5 Deeside, Midmar & West Aberdeenshire: Aboyne, Ballater, Auchindoir

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We have grouped these areas together for this project, no doubt this will change as more data becomes available.

Deeside is almost too well known to tourists with its rivers, forests, highland views and small towns. This contrasts markedly with the rolling countryside of Midmar just to the north, and the foot hills of the Grampians of West Aberdeenshire, behind St Mary's Church, Auchindoir. This last site in particular is well off the normal visitors' track but any visitor will find exploring this part of West Aberdeenshire to be rewarding.

The Davidson history for this area is considerable. Many Davidsons overseas may have ancestors from this area, as we show in one of the examples. There is much more data like this to document from the area.

Thomas Davidson was one of the early printers in Edinburgh in the 1520s, although we don't know his exact dates. He is the first printer recorded using Roman type in Scotland. He was appointed the King's Printer in 1541, which gave him the monopoly to print Acts of Parliament 1541–47.

He was described as "…ane northland man borne, upon the wattirsyde of die, in Scotland…", thought to be a reference to Aberdeen. We believe he was probably born on Deeside.

Thomas left us his Printer's Mark which survives from one of his undated works. It contains a shield with the printer's initials T.D. linked with three pheons, the armorial charges of the Davidsons.

Sample of Thomas Davidson's Work

Thomas Davidson's Printers Mark

Detail from the Mark, showing the Pheons or Arrow Heads.

Donald Davidson, 1910–1987, was born in Ballater, the last of nine children to Peter Davidson, a blacksmith. Although he never became a full time professional musician, he made many recordings for Beltona Electrographics in the late 1920s and 1930s. He also broadcast for the BBC from Aberdeen. He became known as the "Banchory Moothie"

Donald Davidson

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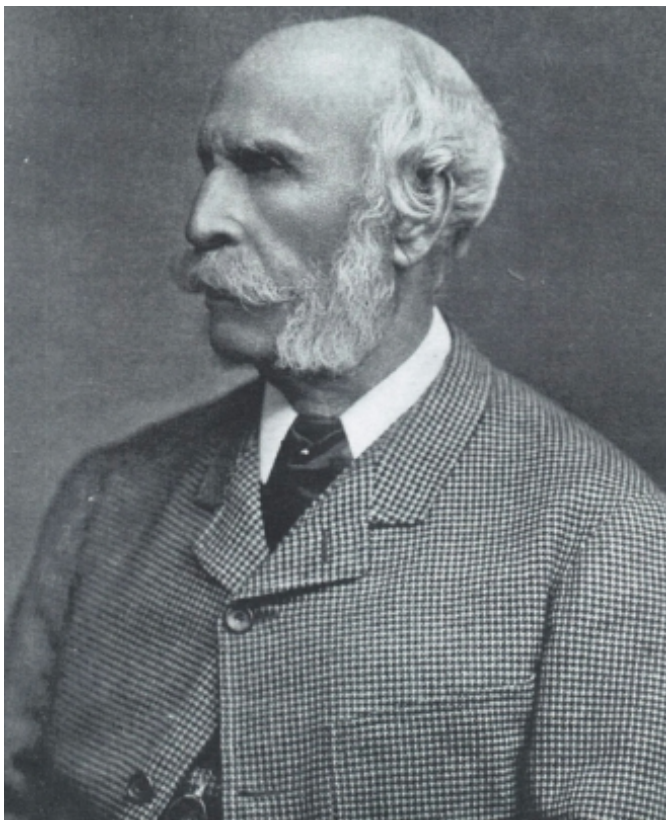

David Davidson

David Davidson, 1811–1900, was an Army Officer originally from a Davidson family at Haddington near Edinburgh. In the 1870s he created a retirement home called "Alltdinnie" on the outskirts of Aboyne on Deeside, which still exists as a private residence.

The Arms of David Davidson

Alltdinnie House

Davidsons the Chemists was founded by Walter Davidson in 1897 and is still very much a thriving family business today. The 26 pharmacies and 4 veterinary shops which make up this flourishing business are spread across East Central and North East Scotland.

Walter Davidson was originally from Hawick in the Borders. He trained as a pharmacist, and then moved to Dundee where he purchased a bankrupt pharmacy.

The Branch at Ballater on Deeside holds royal warrants from HM The Queen and HRH Prince of Wales.

Walter Davidson, founder of the Business.

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Alexander (Sandy) Davidson, 1792–1843, was born at Mill of Inver, Craithie, on Deeside. His exploits as one of the last Highland Poachers were recorded by William McCrombie Smith in his 1904 biography.

"Brave, simple – in the highest tradition and best sense of the word – generous, kind-hearted Sandy Davidson".

He was buried at the Glenmuick churchyard… "where his grave is marked by an undressed headstone, on which are cut in rude characters the initials of some of his forefathers with the date '1715' attached to one of them".

There is a Cairn on the slopes of Creag an Sgor, which marks where he died, among the "blooming heather".

Alexander Davidson

The Davidson Cairn on the slopes of Creag an Sgor.

Many Davidsons from Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire have emigrated to the four corners of the world. We have plenty of evidence of Davidsons in Holland, France, and Poland, and Sweden in the 16th and 17th centuries. Many more left in the great waves of emigration to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and the USA throughout the 18th, 19th and into the 20th Centuries.

Through the inquiries which now come to us from Davidsons from across the world, one from Chile has recently been of interest. The family, still with the name Davidson, found us via our website and wanted to know more about their grandfather, **William [Guillermo] Davidson**.

William left for Chile in 1919, after serving in World War I. He married in Chile and successfully raised a large family. His grandchildren knew little about their grandfather's origins except his name and approximate date of birth in Aberdeenshire. Although his origins were from a humble family of crofters, originally from the parishes of **Leochel-Cushnie, Lumphanan, and Tough**, the story soon tumbled out of the archives providing a glimpse of the hard times experienced by those working on the land in the 19th Century and earlier.

William's story is an almost classic example of the stories of thousands of emigrants from this part of Aberdeenshire.

William Bonnyman Davidson
Born 1885 at Tough, Aberdeenshire
Emigrated to Chile 1919

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The arms of William Davidson dated 1638 can be found on the gable end of the ruined church at St Mary's Church, Auchindoir.

St Mary's Church is an historic site, located in a remote part of West Aberdeenshire. The location exudes a sense of peace and is well worth visiting on a fine summer day to experience something of this beautiful remote part of the region. The church was almost certainly the site of an even earlier church. Few live in this area now.

The arms of the Rev William Davidson dated 1638.
He was the Minister at St Mary's Church, Auchindoir from the 1620s until his death in the 1660s.