

# STANEHYVE ·TOLBOOTH TIMES·



Fishing boats in Stonehaven Harbour, circa 1900



## Editorial

On a recent visit to London, I visited both the British Museum and the British Library for the first time. Both have free admission and are simply wonderful and full of interesting items, with the Lewis Chessmen the highlight of the Museum visit. As it was a Friday evening, the Museum had free 20-minute spotlight tours and we joined one on The Enlightenment. Although not really long enough to learn about that period in Art history, it was good that more details were given on certain exhibits and which I would otherwise have missed. Likewise, when we visited the Library, there was a speaker telling the fascinating story of 2 items on display, Leonardo Da Vinci's sketch book and William Shakespeare's First Folio, when his plays were first printed.

Obviously, we do not have any items to match these but perhaps we could arrange tours of the Tolbooth Museum in order to highlight some of the special things in our collection. Perhaps a Sunday afternoon during the winter might attract some of our local folk who would not otherwise visit the Museum. I can talk on Photographs and Postcards, being my speciality, and I am sure there are others who can help. Please let me know what you think.

As you will read, we had a well attended AGM and thanks go to all volunteers who have helped over the summer. Your Committee have also been busy, particularly in our dealings with the Council and their decision to sell the Ground floor of the Tolbooth and the courtyards to STA for £1. This transaction has still some way to go before settlement, but it will mean that we will have more control over the future of our Museum.

*Gordon Ritchie* MVO DL

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 [gritchier626@gmail.com](mailto:gritchier626@gmail.com)

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## MUSEUM SNIPPETS

- ◆ Winter hours started on 1st October. Museum will now be open weekends only from 12.30pm to 3.30pm
- ◆ Museum will however be open extra days for the school autumn holidays. From Monday 14th October to Friday 25th October 12.30pm to 3.30pm each day (excluding Tuesdays).

- ◆ Friday 25th October sees the return of one of our main fundraisers for the year  
**QUIZ NIGHT.**

It will be held again at the Royal British Legion in Stonehaven and the quizmaster will be Steve Peacock. Tickets available from the museum or at the door on the evening. Spaces limited. £5 per person. Teams of 4-6

- ◆ The following day Saturday 26th October, we are hosting a storytelling event for Halloween.

### **TERRIBLE TALES AT THE TOLBOOTH.**

Storyteller is Pauline Cordiner who has entertained children at the museum several times. Halloween Costumes would be good but are not a requirement to enjoy the spooky tales about the Tolbooth and Harbour. There will be 2 sessions. From 4.00pm to 4.30pm and then from 4.45pm to 5.15pm

**Front cover image** The middle pier still has a breakwater wall. A219 was owned by Alex Taylor, A265 Sunrise by James Clark and A468 Guiding Star by James Blair.



## MUSEUM SNIPPETS

### Footfall for the last few months

**July** saw us host a storytelling event as part of the Folk Festival and then later in the month we had 15 visitors as part of Enable Summer School.

**August** saw 2 days of children's art workshops which were well attended. The lacemakers were back demonstrating in the museum on the 17th and on Harbour Day we saw over 600 people watch mackerel smoking in the outdoor courtyard.

**September** we again took part in Aberdeenshire Doors Open Days weekend and on the last Saturday of the month we hosted a creative writing workshop .

In August we saw one of our biggest daily totals ever with 1151 people visiting the museum and courtyard! Our figures for 2024 are good but due to some disappointingly poor weather we are slightly down on 2023 figures. The figures highlighted in grey below were months when we had Covid restrictions in place.

2024	Museum	Clock tower	Total	Days open	Average Daily footfall
July	2641	873	3514	26	135
August	3876	902	4778	27	177
September	2465	933	3398	26	131
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>8982</b>	<b>2708</b>	<b>11690</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>148</b>

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
July	2909	2123	638	78	3912
August	4131	3260	2134	50	5718
September	2360	1399	1048	83	3728
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>9400</b>	<b>6782</b>	<b>3820</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>13358</b>



## IMAGES FROM SUMMER EVENTS



LEFT  
Lacemaking demonstration



ABOVE  
Creative writing workshop



LEFT  
Children's art workshop in courtyard



## James Finlayson (1887 - 1953)

It is always interesting to read about people, who either were born in Stonehaven, or have strong family connections. In 1990, the Heritage Society published a book by Archie Watt entitled 'A Goodly Heritage' about famous people of Stonehaven and district. Apart from the Barclays of Urie, Robert Burns' ancestors and James Leslie Mitchell, many were a bit obscure and there were only a handful from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I have found details of one man who probably would have not made Archie's book. Isabella Henderson was born in a house on the High Street, Stonehaven on 19 August 1861, daughter of James Henderson, Ship Master and his wife Isabella, whose maiden name was Wood. James would have been the owner or joint owner of one of the ships which plied from Stonehaven, carrying potatoes and cereals, and also coal, so would have been a prosperous businessman. When she was 18, Isabella married Alex Finlayson, a Blacksmith in Larbert, Stirlingshire and her son James Henderson Finlayson was born there on 27 August 1887.



James started working life as a tinsmith, probably for his father, but he obviously had other talents and became an actor, first appearing on stage at the Theatre Royal in Edinburgh. He must have been talented as he got the chance to travel to America and worked first in New York before moving on to Hollywood. He found film work including the Keystone Cops silent films and found success when he signed with Hal Roach working with Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. He became an indispensable part of the Laurel and Hardy team, appearing in 33 of their films, usually as a villain or antagonist. His trademarks were a large fake moustache, double take and fade away head reaction and the expression 'd'oooooh'. 60 years later, this phrase became famous when used by Homer Simpson in the cartoon series 'The Simpsons'.



## James Finlayson (1887 - 1953) cont'd

I assume James would have visited his grandfather James Henderson in Stonehaven ,and perhaps sailed in one of his ships. It is fascinating to have a connection between our small town and one of the greatest comedy duos of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



If you want to find out more about the films James appeared in , check out his bio on the media database—[www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)



## STONEHAVEN TOLBOOTH ASSOCIATION

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FROM AGM

Good evening and welcome.

Many thanks for taking the time to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Stonehaven Tolbooth Association. This time five years ago, to the date, we welcomed to the Tolbooth Museum the then Prince Charles and Camilla. Can't believe that it was five years ago. Where does the time go?

At this time, it is customary to report and reflect on the past year, 2023/2024. To triumph our achievements, vent our frustrations and look towards the future. In time honoured tradition I would like to welcome all our new volunteers who have joined us and I hope that they will find their time with us fulfilling. Once again to all our volunteers, seasoned and new alike, because of your continued support and commitment we have been able to operate our summer opening times.

Now we head into our winter hours. Just as a reminder these will be primarily Saturday's and Sunday's 1230 - 1530 with additional days to cover school holidays. Footfall has been good although slightly down on previous years, but the weather has not been kind to us.

As reported at the last AGM we made an application for a Community Asset Transfer for the building. I can report that after many months, years and meetings the Council has finally issued a Decision Notice in which they have offered to sell the ground floor and the courtyards for £1.00. We have until the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 to make a firm offer for the property as outlined in the Decision Notice. There are still some issues to sort through but we will be addressing these as a matter of course.

At present the Courtyards are undergoing some renovations and this improvement will mean we will be able to organise more outdoor events in the future.

The organisations/events we hosted this year (so far) covered:-

- Globus Tours—hoping they will return in 2025
- Stonehaven Sea Cadets
- Mackerel Smoking
- Primary School Visits
- Creative Writing Workshop—taken by a fellow volunteer Amy Calderwood
- Story Telling
- Lace making.
- Net making
- Stonehaven Harbour Day
- Aberdeenshire Doors Open Days weekend





STONEHAVEN TOLBOOTH ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMANS REPORT FROM AGM

And not to forget the pub quiz which this year is to be held on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at The British Legion from 7.30 p.m. All welcome. As you will appreciate there is a lot of work undertaken in organising and co-ordinating these events and our thanks go to all involved.

We were approached by the University of Aberdeen with regard to hosting a student placement in 2024. One of the Trustees, Lindsey took this on board and using the last report from Visit Scotland we were able to accommodate this request. Some of you might have met Autumn Pinto, the Masters Student from Aberdeen University who was on placement with us; Autumn undertook to improve the presentation of the Bervie Brae collection. I think we can all agree that Autumn did an excellent job and also shared some other ideas which in the forthcoming year we hope to undertake. We wish Autumn all the very best and thank her most kindly for the work she produced.

Sadly other work on the collections has stalled as energies were being concentrated elsewhere, however, we will be addressing these. There is a long list of observations and proposed actions and we will be endeavouring to address these over the coming months. However, the Dunnottar Castle panel has been completed and we are just waiting to have this attached to the wall.

The inventory mentioned in last year's report is very nearly finished and it is hoped that this will be completed and available to all volunteers.

We continue to open the clock tower when we have two volunteers available. There have been a few issues with the TV from time to time but we will continue to monitor this.

Social media is a must in this day and age and my thanks go to those who maintain our platforms and keep them current and up to date.

Now I have been practicing a lot on my pronunciation of our *Stanehyve* publication - hopefully I got it right - as it is a continuing success and our thanks as always to Gordon Ritchie and Liz Ritchie for all their hard work in the production of this.

Our shop is well maintained and the Stonehaven Sea Salt is still proving to be very popular. The replacement card reader seems to be working just fine.



## STONEHAVEN TOLBOOTH ASSOCIATION

### CHAIRMANS REPORT FROM AGM

So what does the future have in store for us? How do we build on an already well established visited venue? We say there is always room for improvement.

We can work together towards:-

- Keep enhancing the visitor experience
- New exhibits. We are currently working with a chap who would like to help with the agate display,
- Promote becoming a volunteer. We have attended a volunteer recruitment event at Fetteresso Church.
- Have more formal or informal volunteer days. Where we can meet and discuss various topics or just have a coffee. I say coffee possibly a glass of wine. Especially as we go into the winter months and the chance to meet becomes less.
- Improve communications.

Last but by no means least I would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone. For your continuing support, commitment and time to the running of the Stonehaven Tolbooth Museum. Thank you to my fellow trustees for all their hard work in everything that we as Trustees and volunteers alike have gone through this year.

Thank you.

*Cressida Coates*

Chair

2nd October 2024