

Helensburgh Heritage Trust Newsletter

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Contributions and suggestions are urgently required and welcome!

A Helensburgh Centre for Heritage ?

We have heard quite a lot in recent times about the idea - "*Use It or Lose It*" Close to home an example of *Lose it and Reuse it* seems likely to come to pass in the near future. Until recently Helensburgh Library has maintained a major Reference Library - and indeed it has served many other areas of Argyll and Bute.

A dramatic change in Society has altered the way in which many of us now access information. The astonishing development of the Internet and the way in which the population has turned to it as first source, if not the primary source of information, has meant that fewer and fewer of us actually visit the Library for research purposes. In fact, the Library Service now purchases a range of 'on-line' subscription sites which the public, with internet access, can consult in their own homes as well in the Library. {For full details, go to the Councils' website - www.argyll-bute.gov.uk Book it } The result is that the collection of Reference Books has been scaled down and relocated within the Library. Space has been freed up. Before the outcry - this does not relate to the valuable books in the Local History Collection, nor to documents deposited for public inspection. But it might also be said that as Planning Applications are now being submitted electronically, they can only be inspected by computer. Fortunately, these are already available in the Library!

So what of the reuse?

Helensburgh Heritage Trust has been invited to present exhibitions as appropriate about the history and heritage of the Lomond area! It seems that out of the shrinking of book-based reference, we may be about to achieve our dream - and the purpose for which the Trust was formed. The Library Service wish us to take a lead role in creating a local history room. This will merge their extensive book collection with historical displays, which we will design and mount from materials we have acquired over the last 14 years and held in storage. The resources in the possession of the Council will also be available.

We have mounted many short exhibitions in the past very successfully. Access by Visitors and the public generally is available and the only downside may be slightly restricted opening hours, - although currently these include evening openings.

The Trust still has its sights on a dedicated Centre, but the present flexible proposal now offered to us gives a tangible open-ended opportunity which will both sharpen our own skills, develop public interest and allow us to move forward with the full support of the Argyll and Bute Council Library Service.

Suggestions and help and advice will certainly be needed to ensure displays of quality and interest. Please give this some thought, it may be that you will have the winning idea that will make this trust venture an outstanding success.

Landing Craft Excursion

One of the Life Members of the Heritage Trust, J. Howard MacDonald of Cobham in Surrey has recalled the time when, as 14 year old, he started work for Timbercraft. This was a small boatyard near Gullybridge owned by Peter Boyce, which moved to Faslane much later. He ran a launch service for workers on ships lying in the Loch, usually weekends and holidays and would happily have worked for free, but was paid 6d per hour! The perks were food and a stock of rum donated by the crews!

On a fine day In 1946 he was asked to deliver a small, basic, landing craft to the Island of Shuna, off Oban.

Could perhaps have carried one tank, but with little protection and a shallow draft, . Denis Royal agreed to help. Before departure, a tattered Rolls Royce delivered two passengers - a man who claimed to be an engineer and a woman, who, it seems, was Lady Mosley. Neither spoke to us, but there was an incident when she asked to use the non-existent facilities! A bucket was found and passed in, she pulled down the blind, but there was a large hole in it!

To the surprise and relief of the crew, on arrival at the Crinan basin Howard and Denis were told that they were no longer required. The thought was that they were not to see the set up on the island, for it had recently been purchased by the British National Party.

KNC and MD

KNC

Church Restoration viewed Archive Checking 'Helensburgh 2010'

The closing meeting of the trust season was an unusual evening out. More than 40 Members and supporters were entertained to an evening visit to St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church in William Street, marking the completion of a 10 year restoration and conservation programme of the only Grade A Listed Church in Helensburgh. Chairman Stewart Noble introduced Dr Nigel Allan a director of the trust and member of the church who covered the heritage and history of the Scottish Episcopal Church, both nationally and locally. Also the architecture and building of the first and present buildings. and detail of the magnificent stained glass and memorials. Joan Sadden showed many vestments and altar frontispieces used at different seasons of the church year. Very beautiful silverware presented over the years for use in services was set out and its purpose explained. Then, Martin Marshall, Director of Music gave a short history of the church organ as a musical instrument and the building and restoration of the model which has been in use for over 100 years in St Michael's and which was itself restored some ten years ago. He proceeded to demonstrate by a recital of J. S. Bach's Toccata and Fugue and also the Pomp and Circumstance March No 1 by Edward Elgar, who is believed to have played that very organ whilst visiting the town. The quality, clarity and capability of the organ was very well received.

Refreshments in the Church Hall concluded a most informative event as a result of which the sum of over £200 was donated/raised for the Restoration Fund.

Next Public Meeting

Speaker: David Norman

Glen Fruin's Little Secret -
the Admiralty Hydro Ballistic
Research Establishment

Wednesday September 29
7.30pm at Helensburgh Tennis
Club, Suffolk Street

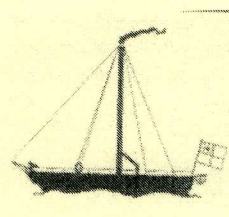
In early June a 'working party' of 90% of the Board of Directors met at the secure storage facility where the Trust keeps the artefacts, documents records, and displays that have accumulated over many years. We have become increasingly aware that no complete asset record had been kept although, of course, proper acquisition forms have been completed on the occasion of donations and purchases. It was not easy. So many memories of times past, records of trust events, things put away as against a future display need, kept being uncovered! Over 80 record cards were completed and will now have to be transferred on to a searchable digital database. Many new photos were taken of old assets for incorporation. Even discoveries were made. The trust web site has benefited from the recognition of a couple of pictures of Renee Taverne - the long-time town resident who had previously been a distinguished member of the French Forces during the second world war. It had been a source of frustration to the Trust that we had received a bequest of his medals from his widow but we thought we had no picture of the Hero himself! Read about him at:- www.helensburgh-heritage.co.uk

Helensburgh Rotary are, for the fifth decade, organising this event which has been held every ten years. It provides a showcase for Clubs, Activities and Associations in the town. Residents get the opportunity to discover interests which they may not have known they had - and clubs gain new supporters. 6th to 9th October is the date and Victoria Halls the venue. The Heritage Trust will make its presence felt, and hopes that many existing members will volunteer to design, construct and man our stand during the three days.

Thanks from Strathclyde University

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Helensburgh Heritage Trust on behalf of the Strathclyde Science and Technology Forum, University of Strathclyde, for assistance in sponsoring the recent series of nine Forum workshops for 240 1st year students from Hermitage Academy. The events ran very smoothly and every student was successful in completing an electrically powered 'Off-Roader' model car which they retained. Feedback from the students and the school is very encouraging - to the extent that we are now exploring the possibility of this becoming an annual event for all future Hermitage first years.

*Dr Douglas Brown
and Ann Morrow*



Celebrate Comet in 2012