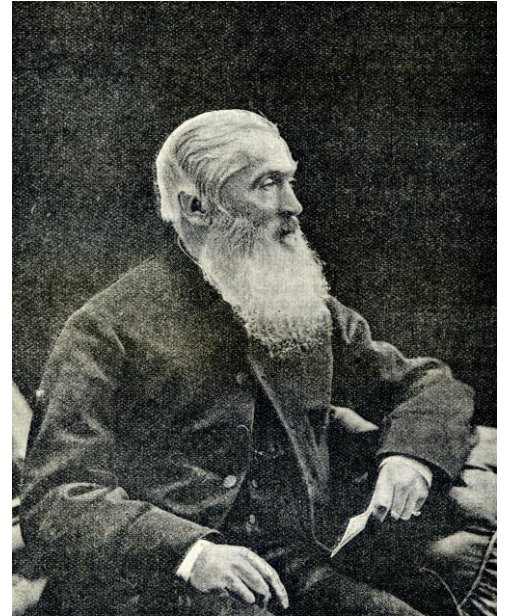


New Pitsligo Lace set for local display



A discussion about New Pitsligo Lace (left to right) Jackie Maclennan (graduate student); Gwen Duthie, (Lacemaker and Diocesan Library Archive assistant); Victoria Ward (Curator of Textiles, Aberdeen Art Gallery); and Stuart Donald, Honorary Archivist, Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney,



*Very Revd William Webster (1810-1896)
Rector of St John's New Pitsligo 1841-1893
Dean of Aberdeen & Orkney 1887-1896*

After Jackie Maclennan brought my attention to New Pitsligo Lace, I decided to find out if we had any examples in the field. There was supposed to be an altar cloth in St Peter's Peterhead, but that proved not to be the case. Other leads proved negative and so I decided to contact the Art gallery to find out if they had any examples I was put in touch with the Textiles' Curator,

Victoria Ward who kindly suggested she might show us some examples. A date was set and we arrived at the Gallery to be shown into the 'back rooms' where all the machinations of a modern art gallery take place. Ushered into a viewing room a great box was opened and low and behold, many examples were brought forth. I

stopped counting after fifty but marvelled at the intricacy of the designs. There are only a couple of examples reproduced here. Jackie has written up the story



an intricate lace edging, probably for a lady's dress. Queen Victoria ordered such lace to trim the Christening Gowns of some of her children.



a most attractive table doyley, the marine scene is most likely printed fabric

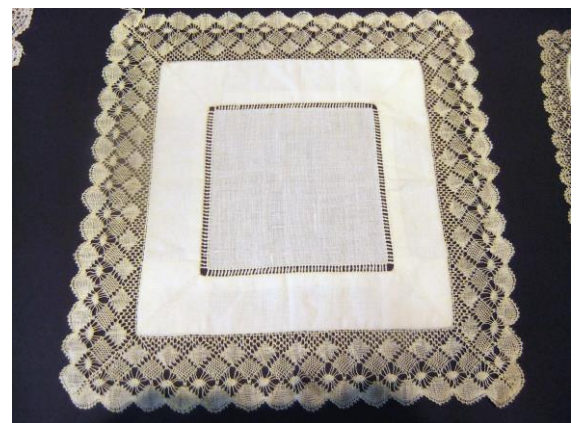
in her dissertation on Aberdeenshire Crafts. A useful ally was Gwen Duthie, Diocesan Archive volunteer helper and native to New Pitsligo, who has made lace herself and was able to advise the gallery staff on various techniques.

After discussions the Gallery staff acknowledged that they were grateful to know the story. The lace samples had lain in their reserve collection for many a long year and now had sprung to life because of Jackie's query. The curator, Victoria Ward, explained that it takes many years to fit in smaller exhibitions into the Gallery's busy schedule but she would now definitely be progressing her search to find a date for a display of the many pieces.

The industry which arose in New Pitsligo is remarkable for the fact that Dean Webster started out in the early 1840s to find some occupation for women of his parish who were impoverished because they could not find any local employment. The Incumbent then thought up the scheme to introduce the lace making and the rest is history.

Extensive correspondence was carried out with many sources and the Lace Guild reported two or three items in its library regarding the New Pitsligo industry. They were glad to have the information we provided thereafter and now have a rounded picture of the subject.

There have been many such initiatives by other clergymen. Bishop Ian Begg's father was a respected published meteorologist who 'used' his 'hobby' in the early days of World War I, accepting a commission at Orkney [where Ian was born] at the new airfield which had been set up to run the activities of the fledgling air force, a new method of defence for the British Isles. Dean William Christie formerly a priest in the diocese at Arradoul and Buckie moved to Fochabers in 1855 where he served the rest of his working life. Dean Christie's family were all musical and he collected vernacular folk music writing it down for posterity. He has two volumes of such music published in 1881 and appears amongst the early researchers of Scottish traditional music to this day. Research is continuing to find a likeness of Christie who doesn't appear to have been photographed in his life time.



a beautiful section of a cheval set for a lady's dressing table