

# Helensburgh Heritage Trust

Number 51  
[Vol: 13 No:1]

April 2011

## 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!

### Which Duchess?

With ever increasing awareness and appreciation of Duchess Woods Local Nature Reserve, and the fine walks to be found there, more and more people are asking: - - *which Duchess?*

The most obvious candidate is one of the Duchesses of Argyll, since Ardencaple Estate was bought by the family prior to the death of the last MacAulay laird of Ardencaple in 1767, remaining in their possession until sold to Sir James Colquhoun in 1862.

The trouble is that few Dukes and Duchesses actually appear to have resided at Ardencaple, although that doesn't preclude work being carried out on their behalf, or some form of dedication taking place. However, the most obvious starting point must be to consider any suitable resident Duchesses.

The only such person would appear to be Ann Colquhoun Cunningham, second wife of John, 7<sup>th</sup> Duke. After his death in 1847, Ann, by now Dowager Duchess, returned to Ardencaple for some years, having previously resided there for some time prior to John becoming 7<sup>th</sup> Duke.

While this might appear to be no more than suggestive evidence, Battrum's Helensburgh Guide of 1865 helpfully informs us, in a passage describing a linking track from Ardencaple to Highlandman's Road, that it has "lately been put into excellent repair by the Dowager Duchess of Argyll". This would seem to confirm that Ann is indeed the most likely candidate.

*AMcI*

### VISIT TO DUMFRIES HOUSE AND AIKET CASTLE

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

**Leaving the Pier car-park at 9.30 am and returning at 5.30 pm**

As promised when Charlotte Rostek spoke to the Trust, a Special Visit has been organised for Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June to see the house, now reopened by The Prince of Wales, Great Steward of Scotland, after a major refurbishment. Charlotte says it is "looking absolutely fabulous" The chairs and sofas have been re-upholstered and covered in finest silks and the four poster bed has been restored to its original magnificence. So even if you have already visited the House there is much new to be seen and Charlotte will give us a talk before lunch, which should, by then, be in the new cafe in the old coach house.

In the afternoon we will visit Aiket Castle, Dunlop, restored by Robert Clow from the burnt-out shell of an ancient tower house, and tour the beautiful gardens created by Katrina Clow. Following this we will have tea before our journey home.

**COST: £36.00 per head inclusive as above but a reduction of £7.50 for members of The Art Fund who do not have to pay the entrance charge and a 25% reduction [£1.87] to Members of Historic Scotland.**

**Application Form to John Johnston, 1 Upper Sutherland Crescent, Helensburgh G84 9PQ -  
e-mail [rhuarden@btinternet.com](mailto:rhuarden@btinternet.com) Telephone 01436 678 775**

**Please enclose a cheque made out to Helensburgh Heritage Trust and a SAE.**

### Railway Heritage

On 17 May at 7.45 for 8 p.m. Members are invited to a talk in the ante-room of the Pillar Hall by Andy Savage, the Chief Executive of the Railway Heritage Trust, who is based at Euston Station. Andy is making a small tour of Scottish Stations and has agreed to meet with some members of Helensburgh Horticultural Society and the Model Railway Club to make a presentation about the History and function of the Railway Heritage Trust. Andy used to be a senior Civil Engineer with Rail Track. The Trust played a major role in the refurbishment of Central Station. Refreshments will be available prior to the event, which is organised by Margaret Ashman of the HGHS and who is the lead "Adopt a Station" Volunteer responsible for the wonderful year-round 'welcome' floral display at Central Station.

## The Victoria Halls - History

In 2005 Leisure Services of Argyll and Bute Council invited the Trust to produce an informative leaflet about The Victoria Halls. It was decided that this should be similar to those which we maintain explaining the Stained Glass Door Panel displayed at Dr McLeod's waiting room in the Medical Centre and at the Library about the St Bride's Windows. We provided a master copy and the Council printed it as necessary. Many changes have taken place since then and a revision has recently been requested, and agreed. The Hall Supervisor will aim to keep copies available for interested users, but I thought Members of the Trust might like their own copy.

K.N.C.

## Mason or Masonic Mark

*Stewart Noble writes, about the carved symbol on the wall of The Victoria Halls, above but to the left of the main entrance :-*

"I have finally received an answer from Robert Cooper, the curator of the "Museum at the Grand Lodge of Scotland in Edinburgh, regarding the mark on "the Victoria Halls."

He says that it is almost certainly masonic, but not obviously related to any particular lodge. The man who did the carving was probably a member of a lodge using his own design -- this was not uncommon. At one point during their membership of masonic lodges, masons take part in the "Mark Ceremony," after this ceremony masons may use their own mark which can be a symbol or letters and is often based on traditional masonic symbols. It would appear that the mark on the Victoria Halls falls into this category.

*So, not the most successful of marks left for posterity, when, after 124 years, it is not identifiable!!*

*Editor*

## Books and Souvenir Ephemera for Sale

1. Kenneth N. Crawford and Alison Roberts: **Around Helensburgh (collection of historic photos)** £9 (RRP £10.99)
2. Stewart Noble (editor): **200 Years of Helensburgh** -- £15 (RRP £20)
3. Michael C Davis: **Scots Baronial -- Mansions and Castle Restorations in the West of Scotland** -- £6
4. Stewart Noble: **Vanished Railways of Old West Dunbartonshire (collection of historic photos)** £11 (RRP £12.99)

### West Highland Railway Centenary Memorabilia

1. Centenary Railway postal cover (1994) with special envelope, stamp and postmark -- £1.50
2. Postcard: West Highland Railway Company coat of arms -- 40 p
3. Postcard: North British Railway Company coat of arms -- 40 p
4. Postcard: London and North Eastern Railway Company coat of arms -- 40 p
5. Postcard: West Highland Railway centenary, showing original locomotive -- 40 p
6. All four postcards above -- £1.20

## Michael Davies - Honorary Life Member

Michael Davies, Reference and Life Long Learning Librarian was based in Helensburgh but responsible for the service for the whole of Argyll and Bute. He took early retirement at the end of March, and on his last day Stewart Noble, and Donald Fullarton made a presentation on behalf of the Heritage Trust and awarded him the title of the first Honorary Life Member of the Trust. We have benefited greatly over the years from his vast knowledge of local history sources and guidance on many different items which have cropped up from time to time.

K N C

## Helensburgh Pier

### Dumbarton Herald - 9th October, 1851

"Who that has been put ashore on Helensburgh Quay would ever think of hazarding the experiment again, were it not for the pleasantness of the town itself, and even that cannot make one forget the torture he is compelled to undergo on landing? There is not, in the most remote parts, or in a locality offering a twentieth of the accommodation, so primitive a structure or one so well conformed with every idea of discomfort to passengers."

### Dumbarton Herald - 16th October 1851

This edition carried a report on a court case brought before Sheriff Skene for unpaid harbour dues at Helensburgh. The pursuers were the magistrates of Helensburgh, acting as Trustees for the Harbour, and the defendants were the owners of the steamer "Emperor". The defence argued that, under the Act of Parliament which allowed the levying of dues at Helensburgh, part of the payments received should be used to make a new pier, but "not a spade has been put into the ground for this purpose". Sheriff Skene deferred the case so that proof could be laid before the court of what improvements had actually been made.

### Postscript

Within two years the "Emperor" was making news as one of the first Clyde steamers to undertake pleasure sailings on the Sabbath. Having called at Helensburgh Pier on Sunday 21st August, 1853, the "Emperor" made its way to Garelochhead where the pier had been barricaded by Sir James Colquhoun in order to prevent any passengers from landing. The resulting altercation has sometimes been referred to as the Battle of Garelochhead - *for fuller details, see Heritage Trust Newsletter volume 1, issue 2 (September 1996).* [Photo copies could be made on request!] E.d