

# Helensburgh Heritage Trust

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## Newsletter

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Contributions and suggestions are urgently required and welcome

### Heritage Trust Changes

At the board meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January Stewart Noble our Chairman for the past 19 years, announced his resignation from that office. Fortunately, he then went on to declare that he wished to remain a member of the board and would accept appointment as Treasurer. Stewart has done extensive work in the promotion of the trust and its many activities, exhibitions, publications, monthly meetings and more permanent works such as the bicentenary monument in Colquhoun Square and the Battle of Glen Fruin Memorial. We are most grateful to him for the immense energy which he has put into the role.

The Rev David W. Clark who became a director a little while ago was then appointed chairman of the trust.

At the subsequent board meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> February John Lewis, who has been assisting in an advisory capacity for some time was co-opted a director of the trust.

Also at that meeting my own retirement from the directorship was regrettably accepted. I have been reluctant at recent annual meetings to my re-election. I will continue to edit and produce this newsletter for so long as I get some support and contributions from members and will continue to compile the necessary register of our assets.

The board also agreed to wind up the company limited by guarantee, which has been our constitution since the beginning and to create a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) This was approved by the Extraordinary General Meeting at the end of February. Whilst simplifying accounting and auditing, in future accounts will be publicly available on the website of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

### The Heritage Centre, as was, is and may be.

Dramatic changes have or are coming about! Good or bad is just about anyone's guess! Commencing with our brief tenure of the former Reference Library being reduced by 50% in area but compensated by the suggestion that our display cases could spread along the balcony in one direction and the valuable Local History book collection in the other. And that the bay between the inner and outer automatic entrance doors of the Library could house the model of 'Comet' in a new sealed case. It would need a suitable full biographical commentary on the walls with the portrait of Henry Bell, instead of current affairs posters which no-one has looked at, but will such a display be sufficiently eye-catching?

Then your Board discovered that the new Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre, or rather that part of it which is a re-incarnation of the Clyde Street Community Education Centre, (closed and abandoned by the Council in 2002), has three integral display cases each with three shelves in the main hall. It was proposed that we could fill these with suitable and appropriate material! A further large and lengthy glass case lines the corridor between old and new buildings. This is an obvious home for a History of the Burgh Council, and we do have the exhibits from the work which was done and which resulted in the 'The Maclachlan Dynasty of Town Clerks' display in 2006. But the case is a floor to ceiling box in three vertical sections with no display stands or horizontal shelves, so that really the content and the style of display needs to be designed before display equipment is ordered.

However, since the above was written, (and this newsletter has been a long time in gestation), the civic centre opening ceremony by Gordon Reid, our current Helensburgh Hero, was announced for the 1<sup>st</sup> March which caused dynamic action by your board. Existing displays and some new ones were revised, transferred and created so that all 9 display areas were filled with interesting and relevant displays, possibly to a higher standard than we have previously achieved. With the trust name prominently displayed on the headboard of each case, it is clear that we are responsible for the attractive and interesting content. The Civic Centre is open office hours and anyone can go through the front doors and then turn left to the link corridor into the main hall. Until 2:30 pm there is even a cafeteria and seating to add interest to the visit. Next seasons monthly series of public lectures are to take place in the marriage room which is adjacent, so that members and our guests will be able to enjoy the displays.

## *Congratulations - 20 Years on*

*A Public Meeting was held in the Court Suite on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1996 to inform the public about the objectives of The Trust, and provide an opportunity to join as founder members. Of the initial ten Directors, only Cecelia Dunlop remains a director. Congratulations again!*

## Remembering JLB

The Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland held a dinner in November at Glasgow's Radisson Blu Hotel to celebrate 250 years since James Watt developed the steam engine. At the event there were four new inductees into the Scottish engineering Hall of Fame: principally, {so far as this publication is concerned} John Logie Baird, the inventor of mechanical television and pioneer of televised images. Also Sir Donald Miller, the man responsible for creating a highly respected, efficient and reliable electricity supply system in Scotland; Henry Dyer, the father of engineering education in Japan; and Sir George Bruce, the pioneering genius who created a sophisticated 16th century mining complex in Culross – that predated the industrial revolution.

A charity raffle raised around £4,400 for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Erskine Hospital.

*The Herald 17 November 2015*

On 26<sup>th</sup> January a Google Doodle on all UK web pages marked the 90th anniversary of John Logie Baird publicly demonstrating television in Soho. The background story gave a chronology right up to the recent gift to Glasgow University mentioned in our last issue!

### Displays at The Civic Centre

Deborah Kerr

Jack Buchannan

Bottles from the Past

Boer War Presentation Clock

Communion Silverware from three Churches

Arms of the Community Council

Andrew Bonar Law

John Logie Baird

Life Beneath the Waves

## THE GLEN FINLAS RAID: A CAUTIONARY NOTE

The so-called Glen Finlas Raid of December 1602 is often mentioned in the same breath as the Battle of Glen Fruin a mere two months later, and there can be little doubt that the earlier incident helped fan the flames leading up to the fateful conflict. The trouble is that the Raid is invariably portrayed as exclusive to Glen Finlas, when in fact many other places also suffered.

While the event may well have centred on Glen Finlas, the standard accounts perpetuate a misleading impression of the population and agricultural output of this small glen, lying about three miles south of Luss. Thus, for example, the well-respected Ian MacPhail, author of “A Short History of Dumbartonshire”(1962), writes:-

“...a band of about 80 caterans, under Duncan MacGregor of Glenstrae, plundered 45 houses in Glen Finlas, stealing 300 cows, 100 horses, 400 sheep and 400 goats...and killing two men”. In fairness, he does concede that these figures, from a Colquhoun source, might be exaggerated. In like manner, the editorial entry to a modern (1978) reprint of the Old Statistical Account refers to Glen Finlas as having at least 45 tenants in 1602. The Internet offers similar versions.

In order to help provide a working framework, a certain amount of deduction and extrapolation may be useful. The upper parts of Glen Finlas are narrow and not very conducive to settlement, in contrast to the lower areas, which open out into extensive slopes and plains. With the aid of old maps and other sources, and a very generous definition of what constitutes lower Glen Finlas, it appears that at most around 14 settlements could be included. An average of two tenants to each would probably be equally generous, giving a maximum figure of 28 tenants. There would also have been cottars and the landless, but they would have had little worth stealing, while bearing in mind that household plenishings were also plundered, and two men, Patrick Laing and John Reid, allegedly killed.

Although the above may help set context, the main point is that many of those despoiled did not live in Glen Finlas. Tenants at Auchentullich and Midross also suffered, which demonstrates the raid spilled some way south of the Glen. The raiders next turned their attention to Glen Luss. The Lei(t)ch family at Collychippen, not far from Luss, fell victim, as did tenants at Edentaggart, at the head of the glen, and the MacInturners at Glenmacairne, by the upper reaches of Luss Water. Indeed, these settlements help reveal the exit route of the brigands. From there, they probably crossed a pass to reach the vicinity of Glen Mallan, where the Turners at Tombowie and the MacCaslanes of Cullanach were similarly despoiled.

The thieves most likely then headed north by a line roughly corresponding to that now followed by the pylons from Loch Sloy, similar to the route thought to have been taken by Macgregor of Glenstrae and his men en route to the Battle of Glen Fruin.

*Alastair McIntyre*