8 Strathbogie, Buchan & Northern Aberdeenshire: Huntly, Auchenhamperis, Turriff, Mintlaw, Peterhead

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We have grouped the northern outreaches of Aberdeenshire together for the purposes of this project. The areas are quite distinct from each other

Strathbogie is the old name for Huntly and the surrounding area. This area is quite different from the high plateau farmlands between Turriff and the north coast, and different again from the flat lowland coastal plain of Buchan between Mintlaw and Peterhead. West of Huntly, the landscape quickly changes into a moorland and highland environment.

The whole area is sparsely populated.

The Davidson history of this area is considerable but not yet well documented by the Clan Davidson, and we hope to complete far more research over the coming years.

The Davidsons of Auchenhamperis appear in the early historical references for the North East of Scotland. Our Clan Davidson genealogical records have several references linking Davidsons to this part of Aberdeenshire.

Auchenenhamperis is located north east of Huntly and south west of Turriff. Few of the buildings present today appear to have any great ancestry and it is hard to imagine what this area looked like three to four centuries ago. Today, this is open farm country on much improved land, but is sparsely populated. The landscape in earlier times would have been similar, but with far more scrub and unimproved land on the exposed hills, and with more people working the land.

Landscape at Auchenhamperis

Davidston House is a private house, located just to the south of Keith, which was originally built in 1678 for the Gordon family. It is an L-plan house with corbelled turrets. We don't know why it was called Davidston, possibly after the nearby burn or the Daugh of Davidston.

We have found a Will dated 1688 in the Moray Commissary Court records which details the testament of one "**William Davidson of Davidston**", but have not yet found the actual link with this property or any other in this immediate vicinity.

Davidston House, near Keith

Aerial view of Davidston House

The Davidsons from Peterhead can be found in this harbour's long maritime history displayed and documented in the local Arbuthnot Museum. We have many references ranging from deep sea fishing and whaling down to the servicing of oil rigs in more recent years.

The whaling industry has long since disappeared from this port. It barely survived into the 20th century. We know that Davidsons from a number of Peterhead families were involved in this hazardous seafaring business.

Peterhead Arbuthnot Museum

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Alexander Davidson, the shipmaster of the Peterhead brig "Alert" was one such. We have found his photo portraits, shipping certificates and many other references to him and his family.

Alexander Davidson, 1830–1898
Whaling Shipmaster

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Alexander Davidson of Rattray, 1808–1890, was born at Haddo where his father was a tenant. Alexander is recorded as having spent 7 years in Jamaica, followed by 20 years in Ceylon before retiring and ending his days at Fetterangus nearby.

We don't yet know what Alexander Davidson did during his career in the colonies. His headstone and those of his parents are still readable at St Mary's Chapel, Rattray, as are some of the memorials to his mother's family, the Aidies. There are also engraved memorials which indicate that this Alexander Davidson paid for the rebuilding of the kirk yard wall in 1848.

Alexander Davidson's headstone

St Mary's Chapel, Rattray

St Mary's Chapel, Rattray is one of the smallest, most isolated, and windswept kirk yards of Aberdeenshire, located just north of Peterhead. Here we have found the memorials for a Davidson family from this area. There was originally an important port here but it was closed by the advancing sand dunes which finally silted up the entrance in 1720.

Davidson Memorial in Kirk wall

The Davidson family of Auchtydonald near Mintlaw has been farming here for four generations, and in the area for much longer. Auchtydonald is in the parish of **Longside**, and the old graveyard there has many surviving headstones, all with a story to tell.

Originally Auchtydonald was primarily a beef and arable farm; today it has diversified and is now a major soft fruit farm selling hundreds of tonnes of soft fruit to the supermarkets, and through its own farm shop.

Auchtydonald Farm today… The New Farm Shop.

Auchtydonald Farm in the late 19th century.

The farm is well known across the region because it was the first to introduce the highly visible poly tunnels, and the not so well known specialized irrigation techniques for the propagation of the strawberry and raspberry plants. This is now a high tech family business, but still maintaining all the traditional good farming practices of land/ water management and a caring staff relationship.

Priscilla, Bruce & Neil Davidson: An example of Davidson entrepreneurship

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George Davidson, 1776–1815, was the son of George Davidson, the Bank Agent for the Bank of Scotland in Huntly. He started his military career as an ensign in the Gordon Highlanders [The 100th Regt] when the regiment was first formed in the early 1790s. He married Jane Forsyth in 1801.

By 1808 he had joined the 42nd Regt [later known as the Black Watch] and took part in the Peninsular campaign fighting under Wellington, which saw the French eventually chased out of Portugal and Spain. George Davidson was promoted to Captain.

Later, the 42nd Regiment played a major role in the Waterloo campaign of June 1815, where George was fatally wounded at the Battle of Quatre Bras immediately before Waterloo. During this bitter battle, he briefly commanded his regiment after 3 senior officers were all killed in quick succession.

This miniature portrait is part of a small set of items including George Davidson's Waterloo Medal which were presented to the Huntly Town Council, and later the Brander Museum, Huntly, where they have recently been on display.

George Davidson

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The Clan Davidson return to Huntly in 2008

for its AGM weekend in September.

This town is historically important, known as the Capital of the Strathbogie district. There are several distinct areas of this small town: the 12th century Castle almost surrounded by the river Deveron, the planned burgh with its central busy square made up of some grand 19th century buildings, and the modern expansion to the west with large supermarkets and the dual carriageway bypass.

The Brander Museum in the top right corner of the Square holds some interesting fragments of early industrial history of the linen industry which once flourished in this town. There is a cast iron stamp in the name of **William Davidson, a local Stampmaster**.

Gordon Arms Hotel: Huntly Square, venue for the Clan Davidson AGM 2008.

The Square, Huntly

Huntly Castle Lodge was purchased by **Mr [later] Sir Leybourne F. W. Davidson** in 1924. He presented 8 acres of the beautiful land around the ancient Castle to the State. Leybourne Davidson had a long career as a tea planter in South India and Ceylon. The Lodge was sold by the Davidson family in 1946, and the building was later converted into a hotel as it is now.

LWF Davidson 1859–1934

Huntly Castle Hotel

Huntly Castle Hotel

River Deveron: Huntly Castle

Huntly Castle: The history of this major Gordon fortress dates back to the 12th Century.

Huntly Castle

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