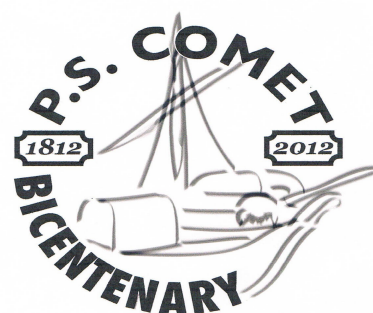


COMET BICENTENARY NEWSLETTER



September 2012

Although most celebrations are now over, keep looking at www.comet-2012.co.uk

Some dates for your diary

The Exhibition on Henry Bell and the Comet in Helensburgh Library remains open until the end of September during normal Library hours -- either phone 01436 658833 or go to <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/library/helensburgh-library>. Very many thanks are due to Doris Gentles for arranging this. Although Henry Bell and his wife had no children, his brothers did and two of these Bell descendants were present at the exhibition's opening ceremony on 3rd August.

Saturday 6 October is the date for a conference being held in Glasgow's Riverside Museum by the Glasgow Archaeological Society; its title is "The Clyde -- A Voyage of Discovery" and it will deal with the history and archaeology of the river -- for further details go to http://glasarchsoc.org.uk/?page_id=93

Helensburgh - Saturday, 4th August 2012



Unlike Port Glasgow which suffered bad weather for its festivities, the celebrations in the Helensburgh were blessed with good weather -- although dark clouds could be seen round about, they never came too close, but a most torrential thunderstorm broke out about an hour after the celebrations were over. HMS Pursuer and small Victorian-style steamboats led a procession of craft from Rhu Marina to Helensburgh Pier, where many came in as close as possible so that spectators on the pier could get a good look. The lifeboat performed a mock rescue, while Helensburgh Modellers Club entertained everyone with their models of the Comet, Maid of the Loch and the Royal Yacht Britannia. In addition a certain Mr Henry Bell walked among the crowd and chatted to them. Numbers were difficult to guess, but it seems likely that more than 1000 people took part during the course of the afternoon.

The same day also saw the launch of a Henry Bell Trail taking in the locations in Helensburgh and Rhu connected with him -- these include the Baths Inn, the flywheel from one of the Comet's engines, the obelisk erected to his memory on Helensburgh seafront and his grave in Rhu churchyard. Copies of this leaflet are available free of charge from Helensburgh Tourist Information Centre, or can be downloaded at <http://www.comet-2012.co.uk/images/stories/pdfs/Henry%20Bell%20Trail.pdf>

The Comet Archway (or Silhouette)

In previous newsletters you will have read how the proposed Comet Archway at the entrance to Helensburgh Pier car park was rejected by Argyll and Bute councillors. Since then we have been working to find an alternative site for it, and Babcocks at Faslane are keen that the project goes ahead. Prior to the rejection of the Silhouette Babcocks had already made a full size plywood template of it, and so this was painted, assembled and mounted on a trailer which was parked at the entrance to Helensburgh Pier on 4 August. Although it was not sitting on top of posts as it will eventually do, it received a lot of favourable comment.

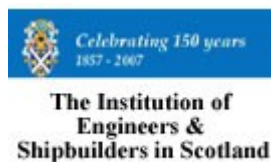


Access to Henry Bell's birthplace to re-open shortly

It used to be possible to reach Henry Bell's birthplace at Torphichen Mill by following the River Avon Heritage Trail, but the relevant section of the Trail had become unsafe and was consequently closed. However West Lothian Council have recently announced that a new bridge has been designed and should be going on the site very shortly, with the Trail set for a re-opening this autumn at a date yet to be arranged.

An audience with Mr and Mrs Bell

This play in the form of a "This Is Your Life" interview was written by Dave Dewar of Kilmun, who also played the part of the interviewer. It was performed in both Dunoon and Helensburgh Libraries in late August and was thoroughly enjoyed by all present. Henry Bell was portrayed in a sympathetic manner, warts and all, and by the end of the evening the audience felt that they had really got to know the man and his wife.



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