

Helensburgh Heritage Trust Newsletter

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Editorial

As the trust Web site is proving to be such a success with the great world outside this area and so modern in its outlook, I felt that I had to use a little of my recent convalescence to review the usefulness of this Newsletter! Since the first issue in June 1996 there have been 42 single sheet, desk-top printed two page newsletters! It was started by Sally Joice, then librarian in the Templeton Library. Within a few months Sally left for pastures new in Fife, and Anne Gray started to write the news as well as typeset and computer print it. Eventually, I volunteered to provide the text and notes and generally act as Editor, whilst Anne retained the full publishing burden! Finally I succumbed to the recent art of Desk-Top Publishing by Computer. It is most enjoyable, especially when members send in their articles for consideration!

My first publication was using a Hectograph Jelly pad to produce lists of stamps for sale to collectors and second publishing venture was in the 1950's for Manchester Presbytery Fellowship of Youth using the Town Clerk's Secretary as typist and office Gestetner. Then came the Brindley Mill Preservation Trust and Museum whose publications were hand set with moveable type and 2 Adana printing machines (which I still own!). In 1980 we wrote, printed and published "The History of the McVannel Clan." I acquired and learned to use an Offset Lithographic machine in our cellar for this much bigger job, (at all good libraries!). And then, here we are in the 21st century, able to compose, type, lay out our text on the 'page' and send it to the home printer within minutes for printing. The question is - has any other Member or friend got in their possession a complete set of all 43 Newsletters? The Trust has. Is there any point in preparing an Index? *KNC*

A Vintage Railway Timetable

One of the most interesting items which appeared at the recent exhibition to mark '150 Years of the Railway in Helensburgh' was one of the smallest: an 1979 pocket timetable! I found it quite remarkable that it had survived for nearly 130 years - and perhaps even more so that people had bothered to hold on to it for that length of time! Many thanks are, therefore, due to Jenny Sanders and her ancestors. The pocket timetable was an advertising medium used by John Stuart, Photographer, of 120 Buchanan Street Glasgow and 20, Charlotte Street, Helensburgh. It contained the following intimation:- "Mr STUART desires to draw attention to a new style of permanent photograph on CHINA, or PORCELAIN, very suitable for enlargements, and which can be had either coloured or plain. The brilliancy and exquisite softness of detail in these pictures render them very pleasing and effective."

On a typical day in 1879, there were only ten trains a day from Glasgow to Helensburgh. Two extras ran on Saturdays and another extra one at 10.50 p.m. on Thursdays - I would be much intrigued to know why this particular train ran (and it had a matching service leaving Helensburgh at 9.30 p.m.) There were no Sunday Trains. Queen Street Low Level Station had not been built by 1879, so the trains all left Queen Street and had to cope with the Cowlairs Incline, and in 1879 the train locomotives were being hauled up the Incline by cable until they reached the first station at Cowlairs. Next stop was Maryhill, and then Kilbowie, (very close to the present Singer Station) - no Westerton, Drumchapel or Drumry. After Dalmuir came Kilpatrick, Bowling and Dumbarton. Dalreoch Station is not mentioned although I'm sure that it was in service at that time - perhaps only for Balloch-bound trains.

After Dumbarton the only stop was Cardross, as Craigendoran with its pier was not opened until 1882. In 1879 the trains would have taken a more direct route past Craigendoran than they do today. Typically, this journey took 1 hour and 15 minutes, while an express calling only at Dumbarton, could do it in 51 minutes. The timetable also tells us that "all trains carry 1st, 2nd, and 4th class."

HSN.

The Office of the Scottish Charity Registrar has reported that there are 23,806 Registered Scottish Charities, a quarter of them having Advancement of Arts and Heritage as an objective. In Argyll and Bute there are 864 - [more than 86 per 10,000 population,] 16% are working to enhance environmental protection or improvement [highest in the country] and 200 have an income of more than £25,000 per annum. *KNC*

Obituary - Brian D Osborne

As briefly mentioned last time, we are sorry to record the death of Brian D. Osborne. He died towards the end of May whilst on Holiday in China. Brian was born and brought up in Helensburgh and after two years working in a Glasgow Bookshop he moved to work at Dumbarton Library, indeed, he then spent the whole of his career in the Library service. At retirement in 1995 he held the post of Chief Officer, Libraries and Museums for Strathkelvin District Council. Early retirement enabled him to embark upon a new career in writing, and, so far as we are concerned, his most notable work is "The Ingenious MR BELL." Published in 1995 it is the definitive work on the life and times of Helensburgh's first Provost and Pioneer of Steam Navigation. We were delighted when he agreed to write the section in "200 Years of Helensburgh" devoted to Bell and his influence on the town. Brian was also an admirer of the writings of Neil Munro and the work of Robert Napier. At the time of his death he was Secretary of the Neil Munro Society. Given his wide knowledge, Brian was an obvious choice of speaker at our meetings. On one occasion arriving in period costume with a colleague and putting on a full presentation.

HSN & KNC

Aquisitions Fund

Last time I mentioned briefly the idea that a Purchase Fund, separate from the general funds of the Trust, but, of course, kept strictly under the Directors control, should be created. On a number of occasions we have either been told an artefact of local interest is on the market or have accidentally come across such an item outwith the area. Often little time is available to decide to make an offer or not. Then we have to balance the effect of purchase upon the general funds and commitments of the Trust.

I am delighted to say that there has been an immediate response - the Treasurer has received donations from Members. Obviously many contributions will be needed to make the fund worthwhile, but a good start has been made. The Treasurer looks forward to your contribution to the Fund.

KNC

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 29th October 2008 at 7 p.m.

In the Lawn Tennis Club to be followed by
"The History of Dumbarton Castle and Other Tales"

Helensburgh hits the (Inter) National Headlines!

Or, to see oorself's as ithers see us!

According to a couple of journalists in The Observer on the last day of August, Helensburgh is a 'Glasgow town on the north shore of the Firth of Clyde... where Residents believe it is the most talented town in Britain'! At the last count it says there were 75 'heroes' who deserve a place in a Hollywood style Walk of Fame at a cost of £28,000. It was conceded that not everyone was born here, but the list was drawn up to include all who were here when they were going through their meteoric rise to fame and fortune. Only twelve are mentioned. A London University historian and broadcaster, Tristram Hunt, is quoted as saluting the idea but expressing caution that some links seemed tenuous - people who just pass through or had a house or holiday here do not have a credible link.

Two days later, in The Independent, a more light-hearted article explored the same theme, describing us as:- Sailing club, Golf club, slightly grim seafront with pointy obelisk thing. British nuclear deterrent fleet of submarines moored nearby and, er, ...that's all there is to say about Helensburgh - except that it is "Britain's most talented town" according to the weekend newspapers." {1!}. He asks, can you call a town talented because a historical figure dropped in one day to buy an ounce of tobacco and a choc ice...Or because a poet taught some children for eight weeks before legging it south? Having called us a 'scabby little fishing village' he then tries to be clever and outdo the claim by listing exactly the same number of known residents from his charming (London) suburb of Dulwich. (Pop 20,000) But realises that he strays into the same kind of suburban braggadocio as the subject of his accusation when he finds less desirable but equally famous names on his list! Interestingly, The Independent, on its web site invites comments and received four, all more or less against the columnists attitude to the local effort.

All this has been done before, of course, The Advertiser in Eye on Millig, perhaps inspired by this Newsletter ran quite a series a few years ago and listed what may well be the same names. Our aim was to be aware of the persons and subjects to which reference could be made when preparing the content material for a Heritage Centre, not to claim them all as equal sons and daughters! And I don't remember whether Madelaine Smith was on our list!

K.N.C.

THE YEAR OF THE HOMECOMING.

In 2009 Scotland is hoping to welcome the descendents of those who emigrated in the past few centuries, for whatever reason. Worth remembering if you have relatives thinking of visiting!

First meeting of the season is **John Urquhart** on the subject:-

FOOTPATHS - The Long and Short of It

We meet in the Upstairs Hall at Helensburgh Lawn Tennis Club at
7.30 p.m.

Your full seasons programme should be enclosed with this Newsletter