



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2007

Chairman's Chat

Once more, we start a new hillwalking year. The program of walks, which the Committee spent several meetings discussing and eventually recommended to the AGM in February, was agreed and will be implemented over the coming months. We have, of course, been walking throughout the winter, but with the clock change and prospect of longer days, we face new adventures.

It's encouraging to see new faces on our outings, and we welcome new Members to the Club. Last year, membership dropped below 70, and we hope to reverse this trend. So what can we do? Why not encourage any family, friends or colleagues interested in walking to try us? We advertise our program in hillwalking shops and the tourist information office, but personal is always best. Let's work together to increase our membership and maintain the success of our Club.

Annual General Meeting

Around twenty attended on Wednesday 7 February 2007 and elected:

President Frank Kelly
Vice-President Jim Henderson
Secretary Heather Eddie
Treasurer Sally Henderson
Booking Secretary Alex Joiner
Committee Members Colin Chapman,
David Garwood, Kris Howard,
Gilbert McCurdie, Bill Marr,
Graham Sangster, Vi Walker.

Auditors ... Rosemary Kelly, Marjory McLeod

The Committee's draft 2007 program was approved, subject to an amendment to the 20 May walk. Ben Avon was replaced with Cullardoch as the main objective of the day, though Ben Avon may still be possible for fitter walkers.

Unfortunately, illness prevented Treasurer, Sally Henderson, from attending. [Sally (and Jim and their

family) are in all our thoughts.] However, according to her written financial report for the year to 31 December 2006, we ended the year in profit albeit much smaller than the previous year. Concern was expressed about increasing costs of outings, showing a marginal loss over the year.

The maximum fare of £14.00 doesn't cover costs of longer outings and early starts in summer when numbers tend to drop. The Committee, therefore, proposed an increase in maximum fare to £16.00. A lively debate ensued about the maximum fare, whether we should introduce a minimum fare or increase the membership fee and perhaps introduce a family membership. In the event, the AGM endorsed the committee recommendation to increase the maximum fare from £14.00 to £16.00, and membership from £10.00 to £12.00, still very good value. The bottom line is, however, the more attending outings, the cheaper the fare.

Donations were approved for Braemar Mountain Rescue Team and the Mountain Rescue Association of Scotland, and our affiliations to North East Mountain Trust and Ramblers' Association were continued. Overall, we start the new season in a very healthy state and anticipate another successful year.

Discounts

Perhaps now is the time to check if you need any new or replacement equipment. Discounts are available at the following outlets on production of a signed 2007 membership card, which you receive on paying your membership:

Blacks, George Street 10%
Craigdon Sports, 5 St. Andrews Street 10%
Millets, Union Street 10%
Nevisport, 186 George Street 10% (selected lines)
Graham Tiso, 26 Netherkirkgate up to 25%
club sales nights only, first Monday
each month, 6:30 - 8:30pm.

route climbing the hill more gently. Views were glorious. Conditions under foot were very wet but didn't impede. Fences in abundance, both barbed and electrified, led to clooked breekes and shocks. Are the fences to keep cattle in or walkers out? With Edzell in sight, we climbed Hill Lundie, dropping down for a leisurely walk to the bus in the car park for an early start home after refreshments - a jolly good day.
Alex



Lunch on White Caterthun

On a gloriously sunny autumn day, 25 members took part in this interesting walk over the Caterthuns, with their white and brown hill forts, thought to be inhabited 2000 years ago. What should have been an easy walk proved hazardous due to numerous barbed and electric fences, not to mention two or three bulls, depending on route taken! Alex discovered that an electric shock in a certain sensitive region caused an involuntary two-foot leap into the air, thereby scaling the fence with ease!
Colin

26 October: Social Night at Royal Hotel

We had a good turnout for our annual supper at the Royal Hotel, Bath Street. The food was good and the *claik* even better, thanks to Heather who organized the event.
Graham

5 November: Mormond Hill (Strichen to Fraserburgh)

With a good weather forecast, 27 walkers took the bus today. There was no rain but a blustery wind from the west. All members took the White Horse path to Hunter's Lodge on Mormond Hill. From the disused MoD base on the summit, we had good views north to the Moray Firth and east to the North Sea. We descended to the former Dyce-Fraserburgh railway, now the Formartine & Buchan Way, which we followed to Fraserburgh, with good views of the Cortes Stag on the east flank of Mormond Hill. Lunch was taken on or near the old Lonmay Station platform. Refreshments were taken at The Broch, and Gordon's bus departed on time for Aberdeen after a most interesting outing.
Graham



Group at Hunter's Lodge

23 November: Video at United Services Club



Alps from Descent to Verona, Italy

Graham presented a video and picture show of a walking holiday in the Italian Dolomites based at Selva in Val Gardena. Five Members participated in the holiday. A big turnout of Members enjoyed the evening's show.
Graham

3 December: Fetteresso Forest



Lunch in Forest

Our last walk of 2006 started dull and damp. Heavy rain abated to merely damp, with occasional showers driven by a fierce wind. Every path was a running stream, and it was heads down, forward and onward.

After ploughing through a particular patch of tall heather, rushes, highs and lows, through constant running water between the Builg and Tipperweir, we made it to a forest path leading to Hare Hill, where most of us had our one and only stop for a reviving hot drink. It was too cold to linger, so off we all went, and as before, the paths were extremely boggy. There was no skipping over small streams today; with feet already wet, we waded through fast flowing burns. Clad in waterproofs, it didn't feel so cold, so we pressed on to the bus, and made an early return. On a good day, it would have been a (fairly) leisurely and pleasant walk.

Alex
[Vi was in charge of the bus, which dropped off at Dellavaire and picked up at Bogendreip. Ed.]

7 January 2007: Clachnaben & Glen o Dye

Our first walk of 2007 saw all the regulars plus two new faces, who we hope will become regulars. It was a bright clear day. A few decided to reverse the walk, Clachnaben first, then downhill to Charr Bothy, and along the track back to the bus, but most did the prescribed walk. A tidy bothy at Charr welcomed us for elevenses, then it was onwards and upwards. With excesses of wining and dining over the festive season, a few showed signs of flagging. It was still bright when we took the bus, but it was very wet and rainy at the Feughside Inn, where an excellent carvery followed by coffee and drams completed a very pleasant day. As Bill Marr was to be 80 years young on 15 January 2007, we all signed our best wishes on a card.

Alex



At the Feughside Inn.

[Frank was in charge of the bus

Ed.]

4 February: Inverbervie circular

On a bright morning, 31 Members set out for the Inverbervie circular. Starting from Sillyflatt, the map looked as if the first part of the walk were along a minor road. It's an old coach road, but mostly a dirt track or grassed over, with very little tarmac to walk on. Although plenty of time was allowed, only two members stopped to look at Benholm Kirk, with a profusion of snowdrops in the kirkyard. Though not

used as a church nowadays, it's maintained by the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust and recently hosted a wedding. The walk along the coast with the sun on our backs was glorious. There was a minor panic when the bus didn't start, but Gordon came to the rescue in his other red bus with a set of jump leads. Just after setting off, the rains came. David



Lunch at the Narrows

The weather was excellent for the beginning of February. With a good turn-out and a reasonable journey-time, off we set. All but two opted for the longer walk. Going wasn't difficult, and the slightly elevated terrain inland from the main road afforded good views out to sea. After Bridgeton, good time was made down to the coast path and through the fishing villages of Johnshaven and Gourdon with two stops for refreshments. Continuing pleasant and sunny, our last stop at the picnic area outside Gourdon left us plenty of time to meander on to the bus at Inverbervie. After a quick change, most headed for the nearest hostelry. Alas and calamity, the bus wouldn't start. Raf, our Polish driver, called Gordon, who mounted a rescue mission and came out to get us started. Still with plenty of time to spare, we set off for home, relaxed and contented.

Alex

25 February: Sandford Bay - Port Erroll

Many regulars were missing today, but we still had 26 on the bus, not bad for the first outing of this year's program. The walk commenced at 10:00am near Sandford Lodge south of Peterhead, after heavy overnight rain ceased, giving us dry, clear weather all the way to Port Erroll. *En route*, we plowtered through dubs and mire on the disused Boddam railway, but soon had the thunderous noise and spectacular views of boiling seas in the Bullers of Buchan Pot.

Further on, we had great laughs as we heard Willie Robb and Stan Stewart's echoing Dracula impersonations as they tried to scare Linda Henderson and Margaret Cameron in the creepy corridors and dark passages of eerie Slains Castle

ruins. After walking nine miles, refreshments were taken at Cruden Bay Car Park and the Kilmarnock Arms, before leaving on time at 3:00pm to arrive back in Aberdeen at 4:00pm. After three days of heavy rain, it had been a wet, muddy, slippery walk along an incredibly spectacular cliff top path, but a most enjoyable outing. Graham



Bullers Pot

11 March: West Gordon Way (Suie Hill - Esson's)

It was a day of two diversions with a very pleasant walk in between. As Riverside Drive was closed at one end, our driver toured West Tullos Industrial Estate to reach Duthie Park from the other end.

It made a change to approach Bennachie from the west, and the path is well way-marked and maintained. We ate before the rain in early afternoon, but it was never heavy enough to spoil the walk. Some managed the tops on Bennachie, but views weren't very good by then, and most kept a steady pace along the Gordon Way. Forestry works near the end necessitated a diversion to reach the bus. The only damper on the day was some no-shows. David

The day started bright and dry with clear views of Tap o Noth and Fowdland Hill from Suie Hill. The first part of the walk saw us traverse Suie Hill through forest to Black Hillock and Knock Saul. Gordon-Way marker posts kept us all on the right track.

After crossing the B922 (White House - Premnay) road, we headed up Corrie Hill towards Hermit Seat on the western slopes of Bennachie. Looking back, we saw clouds and low mist fast approaching, and soon we felt the rain. As we stopped to put on cagoules and over-trousers, the rain became heavy and continuous. Some made for the main summit, Owsen Craig [Anglicized to Oxen by the OS], but most followed the good path skirting the tops to descend through trees to a forest road near Heather Brig. A slight

detour avoiding tree-felling brought us to the bus at Esson's visitor centre. Most of the party arrived by 4:00pm, allowing us to head home by 4:30pm. Frank

25 March: Littlemill circular by Glen Girnock



Elevenses at Bovaglie Lodge

Considering the good weather forecast, the turn-out of 27 was a bit disappointing, but everyone booked on was present in spite of the start of BST. Linda and Ela got off at Loch Ullachie for the Coyles of Muick circular, but as the upstream bridge over the Water of Girnock was down, the bus took the rest across the downstream Girnock bridge to Littlemill, and they walked south up the west side of the Girnock.

As spring sunshine blazed down, all anoraks and fleeces were shed within thirty minutes. We veered west to stop at Bovaglie for elevenses. The cliffs of Lochnagar stood out under clear blue skies. The biggest herd of deer we have seen low down for some time (100 - 200), obligingly strolled past. What a beautiful clear, crisp spring day, you couldn't wish for better scenery.

Lunch was taken in a lovely forested glade with views over Abergeldie Castle in Deeside to the Cairngorms in the northwest, still partially covered in snow. Graham provided a desert of liqueur chocolates from his skiing holiday.

A lovely walk passed Khantore on the Dalraddie track. High stiles and gates were climbed before contouring the slopes of Creag nam Ban to skirt Creag Ghiubhais, a beautiful Spring walk to the coach at Littlemill. Margaret Leslie commented on the day's walk "magnificent - eleven out of ten". Those elsewhere today missed one helluva good walk! A twenty-minute toilet stop was taken at the Huntly Arms, Aboyne.

Graham & Alex

Mount Keen Footbridge

In 2002, the walkers footbridge over the Water of Tanar two miles north of Mount Keen washed away.

To restore access to a popular Munro, the Estate has replaced this bridge. One has to complement Glentanar Estate's attitude to hillwalkers and others for allowing safe access to Mount Keen.



New Glen Tanar footbridge to Mount Keen.

It's a pity that Mar Lodge Estate is dragging its heels over a suggestion to re-instate a simple footbridge over the Geldie Burn on the well used Glen Tilt right of way. The old footbridge afforded safe passage over the stream when in spate, but it washed away in the 1960's, since when crossing the Geldie in spate is a very real hazard. Graham

Aircraft Wreckage on Cárn an t-Sagairt Mór



Aircraft Wing ~100m East of North Summit

After the 13 August 2006 outing to the White Mounth, Members asked about aircraft wreckage on Cárn an t-Sagairt Mór. The wreckage is an English Electric Canberra, headed for RAF Kinloss, which crashed into the summit in November 1956 killing the crew of four. Wreckage is scattered over a wide area west, east and northeast of the summit. Graham

Abergeldie Castle

ATHWC's circular walk on 25 March from Littlemill through Glen Gironck gave views over to Abergeldie Castle from high ground west of Bovaglie Lodge. Though most of us have travelled up and down Deeside over the years, few have any knowledge of this castle.

Stan Stewart provided the photograph of the castle as it appeared in the 1960's. Most outbuildings have since been removed, and little remains apart from the prominent tower.



Early 1960's

The tower house castle was built in the sixteenth century by Sir Alexander Gordon of Midmar, subsequently Earl of Huntly. The castle had three storeys and a basement, and remained in the family for years, except during the Jacobite rising, when General Mackay garrisoned his troops there. In 1848, when Prince Albert was developing his Deeside Estate, he unsuccessfully bid for the castle, but was granted a long-term lease. Future generations of Royals, such as Edward VII & Queen Alexandra, and George V, used the Castle as a summer home while they were still princes and princesses.

The Ghost of Abergeldie

Abergeldie Castle is reputed to be haunted by Kittie Rankie who was burnt at the stake as a witch on Creag nam Ban [The Women's Crag], overlooking the Castle. The ghost of Kittie has been seen in the cellars where she was imprisoned in the dungeon before execution. The ghost is often called French Kate; in life, she was a French woman employed in the Castle, until accused of practising black magic. She was accused by her mistress, who didn't like her reply to a question about the whereabouts of her master. Kittie said her mistress's husband was with another woman. Graham

[The same story is told about the Brahan Seer and Lady Seaforth. Ed.]

Montrose and Bervie Railway

Participants in the 4 February 2007 Inverbervie outing inquired about the dismantled railway the walk followed. I hope the following is of interest.

In 1863, a project to build a railway between Inverbervie and Montrose was proposed between the Great North of Scotland Railway (GNSR) and the Montrose and Bervie Railway Company to construct a

new route to the south. This received Royal assent and would have been called the Aberdeen Junction Railway. However, the project was abandoned later the same year and the Montrose and Bervie Railway shares were sold by the GNSR. In 1865, the Montrose and Bervie railway finally opened. The single-track line commenced at Montrose and had stations and halts at Broomfield, Northwater Bridge, St Cyrus, Lauriston, Johnshaven, Gourdon, and Birnie Road, and its terminus at Inverbervie, now occupied by the beach car park.



Goods train with 0-6-0 loco at Bervie Station.
from Alexander Wilson Collection,
Dundee Central Library

On average, the journey lasted 40 minutes. This was a busy station because fishermen, farmers, tradesmen and jute mills in the area all had goods coming and going by train. At its peak, twenty trains a day travelled this line. In the 1930's and 40's, when the July Glasgow and Clydeside Fair Holidays arrived, special trains came into Inverbervie and townsfolk lined the station roadway to see *peelie-wally Glesca fowk* arrive for a ten-day holiday and return home with tanned or weather-beaten faces after a bracing holiday. The railway ran passenger services until 1951. There were plans to extend the line north to Aberdeen, but it finally closed in 1966. Graham

The Canadian Bridge (continued)

A friend was excited by my article on the Canadian Bridge in our last Newsletter. He was active in Hall Russell's Hillwalking Club in the 1950's and 60's, and sent the Evening Express the attached Canadian Bridge black and white photograph, which appeared in their "Memories Page" on 11 December 2006.

In response to his photograph, my friend received a letter from William "Robin" Kennedy, a senior Braemar resident, who during World War II, worked with the Canadian lumberjacks who built the bridge. According to the letter, the bridge was built in 1942 by Unit 25 of the Canadian Forestry Corps, known locally as *The Sawdust Fusiliers*, who stayed on a

campsite on the Mar Lodge Estate until 1944. The bridge was constructed to carry a narrow-gauge railway taking cut timber from a sawmill on the north side of the Dee, to a stacking and loading area at Inverey. The bridge saved lorries from a long detour by Linn o Dee.



DEE CROSSING: The Canadian Bridge over the River Dee in the winter of 1956/57 which was built by Canadian soldiers during World War 2. It is believed the bridge, which was situated between the Linn o' Dee and Inverey village, was built as an exercise. Picture submitted by Alistair Davidson who believes it was dismantled in the 1960's.

[The caption reads

"Dee Crossing: The Canadian Bridge over the River Dee in the winter of 1956/57, which was built by Canadian soldiers during World War 2. It is believed the bridge, which was situated between the Linn o Dee and Inverey village, was built as an exercise. Picture submitted by Alistair Davidson who believes it was dismantled in the 1960's."]

17.5 thousand tons of timber was sent by lorry to the railway terminal at Ballater from the Mar Lodge estate logging site. During World War II, half a million tons of timber from Deeside sawmills was sent down the Deeside line to Aberdeen for the war effort.

The Canadian Camp on the Mar Lodge side of the bridge consisted of log cabins with wood burning stoves for the workers, a sawmill, a cinema and a dam to wash the wood before being processed in the mill. They made their own electricity from hydropower from the river. The engine for the sawmill was steam driven and was transported by sea from Canada along with bulldozers and caterpillar trucks for moving the logs. The first shipment from Canada was torpedoed in the North Atlantic with total loss, but a second one arrived safely.

The Canadian Camp eventually became a very popular informal campsite, but the Swiss brothers who bought the Mar Lodge Estate, removed the Canadian Bridge in the early 1960's, along with Captain Ramsey who owned the Inverey side of the Dee. The dismantling of the Canadian Bridge turned out to be a very big job as it had been extremely well constructed. Iron rods had been used to hold the timber bridge together. The central pier had thick steel rods through the timbers and was tied and

bored into the huge shelf of rock in the bed of the River Dee. After its construction, the locals said the bridge wouldn't withstand a winter flood, but high waters and ice floes, even rising over the flat planking, didn't budge this construction.

Mr Kennedy, who supplied all this information, is sad that the Canadian Bridge was removed and that no photographs exist of the historic sawmill and campsite, but he is currently constructing a model of the Canadian Bridge from both memory and photographs. He ended his letter, "I had better close now and get on and finish this model before I snuff it"

I had a long phone conversation with Mr Kennedy. He intends to exhibit his model at the Mar Lodge memorabilia area. I think this is a wonderful piece of local history. Graham

Mormond Hill Features

Our 5 November 2006 outing took us from Strichen, over Mormond Hill to The Broch. Many asked about various features seen on the hill, so I trawled the Internet, and I hope the information below will interest.

The Strichen Horse

The Strichen Horse, also known as The White Horse of Mormond, is a white horse etched into the south side of Mormond Hill, 14 miles from Peterhead on the A950. It has been carved out from the turf and the body filled in with white quartz. The horse is 164ft (50m) from nose to tail and 146ft (44.5m) from head to hoof, filled with white quartz, and is a well known Buchan landmark.

For one hundred and seventy five years, the White Horse has watched over the people of Strichen. The horse was commissioned by Captain Fraser, eccentric son of Lord Strichen, who succeeded to the estate in 1775, as a memorial to a selfless act that inspired him during his service for King and Country in the French Revolutionary wars. He gathered the local populace on Mormond Hill, and set them to creating a horse.

While on campaign with the British Army in Holland, Captain Fraser was involved in a battle near the town of Gilzen, south of Rotterdam, now called Gilze. He had his horse shot under him, leaving him vulnerable during the fight. His faithful sergeant James Hutcheon of New Pitligo dismounted and offered his white horse, saying "Never mind, Sir, I'll soon find another riderless mount". Having uttered these words, he was shot dead by enemy gunfire. With no time in the heat of battle to mourn his loss, the

memory of that day stayed with Captain Fraser. The White Horse was created in 1820/21, and succeeding generations of Strichen folk have looked after it by gathering from time to time to inspect the horse and remove weeds, though it is said to have disappeared from view during World War II, when the white quartz was too obvious a marker for the enemy.

The Cortes Stag

The figure of a stag, constructed in 1869-70 by W F Cordiner of Cortes, decorates the east flank of Mormond Hill overlooking the village of New Leeds on the A92. A cairn beside it commemorates the date of building. Vanity may have taken a hand in its design for it is even bigger than Strichen's White Horse. It is 240ft long and constructed from quartz rocks five inches in diameter. The stag was cut on the east flank of Mormond Hill by the Laird's tenants as a wedding gift. There is some disagreement as to its original form, an outline or solid figure, but it has at some stage been in outline only, and is now a solid figure. The Stag was cleaned in 1939, 1946, 1955, 1984 and 1994/95.

The Hunter's Lodge

On one of the highest ridges are ruins of a hunting lodge built in 1779 by the same Captain Fraser who commissioned the White Horse. This was a two-storey building with the gamekeeper occupying the upper floor. The single large room of the ground floor had a fireplace big enough to roast a deer. This room was used by the laird and his guests after the hunt. The door lintel bears the words "In this Hunter's Lodge, Rob Gibb commands, MDCCLXXIX". Tradition has it that a locally born jester of this name served King James V (1513 - 1542), saying "I serve your majesty for stark love and kindness". The words *Rob Gibb* were used as a tacit loyal toast in Jacobite circles and it remains a mystery whether the laird simply hoped goodwill might prevail within the Lodge, or was making a veiled political statement, Charles Edward Stuart being alive at this time.

The Resting Stone

Partway up the hill between the Horse and the Stag lies a flat stone, known as the *Resting Stone*. It's said to have been a spot for resting coffins in distant ages when there was no consecrated burial place at Strichen and the dead were borne over the hill to Rathen graveyard. The stone lies above Dencallie Farm, which philologists translate as *Den of Rest*, thus lending some credence. Stories are told of winter weather so bad that the dead were left on the hill until bearers could continue the journey. One corpse was left on the stone for three weeks when snow prevented relatives from bearing her to Rathen.

MoD Base

Mormond Hill's most conspicuous landmarks are twentieth century telecoms masts and dishes on the eastern summit. Among these masts can be seen dishes that served our country during the Cold War, to alert the military of a nuclear attack. Some dishes were trained on harbours in the area to listen in on Russian spy trawlers reporting to Moscow. Thankfully those days are past and Mormond Hill won't be atomised by a thermonuclear device, which would certainly have made such a flat place as Buchan, a little less featureless! Those considering moving to the area might be interested to know that the site is for sale. For those of a strong constitution, it is an ideal spot with great views over the east. You will certainly have a feeling of mastery of the land, but contending with winds that blow over the hill might be another matter for consideration.

Graham

Bullers o Buchan, Slains Castle & Port Erroll

On 25 February 2007, our outing from Sandford Bay (north of Boddam) to Port Erroll (near Cruden Bay) threw up numerous questions from Members regarding historic sites *en route*. Uppermost in walkers' minds were Bullers o Buchan, Slains Castle and Port Erroll. After some research, I have put together a synopsis of these topics.

Bullers o Buchan

This is a small hamlet of cottages, once a fishing community, situated two miles (three km) north east of Cruden Bay. It takes its name from the nearby famous coastal granite cliff feature. The cliffs at Bullers provide a nesting site in spring for colonies of seabirds, including kittiwakes, puffins, fulmars, shags, razorbills and guillemots, along with herring gulls and greater black-backed gulls. Eider ducks may also be seen, and gannets often pass *en route* to Troup Head.

The Bullers cliff feature is the collapsed roof of a sea cave, which has in turn formed an almost circular chasm. Here, the North Sea rushes in through a natural archway in the cliffs into the Bullers cavern which has a vertical opening of 30m (100ft) high known as The Pot. The name Bullers may be derived from the French *bouillir*, meaning to boil, as the water in the Pot appears to boil during stormy weather. Alternatively, it may be an old Scots word meaning *rushing water*, relating to the sound made by the waves crashing in through the archway's opening into the Pot.

In 1773, James Boswell and Samuel Johnson on their tour of the Highlands and Islands visited the Bullers,

which Johnson described as a *monstrous cauldron... which no man can see with indifference who has either sense of danger or delight in rarity*.

Slains Castle

Slains Castle is a large imposing ruin fronting directly onto south facing cliffs about 1 km east of Cruden Bay village. There are confusingly two Slains Castles on this stretch of coast. Old Slains, the original, lay a mile north east of Collieston and about 6 miles south west of New Slains. Old Slains was built in the 1200's as a fortress, but in 1594, the owner, the Earl of Erroll, backed a plot by the Earl of Huntly against James VI, who responded by blowing it up, and little remains today.

Erroll made his peace with James and returned from exile in 1597. Rather than rebuild Old Slains, he used a tower house at Bowness as the basis for New Slains. The tower was extended and ranges of buildings were added round a courtyard. In 1664 the castle was again expanded and altered, and a corridor was built across the courtyard. The final major change came in 1836 when further wings were added and the underlying castle was given a granite facing and generally improved. At one time, it had three extensive gardens. In the late nineteenth century, the nineteenth Earl entertained many celebrities, including Bram Stoker, who took inspiration from the spooky castle when he wrote *Dracula*.

Building costs and high living did little for the family finances, and in 1916 death duties forced the twentieth Earl to sell Slains. The new owner Sir John Ellerman of the shipping line eventually allowed the castle to fall into disrepair, and in 1925, its roof was removed to avoid paying taxes. That led to the ruin we see today, much more spooky than in Bram Stoker's time.

Port Erroll

Purists say the harbour area is properly known as Port Erroll while Cruden Bay lies a little inland, but as you stroll around you are unlikely to notice the difference. The village lies at the north end of the Bay of Cruden, a two-mile arc of sand. Approaching Cruden Bay from the west, you first see St. James' Church, prominently positioned on Chapel Hill amid open fields. With a spire that makes it one of the most prominent landmarks in the area, St. James' was built in 1842. The font comes from a much earlier chapel built here some time before 1100 to mark the site of a battle between Danes and Scots in 1012. Cruden derives from the Gaelic *Croch Dain* "Slaughter of Danes".

[Having received a bloody nose, the Danes turned their attention south, where Canute found England's Ethelred something of a pushover. Ed.]

The origin of Cruden Bay is associated with New Slains. Erroll didn't stop with his new castle, but also built a harbour at Port Erroll. Its distant descendant remains in use today, more functional than pretty, but with good views along the sands of the Bay of Cruden. The way in which fishing nets are hung up to dry near the harbour gives a good impression of their complexity and structure, not usually obvious when you see them piled on the harbour-side.

Cruden Bay became the name for the settlement following the arrival in Port Erroll in 1897 of a branch line from Ellon. The Great North of Scotland Railway Company tried to attract people to use their railway by building the luxurious Cruden Bay Hotel on the high ground above Port Erroll. This came complete with golf course and narrow-gauge tramway linking it to Port Erroll. The hotel was little more successful than Slains, which had been stripped of its roof in 1925. The branch railway from Ellon and the tramway both closed in the 1930's, though a tramcar can still be seen in the Grampian Transport Museum at Alford. The Cruden Bay Hotel spent World War II as a military hospital and was later demolished.

Cruden Bay didn't do well in the 1950's and 1960's and its population fell steadily. The turning point came with the discovery of North Sea oil in the 1970's. With increasing wealth in Aberdeen to the south and Peterhead to the north, a steady stream of people came looking for attractive places to live, and Cruden Bay fitted the bill, its population doubling between 1971 and 1981.

Despite rapid recent growth, Cruden Bay remains attractive. The surrounding golf courses, beach and rocky cliffs all provide a timeless atmosphere, and the village itself has a nice feel as well as a reasonable range of services. Graham

Congratulations

Kath and Graham Sangster are pleased to announce the arrival of their first grandchild Max James Sangster, born at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary at 23:30 on 6 February. Mother and baby are well, but father and both grandpas were struggling after copious amounts of *vin blanc*. Graham
[You didn't wet the baby's head with whisky?!!! Shame on you. Ed.]

Sheep Ticks

Of late, we've heard a lot o' blether
About sheep ticks among the heather,
So Scientists a' thegither
Are daen their best
Tae save the wool and fur and feather
Fae this new pest.

It's just since 1925
That ticks hae richt begun tae thrive
When the government did contrive
Tae wreck the law
O' burnin' richts they did deprive
The farmers a'

Noo what's the sense o' dippin' sheep
When deer and hares are left tae sleep
'Mang heather eighteen inches deep
Baith day and nicht,
When on tae them the ticks will creep
Be it dark or licht?

If gaimies wad their spunk box use
And burn the heather, I jalouse
I wadna hae tae write this muse
About the pest
But they're maist feart the tickies lose
Their comfy nest

It needs nae rowth o' college readin'
Ye maun attack them whaur they're breedin',
A box o' spunks is what you're needin'
Withoot a doot.
Just fire the heather tae send them speedin'
An burn them oot.

By James W Glass, Balloch, Forest o Birse.

Submitted by Vi