
THE BREBNER/BREMNER GENEALOGY NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 1

February 2006

Welcome!

Thanks to all of you who responded favourably to the first issue of the newsletter published last October. Some of you pointed out alignment problems while printing the web version, which have been overcome in this issue. Type size has also been increased to aid legibility.

Many of you sent detailed multi-page genealogies; other sent copies of photographs (Thanks to Allister Brebner and Cyril Pawley) which I have incorporated into the new individual portrait database.

The winter months here in Canada give me a chance to work on the housekeeping related to maintaining the web-site, including updating genealogies, correcting data and updating mailing lists. Not on the list? [Please add my name to the mailing list](#)

Check to see if you are listed (or to add your name) to [the Brebner/Bremner Researchers Page...](#)

In this Issue...

- [Biography: Ann Melani Bremner](#)
- [Brebner/Bremner related reading](#)
- [Editorial Comment...the "unknown unknowns"](#)
- [Feature...The Aberdeen Brebner Families](#)
- [Feature...Research in Aberdeen](#)
- [Suggested websites](#)
- [What's New on the website \(this page\)](#)

Featured Living Biographies

In this issue, I'd like to premier a new feature...short biographies of living Brebner/Bremner individuals. While fame is one criterion, those individuals who are high-wire artists, alligator wranglers, musicians or death-row inmates will probably be featured first. Or maybe lawyers...this month showcases **Ann Melani Bremner**, a high profile US west coast media attorney. Descended from the Botriphnie family of **John Bremner** and **Jane Watt**, her ancestors immigrated to the United States about 1840. [See Page 4...](#)



What's New ...

1975-2003 English BMD records updated



William Wilson
Bremner
1853-1897

[View genealogy...](#)

The 1837online.com site recently offered an unlimited search of its BMD records for one year for £50 GBP. That has allowed the updating of English BMD records in the databases to 2003, as well as add quite a number of additional spouses' names to the compiled genealogies. These records will continue to be updated throughout the year.

Searchable Portrait Database



William Brymner, Artist
1855-1925

[View genealogy...](#)

Over the years I have been accumulating copies of old photographs both of my own Brebner family as well as those of others. The [portrait database](#) is now available. You can very quickly search for individuals by first name, see all images of specific individual, or look at all images from that genealogy. I'd welcome any additional images of your early ancestors, as the database is a little heavy with photographs of my own family! I'm most interested in photographs (or paintings) prior to 1930, but if you have more recent images that you'd like me to include, please feel free to send them along. Here are [some hints and guidelines for sending images...](#)

Compiled Genealogies Update

[The 400+ compiled genealogies](#) are usually updated when new or corrected information is uncovered. However, during the past three months, all the older genealogies that dated from 2003-2004 have been updated. While in many cases there are few changes, you may find additional information within these revised compilations for collateral lines.



David Francis Bremner
1839-1922

[View genealogy...](#)

[Next page...](#)

Suggested Websites...

Once again I'd like to recommend a [Google](#) feature...this time it's the Image Search. I was amazed to find some of my own photographs through this search, and I think that you may be surprised at what you find when you enter your own name there. I plan to incorporate some of those images into my new [photo and portrait database](#) over the next few months.

The 1851 English census has now been posted on the [ancestry.com](#) site, and the transcription of the Brebner/Bremner entries to my own census databases is nearly complete. While the index often requires some creative thinking...my favourite mis-transcription of *Brebner* is *Bulnes*... the legibility of the scanned images is excellent.

Also new on ancestry.com is their Canadian records collection, which is said to include the complete 1911 Canadian Census transcription, as well as Ontario BMD records. This requires an upgrade to their World Deluxe Membership level, available either monthly or annually. I haven't tried this out yet, and I welcome any comments about this new service. Feedback will be featured in the next issue of the newsletter.

For those researching Canadian ancestors, the free version of the [1911 Census Transcription at automatedgenealogy.com](#) is progressing well. Many of the smaller communities have been fully transcribed, the total transcription is about 45% at time of writing. Unfortunately, because of deterioration of the original images, many pages suffer from problems of legibility. Don't overlook the 1906 census of the western provinces (Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan) on the same site...the transcription is about 75% complete.

Still on the subject of census information, the 1861 Scottish census is now available at [scotlandspeople.gov.uk](#). Again the quality of both indexing and image quality is excellent here, and I'm making progress on adding the Brebner/Bremner information to my own census databases.

To keep abreast of what's happening across the board in genealogy, I recommend [Eastman's Genealogy Newsletter](#). Dick has a very informative newsletter on all aspects of genealogy research in addition to useful articles on computer-related subjects.

For those researching Australian ancestors, the [Brisbane Cemetery Database](#) allows free searching of a number of cemeteries in that area. A big plus to this site is that other family members buried in the graves are also noted. Brebner/Bremner entries will be added to my deaths database during March.

And on the other side of the world, [descriptions of Illinois Civil War soldiers](#) are now available from this state government site. These include place of birth, and physical traits, among other military details.

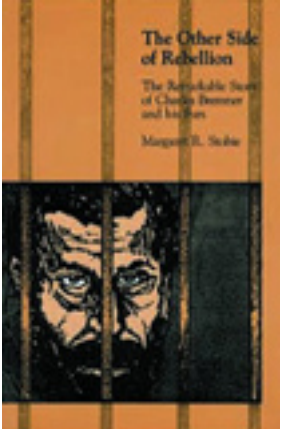
[Previous page...](#)

Brebner/Bremner Related Reading

For those with an interest in Canadian history, *The Other Side of Rebellion* by Margaret Stobie [ISBN 0-920897-08-8] is a fascinating account of Charles Bremner and his unfortunate run-in with General Frederick Middleton during the North-West rebellion of 1885. Bremner was a Scottish-Indian [descendant of Alexander Bremner from Orkney](#), who had come to the Red River area to serve with the Hudson's Bay Company. Charles had moved to the Battleford area of Saskatchewan in 1881, and it was there that he became involved in a series of events that led to his being imprisoned in 1885, with the subsequent confiscation of his furs by Middleton, who became the subject of a government enquiry.

This is a captivating journal of the events of the time. You may have some difficulty finding it in print as a new volume, but it can be found fairly easily through on-line used book-sellers.

Right: General Frederick Middleton (1825-1898)



Did you know...



The late Billy Bremner (1942-1997), master footballer was connected with the family of James Lobban Bremner from Ythan Wells. James, one of at least seven children to William Bremner and Jessie Greig from Drumblade, married Bridget Newlands in 1937 in Stirling, and adopted young William John (b 09 DEC 1942). Billy married Helen McKay Vick in 1962; the couple had three children, Billy Jr., Donna and Amanda.

Billy Bremner

[View genealogy...](#)

Now available...

A quick search of [Brebner/Bremner marriage databases by spouse's name](#). This new search is a great way to check for compiled family genealogies...all you need is a spouse's surname and an approximate marriage date.

[Next page...](#)

Editorial... the "unknown unknowns"

"Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns -- the ones we don't know we don't know."



Donald Rumsfeld

You might wonder why I would start my editorial in this issue with a quote from US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and I'm sure many of you chuckled when you first heard that convoluted statement.

However, joking aside, it does illustrate many of the challenges faced by genealogists today. Most of us, for example, know who our parents and grandparents are... and we can work back in a logical progression to our earlier ancestors from that point. These are the "known knowns".

And the 1911 UK census and those other records that are just out of view certainly fall into the "known unknown" category, because they will be revealed to us in time. We know they exist...we just can't get our hands on them quite yet! And then there are those records that no longer exist...the Australian and New Zealand census data that we know was taken... and is gone forever.

But what really keeps my interest in this project is that tantalizing question of the "unknown unknowns --- the ones we don't know we don't know." During my research in the Brebner/Bremner families, I have frequently been faced with what is supposedly a complete "set" of known births or christenings. The OPRI and IGI are often interpreted as being that complete record of all those events, but it takes only a little research through the 1841-61 census data to realize that many of the birth events have never been recorded. While in some areas, recorded christenings were over 90%, in others, like many parts of Caithness, that figure is closer to 45%. These are the unknowns that we know we don't know! And researching prior to 1841, that territory is virtually uncharted.

In genealogy, an event-based study, records of a person's life define that individual. For many of the people in our family histories, there are a number of events that define those lives, even for those that we know very little about. If, for example, they lived in Scotland in the mid-19th century, then there are a number of events that should be recorded for each life. These should include a birth/christening, marriage or death record and a census listing every decade from 1841-1901.

These and other event markers from city directories to wills, court records, immigration records, ships lists, monumental inscriptions and newspaper accounts allow the researcher to build up a picture of the individual. They define the framework for a family history, and once a researcher has established those defining time points, it becomes much easier to start understanding the lives that ancestors lived, as well as verifying that we indeed have the correct ancestors and family.

It's all too easy to assign "probable" births to parents based on the incidence of names in a given community, but the reality of the situation is that certainly in rural areas, many births weren't recorded, many children were illegitimate, many wives died in childbirth and a large number of both men and women married more than once or twice. Inevitably a man will marry a second wife of the same first name, or a sister of his first wife, or worse! I have been guilty of making what I thought at the time were very reliable assumptions, and been proven wrong! I now take a much more cautious approach to those pre-1855 Scottish events, and I am accordingly far more suspicious of those genealogists that can trace ancestors back into the medieval period. Most of us are lucky if we can trace reliably to the late 18th century. We would all like to be able to delve deeper into those mists of time, but without concrete event-based proof, that can become a slippery slope. Even Donald Rumsfeld doesn't have a category for what appears to be known...and what turns out to be wrong! Perhaps the less said here, the better!

I'm all in favour of making educated guesses when no real proof of ancestry exists - but only as a guideline! Using Scottish naming patterns, may give some clues toward a mother's surname, but one should be wary of using this technique and thinking that it's absolutely accurate. These and other guesses should be used only as pointers toward verifiable data!

With the increased popularity of genealogy, I find a mountain of uncorrected information on many web-posted genealogies. Many people post their data on a number of sites, including rootsweb.com, ancestry.com or genesreunited.com.

Unfortunately, that information is often rarely updated or corrected, and once it appears, it takes on a life of its own, spreading far and wide to other sites perpetuating its errors!

The genealogies that appear on my site are updated regularly. If you see a problem with accuracy, or anything that doesn't appear quite right...such as 10 (or 75!) year old mothers, please let me know. While I endeavour to verify all information that is sent to me, mistakes do happen. Feel free to question any data on my site. I'd like to think that the information that I have is as accurate as possible, and as more resources become available, omissions in Brebner/Bremner data will be filled and new data added.

Finally, let's hope that we can reduce the "unknown unknowns" into "known unknowns" and even further into "knowns"! After all, that's what genealogy and family history is all about...to know as much about our ancestors as possible.

[Previous page...](#)

[Next page...](#)

Biography...Anne Melani Bremner

One of four children to psychiatrist James Douglas Bremner and Linnea Marie Leonardson, Anne descends from the family of John Bremner and Jane Watt in Botriphnie, Banffshire. That family can trace their roots as farmers there at least as far back as the 17th century. Their son James (1776-1858) married Isobel Mitchell in Botriphnie in 1801; their eldest son John Bremner (b 1803) married Margaret Cran, and had six children, five born in the Rhynie, Aberdeenshire area.



She is a faculty member for the National Institute for Trial Advocacy and has been a frequent lecturer for seminars throughout the United States and the Caribbean. She is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates. She is "AV" rated ("preeminent"), and was a semifinalist to be the U. S. Attorney in Washington.

In addition to these accomplishments, Anne has been named a "Superlawyer" (top 5% of lawyers in Washington State) from 1999 through 2005 and was voted by her peers as one of Seattle's 92 best attorneys in 2001 and one of Seattle's top 115 attorneys in 2003 in Seattle Magazine. Her frequent media appearances continue to maintain her high profile image within the law community of the US North-West and indeed across the country.

The family came to the United States in about 1841, where their youngest son, George, was born. After living there for about 12 years, the family moved west to the new American frontier, settling in Cow Creek, Iowa.

Her gg-grandfather James Bremner (b 1831), their third child, married Abigail Freeman (b 1828) in Iowa. Three children were born in Springdale and Prairie; son George moved to Washington state before 1900, marrying Marian Alicia Bay around 1925.

Many descendants of this prolific family moved throughout Banffshire and Aberdeenshire, and descendants are found in Keith and Cairnie. Other family members emigrated to Canada.

[More details of this genealogy...](#)

After a B.A. in medieval history at Stanford, Anne got her law degree from Seattle University, and for the past 24 years, she has been a well-recognized trial lawyer in Washington state. Currently with the Seattle firm of [Stafford Frey Cooper](#), her private practice emphasizes high-profile trial work.

She could be considered a "lawyer's lawyer", having represented Washington State Attorney General (now Governor) Chris Gregoire as well as the Seattle Police and other law-enforcement officers throughout Washington State. She won verdicts for the police in the high-profile "Mary Kay Letourneau" statutory rape case.

Presently a member of the American, Washington State and Seattle-King Bar Associations, she is also on the Board of Trustees for the Washington Defence Trial Lawyers Association, and a past member of the State Board of Directors (and Director of Media Relations) for Washington Women Lawyers.

Anne Bremner has the honour of being included in the top 1% of Trial Lawyers in the United States and Canada (she has won every civil case she was ever involved in) who meet the rigid requirements for Fellowship in the prestigious American College of Trial Lawyers, and in 2003 was selected as National Representative for all the Fellows to give their formal presentation at her class' induction.

[Previous page...](#)



"I used to believe that for a lawyer to be successful, one had to be hard edged, mean and tough, but it's more disarming when you're nice. You get a lot farther. When people call me 'Barbie' or 'Gidget' in jest, I love it!"

Anne has a simple explanation for the popularity of TV legal shows and the American obsession with crime, trial and punishment.

"All trials are morality plays, public forums in which to discuss big issues. In the Robert Blake trial, we asked, if the victim is an unsympathetic grifter, should the defendant get off? Do we know evil when we see it? Is the case of Martha Stewart, who is rich and female, different from the guys from Enron? Americans have been fascinated by trials forever, going back to the Lindbergh baby case and Leopold and Loeb. The press coverage has always been staggering. And morality plays are unpredictable. It's like a sporting event where we don't know the outcome. The fascination we have for disturbing human behavior has never changed, only the proliferation of media outlets to feed it."

That balanced perspective makes her a frequent guest on such television shows as "Nancy Grace" on CNN Headline News.

Check out her web-site at <http://www.abremner.com> to find out when her next media appearance will be televised, and to see her in action! Written with files from:

- [Seattle Weekly](#)
- [Luck Media](#)



[Next page...](#)

For anyone researching family history in the North-East of Scotland, Aberdeen is a must-visit. Most of the major records from the old counties of Aberdeenshire, Kincardineshire, Banffshire and Elgin/Moray are held in the city in a number of locations. In this article, I'd like to share some of my own experiences about Aberdeen, and suggest some locations that should prove useful to anyone researching family in the area.

The first-time visitor should start their pilgrimage at [The Aberdeen and North-East Scotland Family History Society \(ANESFHS\)](#) at their now-expanded premises at 158-164 King Street. They hold the OPR films for the above-mentioned counties, as well as the 1841-1891 censuses for those and other counties, including those to the north and south, many of which have been indexed by society members. They have a wealth of publications of monumental inscriptions, old maps, local histories, all enhanced by a friendly and knowledgeable staff of volunteers eager to help. Violet in particular has been a constant fixture for many years...if she doesn't know the answer to any of your genealogical questions, she'll quietly go about finding the information during your visit! Annual membership is £15 GBP. At the time of writing, they are open Tuesday and Friday evenings from 1900-2200; from experience I can recommend these quieter times that give you full run of the place.



St. Nicholas Kirk, Aberdeen

I'd like to mention the St. Nicholas OPR marriage entries in particular here. Of all the parishes in the North-East of Scotland, these records are by far the most detailed. They list the husband's occupation, as well as the wife's parish of residence, father and occupation, or her previous husband's name if she had been widowed. Check these out if you're researching names within the city of Aberdeen between 1700-1855.



The [Aberdeen City Archives](#) also holds a wealth of materials, not limited to the city itself. Of particular interest are the Poor Relief Registers. While the records for Aberdeen St. Nicholas, and much of Old Machar have not survived, many of the other parishes in the North-East have comprehensive records of applications for relief. Those still extant are extremely detailed, and a large number of the applicants were women whose husbands deserted them. There are often details about both the husbands whereabouts, as well as any children (both legitimate and illegitimate) that are dependent on the mother. These records are held at the Dunbar Street location of the Aberdeen Archives. Other records of interest for Aberdeen, held at the main Town House branch are the Rent Rolls for Aberdeen from 1795 onward. These show all "heads of household", occupation, rents paid, their landlords, and in the later volumes, the street on which they lived. The earliest one has been indexed, and lists all "Heads of household" for the Burgh of Aberdeen. For those who have gone as far back as the 1841 census and wish to check earlier records, these records are most useful. Appointments are recommended for both locations of the Aberdeen City Archives as space is limited. Note also that the Dunbar Street location (in Old Aberdeen) is open Monday-Wednesday and the city centre location at the Town House open Wednesday to Friday. Limited parking is available at the Dunbar Street location...but there's lots of free parking nearby at King's College.

Records at Aberdeen University, [Special Collections](#) are also a must visit for those interested in Aberdeen and local history. They hold the full set of microfilms for the Aberdeen Journal and Press and Journal to about 1860, and also have a little-known index to people in the domestic occurrences column of events in the paper. ([Have a look at my own index for those events for all names up to 1820...](#)). A full set of the Spalding Club publications of early Aberdeen documents is also available. The library is open Monday to Friday 0930-1630. Free parking off Bedford Road, right beside the [Queen Mother Library](#) which holds the general collections of Aberdeen histories, as well as national and international newspapers.



[Previous page...](#)

[Next page...](#)

[The Aberdeen Central Library](#) is another useful resource. Among other items, it too has the collection of the Aberdeen Journal from 1745 onwards, as well as a fairly complete run of city directories. Located downtown on the Rosemount Viaduct, it's within the central core, and a five minute walk from the ANESFHS.



If you are wandering through the Aberdeen graveyards, it's a good idea to first check the ANESFHS for monumental inscriptions and plot maps. Knowing where the grave is will save you a lot of time when looking through these larger sites. Most of the Aberdeen City graveyards open only between 0800-0900 and close between 1800-2100, so plan your visit accordingly. The Grove Cemetery in Woodside is often overlooked when visiting the older city cemeteries; if your ancestors lived in that part of Aberdeen after 1900, it's worth checking for them in that cemetery.

Something else to keep in mind about many of these graveyards is that very few of the larger and newer ones have been transcribed. This also applies to the older graveyards, many of which have current annexes that can also be a useful source of inscriptions for deaths occurring in the twentieth century.

St. Clement's Church, Aberdeen

When in Aberdeen, I stay at the [Premier Travel Inn](#) Aberdeen City Centre on West North Street. It's one of a chain in Britain, and is perfect for my needs. In May 2004, rooms were 52 GBP per night. The staff is friendly and accommodating, and the location of the hotel makes it ideal for downtown research. Restaurant and bar in the hotel, king size beds and full bath and shower facilities. I'm not against guest-houses...but I like to maximize my research time when abroad, and that means getting up and out at dawn when the weather permits. This hotel is close to all the research facilities...the ANESFHS is about two minutes walk; other record repositories and museums are about 5 minutes away. A big plus is free parking...no small consideration in a city where that commodity is in short supply. A few minutes walk north is a (Safeway) supermarket where one can stock up on a wide assortment of food, drinks and even suntan oil if the weather warrants! There's a 24 hour gas (petrol) station next door to that... be prepared for sticker-shock! Renting a car from overseas will be cheaper than doing so once in the UK. But walking is the best way to explore the city. Old Aberdeen or the harbour area are less than a half hour walk from the city centre, and is still charming despite the city's modernization attempts.

Travelling uphill from West North Street, you'll come to John Knox Church and churchyard. A small graveyard, many of the burials here are of seamen. Continuing along Mounthooly, King's Crescent and the Spital there are several book and antique shops at the top of the hill toward Old Aberdeen. On the right, through the Spital Court is the entrance to the Old Spital Cemetery (*photo, right*). The cemetery is now accessed from King Street through St. Peter's Cemetery, and holds the oldest graves for Aberdonians. Transcriptions of gravestones and burials for this cemetery are held both at the ANESFHS and the Aberdeen Central Library. Many of the Spital burials recorded within the transcriptions do NOT have any corresponding stone... this is commonplace with many of the older cemeteries. Economic circumstances at death often precluded the erection of a monument, and even if one existed in the late 19th century, it's unlikely that it is still standing. Murphy's law applies to gravestones: the one you're looking for has either disappeared, or inevitably fallen forward on its face.



Shield over entrance to Spital Cemetery

Passing King's College of Aberdeen University, a spot of drink is probably in order. The St. Machar Bar (97 High St.), frequented by students, professors and locals alike, is a good spot to quench your thirst, or to take cover from the elements when the Aberdeen weather turns wet! Great for a sandwich if you're spending the day at either the Archives or Special Collections.

Crossing over St. Machar Drive and continuing north along the Chanonry brings you to the cathedral church of St. Machar, the parish church for Old Machar. Don Street in Old Aberdeen also has a number of original buildings, including No. 23 where I lived at the age of three! East of Don Street is Dunbar Street and the location of the Aberdeen City Archives. If you do drive out to St. Machar, parking at the church is only available on Sundays, in fact all parking nearby is restricted only to residents during the week. There is limited free parking at the Aberdeen City Archives Dunbar Street location, and as mentioned off Bedford Road at King's College.



Don Street, Old Aberdeen

The Harbour



This trawler has seen better days!

An oil rig supply vessel enters harbour.



The harbour is another interesting visit. While very little of the original harbour remains, the area is still bustling with the oil-rig supply ships and Shetland ferries. If you're an early bird... before 0600... you can catch the offloading of fish from the trawlers, although sadly this trade is a shadow of what it was 50 years ago, as a shortage of fish has made its mark on the trawling fleet. Even the harbour ladies are less prevalent than during the boom 70s! When in the harbour area, visit St. Clement's Church and graveyard; it is the final resting-place of many Aberdeen seamen. The church is no longer in use. A word of caution... the young ladies that look like they're waiting for a bus in front of the church early in the morning aren't!

The Aberdeen Maritime Museum in at 52-56 Shiprow is worth a visit, and gives insight into the glory days of Aberdeen as both a fishing port and shipbuilding centre. When walking through the downtown and harbour area of such an old city, you can't help but be a little depressed that so little of that historic city remains. It seems a shame that the City didn't have the foresight to preserve many of the older buildings in this area. While Edinburgh has a vibrant old city, Aberdeen bowed to the pressures of the oil and gas industry in the 70's and carved up the city core for a series of wider road accesses to the harbour, and consequently destroyed the old heart of St. Nicholas and George Street with shopping malls. The attitude toward preservation seems to have changed for the better, but in general, history is something that most Aberdonians take for granted, the general feeling seems to be that the newer something is, the better it must be. And that's enough of me on my soap-box!

Still, if you look carefully around the city, you can still see scraps of architecture dating from the 17th century and even earlier, and if you look around St. Nicholas' Kirk, you can find remnants of Aberdeen's medieval past. Much of the main street, Union Street, still has the imposing granite buildings built from the early 1800s. These no longer house wealthy Aberdeen merchants, but are outlets for the ubiquitous fast-food chains housing primarily the cell-phone toting teenagers seen everywhere. Unfortunately, many of these wonderful Victorian buildings lie vacant on what was arguably once the busiest commercial thoroughfare in the north-east of Scotland.

But no mention of food would be complete without a visit to the Ashvale Fish Bar (42-48 Great Western Road)! Aberdeen's prize-winning restaurant is ideal for either the sit-down meal or the traditional fish and chips wrapped in paper...the original "fast-food" in Aberdeen! Located opposite Nellfield Cemetery it's another must-visit for the hungry genealogist!



Ashvale Fish Bar, Great Western Road,

Aberdeen

[Previous page...](#)

[Next page...](#)

Outside the City

If you have time and ancestors in other parts of the North-East, a day trip driving through the countryside to the various graveyards and small villages is recommended. After looking at maps of the parishes, I was interested to note how small many of these parishes were, and how likely it was that people lived in one parish and worshipped at the parish church in another. Don't overlook this fact when tracing your genealogy. Aberdeen itself is a good example. The parish of St. Nicholas is relatively small, and almost surrounded by Old Machar, which includes Old Aberdeen and most of "new" Aberdeen. Banchory Devenick and Nigg in Kincardine are also just a stone's throw away across the River Dee. Banchory Devenick was a farming and fishing parish, and farmers regularly brought their goods into the city. My own ancestors came from that area in the 1820s, and I'm still finding ancestors there from the previous century. Stonehaven in nearby Fetteresso parish about 15 miles south of Aberdeen is another must-visit location. I can recommend the pub lunch in the Boat Inn on the Quay...get there early if it's a nice day because Stonehaven harbour is a popular tourist site. Stop by Dunnottar Castle, just south of town. A spectacular mediaeval ruin, that has a fascinating history, it's a wothwhile albeit somewhat slippery walk from their car park in damp weather. Wear sensible shoes!



Dunnottar Castle near Stonehaven

Up Deeside



On a good day (preferably during the week when traffic is less problematic) a trip "up Deeside" to Braemar is a wonderful introduction to the Highlands. Leaving Aberdeen on the A93, the drive to Braemar takes a leisurely hour and a half. At Ballater, the Alexandra Hotel boasts a genuine Scottish country hotel atmosphere, and has a great Aberdeen Angus steak lunch. Among the many sites along the route, Balmoral Castle is probably the most famous. Between Ballater and Balmoral, a diversion up the road to Strathdon takes the visitor across some of the most barren areas of the highlands. The 8 foot poles along both sides of the road here allow the snow-plough drivers to determine their track... a reminder of those times many years ago when heavier snowfalls made the road impassable. Strathdon is probably best known now as the home of Scottish comedian Billy Connolly, who has incurred the wrath of the locals by closing the gardens of Candacraig House, often used in the past for photo-ops for wedding parties.

Driving north from Strathdon, the road winds uphill through a little-populated area of the highlands, through Cabrach to Tomintoul. From there, the whiskey trail beckons, with a number of distilleries along Speyside offering tours and samples. I recommend a designated driver if you want to enjoy this part of your visit to the fullest!

Strathdon Kirkyard

Rhynie is another area worth a visit. A charming 12th century farming village, it's still a remote and quiet spot in the early spring. A few miles south on the road to Tomintoul, you can visit the Bronze Age hill fort at Tap O'Noth. From the car park at the base, be prepared for a ninety minute walk that takes you up over 1000 ft to the summit. That walk will make you appreciate the amazing feat of its builders, who managed to actually fuse the stones of the walls of the site with fire. To this day there's no accurate explanation as to how much wood, how long the fires had to burn, or even why they built this amazing fortification. Once you walk up to the summit, the panoramic view from the fort (*photo, following page*) encompasses the hills and glens for 20 miles or more on a clear day. Certainly, anyone posted as a lookout here in the past mists of time would have had ample warning of the approach of enemy forces. But the question remains...how did they survive up there, and what did they live on in the Scottish winter? Even on a May day, with temperatures in the surrounding valleys in the 20s, the north-east wind can be bone-chilling!



Your intrepid host at the Tap O'Noth vitrified fort.

[Previous page...](#)

[Next page...](#)

Early Scottish history has always held a fascination for me. And around this part of Scotland a number of stone circles, Pictish standing stones and other reminders of that distant past pop up in farmer's fields. Have a look here for information on Scottish archaeological sites, listed buildings and ancient monuments. It's only recently that much interest of these sites and their importance to early archaeology has been noticed, although the Aberdeen Journal from the early 19th century frequently mentions the discovery of stone age burial mounds, pottery and inscribed stones...usually mentioning that they were discovered during ploughing a field, or building an extension to someone's house, and most of these relics have long since disappeared. There was little interest in many of these pre-Christian relics, and less tolerance for the pagan beliefs that generated them.

While much of this early history may be beyond the purview of the genealogist, the doings of people throughout the ages have changed little, and can only be a continued fascination to us all.

Maiden Stone, near Chapel of Garioch



Rainbow over Tarland



Rhynie as seen from Tap O'Noth

One final thought if you are travelling to Aberdeen from through Heathrow in London...get there in plenty of time for your transatlantic flight. Air traffic at lunchtime can be brutal...and you may spend as much time circling London as you did flying from Aberdeen. Leave Aberdeen on the earlier morning flights to ensure that you don't miss your connection! Or connect via Amsterdam rather than London!

Happy trails!

For those of you with Google Earth capability, here are some satellite photo placemarks for Aberdeen locations mentioned in this article. You **must have** Google Earth installed on your computer for these to work!

- [Aberdeen and North East Family History Society](#)
- [Aberdeen Archives \(Dunbar Street\)](#)
- [Aberdeen Archives \(Town House\)](#)
- [Aberdeen Central Library](#)
- [Aberdeen Maritime Museum](#)
- [Aberdeen University, Special Collections](#)
- [Ashvale Fish Bar](#)
- [Banchory Devenick Kirkyard](#)
- [Grove Cemetery, Aberdeen](#)
- [John Knox Churchyard](#)
- [Nellfield Cemetery, Aberdeen](#)
- [Nigg Kirkyard](#)
- [Premier Travel Inn, Aberdeen City Centre](#)
- [St. Clement's Kirk, Aberdeen](#)
- [St. Machar Bar](#)
- [St. Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen](#)
- [St. Nicholas Kirk, Aberdeen](#)
- [St. Fittick's Cemetery Nigg](#)
- [Spital Cemetery, Aberdeen](#)
- [And just for fun...the world headquarters of brebner.com in Ottawa!](#)

The Aberdeen Brebner/Bremner Families in 1851

Many of the Aberdeen Brebner/Bremner families arrived in that city during the later years of the industrial revolution with the boom in railway construction in the late 1840s. After the arrival of the railway in Aberdeen in 1855, the population started to grow quickly with the arrival of predominantly farm labourers looking for work in the mechanized textile and ship-building industries in Aberdeen.

1851 was the first detailed census that listed the birthplaces of those enumerated, so that a clearer picture of the origins of the population of Aberdeen can be determined from this time forward. The accompanying graphic (superimposed on the 1902 Ordnance Survey map) shows the Aberdeen locations of those Brebner/Bremner families; the table below gives their addresses and links to the compiled genealogies. Clicking on the appropriate number on the accompanying map will also download the genealogy.

Families represented with a green dot have been shown to have been in Aberdeen at least as early as 1800, those with an amber dot from 1825 and those with a red dot being the most recent arrivals after 1841 It's interesting to note the proximity of related families.

It's my hope that by seeing a visual representation of their homes within the city, that some conclusions as to linking the groups may be made. Note that of the twenty families represented on the map, the ancestors of only 4 were actually in Aberdeen in 1800.

No.	Family	Address	Origin
1	William Brebner/Jane McSwein	3 Mount Street	Aberdeen?, ABD
2	Burnett Brebner/Elizabeth McPherson	11 Forbes Street	Glenmuick, ABD
3	David Brebner/Jane Stewart	Regent Quay	Strachan, KCD
4	James Brebner/Margaret Pirie	9 Albyn Place	Durris, KCD
5	William Brebner/Catherine Johnston	Mile End	Glenmuick, ABD
6	George Brebner (d)/Margaret Sherret	60 Gordon Street	Glenmuick, ABD
7	John Brebner/Christian Esslemont	22 Bon Accord Terrace	Tarland, ABD
8	John Brebner/Jane Edward	189 Barron Street	Aberdeen?, ABD
9	James Brebner (d)/Helen Gordon	65 Langstane Place	Glenmuick, ABD
10	John Bremner (d)/Christian Forbes	96 Windmill Brae	Aberdeen?, ABD
11	William Brebner/Agnes Chalmers	20 Dee Street	Aberdour/New Deer, ABD
12	Jasmes Brebner/Christian Peterkin	21 Shiprow	Aberdeen, ABD
13	William Brebner/Elizabeth Annand	81 George Street	Leslie, ABD
14	George Brebner/Elizabeth Kilgour	16 Loch Street	Leslie, ABD
15	William Bremner/Jane Morrice	36 Park Street	Aberdeen, ABD
16	Robert Bremner (d)/Ann Donaldson	7 Albion Street	Aberdeen?, ABD
17	Alexander Bremner/Isabella Robertson	52 St. Clement's Street	Kinloss, MOR
18	William Brebner/Betty Hunter	30 Commerce Street	Stonehaven, KCD
19	Alexander Brebner/Jane Webster	9 Drum's Lane	Aberdeen, ABD
20	William Bremner (d)/Margaret Milne	North Street?	Aberdeen?, ABD



Regent Quay, Aberdeen 2005



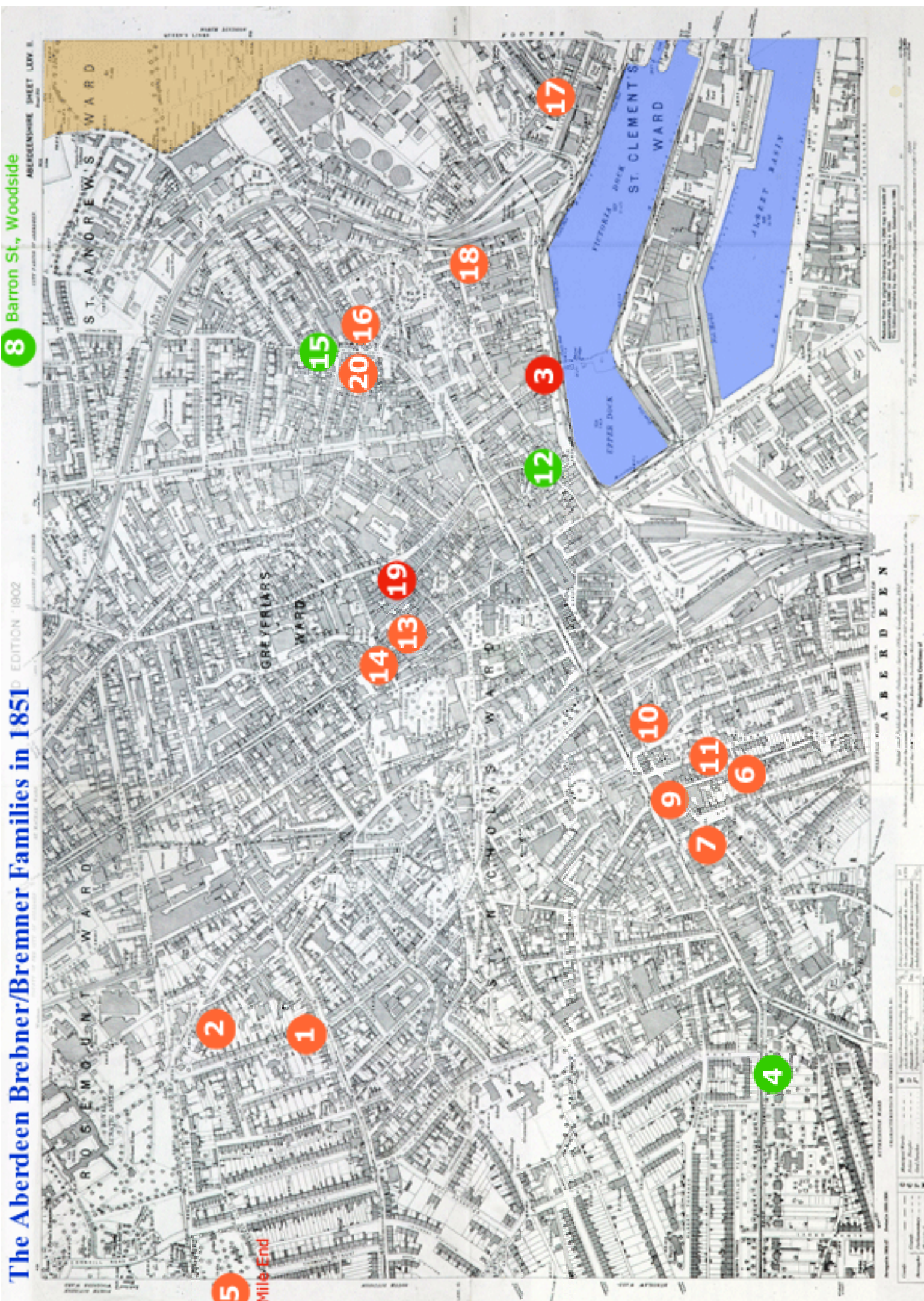
St. Clement's Street, Aberdeen 2005



Bon Accord Square, Aberdeen 2005

[Previous page...](#)

[Next page...](#)



- Family/Ancestors in Aberdeen in 1800
- Arrived in Aberdeen before 1840
- Arrived in Aberdeen after 1840

[Download larger image...\(2.3 Mb\) .jpg file](#)

[Previous page...](#)

[Next page...](#)

The Aberdeen Brebner/Bremner Families (continued)...

It's interesting to note that by the time of the 1901 census; almost 100 Brebner/Bremner families called Aberdeen their home. Most of these newcomers came from the countryside to the north and west, and had taken jobs in the expanding industrial economy of the city. The city had grown rapidly from 12,000 inhabitants in 1801 to 63,000 in 1841 and to over 135,000 by 1901. While the primary economic activity in the first part of the 19th century had been supplied by textiles and shipbuilding, the latter part included the granite industry, which at its peak in 1900 employed 2500 men around the city. Paper mills and iron foundries, gaining a foothold in the late 17th century, continued to be a major employer in the city. The fishing industry helped maintain shipbuilding activities in the city during the latter part of the 19th century with improvements to the port and centralization of smaller coastal fisheries into Aberdeen.

But the depression following the First World War saw many Aberdonians seeking a new life abroad, in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and South Africa. The Brebner/Bremner families were no different, and many of those far-flung families around the world today can trace their roots to Aberdeen.



Marischal Street, Aberdeen



Looking west along what was Virginia Street, Aberdeen



Marischal Street, looking south to Regent Quay

In the next issue...

- Deeside/Donside Brebner/Bremner Families
- Researching in Banffshire and Morayshire
- David Brebner of Fordyce/Portsoy, Banffshire
- Guide to Gravestone Photography, Part 1

In conclusion...

I hope that you have found something of interest within this issue of the newsletter. While the newsletters are published quarterly, the BMD database information and compiled genealogies on the site are updated monthly or as new information is uncovered.

I welcome any information, no matter how little, that might add to or correct the genealogies that appear on the web-site. My philosophy is to share freely all my research data; if you have any questions about information on the site, or would like to have copies of certificates sourced in the compiled genealogies, please ask!

What would you like to see here? [Send me your comments about this newsletter...](#)

[A printed version of this newsletter is available by annual subscription.](#)

Many thanks to everyone who sent suggestions and information in the past three months. Good luck in your research!



Left: Iron gravestone in St. Clement's Churchyard, Aberdeen.



Right: Insch Old Kirkyard

Below: St. Fittick's Kirkyard, Nigg.



[Previous page...](#)

[Back to beginning of newsletter...](#)