

# Helensburgh Heritage Trust

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# Newsletter

The Newsletter is edited and published by Kenneth N Crawford 'Ardlamont' 3, Loch Drive, Helensburgh G84 8PY kn.crawford@virgin.net

Contributions and suggestions are urgently required and welcome

## Helensburgh Heritage Centre an update

The trust had an initial policy that the displays in the heritage centre should rotate on a regular basis, now that we are heading towards the first anniversary, it seems appropriate to look at this and see how well it is proceeding.

It also seems to me that this newsletter should record the displays as they happen, otherwise we will find that we have a recollection of a superb display but cannot always remember who prepared it and what happened to the exhibits!

At the time of the opening on 1 May 2012 the showcases contained displays as follows: the original Baird televisor was beside the 1936 Daily Express amateur DIY kit that was re-created a few years ago. We were delighted to have got one of the last copies, and to have it constructed to be operated by visitors. Stewart Noble prepared a case on Bairds Noctovision. A display of militaria including a replica Victoria Cross had been prepared by John Johnston and Alistair McIntyre had two cases showing the astonishing range of old bottles which have been excavated from various sites and relate to former Helensburgh businesses. Marion Gillies presented an exhibit of the Clyde Steamers which frequented the local piers. Pat Wiseman and Isabel Stirling created a remarkable display of wooden Mauchline ware, each decorated with a Helensburgh view. Donald Fullarton created a display about Deborah Kerr. Around the walls were nine banners originally commissioned by Dr Anne Gray our

first Secretary, at the time of the millennium exhibition - each showed a different aspect of Helensburgh history.

During the autumn and winter the room has been redecorated and rails for hanging pictures installed. We took the opportunity to rearrange most of the displays ready for the new season. Coinciding with one of our lectures, the Mauchline ware display now contains complete change of souvenirs. The two displays of antique mineral water and other bottles have also been refreshed. Instead of Deborah Kerr, the local personality is now *The Entertainer*, Jack Buchanan. Donald has also replaced Noctovision with Baird Books and Memorabilia. The case of Clyde steamers has kept a similar interest in that, for the first time, we have invited a local organisation to exhibit and this The Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club have done.

At the time of writing the Banners have not been re-erected, so the room looks quite different, whilst still retaining the local history reference library and the table for research.

Externally, the Library has placed a banner on the balcony and another on the door so that visitors to the library ought to be able to notice our existence quite easily. *However your editor has come across local library members totally unaware either of the centre or of the banners inviting them to visit!*

As we go to print, a Provost Lamp, which the Trust was given a while ago, has been restored and placed on the balcony outside the Heritage Centre



Door. We are looking for a suitable Eco bulb which will complete the presentation.

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The Trust is a member of the Argyll and Bute Museums and Heritage Forum which has been allocated space at the VisitScotland Expo 2013 at the SECC in April when Scotland will display to the World Travel Industry the experiences available to our visitors. It may well be that Helensburgh Heritage Centre will benefit throughout the next 12 months.

## Tribute to John Johnston

JOHN JOHNSTON first came to live in Helensburgh in 1945 when his parents, Jack and Muriel Johnston, chose to move their young family from the London area to his father's ancestral town.

His time at Larchfield School first fired his lifelong enjoyment of rugby, in teenage years playing for West of Scotland, followed by long years involvement in Youth Rugby in Twickenham, then, on his retirement, back to being a great supporter of Helensburgh Rugby Club. From Larchfield he went on to Uppingham School, Rutland, in the footsteps of five previous generations of his family.

In holiday time he always came home to Helensburgh. Sailing from the then Royal Northern Yacht Club in the Dragon 'Laju', owned by his uncle, Ivor Johnston of Helensburgh, opened a new world to him.

After Uppingham John returned full time to Helensburgh and served five years as a trainee Chartered Accountant with McLellan Kerr of Glasgow. Following qualification he opted for National Service and was commissioned into the Scots Guards, serving in Germany on the frontier opposite Soviet troops and finally on Guard duties in London.

On release from National Service he was transferred to the Army Reserve List. He later became a member of the Guards Association, and latterly chairman of the Glasgow branch.

His long civilian working life, in the financial world of the City of London, started with the merchant banking firm of Dawnay Day, and later in senior positions with Jacob Rothschild and the Rothschild Investment Trust.

In 1962 he married Penny Kidston of Helensburgh, followed with the arrival of their four children, Tanya, Vanora, Adrian and David, home then being in Hampton/Twickenham.

In a tribute to his early education at Larchfield in Helensburgh he agreed to serve on the Board of Governors of Newland House Prep School in Twickenham, later becoming chairman for 10 years.

The wish of Penny and John for many years was that on retirement from working life in R.I.T., they would return to Helensburgh. In this they were grateful to be able to inherit from John's uncle, Ivor Johnston, the old family home of 'Rhu Arden' on Upper Sutherland Crescent. An architectural gem from Thomas Leiper, this reinforced their interest in Scottish, and particularly Helensburgh, architecture and culture.

John became a director of Helensburgh Heritage Trust in 2001 and its company secretary and treasurer four years later. He held similar roles in the Comet 2012 Bicentenary Project which the Trust instigated. Also on historical aspects, he enjoyed researching and writing material for the Helensburgh Heritage Trust book '200 years of Helensburgh 1802-2002'. With his long financial experience he was eagerly sought by many voluntary organisations in Helensburgh and the West of Scotland for advice and hopefully to be their secretary and/or treasurer. His memberships were amazing in their number and diversity.

Partnered by Penny and often giving home hospitality to visiting speakers to Helensburgh from far afield, they developed many new friendships in these so-called retirement years. At the Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving at St Michael and All Angels Church, Helensburgh, on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2012 the attendance of over 300 showed the depth of regard for John. The very visible presence of the Guard of Honour from the Scots Guards was representative of the strength of feeling and wish to give support to the family at their great loss.

*Iain Hope penned this tribute to his brother-in-law, Helensburgh Heritage Trust company secretary and treasurer, John W. P. Johnston, who died on October 5 2012.*

## An Archaeological Group ?

There is a proposal to form an Archaeology Society based in the Town but interested in the Dumbarton/Loch Lomond/Rosneath area. Discoveries have been made both at Rosneath and Ben Bowie and it is believed that there may be sufficient interest to co-ordinate and cater for people interested in surveying, walking or even excavating suitable areas, in the hope that artefacts may be discovered. This relates to our ancient history as opposed to the heritage trust's interest in the last couple of centuries. A public meeting at the Victoria Halls is due to be called but anyone interested is invited to e-mail:- [sandra09k@btinternet.com](mailto:sandra09k@btinternet.com)

## Meetings Programme

The final public meeting of the season is on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30 at the Tennis Club in Suffolk Street when Robin Bird will examine 'Why did the Marine Aircraft Experimental Establishment come to Helensburgh in World War II and what did it do here?'

The programme for the next season is nearly complete but you should note that, as usual, we meet on the last Wednesday of September, October (AGM) and November.

### Glen Fruin Cairn

The Board is a little concerned at the weatherbeaten state and accessibility of the Battle Memorial. The trust carried out a full restoration in 1997. At the unveiling it was claimed to be the first time the Clans MacGregor and Colquhoun had shaken hands since 1603!

Within days of our mention of the state of the hands on the west face of the Town Clock, it was stopped and the one and a half hands moved to 12. From West Clyde Street and the Swimming Pool the time is now either Noon or Midnight and the end of Summer Time made no difference! However the other three faces have since lost time and Councillor Aileen Morton has obtained an assurance that VisitScotland are to have the whole Clock overhauled in the near future. On Easter Day our other Public clock, on the Library building, will return to the correct time - so long as nobody changes the hour!