

# STANEHYVE 'TOLBOOTH TIMES'



**Around 1920, a snowy and empty Market Square, Stonehaven.**



## Editorial

We are very fortunate in Stonehaven that there are still volunteers willing to come forward and help support our local enterprises and activities in these difficult times. Not only can our own Museum rely on folk to come forward each weekend and open up for visitors, we have also an extraordinary group in Horizon who have done a power of work over the past year to beautify our lovely Town. Who will forget the magnificent effort in the summer for the Beautiful Scotland judging and the very well deserved Silver Gilt certificate? May their good work continue.

We wait to see whether our Fireballs ceremony can go ahead this year, but if it does; it will be with thanks to another hardworking group of volunteers. Stonehaven should be proud that we have 2 groups in the Town who have received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the Friends of the Pool and the Tolbooth Association. We can hope that in future years, other excellent local groups can also be recipients.

As this year draws to a close and we all hope that next year can only get better, can I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Gordon Ritchie, MVO

Editor

If you have any stories or information you think could be included in future editions, please get in touch with either [lizmkritchie@gmail.com](mailto:lizmkritchie@gmail.com) or [gritch626@gmail.com](mailto:gritch626@gmail.com)

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## MUSEUM SNIPPETS

### Courtyard events

After the success of the **#summeratthecourtyard** events, Clare and Mary have organized a free Christmas concert for **Saturday 18th December**. Using our outdoor courtyard space, Saturday afternoon visitors will be entertained by **Stonehaven Choral Society** fresh from their own concert and also the **Kilwhang Bell Ringers**. Our MC for the afternoon is a very special visitor who is flying in from Lapland especially for the event. Concert is free but all donations made will go to our chosen charity—**Pillar Kincardine**. A big thank you must also go to our neighbours here at the harbour —**Old Pier Café** who have very generously said they will donate their days takings to Pillar Kincardine.

Although it is an outdoor event, our courtyard has limited space and so in view of the current Covid regulations, we are **suggesting** that all those attending do a lateral flow test earlier in the day and may perhaps wish to keep their face masks on for the duration of their time at the concert. The groups will each be performing two times throughout the afternoon and so there will be time in between performances to warm up and visit the museum or get a coffee at the Old Pier Café. Most importantly – wrap up warm!

Stonehaven Tolbooth Museum

**#Christmas at the Courtyard**

Join us for an afternoon of Christmas music

surprise special guest

Wrap up warm

Stonehaven Choral Society

Kilwhang Bell Ringers

Free outdoor concert - donations welcome.  
All donations will go to local charity  
Pillar Kincardine

December 18th  
2.30 pm to 4.30pm

For more details check  
Facebook: Stonehaven  
Tolbooth Museum  
Instagram:  
@stonehaventolbooth  
museum



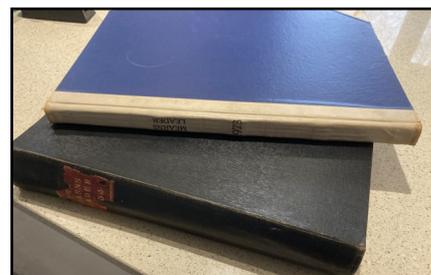
## The Mearns Leader Archive

by Gordon Ritchie

It does not seem that long ago that you would have seen queues of folk outside our local newsagents late on Thursday afternoons. And what were they waiting for? Yes, delivery from the printers in Montrose of that week's edition of the **Mearns Leader**. It was essential reading in the Town and I think that weekly sales at one time were around 5,000 copies, which for a town with a population of 11,000 seems extraordinary. But the Leader did its job well, it faithfully reported all that went on in the town and district and no event took place without a report or photo in the next edition.

Sadly these days are long gone. We still have a **Mearns Leader** but it is a shadow of its former self and contains little local news. And I suspect sales are very low. The younger generation no longer rely on newspapers for their news and now follow social media. This can have its advantages as, in the recent stormy weather, you could find out that there was a tree blocking the Slug Road and who was without power. I read the local daily paper online in the morning, but I still like to read a proper printed newspaper each day.

There is no longer a **Mearns Leader** office in Stonehaven but around 10 years ago, when it was downsized, I had a phone call from them asking if the Heritage Society was interested in having their archive of bound editions, otherwise they were going to the skip! I immediately said yes and John Christie, local painter, was good enough to collect them all and deliver to my office. The volumes date from 1932, with some gaps to 1978, and have now passed to the Tolbooth Museum. You can see the Leaders on microfilm in the Library but there is nothing better than looking through the actual newspaper. However the Bound volumes are not really suitable for public display at this time, but hopefully if the Museum is extended in the future, we can find a way of making them available.



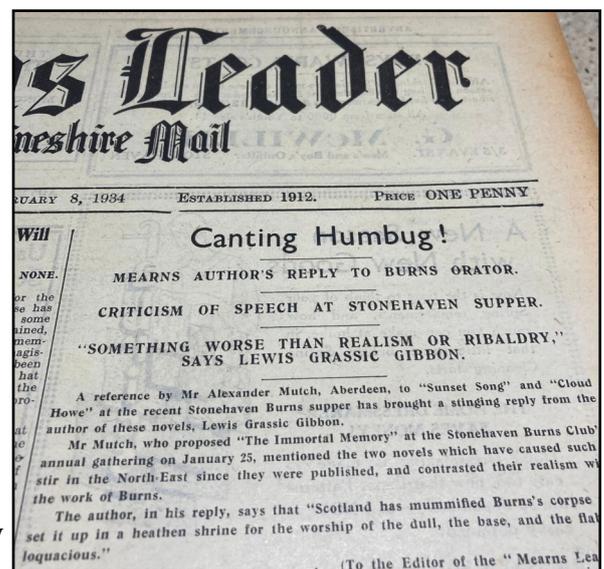
I have looked at 2 volumes to give you an idea of what they contain.



## The Mearns Leader Archive by Gordon Ritchie—cont'd

I looked at **1934**, as I was keen to find any mention of my Grandfather George Ritchie, who was Manager of the North of Scotland Bank in Banchory and who moved to Aberdeen that year. On the front page of the 15 February edition, it was reported that Bailie G. Ritchie had resigned from Banchory Town Council and Provost Burnett paid tribute to him for the valuable work he had done for the Council and the community.

However the edition of 8 February is very interesting as it contains a letter from author Lewis Grassic Gibbon replying to a report in the previous week's paper on the Stonehaven Burns Supper and Mr. Alexander Mutch from Aberdeen who had proposed the Immortal Memory and made reference to the 2 novels, *Sunset Song* and *Cloud Howe* recently published. The story here continued in the press for several weeks and is deserving of a longer explanation which I can do in a future issue. It is fascinating however to know that LGG, living then in Welwyn Garden City, had a subscription to the *Leader* and must have read it each week.



Also in that edition is a photo and report on the new Stonehaven Pool, due to be opened in June, which means that it was built in less than 6 months. Surprising, when you see how long it takes to build anything these days.



## The Mearns Leader Archive by Gordon Ritchie—cont'd

Stonehaven Farmers' Ball had 320 guests, most of who were named. There was a petition to Fetteresso Kirk Session by 500 in favour of individual communion cups but Minister Rev J B Burnett criticised it as he had not been consulted. The Golf Club voted narrowly in favour on whether play should start at 10am on Sundays instead of 1.30. The Churches were against golf on Sunday mornings. DE Shoes at 17 Evan Street had a boot sale. The Queens Cinema had 4 programmes that week. **The Wee Shop** at 1 Rodney Street had an interesting advert. The 20 pages are packed with news and LGG's novel Cloud Howe was being serialised also.



Moving forward nearly 40 years, the **Mearns Leader** of 9 February 1973 had 10 pages and more adverts but still contained some fascinating local news.

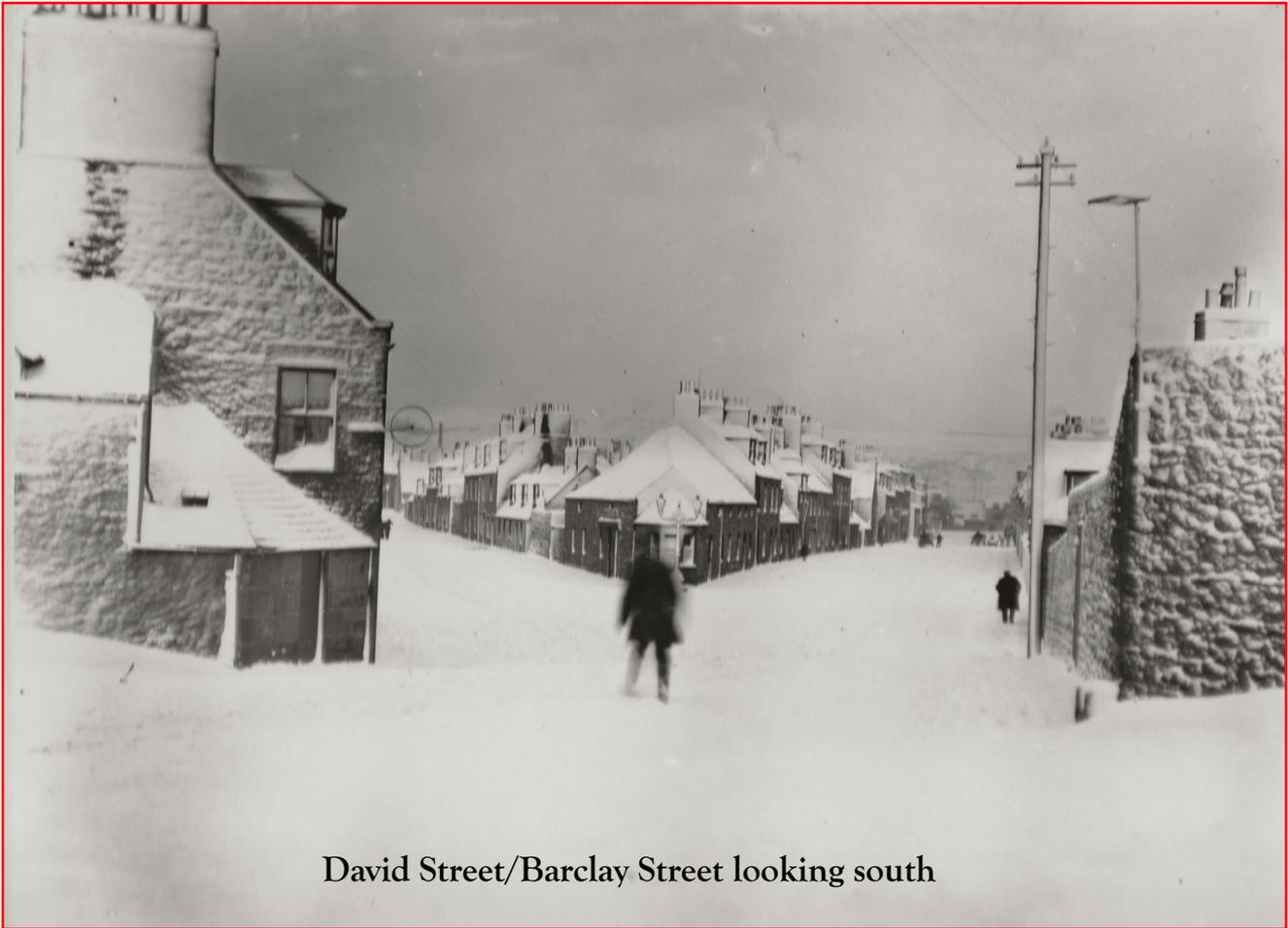


Town Council business was always well reported and heated discussions were not unusual. A large topic was the purchase of 43 acres at Mill of Forest and which later became Forest Park, the adjacent park and sites for the 2 schools and Carronhill. Councillor Alice Blacklaws, who had a Boutique in the Square, always had strong views. Major work in the town was the new bridge over the River Carron at Bridgefield and I recall that this caused traffic delays for some time as of course this was before the By-Pass was built and all traffic from Aberdeen came through the town. The Council gave permission for a seafood factory at Invercarron on part of the former Invercarron Motors garage. Hugh Ramsay's Winter Sale and Leslie's Annual Sale were both about to end. A Caravan Site at the Recreation Grounds was approved, although it had been there for some years. Stonehaven Registrar's Office was to be closed on Saturdays. There had been 13 fires on the Bervie Braes over the past year all started by children. An Appeal may be launched to save Old Kinneff Church. The Picture House had 3 programmes that week.

These Volumes contain so many stories about Stonehaven in the past that they will fill future issues of Stanehyve Tolbooth Times for many years to come. GR



## Stonehaven Wintry scenes from the past



David Street/Barclay Street looking south



Around 1930, showing a wintry scene in the Market Square, Stonehaven. The taxi rank is on the left.

Have you noticed  
the impressive  
snowman in the  
Square?

