

# Helensburgh Heritage Trust Newsletter

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Contributions and suggestions are urgently required and welcome!

## Local History

## Luss Heritage

Only six weeks into the New Year and your Editor has been to three meetings of historic and heritage interest! The first was in Glasgow hosted by the Transport Museum, but on the initiative of your Trust and chaired by Stewart Noble. We have been concerned that the 200th anniversary of the sailing of 'Comet' on the Clyde might go unrecognised. MSPs, Two Provosts, Maritime and Transport Museums, Clydesport, Tourist bodies and the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders now appreciate the significance of August 2012, Henry Bell and Comet. A committee was set up and will seek to ensure that significant celebrations take place.

Then, our regular public meeting was led by Dr Martin MacGregor who spoke of The First Scottish Wars of Independence 1286-1329. A change to the publicised Battle of Glen Fruin, it nevertheless held the attention of a large audience who hoped that next season Dr MacGregor will be invited back to share his researches on our local battlefield.

Finally, Helensburgh Probus gave Michael Davis an opportunity to show the Reference Library's early maps of Helensburgh. The Schaw or Colquhoun 'fantasy map' was equivalent to the modern Estate Agents computer generated picture of what your new house might look like! An undated aerial view was very familiar. The stages of development of the town were clearly illustrated.

KNC

The Reverend Dane Sherrard, Minister and Luss Parish Church, are this year celebrating the 1500th anniversary of the arrival in the area of St Kessog (or MacKessog, the Gaelic form of St Kessog).

Legends say that St Kessog came from Ireland and established a monastery on the island of Inchtavannach - the island that you can see from the old road immediately opposite the two cottages with the splendid gardens about one mile south of Luss village. The name of Inchtavannach actually means monks island. St Kessog also founded the first church in Luss. Ten years after his arrival Kessog was martyred, perhaps at Bandry, about one-quarter of a mile further south.

Robert the Bruce went into battle against the English at Bannockburn in the name of the blessed Kessog, and after his victory he decreed a three-mile sanctuary around Luss.

When the Reformation came to the area, the Catholics buried their treasures in a small mound for safe keeping - and forgot about them! Around 1750, the army were building the first road along Loch Lomondside, dug into this mound and unearthed the treasures, which you can see today in Luss Church.

Three items survive:

1. A carved stone head of St. Kessog now reckoned to be about 1000 years old.
2. A medieval carved stone statue of a man in clerical garb, now also reckoned to be of St Kessog - this is probably about 500 years old.
3. A stone baptismal font, believed to be about 1000 years old and still in use.

Dane Sherrard has established the Luss Pilgrimage Centre to explain all this history in much more detail. It is in the low building almost straight across the road from the Church, and

well worth a visit.

You can find out more about the celebrations at Luss and about the Pilgrimage Centre by going to the Church's website which is [www.lussonline.net](http://www.lussonline.net)

If you are visiting Luss with a group and the church is locked, it may be possible to obtain access. Either go to the Pilgrimage Centre or, if that is closed, to the manse (the big house straight across the road from the Church). However there may be occasions when it is impossible, for example when the aisle is specially decorated with flowers. Weddings can be televised across the world, via the web, using the Church's own equipment.

Dane Sherrard was also instrumental in having the bridge across the river rebuilt, thus providing access from the village to the glebe where a fine cross has been erected, and a Pilgrim's path encircles the glebe.

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### Next Public Meetings

Wednesday 24th February at 7.30pm  
Helensburgh Tennis Club

Mary Haggerty will speak on

**The Arrochar, Tarbet and  
Ardlui Heritage Group**

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Wednesday 31st March at 7.30pm  
Helensburgh Tennis Club

Charlotte Rostek-Davis

will speak about

**Dumfries House**

