

# STANEHYVE ·TOLBOOTH TIMES·



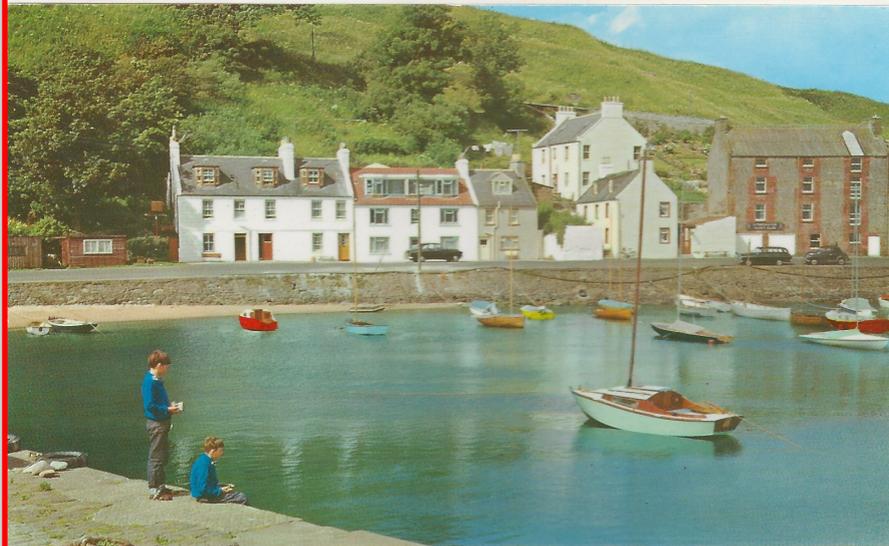
Market Square, Stonehaven

S.7003



Beach and Harbour, Stonehaven

S.7004



The Harbour, Stonehaven

S.7001



## Editorial

Our cover shows some lovely views of Stonehaven Harbour and Market Square in the 1960s, with everything looking quiet and peaceful. These come from a large collection of postcards donated to Stonehaven Heritage Society some years ago by Yules of Arbroath, who used to have The Gift Shop at 64 Allardice Street, run by Miss Donald, and who must have over stocked postcards at the time! There are still many left and they are available to buy in the Museum shop.

Now that we are into Spring, and things are starting to get back to more normal times, we can all hope that visitors will be flocking to Stonehaven to enjoy similar weather to these postcards and hopefully visit our Museum. We are grateful to our red fleece volunteers who will man the Museum, and be able to open it to more visitors this year. If you are able to help and can spare a few hours, we would be delighted to see you.

**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 [gritchie626@gmail.com](mailto:gritchie626@gmail.com)

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## MUSEUM SNIPPETS

Earlier in the year, the museum heard from Aberdeenshire Council about visitor attraction numbers for 2021. Some attractions such as those at Peterhead and Banchory were closed for the whole year.

- Aberdeenshire Farming 2255
- Maud Railway 108
- Banff Museum 241
- Sandhaven Meal Mill 36
- Stonehaven Tolbooth Museum 5429

The museum accounted for over 67% of total visitor numbers in 2021!



From 1st April, the museum will be opening 4 days per week - Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Mondays from 1.30pm to 4.30pm. We will therefore be requiring more volunteers to man these extra opening hours. If you think you can help, please pop in to the museum and get more information or get in touch by email at

[enquiries@stonehaventolbooth.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@stonehaventolbooth.co.uk)



After the success of last years **Summer at the Courtyard** series of events, plans are well underway to put together a programme of events for this summer. Look out for posters around town and details on our social media - Website, Facebook and Instagram.



A programme of major repairs are to be undertaken at the harbour over the calmer weather summer months May to November. The works at the South Pier, Fish Jetty and Boom Gates should not impact on the museum directly—although there will no doubt be a lot of increased activity in the harbour area. . The repairs to the Net Pier (directly outside our building) are however planned to commence early June and be completed by early November. and so we will no doubt have increased noise and have to deal with more contractor equipment and vehicles whilst also hopefully welcoming increased summer visitor numbers. Busy times ahead.



## THERE'S BEEN A MURDER

### TRAGEDY ON THE HIGH SEAS OFF MONTROSE

By Douglas Cusine



Over the past few years, local man Jim Malcolm has produced some wonderful metal sculptures which have been erected along our Beach Boardwalk. As, initially, he did not seek publicity and remained anonymous, he was given the title of 'Stonehaven's Banksy', after the well known Bristol street artist. Jim's latest work is a model of the schooner "Nymph." It, like his other creations, are rightly admired by locals and visitors alike. The photo shows the model and the plaque which mentions a murder.



## THERE'S BEEN A MURDER— cont'd

Captain John Greig Junior set sail just after midday, from Montrose to London in his father's schooner "Nymph" on 6th September 1865, with a crew of three men, plus their Captain, and the cargo of wooden flooring. Those three men were Andrew Brown, the ship's Mate, John Pert, who manned the tiller, and an older crewman, Alexander Raeburnes, who worked the rigging. As they began to head south, Captain Greig, feeling the heat lay down on the deck to take a nap, leaving the other three men to control and navigate the vessel.

At about 5pm, they had barely reached Inverkeillor, at a place called Red Head, when Pert is alleged to have heard two loud, dense thuds, like something heavy had fallen on to the deck. As he turned towards the source of the sudden noise. Captain Grieg lay dead on the deck, his head split open almost in two separate parts in a bloody mess on the wooden deck. Standing over him with an axe, ready to deal yet another blow was the ship's Mate, Andrew Brown. In horror, John Pert watched as Brown struck a third time, slicing the Captain's head in two.

Panic and an overwhelming wish to survive must have overwhelmed Pert, tok him from the tiller and towards the murderous Brown. Pert took possession of the axe and threw it over the side into the North Sea. Knowing that there was no way Brown could get away with what he had done, He ordered the other two to sail to Stonehaven, so he could see his mother one last time before he was taken into custody. Probably fearing for their own safety, the two men obliged, and they turned to set a new course.

Brown's temperament was varied during the hours-long journey to Stonehaven, ranging from fear and anger to being carefree and nonchalant. At one point, it is alleged he asked the crewmen to help him push the body over the side of the schooner, but the men refused. At another, he was said to have confessed that he had yet another man to kill. Despite the warmth of that day, the poor men must have felt chilled to the bone. They reached their new destination about midnight, and so from 5pm, the men had sailed with the murderer and his victim.

The tension aboard the vessel must have been almost unbearable for Pert and Raeburnes. Each of the three men took turns in different positions on the bloodied schooner, probably having to walk past or step over what would now be the congealing body of the ill-fated captain. During part of a conversation both crewmen stated that Brown had said there was an old grudge between himself and Captain Greig, and that he had made threats against both men's lives during the course of the journey.



## THERE'S BEEN A MURDER—cont'd

As they reached Stonehaven, two of Brown's uncles approached the schooner to guide them into the pier. Understandably, they were horrified at what they saw, and Brown was said to have tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent the vessel from docking. As soon as they were close enough to land, both Raeburnes and Pert fled the scene and rushed to report the murder to local police. Brown went to see his mother, and it was at her home that he was arrested. His case was heard in early January the following year, where he pled Not Guilty on the grounds of insanity and the influence of alcohol.

Whilst both Pert and Raeburnes said that Brown was not heavily under the influence of alcohol at the time he murdered his Captain, who was also believed to be his friend, both the policeman who arrested him and Brown's uncle, testified that Brown was definitely inebriated at the times they saw him. Furthermore, there was evidence that Brown suffered from debilitating headaches and changes in mood after a couple of unrelated childhood accidents that resulted in invasive medical intervention. As he grew older, he became more aggressive when under the influence of alcohol.

Despite more witnesses speaking to his erratic behaviour, and with a minority of the jury recommending mercy in light of this, Brown was found guilty as charged and sentenced to be hanged at Montrose. Until then, Brown was in Forfar prison until 31st January 1866 when he was transported to Montrose amid a furore surrounding his execution. After death, Brown's body was returned to Forfar and interred in the prison grounds.

I am sure, indeed, hope that our "Bansky" has another work in hand, but the story might not be so colourful.

Douglas Cusine



## THE TOLBOOTH –STONEHAVEN COMMON GOOD



Looking a bit grim and after a long period of damage and dereliction, this photograph of the Tolbooth was probably taken in the early 1950s. We know that it was taken after World War 2, as you can see the concrete plinth against the wall on the edge of the roadway, and on which was erected the flame thrower device intended to deter any German invaders. The fuel for this came from a pipe which you can see running along the front of the Tolbooth and this lead to a tank in the brick built building which is still behind the Tolbooth today and used by local fishermen. How effective the flame thrower would have been was of course never tested. There was another on the Cowie Bridge at the north end of the town, both of which were presumably manned by the local Home Guard. Also you will see there was another brick built building in the courtyard, and which was demolished before 1963.

In 1932, the Mearns Leader reported that the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Superior of the Old Town of Stonehaven, had agreed to gift the Tolbooth to the Town of Stonehaven. Local government moves slowly and it was not until 1954 that the Marquis signed a Deed of Gift in favour of Stonehaven Town Council and not until 1989 that the Council managed to get a title deed to the Tolbooth, some 57 years after the original gift! As the Tolbooth was gifted to the Town and not purchased by the Council under any statutory powers or subject to any trust or burdens, it follows that the Tolbooth is part of the Stonehaven Common Good. Many burghs in Scotland held land or funds which had been gifted to the town and Stonehaven is no exception. Aberdeenshire Council accounts show that the Stonehaven Common Good Fund had a balance of £105,000 on 31 March 2021 but that would not include the value of the Tolbooth. At one time, the Council regularly made payments out of Common Good but I have not heard of any in recent times. The Council have to go through certain procedures to deal with Common Good assets.



## THE TOLBOOTH –STONEHAVEN COMMON GOOD (cont'd)

Following the Deed of Gift in 1954, Stonehaven Town Council embarked on a project to refurbish the building and raising funds to do so. The final cost in 1963 was around £5,000 which included donations from many bodies and individuals, and on completion the building was opened by HM The Queen Mother. The Council continued to maintain a fund into which the income from the Tolbooth was paid and we were recently surprised to learn that this fund still exists and has a very healthy balance which can be spent on the Building. We await more information from the Council but this does mean that some longstanding maintenance matters on the building can now be dealt with.



Official opening of the refurbished Tolbooth in 1963 by HM The Queen Mother



## POSTCARDS

These are another 2 postcards from the Yule's collection and would date from the 1950s. Like many old cards, they are hand tinted to improve the colours and I suspect the sky and clouds have also been changed.



The view of the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Site shows much smaller caravans and none of the large motorhomes which come today. The present site run by the Caravan and Motorhome Club has

been a great benefit to the Town, bringing visitors nearly all year round who enjoy the many attractions and of course, will spend money in our cafes and shops. I am not sure why the Beach is coloured green. You can see the tank invasion blocks which lined the Promenade and in front of the Beach Pavilion, the frame of the roof of the dodgem cars at the Beach amusements.

The buildings in the Harbour photo are mainly all still there today with the old Granary in the centre now the Yacht Club and Burnett's lorry garage on the right, also now part of the Yacht Club. The houses in



the rear at Castle Square were demolished in the 1960s to make way for new housing. There is a Morris Minor on the right and I think the car in the centre is a Daimler Majestic, and which can also be seen in one of the cover photos outside number 22 Shorehead. The lady who had the house had been secretary to Tommy Scott Sutherland, a well known Aberdeen architect and Councillor.