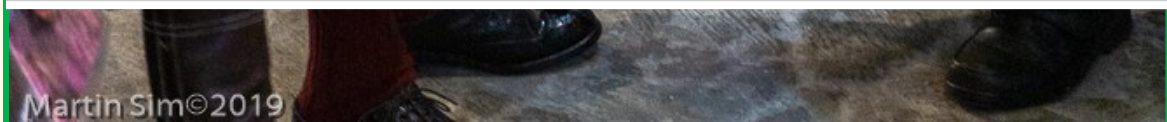


# STANEHYVE ·TOLBOOTH TIMES·



Ian Balgowan 1945—2025



Martin Sim©2019



## Editorial

The success of our Tolbooth Museum over the years has been down to the many volunteers who have freely given up their time to make it such an interesting and friendly space and to give a warm welcome to our many visitors from all parts of the World. And without Jim Bruce donating part of his enormous collection of artefacts from bygone days, particularly related to our agricultural past, the Museum would have been far emptier. But of course, as we have an excellent location next to our picturesque Harbour, exhibits on our rich fishing heritage are vitally important. We were so fortunate that Ian Balgowan donated not only many items from the long fishing history of Stonehaven, but that he gave up his time, week after week, to greet visitors and give them a rich and detailed explanation on what they could see in his part of the Museum. He will be very sadly missed.

We held a very successful Volunteers Open day on 1<sup>st</sup> March and also offered our volunteers more information on some of our displays. The intention was to attract new volunteers and we had 5 who will hopefully be able to help in the coming months. I showed the complete photo archive, with nearly 400 photos of old Stonehaven, and which has been reprinted with new captions over the past few years. The archive will be rotated on display, so that as many as possible can enjoy this interesting collection.

Wishing you all a very Happy Easter, with hopefully good weather to enjoy the Spring.

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

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## MUSEUM SNIPPETS

**January** saw the museum having to sadly announce the passing of one of our most popular volunteers—Ian Balgowan. He was one of the first to join the newly formed Stonehaven Tolbooth Association back in 2011 and latterly was also a much valued member of the Trustee group who manage the museum.

Just a few days after his very well attended funeral in local Fetteresso Church, his family very kindly donated the monies raised at the service to the museum and RNLI Stonehaven.

Ian will be sorely missed by both volunteers and visitors to the museum.



**April** saw the museum start its summer opening hours. If we have sufficient volunteers, we aim to open 6 days per week— every day excluding Tuesdays and from 1.30pm to 4.30pm.



On Easter Sunday 20th April there will be an Open Day to show off the Inner Courtyard and its recent improvements. From 12noon to 3pm. There will be coffee and tea available and refreshments will be kindly provided by Seafood Bothy.

**Front cover image** In 2019 the museum won the Queens Award for Voluntary Service and in October 2019 King Charles and Queen Camilla (the then Duke and Duchess of Rothesay) visited the museum where they met and chatted with volunteers including Ian Balgowan. We wonder what Ian said to Prince Charles that HRH found so funny.



## MUSEUM SNIPPETS

### Footfall for the last few months

Final museum figures for 2024 show that we had 18821 visitors and were open for 227 days in the year. This compares with 18742 visitors in 2023 and open for 220 days. The visitor daily average for both years is very similar at 78 and 77. Whilst the annual totals have been increasing year on year since Covid closures, they are still well below the pre-pandemic 2019 totals of 28872 visitors. Fingers crossed for a good summer season.

2025 figures for the quarter are down by approx. 8% on last year, but we did have some museum closures in January due to bad weather.

March saw private visits to the museum by Kincardine Pillar and Maryculter Scouts. These visits are coordinated by volunteer Clare Thomas.

Globus Tours have confirmed that they will be returning for their twice weekly visits and starting in April.

2025	Museum	Clock tower	Total	Days open	Average Daily footfall
January	533	697	1230	9	137
February	495	161	656	8	82
March	752	295	1047	12	87
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1780</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>2933</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>101</b>

Museum only	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
January	681	669	COVID	COVID	1056
February	478	628	438	COVID	813
March	779	645	444	COVID	180
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1938</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2049</b>





## EXCITING TIMES AT STONEHAVEN'S HARBOUR MUSEUM

By Andrew Newton

*The following article appeared in The Bellman online on 20th March 2025.*

Two or three years ago the Stonehaven Tolbooth Association (STA), which operates the Tolbooth Museum, submitted a community asset transfer request (CAT) to Aberdeenshire Council to purchase the whole of the Tolbooth building and its associated courtyards. The local Councillors unanimously supported this request but unfortunately council officials wished to retain the upper floor which is leased to the Tolbooth Restaurant. Due to the two differing views the request had to go to another committee and the latter sided with the officials. Although this decision restricted STA's plans for renovating and extending the whole premises, this setback did not deter STA for long and, over the last 15 months, they have been forging ahead with ideas on how to improve the ground floor and the two courtyards.

### **Inner courtyard restoration project**

The first stage was a review of the Inner Courtyard. This had been hidden from the general public for perhaps as much as 50 years; during this period of neglect it had become a dumping ground for waste material and at the same time mother nature had tried to re-claim it for her own. It was completely unusable.





## .EXCITING TIMES cont'd—by *Andrew Newton*

STA engaged the architectural services of John Aitken to oversee the project and were fortunate enough to be awarded a grant from the Aberdeenshire Council Coastal Community Challenge Fund.

The initial idea was fairly simple: clear and level the area, lay new paving that was sympathetic to the existing grade A listed building, install disabled access and re-point the walls.

Work started in September 2024 and the vegetation was cleared, but once the digger started, the original 17<sup>th</sup> century paving was discovered under layers of detritus. This paving was very uneven and in poor shape but it was obviously of historical importance. So, what to do? After a bit of head scratching it was decided to abandon the original idea of new slabs and lift the 300 year old paving, clean and relay it.

This was a momentous decision because although it preserved an historical feature and was carbon neutral, compared to using modern material, the cost of sourcing and employing a skilled stonemason, and the additional work in laying randomly shaped stones, was considerably in excess of the grant awarded. STA has had to fund the additional cost themselves.

Renovation proceeded slowly over the winter months as the contractors were dependent on favourable weather, for example the air temperature must be greater than 5° C when pointing with lime mortar. However, the project is now completed and a big vote of thanks is due to Jim Stephen and the workforce at Simbas Construction who took pride in sympathetically restoring another part of Stonehaven's heritage.



## .EXCITING TIMES cont'd - by Andrew Newton



STA has completed the first phase of the improvements which have been made possible under our new ownership. They have provided the community with a usable location in the harbour area and are actively seeking partnerships with local organisations which would be mutually beneficial to the museum and third parties. The current plan is to have an Open Day on Easter Sunday ( 20th) from 12noon to 3pm. so that the public can view this exciting additional open space at the harbour.

### **What next?**

STA is looking to similarly renovate the Outer Courtyard, albeit it is in a far better shape than was the Inner Courtyard. Re-painting the wooden doors on the ground floor is also under consideration. This will be a welcome facelift for Stonehaven's oldest building, without destroying any of its original character.

**Watch this space!**





Susan A C Tindal (1860 -1932)

by Gordon Ritchie

Our Secretary Andrew Newton received a message to the Museum website recently from Kate Macfarlane asking if we could tell her any more about Susan A C Tindal from Stonehaven who had exhibited the painting below entitled 'Old Town Stonehaven' at the Royal Scottish Academy Annual Exhibition in 1891/92. Kate had previously written to the RSA in 1990 but they said that Susan had not been a member of the RSA and had no further information.







## Susan A C Tindal cont'd - by Gordon Ritchie

The Museum do not hold any details but a quick search on the Scotland's People website produced some interesting facts. Susan was born in Edinburgh around 1860 and her father was Robert Tindal who was a Lawyer and Sheriff Clerk in Stonehaven living at Bridgend, Arbuthnott Street, possibly the cottage beside the White Bridge. Her grandfather had also been a Lawyer in the Town. Susan does not appear on the 1891 Census as living in Stonehaven or elsewhere in Scotland. The 1921 Census has her living at 49 Evan Street, a large house just past the Slug Road corner, and which was later a boarding house.. Her sister Margaret, who may have been a twin, married William Christie, the Dean of St James' Episcopal Church, across the road from the cottage, in 1895, and in 1921, Margaret was living at The Parsonage, 35 Evan Street, now the site of St John's Court, on the corner of Robert Street just a few doors down from Susan. Susan died a spinster in 1932, age 72 and is described in the death certificate as being 'of independent means'. Neither she nor her sister appear to have had any children but she was also survived by a brother Robert Tindal.

A look at the 1932 volume of the Mearns Leader produced a lovely obituary to  
*' a lady who, in the course of a lifelong association with Stonehaven, endeared herself not only to the members of the congregation of St James' but to the townspeople in general'.*

She was an indefatigable worker for the Church, for over 50 years a Sunday school teacher and deputy organist. However, no mention of her artistic bent and her one-time exhibition at the RSA.

Tindal is not a common name in Stonehaven but perhaps there are still descendants of her brother Robert still around today?

If you have any further information about Susan Tindal or any of her descendants, please email us at [enquiries@stonehaventolbooth.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@stonehaventolbooth.co.uk)