

# Caledonian

**Newcastle Family History Society Inc**

**Newsletter of the Scottish Special Interest Group**

**No 2**

**Martínmas 2023**

## **Failte !**

### **Welcome to this Martínmas Newsletter!**

‘Caledonian’ –

Where Did the Name Come From For Our Newsletter?

It is thought by many scholars that the name ‘Scotland’ was derived from the Latin term ‘Scotia’ used in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century to describe the Scoti people who originated in Ireland and later resettled in Scotland. Eventually all inhabitants became known as ‘Scots’.

Another name which is sometimes heard is ‘Albion’, a Roman name for the island of Great Britain. When the Picts and Scots united in the 9<sup>th</sup> century as the Kingdom of Alba, the shortened name of ‘Alba’ became the Scottish Gaelic name for Scotland.

‘Caledonia’ was the Latin word used by the Romans for that part of Great Britain lying north of the River Forth which included most of the land area we know as today’s Scotland. The modern use of ‘Caledonia’ in both English and Scots is either as an historical description of northern Britain or as a romantic name for the whole of Scotland. The name has been widely used by organisations and commercial entities such as the Glasgow Caledonian University and the ferry operator, Caledonian MacBrayne.

(Above information gathered from en.wikipedia.org )

Having stood the test of time, the term ‘Caledonian’ seemed to encompass all things Scottish and therefore was most appropriate for the name of our Newsletter.



This edition was edited by Maree Shilling

## Martinmas



In Scotland, Martinmas is a time marking the end of the autumn harvest and the advent of snowy weather. The celebration dates back to the Middle Ages when legend has it that a Roman soldier, Martin, encountered a shivering beggar on the side of the road and removing his red cloak, cut it in half with his sword to give the poor man some warmth. The story of Martin's kindness quickly spread as did his Christian beliefs and soon people of the countryside were calling for him to be made bishop.



Many artists have used this story as inspiration for their work including the Italian sculptor, Pietro Bernini (1562-1629) whose sculpture of Martin and the beggar seen here, is on public view in Naples, Italy.

Martin felt he was called to spread the Christian word and after leaving the army spent some time living as a hermit before entering a monastery. Following his studies, his travels took him to many parts of Italy and France. The veneration of Martin was widely popular in the Middle Ages where Saint Martin became the patron saint of many European towns.

Saint Martin set about establishing churches and monasteries wherever possible and it was to one of those monasteries that Saint Ninian, an important figure in the Christianisation of Scotland, came to further his studies. At the Marmouëtiers monastery, Saint Ninian was profoundly influenced by Saint Martin and carried a deep respect for his teacher and his methods back with him to Scotland.

Martinmas was originally held as a feast to commemorate Saint Martin but has been celebrated in many countries and in many different ways. In Ireland for example, an unusual early tradition was that 'no wheel shall turn on the feast day in respect of the fact that Martin was killed by being tossed into a mill stream and crushed under the paddlewheel'. This tradition plays no part in Irish Martinmas celebrations today but the date of Saint Martin's death, 11 November, remains the day for Martinmas celebrations. In Australia of course that date marks Remembrance Day when we think of those who served their country in times of warfare.



Upon hearing of Saint Martin's death, Saint Ninian dedicated one of the earliest churches in Scotland to Saint Martin. Unfortunately the location of this church is not known but we do know that the church in London of St-Martin-in-the-Fields was dedicated to Saint Martin. Even a lamp post outside the church bears an image of Martin and the beggar!

According to folklore, if the weather is warm on St Martin's Day, then a harsh winter will follow and conversely, if the weather at Martinmas is icy, then by Christmas it will be much warmer.

'If ducks do slide at Martinmas  
At Christmas they will swim;  
If ducks do swim at Martinmas  
At Christmas they will slide.'

For those participating in the celebration of Martinmas in Scotland today, a lantern walk at night culminates in a community bonfire and songs. Traditionally lanterns were carved from newly harvested squash gourds and illuminated with a candle, an idea similar to our Jack-o-lanterns at Halloween. Modern times have seen the introduction of solar powered lanterns – a much safer option for youngsters to manage. After the celebrations around the bonfire it is back home to enjoy hot cider, ginger cookies, roasted chestnuts and apples.

## Happy Martinmas



## This n' That

Robert the Bruce was born on 11 June 1274. He seized the throne in 1306 and forced England to recognise Scottish independence

### Why were our Great Grandparents so happy?

Between 1890 and 1910, heroin was sold as a non-addictive substitute for morphine. It was also used to treat children suffering with a strong cough.

Awarded ten gold medals, Maltine's Coca Wine contained cocaine. It was suggested that you should take a full glass with every meal. Children should only take half a glass.

Cocaine toothache drops were very popular for children in 1885. Not only did they relieve the pain, they made the children very happy. In 1900 it was believed that stage actors, singers, teachers and preachers had to have cocaine tablets for a maximum performance.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century Scotland, as in England, debtors could be imprisoned until the debt was cleared. In the meantime, they were forced to pay for their keep. Life in prison was hard and the suicide rate of imprisoned bankrupts was high.

Famously, Charles Dickens' father was sent to prison for a debt of £40 and 10 shillings – something the writer never forgot and used in many of his novels.



The Lion Rampant is the Royal banner of Scotland, not the Scottish flag, which is the white saltire on a blue background.

## Do You Know Where Your Scottish Ancestor Lived?

If you are starting to research your Scottish family, it is most helpful knowing in what part of Scotland your ancestors might have lived. For centuries the basic location units were the parish, burgh, county and sheriffdom. The boundaries of these units changed from time to time with the present day division into regions and districts dating from 1975.

Some people are a little worried when confronted with the list of location units that might be needed for their research, but when you think about our Australian location finders, it does not seem so daunting. For instance, taking our Society's home location as an example we find the following location finders:

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| State:       | New South Wales |
| County:      | Northumberland  |
| Region:      | Hunter          |
| Town / City: | Newcastle       |
| Suburb       | Lambton         |

And then of course we could add Street and House Number to the list without extending to include such locators as Parish, Electoral Division and even Post Code.

When about to start your Scottish research, don't restrict yourself to the parish where they might have been born. Take a note of the adjoining parishes in case you need to extend your search. Our ancestors often moved around a lot more than we might believe!

If you find that your family did stay for a long time in the one area, familiarise yourself with that area – study local maps such as the large scale Victorian Ordnance Survey maps, read parish histories, check if local libraries have any street directories online, look at travel literature for your area and of course, think about joining a family history society that covers the area of interest. Most if not all of these suggestions can be done on your computer using the search engine of your choice.

Knowing the town or city where your family lived might lead to discovering their possible occupation. Did they live in Aberdeen with the menfolk going to sea for weeks on end hunting herrings or were they living in Dundee, famous for its numerous jute mills? Perhaps they lived in Ayrshire near the coal mines of Kilmarnock or maybe cared for the Laird's sheep on a large country estate. If this was a possibility, it might be interesting to find out who the big land-owning families were in your ancestor's area as their estate records may hold names of those working for them.

The Scottish Local History Directory allows you to find resources and collections held by Scottish museums, archives, libraries, family and local history societies, individuals and specialist groups. The online directory is free to use. [slhf.org/scottish-local-history-directory](http://slhf.org/scottish-local-history-directory)



## The Bell Rock Lighthouse

If you have a sea-going ancestor who plied the waters around the eastern coast of Scotland and northern England, they would have been very familiar with the Bell Rock lighthouse and in rough weather probably gave thanks to those who saw to its construction.

Located 18 km east of the Firth of Tay, the rock was totally submerged at high tide and lurked only four or five feet below the surface, while at low tide parts of the rock could be seen five or six feet above the waterline. The greatest length of the rock which is dangerous to shipping is about 1427 feet and its breadth about 300 feet. Ever since man took to water, the rock has been responsible for claiming lives beyond count.

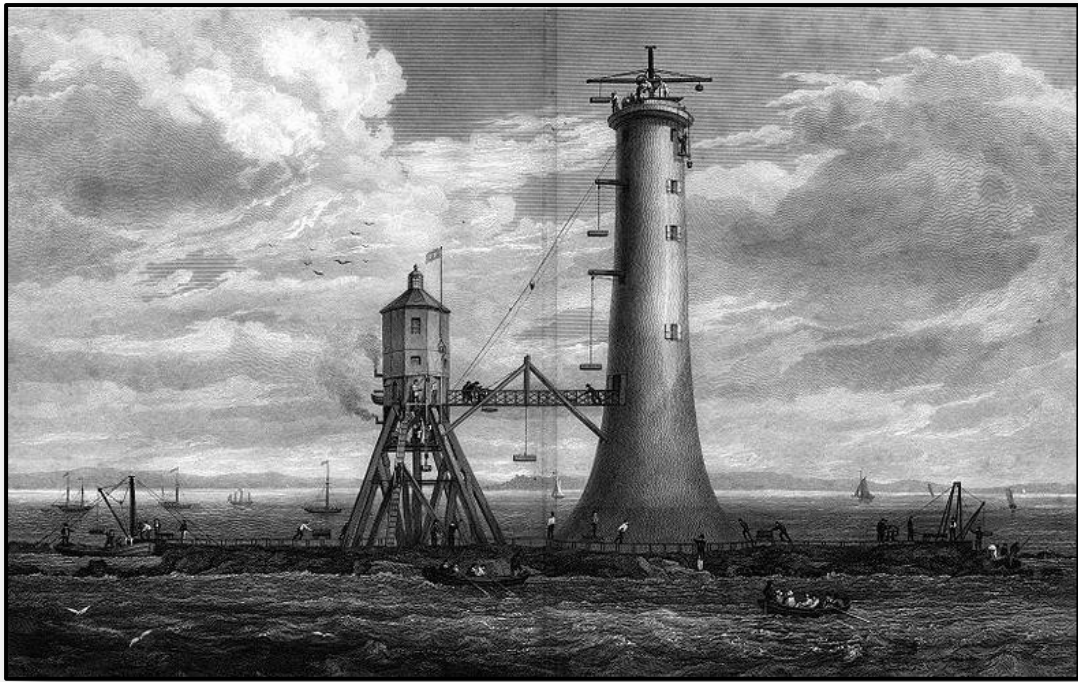
With bodies from a wreck floating ashore both east and west of Arbroath, it was decided in January 1803 that something had to be done. A temporary beacon was erected in July but lasted only until a storm on 20 December of that year. That storm resulted in the wreck of the British 64-gun ship *York* on Bell Rock with a loss of life close to 500 men. Perhaps it was numbers such as these that prompted the political establishment of the time to realise the need for a lighthouse.



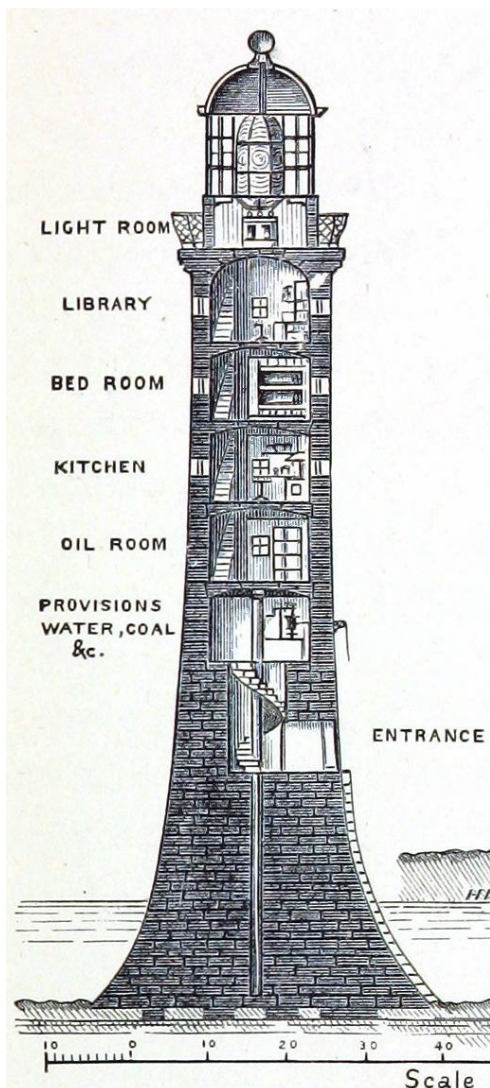
The initial attempt to pass a bill had died in the House of Commons in August 1804 but with still more disasters happening, on 15 July 1806 it was ratified by the House of Lords and quickly given royal assent on 21<sup>st</sup> of the month.

Robert Stevenson was the man appointed to plan and oversee the construction of the lighthouse and in 1807 he hired 60 men to prepare the rock including a blacksmith to re-sharpen the pickaxes used to cut the foundations. Because the rock was covered by water for 20 hours each day, the workers lived at first on a ship moored one mile further out to sea from the rock, requiring them to row to the rock and back again each day to the ship. It was very time consuming and could be dangerous depending on weather conditions. A solution was found in the construction of a beacon house on tall wooden struts on the rock with places for up to 15 men so that workers could stay on site.

Work on the rock paused over winter as the stonemasons moved on land to cut rocks for the lighthouse from Cairngall granite.



The above engraving by William Miller shows the lighthouse well on the way to completion with the beacon house providing accommodation for the workers.



Early in 1808 work at the rock resumed and it was during this year that we are given a glimpse into Stevenson's character. A young worker was accidentally knocked unconscious and fell into the water. His death was a blow to the family as he was the main breadwinner. Stevenson offered the now-vacant position to his younger brother, Alexander Scott, who accepted. On another occasion, a stonemason, John Bonnyman, had to have a finger amputated following an accident with a beam crane on the rock. This made his previous job almost impossible to do and as recompense, Stevenson saw to it that he was later appointed one of the first lighthouse keepers.

Seen at left is a cut-away of the completed lighthouse showing how the rooms were arranged. Amazingly, the masonry work on which the lighthouse rests was constructed to such a high standard that it has not needed to be replaced or adapted in over 200 years. A new feature for this lighthouse was designed by a carpenter, Francis Watt, and involved rotating lights alternating between red and white. These lights and reflectors were replaced in 1843. Bell Rock lighthouse has been automated since 1988.

Because of the engineering challenges that were overcome in the construction of the lighthouse, it has been described as 'one of the Seven Wonders of the Industrial World.'

Bell Rock lighthouse, standing at 35 metres, became a tourist attraction upon completion in 1810 not only for the general public, but for engineering students, writers and artists such as Joseph Mallord William Turner whose painting seen below shows Mother Nature in all her fury pitted against the world's oldest surviving sea-washed lighthouse.



While we know this rock today as the Bell Rock, it was also known in the past as the Carr Rock or the Inch Cape Rock and it was this latter name chosen by the poet, Robert Southey, that headed his poem published in 1802. The third quatrain of the poem describes how a bell was installed to a buoy by the local abbot so that it rang when the rock was under water.

The holy Abbot of Aberbrothok,  
Had placed that bell on the Inchcape Rock;  
On a buoy in the storm it floated and swung,  
And over the waves its warning rung.

When the Rock was hid by the surge's swell,  
The Mariners heard the warning Bell;  
And then they knew the perilous Rock,  
And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok.

The poem continues with a pirate, Sir Ralph the Rover, cutting down the bell and dropping it into the sea as he wanted to plunder the ships that became wrecked on the rock. Some time later, the pirate's own ship laden with booty foundered on the rock.

Sir Ralph the Rover tore his hair,  
He cursed himself in his despair;  
The waves rushed in on every side,  
The ship is sinking beneath the tide.

But even in his dying fear,  
One dreadful sound could the Rover hear;  
A sound as if with the Inchcape Bell,  
The Devil below was ringing his knell.



## From a Scottish Album

### Growing Wild

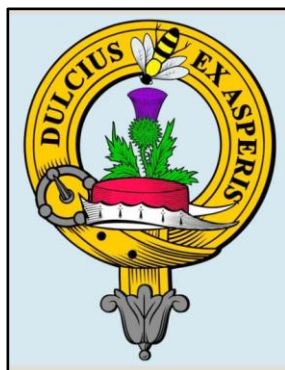


Clockwise from top left:

- Thistles
- Broom
- Bluebells
- Blackberries
- Heather



**Clan Motto:**  
Dulcius Ex Asperis  
(Sweeter after difficulties)



**Clan War Cry:**  
'Fearghuis Gu Brath'  
(Fergus forever).

Clan Fergusson has many branches spread throughout Scotland such as the Fergussons of Argyll, those of Craigdarroch in Dumfries and Galloway, another branch at Dunfallandy in Perthshire and still more in Aberdeenshire, but the senior family in the clan is the Fergussons of Kilkerran in Ayrshire. They can trace their ancestral record back to Fergus MacFergus who was granted lands by Robert the Bruce. This family has owned land in the region from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century onwards.

The Ayrshire Fergussons adopted the Protestant faith during the Protestant Reformation, It is interesting to note that the spelling of the name with a single 's' is not known before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some septs associated with Clan Fergusson include the families of Fergus, Ferries, MacFergus, MacKerras and MacKersey.

John Fergusson was the first documented chief of the clan with the record showing the year as 1464. Today, the current clan chief is Sir Adam Ferguson, 10<sup>th</sup> Baronet, who lives in the clan's ancestral home of Kilkerran House seen below.

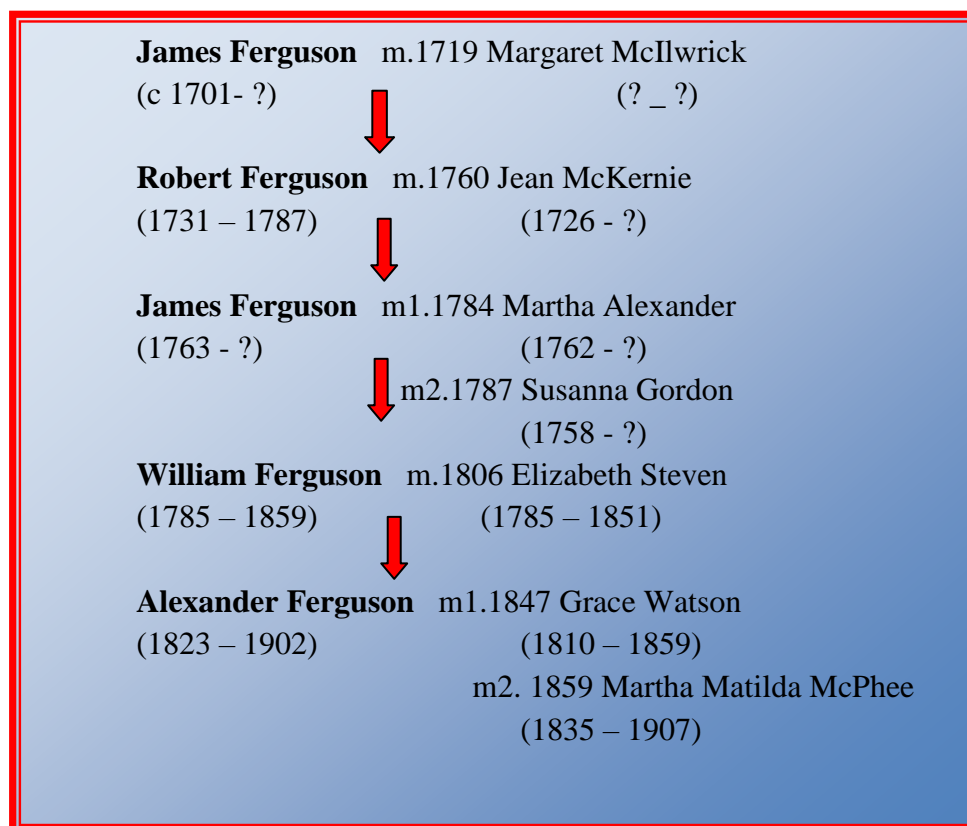


## Alexander Ferguson

The first of my Ferguson ancestors to set foot on Australian soil was Alexander Ferguson from Knockshoggle in Ayrshire. He sailed onboard the *Reliance* with his wife, Grace and their daughters, Margaret and Elizabeth. Also onboard was his sister-in-law, Anne and her husband, James Hutchinson. After arriving in Port Adelaide on 13 September 1851, Alexander and James made their way on foot to the Burra Burra Copper Mine for promised work. The work was tiring but both men had been miners back in Scotland and so conditions came as no surprise. Besides the pay of two guineas a week felt good in their pockets. However, the mine manager soon changed the rules – the hours were to be extended and the pay reduced to £2 per week. In his diary, Alexander wrote ‘I quietly put that week’s pay in my pocket, put my hat on my head and walked out.

Having made their way back to Adelaide, Alexander and James joined their families and after some discussion, decided they should walk to the goldfields of Victoria leaving their wives and children to make the journey to Melbourne on a ship. Kyneton was the location selected for their new home and the men set about constructing dwellings. Meanwhile, the women had made arrangements in Melbourne to travel with a bullock team for a few days before they had to walk the many kilometres in all sorts of weather with their children before reuniting with their husbands. It is easy to imagine the sheer relief on seeing a dry shelter waiting for them. The Fergusons and Hutchinsons lived quietly and died in the small town of Kyneton, far removed from their Ayrshire homes.

Below is a direct ancestral line of my Ayrshire Fergusons dating from Alexander, my great grandfather, back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.



## Snaw-Breakers

An article in the November 2022 issue of *The Scots Magazine* caught my eye recently and introduced me to the Scottish word, 'snaw-breaker'. The article explains this intriguing word and might expand your knowledge of Scots as it did mine.

'In Scots, snaw-breakers are those brave sheep who take the lead in times of extreme snowiness, trampling a path through the drifts to help the rest of the flock follow and find food.'



Image: Pinterest.com.au

Farmers have the worry in sudden severe snow falls that roads to reach their sheep might become impassable thus preventing them from bringing their animals into shelter. So sheep in Scotland have to be of a hardy stock in order to survive. There is more than one breed in Scotland that has adapted and evolved over time including 'Hebridean sheep, capable of thriving on rough, scrubby ground; North Country Cheviots, a sturdy small breed that can endure an inhospitable climate; North Ronaldsay sheep with their diet surprisingly consisting mainly of seaweed; and the tough Soay sheep that live in the St Kilda archipelago.'

Scottish farmers must wonder at the onset of each winter about the prospects for the season with snow sometimes taking its toll. History tells us that a very heavy snowstorm in the south of the country lasted for two weeks back in 1620, killing nine-tenths of the sheep population. The unpredictability of weather has always been thus and will probably continue to be.





Once the fast-approaching holiday season is over, perhaps there will be time to spend investigating some interesting Scottish web sites. Following are some suggestions:

Scotland's People [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk)

Scottish National War Memorial [www.snwm.org](http://www.snwm.org)

Western Isles Records [www.hebrideanconnections.com](http://www.hebrideanconnections.com)

Bell Rock Lighthouse [www.bellrock.org.uk](http://www.bellrock.org.uk)

St Andrew's University Photo Collection

[www.specialcollections.st-and.ac.uk/photocol.htm](http://www.specialcollections.st-and.ac.uk/photocol.htm)



The next meeting of the Scottish SIG will be held on 14 February 2024.

If you would like to attend our meetings, you would be most welcome – just turn up at 1pm at the Mechanics' Institute building in Elder Street, Lambton.

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Members of the NFHS Scottish Special Interest Group would like to offer their best wishes to you and yours for a

**MERRY CHRISTMAS** and a **HAPPY HOGMANAY**

