A WORLD AWAY

Another visitor to the area last year was Christine Greig-Adams from Australia. She was virtually retracing a journey her grandmother, Nell Greig (maiden surname, Gilmore), made in 1993, who was visiting the land of her birth after nearly seventy years in Australia.

Nell was one of nine children of John Alexander Gilmore and his wife, Mary Agnes Philip. John was born in 1877 and left Kemnay School aged thirteen years to be apprenticed to his father at Kemnay Quarry. He returned to night school at seventeen to study mathematics and by the time he was nineteen he was a manager at Rubislaw quarry in Aberdeen.

He worked for a time in Canada, was manager for the building of the Peterhead Harbour of Refuge, and was sent to Orkney to obtain granite for building a retaining wall at Scapa Flow. He worked for some time on Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde, quarrying granite for the American War Memorial in Edinburgh.

One day whilst she was unpacking groceries, his wife spotted an advert in a newspaper which had been used to wrap her meat from the butcher, advertising a post for a quarry manager in Australia on a 5 year contract. She sent off an application on behalf of her husband and he eventually secured the post, sailing first class on the SS ‘Ascanius’ on 13 September 1924 bound for Moruya in Australia to take up the job of managing the quarry to procure granite for the pylons of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The contract for constructing the bridge had been won by Dorman Long and Company, which was formed in 1875 in Middlesbrough, north east England

Moruya is situated some 190 miles to the south of Sydney and the quarry was situated on the north bank of the Moruya River. The quarry was on land which belonged to Joseph Louttit who hailed from Orkney and had been worked since 1876. By the time John Gilmore arrived on the scene the site was quite overgrown. All this vegetation and overburden had to be removed before any other work could be started on.

A wharf was built to enable boats to be loaded and emptied. A building was erected consisting of three bays each 32 feet wide by 150 feet long. Two of these bays were to house the stone dressing sheds while the other contained the power plant and machinery to service the whole site. Crushing and screening plant was erected near the river with storage capacity of between 700 and 800 tons. From these bins aggregate could be loaded directly into boats by means of a conveyor belt.