and the Nisbet Boathouse referred to in Newsletter No. 6.

Nisbet is situated in a true woodland setting on the north bank of the Teviot River below the slopes of Peniel Heugh on the peak of which is erected the Waterloo Monument.

There were once several towers here (all destroyed in the fury of border warfare) and an old church on what is now the village green.

Material and photographs supplied by Mrs. Sarah Chambers, August 1987.



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N/NS IN SCOTTISH TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES: There are 618 N/Ns listed in the following four sections of the Scottish telephone directories: Edinburgh and Lothians/ The Borders/ The Clyde Valley/ The Shetlands.

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A NISBET HEIRLOOM: By James E. Nisbet, of Cremorne, Sydney, N.S.W. When Mathew Flinders set out in 1801 to circumnavigate and map the coastline of Australia he took with him five chronometers. Movement No. 520, made by Thomas Earnshaw of London, was the only one to survive the hazards of the journey. It is now in the collection of the Power House Museum (The Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences) in Sydney where it was lodged by my Uncle, my father's brother, Norman James Nisbet, its true identity then being unknown.

The 520 accompanied Flinders on his return to England. However, as is well known, he was taken prisoner of war by the French in Mauritius. Captain Aken who was travelling with him was released and returned to England with the chronometer which was delivered to Greenwich Observatory on 12/12/1805.

By 1831 the chronometer was back in Australia in the hands of the Rev. Thomas Thomson, the first Presbyterian Minister to preach west of the Blue Mountains. He had received it from his father Hugh Thomson, a West Indies merchantman, who had probably acquired it (by means currently unknown) for use on one or the other of his ships. It is almost certain that neither of these men were aware of the historical significance of the chronometer.

The Rev. Thomas Thomson returned to Scotland in 1835 leaving the timepiece (the gymbals by this time had been removed) in the hands of his sister Agnes

who had married Dr. George Busby, the Medical Superintendent of the Bathurst convict settlement in N.S.W.. She in due course passed it on to her nephew, James Nisbet (referred to on page 2 of Newsletter No. 4.) who in turn left it to Norman James Nisbet.

The true identity of the chronometer was ascertained in 1936 by Mr. Thomas Tooth, an amateur astronomer, and came about through research he had done into the history and use of astronomy in early Australian navigation.

Records in my possession show that apart from time spent in routine maintenance the timepiece had been in use and good working order throughout the time it was in the family's possession. It was recently restored by the museum to its original function and is currently valued in excess of \$80,000, somewhat more than the 12 pounds it was considered to be worth when it was acquired by the museum in 1937.

SOCIETY NEWS

CONVICTS - AN INSIGHT TO OUR EARLY HISTORY THROUGH GENEALOGY: A talk on convicts will be given by Kevin Richardson, secretary of the Descendants of Convicts Group of the Genealogical Society of Victoria at 8 P.M. on Friday 20th May at 1 St. Johns Parade, Kew.

In the year of our bicentennial the Descendants of Convicts Group has been especially active in providing an insight into the early beginnings of the settlement of Australia.

R.S.V.P. by 18th May to Ian G. Nisbet, ph. 862 2258 A.H.

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PICNIC DAY: On February 21st a total of 30 members attended the family picnic at Studley Park. The social committee organised perfect weather for the occasion and ensured a pleasant time was had by all.

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BRIEF UPDATE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: Preliminary analysis of the questionnaire sent with Newsletter No. 4 has been carried out. The questionnaire was divided into four broad areas of society activities.

i) Activities. ii) Social. iii) Newsletter. iv) Genealogy.

Unfortunately for our interstate and overseas members only the third and fourth sections are presently applicable; though you are more than welcome to visit and attend any meetings and are encouraged to develop N/N gatherings for your state/area.

As the sample population is very small, it is virtually useless to state percentages as a single vote which in this case approximates 2-4%. Similarly, such a situation makes a drawing of any concrete conclusions difficult.

This situation is easily remedied by improved response. I know many of you are Nisbets (or related) and if you share the reputation of several of my kin (myself in particular) - stop thinking about filling 'it' in and do it!

Some points which can be made are:

i) Approximately 45% response rate. 50% in Melbourne, 33% Country Vic.

ii) Meetings, whether social or informative are perceived as a integral and important function of our society.

iii) All topics that were listed under the newsletter are of interest to members.

iv) Members who are undertaking family research require ongoing assistance through workshops, guest speakers and the newsletter.

The results will be presented to the various committees to note and consider when planning future meetings, newsletters etc.

Many thanks to those members who filled in and returned their questionnaire.
Gary R. Nisbet.

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MORE ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE: An interest was shown by members in the U.S. & U.K. Newsletters. It has been our intention to use some of Bill Kelsey's material and we hope to have items appearing from time to time. I'm sure they will be well received.

There are members researching ancestors in the following countries: U.S.A., South Africa, Holland, New Zealand and Germany. If those members would please let us have their search notices for inclusion in the newsletter it is possible that links will be found.
Editor.

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THANK YOU: Our archivist, Lyn McFarland, is going to live overseas for several years and so has resigned from her position.

On behalf of the committee and members we thank Lyn for her help and co-operation and wish her success in her venture.

FEATURE ARTICLE

(This section is for full length articles of general interest).

THE NISBETS

J.W. Nisbet

Concluding the unedited article which appeared in the March issue (1972) of "Scotland's Magazine", with the permission of the Scottish Board. We hope you found it interesting. Material supplied by Ian G. Nisbet, secretary.

The other main Scottish branch, which tended to be anti-Royalist and pro-Covenant, moved from Berwickshire North-West, principally through Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. It began with Murdoch Nisbet of Nisbet from whom there descended the families of Cairnhill, Dalzell, Carfin and Greenholm. The last named produced Murdoch Nisbet of Hardhill (1480-1558). When he reached manhood, he joined the Lollards of Kyle, who were among the earliest Protestant dissenters. Subjected to persecution, he escaped abroad. Around 1520, on the basis of Purvey's edition of Wycliffe's version, he translated the New Testament into the Scots vernacular which, besides being more intelligible to his fellow countrymen gave force and vividness to many passages. But on his return to Scotland he was soon in danger of being burned at the stake. So he withdrew to the security of a vault under his house in order to read his book and commune with the Almighty. His New Testament, having passed through several generations of heirs, came ultimately to the Scottish Text Society for publication in three volumes, 1901-1905.

John Nisbet of Hardhill, born 1627, was a direct descendant of Murdoch. After military service abroad he became a preacher at Hardhill, joined the Covenanters and shared in their battles in the Pentlands and at Drumclog. In 1679, after the Bothwell encounter he was denounced as a rebel, with a large price on his head. With his wife and four children he was a fugitive for some years. During the winter of 1683, while conducting a conventicle, he was captured by a troop of dragoons, led by his cousin Lieutenant Philip Nisbet. Disdaining any concession, he was interrogated in Ayr and in Edinburgh, tried by the Court of Justiciary, sentenced to death and in December 1685 executed in

the Grassmarket. With much courage and great Christian composure he died, "adhering to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the undoubted word of God, an unerring rule of faith and manners, and a firm foundation for principle and practice in the ways of godliness and holiness".

Closely linked to the Nisbets of Greenholm was the family at Carfin, the property being acquired in 1677 by Archibald Nisbet. Walter, his grandson, born 1706, emigrated to Nevis, West Indies and bought an estate. His second son, Josiah, born 1747, after taking a medical degree in Edinburgh, practiced in Nevis. In 1779 he married Frances Herbert Woolward, daughter of William Woolward, Senior Judge of Nevis. He died in October 1781. His widow Frances (Fanny) married Captain Horatio Nelson in Nevis in 1789, and though less celebrated than Lady Emma Hamilton, she was a very devoted wife who died in London in 1831 at the age of 73.

Josiah Nisbet, Fanny's son by her first marriage, was born in 1780. A great favourite with Nelson, he followed him into the Royal Navy. Unlike his step-father, he did not become an Admiral. But he attained eventually the rank of Captain. He was a very junior officer, however, when in 1797 during the assault on Tenerife in the Canaries he was able to render Nelson a service. If he could not prevent the amputation of Horatio's lacerated right arm, he in effect saved his life.

Harry Nisbet, Josiah's cousin, was born in Nevis in 1794. His grandson, born 1869, was Brigadier-General Francis Courtenay Nisbet D.S.O., who had a fine military career between 1901 and 1921 in South Africa, France, Macedonia and Turkey. In the same tradition there was Colonel Thomas Nisbet, D.S.O., C.M.G., who for his distinguished service during and after the first world war became, among other honours, an Officer of the Legion of Honour. More recently there has been Major David Wilkie Nisbet, R.A.M.C., who had a long tour of duty with the Gurkhas in the Malaysian confrontation with Indonesia, and with the British Military Hospital in West Berlin. He is now in command of the Medical Reception Station in Edinburgh.

Probably each of these Army Officers would have been more than content with the traditional Nisbet heraldic symbol of the boar. But another type of modern Nisbet might favour the swan, since their distinction has been in the realm of higher education. In Oxford, the oldest of the British Universities, there has been Robin George Murdoch Nisbet, born 1925, elected F.B.A. in 1967 and now Corpus Christi Professor of Classics. In Heriot-Watt, among the youngest universities, there was Hugh Bryan Nisbet, Professor of Applied Chemistry: he was Principal of the College from 1950 and of the new University from 1966 to his death in 1968. In the University of Aberdeen there has been John Donald Nisbet, since 1963 Professor and Head of the Department of Education. His eldest brother, Stanley Donald Nisbet, since 1951 has occupied the corresponding Chair of Education in the University of Glasgow. Finally it was at Gilmorehill that James Wilkie Nisbet began his academic career in 1927, as Assistant to the Adam Smith Professor of Political Economy. Since 1935 he has been Head of the Department of Political Economy in St. Andrews and since 1947 Professor of that subject. Retiring from that Chair in 1970 he is now Emeritus Professor of that University, the oldest in Scotland.

WANTED

(Members' Searches)

RANTIN, Agnes, b. 1835, Maytown, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland: dau. of William Rantin, b. c1800 Co. Armagh. Mother not known. Agnes Rantin married James Brown (b. 1832 Maytown, Co. Armagh) at Drumbanagher, Co. Armagh, June 1853. They arrived Fremantle, W.A. September 1853 on the 'Clara' - moved to Bendigo, Vic., c1860. Agnes Rantin Brown died at Eaglehawk, Victoria in 1895 and James four years later. Daughter, Mary E. Brown, (1863-1906) was my maternal grand mother. I seek antecedents in Nth. Ireland of William Rantin and James Brown. Please contact A. Bruce Nesbit, P.O. Box 84 Bundoora 3083, Victoria, Australia.

NESBITT, John Richard, m. Jessie Walker.

Their son, William Henry Nesbitt b. 1881 Merino, m. 1907 Ruth Agnes Hickmer.

Their Children: Henry Richard Charles Nesbitt, b. 1909, d. 1963.

George Alfred Nesbitt, b. 1911, d. 1981.

Ethel Agnes Nesbitt, b. 1917.

Mrs. Carol V. Prell, 12 Gordons Road, Lower Templestowe, Victoria, 3107, seeks information of John Richard Nesbitt and any of his descendants.

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NESBITT, Alexander, m. Francis ? Alexander was a farmer, and it is believed that he resided near Corbridge, Northumberland, U.K.

Their children: Henry Nesbitt, b. 18/4/1813.

Margaret Nesbitt, b. 26/3/1815.

Hannah Nesbitt, b. 16/8/1818.

Contact Mr. T. Peter Nesbitt, 87 Sandy Point Road, Corlette, 2301, N.S.W.

FOUND

WHOSE ANCESTOR: Whilst having lunch recently at the Edinburgh Hotel, situated in the heart of Mitcham Village (one of South Australia's earliest outlying settlements, first subdivided in 1840) member Evelyn Clark was surprised to notice in a brief history of the hotel on the cover of the wine list, a Robert Nesbit as the licensee in 1869. Further enquiries unearthed a photo of the old hotel and engraved in stone, the name Nisbett. Evelyn says, "does he belong to one of us"? A visit to the Mortlock library showed the following licensees:

1869 - 1874 Robert Nesbit.

1887 W. Nesbett.

1888 - 1896 W. Nisbett. With a note saying "check spelling of the last two names".

Evelyn wonders if W. Nesbett or W. Nisbett is the elusive William Nesbit for whom both Colin Nesbit and she are searching.

Mrs. Evelyn Clark, 3 Willowie Street, Eden Hills, 5050, South Australia.

The Edinburgh Hotel

