



Please reply to:
Stewart Noble
Treasurer, Helensburgh Heritage Trust
28 East Abercromby Street
Helensburgh G84 7SQ

Tel 01436 675484
snoble84@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2022

..... and so Covid 19 is still with us! Although I generally try to avoid tempting providence, the Omicron variant is perhaps not proving to be as big a problem as was feared in December, and so there is perhaps a glimmer of hope of some form of return to normal. However despite it all, life is not standing still with Helensburgh Heritage Trust.

Meetings. At one point the board were very hopeful that these would resume this month. However we have reached a decision to cancel all our current bookings for the Marriage Suite in the Civic Centre, and so it now looks as if the first of our public meetings will be at the end of September. If that changes we shall of course let you know.

Just to whet your appetites, one of the speakers will be our very own chairman, Robert Ryan. Over the last year he has been carrying out some research into his family history – and it is probably easier to draw up a list of the famous people to whom he is NOT related!

New donations to the Heritage Trust - 1.

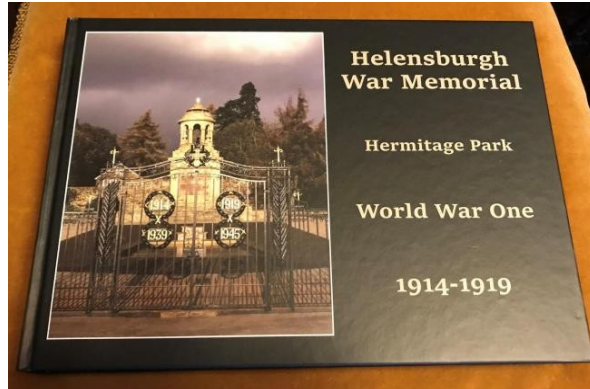
Peter Smith was a John Logie Baird enthusiast who died about 3 years ago. He carefully researched Baird's inventions and then built working replicas of them. His daughters, Wendy Whitehead and Helen Gavin, have very kindly donated four of these working replicas to the Heritage Trust.

The photo shown here is of the image produced by Peter's replica of a Baird mirror drum. Quite how soon members will be able to see his replicas in action is not yet known, but we are confident that they will prove to be of major importance when it comes to the exhibitions planned to celebrate the centenary of Baird's invention of television.



New donations to the Heritage Trust – 2.

In previous newsletters I have told you of the tremendous work which has been done on researching the lives of those local people who died in the First World War and who are commemorated on the war memorial in Hermitage Park. I am delighted to say that Fiona Baker and her colleagues have donated to us a copy of the book which they have produced (both in traditional form and as a DVD), as well as a copy of the much shorter booklet.



Copies of the book itself are also available to view at the Hermitage Park Pavilion and in the Destination Helensburgh shop at 28 Sinclair Street. The booklet and copies of the DVD of the book are available for purchase by a small donation at the Destination Helensburgh shop.

Meantime, there is an exhibition of their work upstairs in the Helensburgh Library. Although that area of the library is currently normally closed to the public, I am assured by the library staff that they will allow anyone who wishes to see this exhibition to go upstairs – just ask at the desk first. There is currently no set date for the end of this exhibition.

New donations to the Heritage Trust – 3.

Member Graham Phillips has given us a range of items which belonged to members of his family.

Perhaps the most unusual is a top-secret letter which was sent to Margot Sloan as a member of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) five months before the outbreak of the Second World War. It tells her what to do if a national emergency is declared – where to report and what to take with her – a sou'wester is near the top of the list! She subsequently served in the army throughout the war.

Anything on United States Navy Base 2 Wanted

Tam Ward who is a Heritage Trust member and also the founder of the North Clyde Archaeological Society is looking for any information, photos, reminiscences, etc that you may have on the Second World War United States naval base at Rosneath.

He is carrying out a very detailed archaeological survey to try to find out just what is still visible. He has already seen not only Dennis Royal's excellent book on the subject, but also the substantial volume of original material on which Dennis based his book.

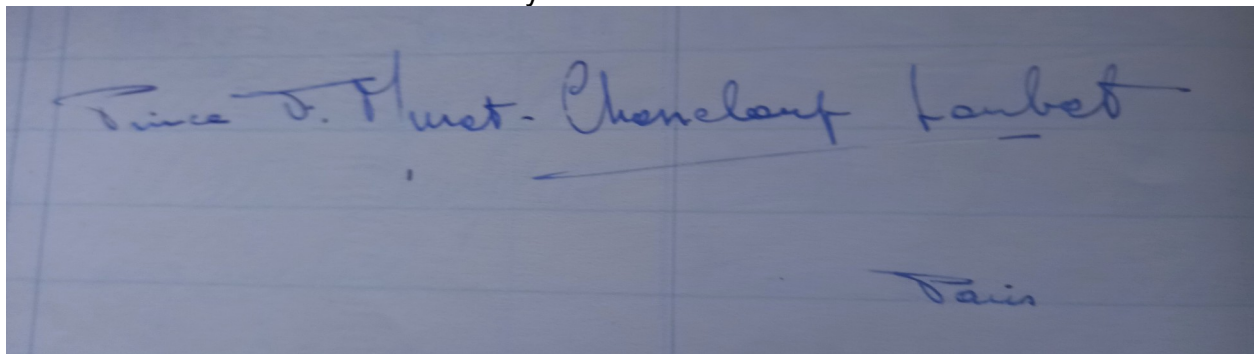
If you do feel that you have anything that might be of interest to Tam, you can contact

him by email at Tamward@btinternet.com or by phoning 07510 378827

Visitors Book query – 1.

As you know, the Heritage Trust are now the proud owners of the Helensburgh Town Council visitors book which was in use from 1947 to 1975. I have been working my way through the names in it in order to try to identify many of the more eminent visitors.

On 25 June 1966 the book was signed by Prince J Muset-Cheneloup Laubet, of Paris – or at least that's what I think his signature reads. However I can find nothing about him or his visit in the local papers or the town council minutes, nor on the Internet. Please let me know if you know anything about him – meantime here is his signature, in case I have not been able to read it correctly.



Visitors Book query – 2.

The John Logie Baird bust which is now on the West Esplanade was unveiled at its original site in Hermitage Park on 27 October 1961. I have been able to identify all of those who signed the visitors book for this event, but with the exception of Len Yates or Gates and Rita(?) Yates or Gates. They gave their address as 26 Millig Street – does anyone know who they were?

Unfortunately our president Malcolm Baird was in Canada at the time and so was unable to attend the ceremony; consequently the names mean nothing to him.

Items looking for new homes.

When accepting new assets that are offered to the Heritage Trust we have tried to limit ourselves to those which have a connection to Helensburgh and district. Nevertheless from time to time we are offered items which we don't wish to keep, but we would like to see them go to a good home. So here are the more recent ones:

1. A videocassette containing 2 films: "North British" c1949 and "The Other Man's Job" 1943. The first of these deals with the North British Locomotive Company in Glasgow, while the second shows the design and construction of War Department "Austerity" steam locomotives at the same company.

2. Another videocassette containing 2 titles: Glasgow 1980, and Glasgow's Docklands c1959.

3. Yet another videocassette containing 2 films: "Seawards the Great Ships" 1960, and the River Clyde 1939. The first of these films won a Hollywood Oscar for the best live-action short film in 1961.



4. A 1937 Coronation medal for King Edward VIII – but, as we all know, he abdicated before he was actually crowned.

5. A curved glass slide with the picture of a little girl on it – her picture is actually printed on the glass, and so I would suspect that this dates back to the 19th century. It came to the Heritage Trust from Graham Phillips, but he has no idea as to who the girl might be.



Problems with Helensburgh Pier are nothing new! The excellent dalmadan.com website carries a number of articles principally related to shipping on the Clyde and including extensive quotes from contemporary newspapers. A recent one explains the somewhat chequered history of Helensburgh Pier - <https://www.dalmadan.com/?p=1769&fbclid=IwAR09VVcW-g7cfBKzfPD7NxA4zM1S7xkuWgSoieEyVOKp0f-BApapzi8god8>

Rhu Church as you have never seen it before. Heritage Trust director Calum McNicol has made an attractive and interesting short video of the church, much of it filmed from a drone. You are strongly recommended to have a look at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8szGHmMqOGM>

John Logie Baird drama. At the end of October it was announced that a three-part drama on the life of the inventor of television will be produced to commemorate the centenary of the actual event. The company behind the event is called Free@Last TV, and it will be the only officially endorsed portrait of John Logie Baird's life and work.

Malcolm Baird has commented that "There have been two earlier 'biopic' projects that aimed to tell my father's story but, in both cases, the family was not happy with the clearly fictional approaches. We are pleased that Marc Pye's script will be based on my father's own memoirs, which have dramatic quality and entertainment value."

Baird TV Centenary update. John Logie Baird invented television in October 1925 and

3 months later gave the first public demonstration of it. Needless to say these are events which deserve to be celebrated and a separate Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation called Baird TV Centenary (of which Heritage Trust Chairman Robert Ryan and I are both trustees) has now been set up and is drawing up plans for events both locally and nationally. We shall keep you posted once more details are known.

Latest Exhibit in the Outdoor Museum. In October a new exhibit was placed in the Outdoor Museum in Colquhoun Square. It celebrates the Gareloch class of yachts which were designed in 1924 by McGruers at Clynder and built in their yard there. By 1936 they were being replaced by more modern yachts, principally by Dragons; consequently many were sold, several ending up at Aldeburgh in Suffolk. However by 1957 all 16 members of the fleet were returned to the Gareloch, where they have regularly been racing ever since. It is believed that there is no other class of yacht in the world of a similar age where all the members are still racing together.



Photo Album looking for its Family. John Wright was a police superintendent who lived at a house called Iridholm at 19 Henry Bell Street, according to the 1919 Helensburgh Directory. Heritage Trust member Jim Chestnut came across a photo album from that period which clearly shows the house, and he thought that it might be a nice idea to present the album to any descendants of the family. Can anyone help, please?

In the Days before an Automatic Telephone Exchange. "The past is a foreign country" wrote LP Hartley. The younger generations today would find life very foreign if they did not have their mobile phones – and in particular manual telephone exchanges would have made their experiences feel even more foreign!

Helensburgh got its automatic telephone exchange in 1966. Before that anyone wishing to make a call had to lift the phone and then wait until someone at the telephone exchange in the Post Office in Colquhoun Square said "Number please!" And it could often be a long wait. However having a manual telephone exchange might have advantages, as the following story shows.



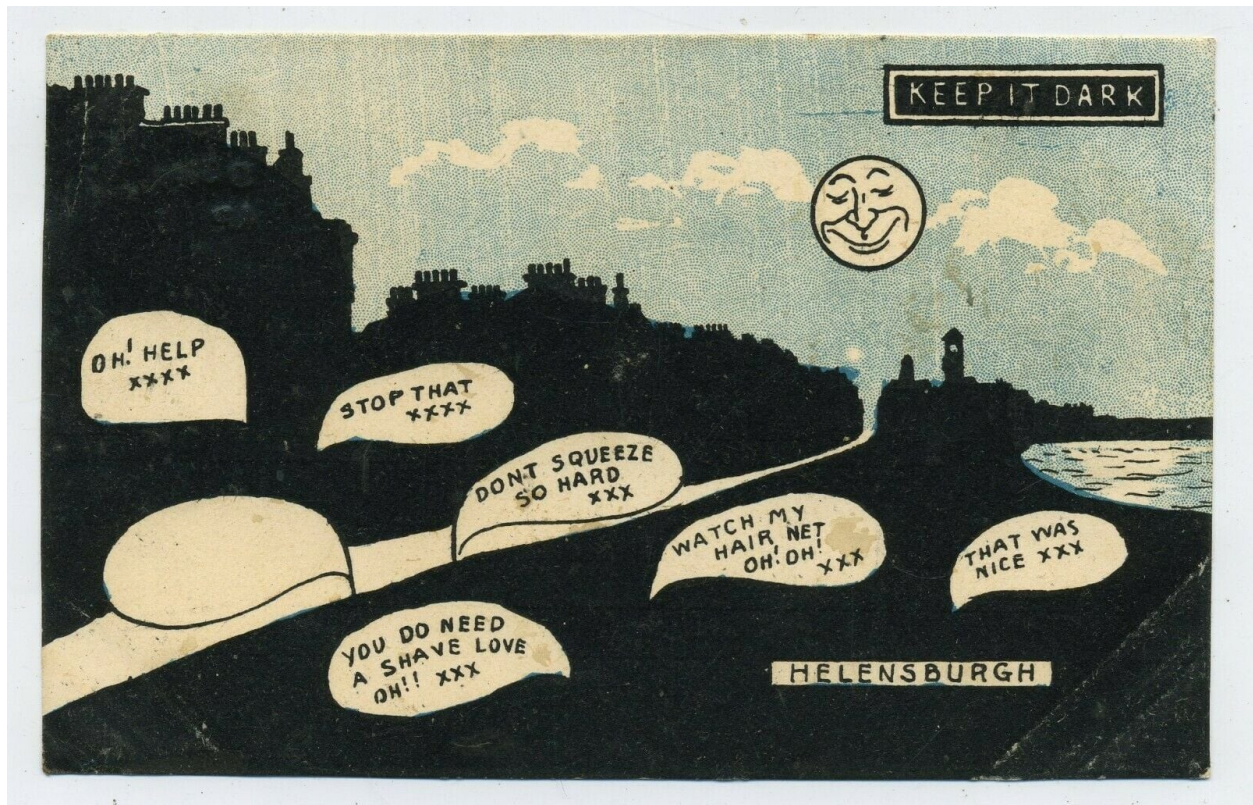
The automatic telephone exchange

One Sunday morning before 1966 our next-

door neighbours, Colin and Jean Hope, had decided to have a long lie. However shortly after 7 AM their slumbers were rudely interrupted by the arrival of an ambulance at their front door. Helensburgh telephone exchange had reported to the ambulance service that they suspected that someone in the house had had a heart attack – heavy breathing and snuffling had been heard down the phone, but no one had been able to speak into it! A quick trip to the kitchen revealed that the dogs had pulled the telephone off a dresser and that they had left it lying on the floor – and the heavy breathing and snuffling had come from them!

How to Bring your Sailing Dinghy to Helensburgh. When Helensburgh Sailing Club was 21 years old in 1972 a booklet on its early history was produced, and here is one of the tales which was related. "Dick Roscoe was the first outstanding helmsman in the club, and was one of the driving forces in the development of dinghy racing at Helensburgh. Being an apprentice, he wasn't particularly well off when he came to Helensburgh, but what he lacked financially he made up for in determination. When he brought his Firefly [dinghy] "Flaming Onion" to Scotland he got as far as Glasgow by train. He then pushed it by road from Glasgow to Dumbarton where he launched it and sailed it downriver to Helensburgh!"

.....And What Did You Do in The War?



... with thanks to the Helensburgh Memories Facebook page! Goodness knows what was going to go in the empty balloon – not something unprintable, I hope!