

Stranger than fiction

To Mr And Mrs T Florence
24/04/2003

Dear Tom and Mary

Your keenly awaited package arrived yesterday morning and if I say I was taken aback by the content that would be putting it mildly indeed I cannot better your "stranger than fiction" title. Also I cannot put an exact date on the photo although because of his young age (b 1898) my father was late joining the army. It would be about 1917 or 1918. He told me once that he was shelled on his way to the front in a communication trench and had to be taken back wounded before he even got near the battle. He rarely spoke of the war and I think this was typical of his generation.

So it is plain that they knew each other and apart from Thomas Florence senior the others crop up in different photos from time to time I cannot help but wonder who kept the photo and sent it on to you. It has stirred a faint recollection of another photo, the Khaki over-skirts ring a faint bell. Never mind that, it is wonderful to be sent a copy. Sorry I cannot help with the unknown warrior but Jimmy Gall was a regular in my time. He ended his days at a croft on Bennachie living in the chamber where they kept the firewood and his buddy Geordie Barclay lived in the house. After they had done with it, when Geordie passed on, one of the oil men bought it and set about a transformation and although it had a wonderful setting it fell within the shadow of the hill and never saw the sunlight for the feck of the winter. I dinna suppose he was told that before hand.

There is a strong relationship between my family and the numerous Barclays but what exactly I am not able to say and Clare Barclay should tell me something but no. My sister living in Oxford is following all this with great interest and she sometimes can cast a light. A copy of the photo is even now on its way to her.

Your photo of the John Florence family seems to confirm mine. There is always an element of doubt if nothing is written on the back and sadly that is usually the case. I can say at once Maggie Fasken is a winner. Now I am intrigued by Patrick Mitchell Florence. You may be aware that Patrick Mitchell was the doctor from Rayne for many a year and he signed the death certificates of both g-grandfather George Florence and his father John as well. It stands to reason he saw a good many into the world also and maybe Maggie Coutts had special reason to be grateful to him and kept the name. Ah yes the more we uncover about our ancestors the less we know of them.

And just a quick mention of Mains of Glack. You may be aware that the House of Glack site has been redeveloped. I believe the fine avenue of beech trees that lined the approach is no more and there was some protest about it. Executive style houses were being constructed in the grounds. The house itself is converted into flats. Apart from changing the outlook I don't suppose the farm is affected and of course the horses are long gone!

All for now look, after your selves