

THE BOOK OF BANFF **REPRINT**

ROYAL AND ANCIENT BURGH

Banff Preservation & Heritage Society

Banff is a good site for a castle, a bluff at the mouth of a river. So the royal and ancient burgh was founded because the kings of Scotland had a castle there. Edward I of England, the Hammer of the Scots, spent time in Banff Castle, and Banff was the last outpost of the English in the north of Scotland in the War of Independence. Like several other burghs, the town's modest wealth came from salmon netting at the mouth of the river. Banff traded with the Baltic. The core of the town plan, the remains of the castle, and names like Carmelite Street, are all that is left of medieval Banff. After the kings, the town was dominated by local noblemen, the Ogilvies, the Grants, and then the Duffs. But the Ogilvies died out, the Grants preferred Cullen, and the Duffs built Macduff as their own town, so perhaps none of them quite controlled Banff as they might have hoped. Instead in the eighteenth century lesser gentry built themselves town houses, the politics of the town was Jacobite, wanting the old Stuart kings back, and the economy relied quite heavily on smuggling. An English family, the Robinsons, started industry, and built themselves the grandest houses in town. Banff was an attractive Georgian town, where respectable ladies and half-pay officers would choose to retire. In the nineteenth century, though Macduff was much more prosperous and go-ahead, Banff did flourish. The railways came, the herring fishing prospered. There was a cultural life. The parish minister, the rector of the academy, and the editor of the *Banffshire Journal* were all honorary Doctors for their national quality. In the twentieth century the Dukes of Fife left Duff House, the railways closed, the industries were at a low ebb, the county of Banffshire was merged with others, and the older buildings were seedy and unloved. "Ding them a' doon". But it is still a delightful place to stay, and there are hopes of a Banff renaissance.

HALSGROVE AND COMMUNITY HISTORIES

The Book of Banff is a reflection of times past and a celebration of the sense of belonging that exists in the community. By retracing the past and honouring the memories of those who went before us, we acknowledge the ties that link us from generation to generation.

Halsgrove's development of this series fulfils its aim of working together with communities in collecting and preserving information in published form. The identification and conservation of photographs is of particular importance as such material is all too easily lost; images of people and places fade from memory just as the photographs themselves are subject to physical change.

HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

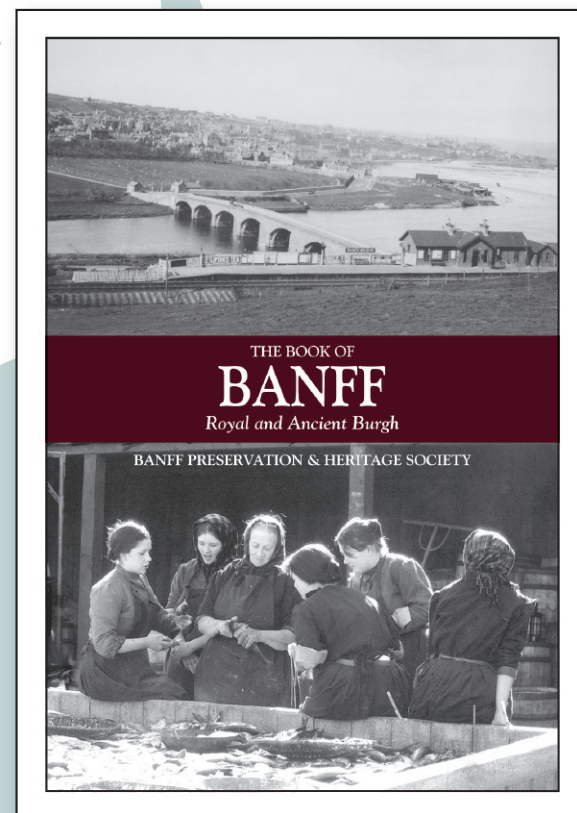
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Inchedrew Castle in flames.

(© TOMMY BOB)



Pipe band Banff Castle, 1983. (© DR DAVID FINDLAY CLARK ARPS)



Episcopal church Sunday-school outing.

(COURTESY OF MR J. MORGAN)

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beginnings as small groups meeting in the vestries of various churches (in order to avoid sectarian leanings) that it should move into such a large purpose-designed building.

The declared purposes of the association were to promote the moral and spiritual well-being of the young men of the town and its neighbourhood, to provide a focal point for young men coming to the town from elsewhere and to help prevent them being led astray into 'corrupt and sinful practices'. The members held weekly meetings for considering the scriptures and delivering essays and, from time to time, also held special meetings and lectures:

... of a religious cast which are addressed by most of the clergymen in the town, and others from a distance, and otherwise use such means as are calculated to advance the Glory of God and the eternal well-being of the community.

In times when young men needed to be highly mobile in following opportunities for work in an era of rapid industrialisation and widespread migration from rural areas, such an institution no doubt served a vital social, as well as religious, function.

GENERAL JOSÉ DE SAN MARTÍN
Charles Burnett

James Duff, later 4th Earl Fife, fought in Spain as a young man during the Peninsular War. He joined the Spanish Army and eventually was promoted to the rank of general. While there he met a fellow officer, an Argentinian of Spanish extraction named José de San Martín, who like him, was a Freemason, and they became good friends. In due course San Martín returned to South America, where he led the movement which caused the Spanish colonies to become independent, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. By then he had also achieved the rank of general and the title of 'Liberator'. The friendship continued between the Earl and the Liberator, who was not acceptable to everyone in Britain because of his actions in South America, and they were regular correspondents.

In 1824 the Earl invited the general to visit Banff and acted as his sponsor with the British government. The Liberator enjoyed the hospitality of Duff House, where the two veterans no doubt reminisced over their time together in Spain fighting the forces of the French Emperor, Napoleon. During the seven-day visit General José de San Martín was elected an honorary burgess of Banff by the town council in recognition of his great endeavours in South America, and adopted the Banff Burgess Roll.

When he died in 1850 the Liberator was buried in the Cathedral of Buenos Aires in Argentina as a

The commemorative plaque beneath the monkey puzzle tree in the castle grounds. (© TOMMY BOB)

Guard of Honour at the Plantation, Banff, 1950, for the Argentinian ambassador, Dr Carlos Hogen. With him is Provost Thomson, and the NCO is Belle Reid, later first district councillor after 1975.

The monkey puzzle tree. (© TOMMY BOB)

The Mausoleum of General José de San Martín in Banff. It is a small, white, classical-style building with a pediment and columns, situated in a park-like setting.

mausoleum which is permanently guarded by soldiers of the Grenadier Guards, a branch of the Army created by General San Martín. Also in the city, the Plaza de San Martín commemorates the connection between the liberator and the royal burgh.

In 1950 Argentina celebrated the 100th anniversary of the death of the liberator. Banff town council, on being reminded of this, invited the Argentinian ambassador to the United Kingdom to pay an official visit to the royal burgh on 25 October of that year. The ambassador, Dr Carlos Hogen, was entertained at a formal luncheon in the Rife Arms Hotel in Low Street, now converted into apartments, where he presented the Royal Burgh of Banff with a half-size replica of the general's sword. This is now on permanent display in Banff Museum. After the luncheon the ambassador was taken to Banff Castle, where he planted an Arancaria tree, a native of South America, in front of the castle.

After 58 years, this flourishing monkey-puzzle tree is over six metres high. A cast metal panel beneath the tree gives the reason for planting such an exotic addition to the landscape around Banff Castle, and keeps alive the memory of the foreigner who became an honorary burgess of the royal burgh so many years ago.

Argentina cherished the link. The memorable 'Tevia' Peres, wife of the President of Argentina, sent money for the old-age pensioners of Banff, and in 1961, following the footsteps of San Martín, the

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The 'Plea City of Banff', Buenos Aires.

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An Edwardian photograph of staff at the Banffshire Journal offices.

Example of a double-page spread.