

Kilwinning Heritage News

August 2021



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Sizzling summer news

Welcome to our newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading about what we've been up to this summer. Please get in touch with your thoughts and suggestions.

'Lost' Kilwinning treasure in Nevada

Occasionally we are contacted by people from all over the UK and abroad who are looking for information. Recently a gentleman from the USA wrote to say he has a clock which has been in his family for 240 years. It is made by James Stirrat of Kilwinning in 1767, the year of Napoleon's birth. The clock began its travels by going to Belfast, then, when the family emigrated initially to Canada, it sailed across the Atlantic on the day after the Titanic sank. The family told of seeing paint scrapings on an iceberg, evidence of that disastrous sinking. From Canada it travelled to USA, eventually settling in Carson City, Nevada (home of *Bonanza*). The clock is still working as it has been well looked after. Heather Upfield, who wrote the KH book, *Timepiece*, is excited by the news, and intends to carry out more research into James Stirrat, clockmaker. We'll keep you updated on this incredible find.

WW1 memorabilia returns home



We were recently contacted by a lady in Kent, who had some medals and papers handed down from her late husband's grandfather. Sgt. Peter Edwards, born in 1890, was from Corsehillhead, Kilwinning, and before the Great War he joined the Royal Hussars and then the Royal Field Artillery. He fought throughout World War One and was discharged with exemplary conduct in 1920. His medals were: Distinguished Conduct Medal with oak leaf (DCM), 1914 Mons Star, and a British War Medal. Sgt Edwards died after the war in a flu epidemic. The collection has been donated to KH and includes an official "Mentioned in Despatches" certificate signed by Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War. Also in the donation are some beautifully hand-embroidered silk postcards sent from France to his family in Kilwinning. If any member would like to undertake some more research on this brave soldier and his war record, please contact Christine for full details.

Abbey Tower

As you will have been aware for some time, plans have been in place to carry out improvements in the Tower. North Ayrshire Council has set aside a sum of money which will cover part of the restoration. It was hoped to obtain additional funds through an application to Historic Environment Scotland. NAC engaged a specialist architect to advise and complete a funding application. This was submitted last year. However, decisions were delayed because of Covid.

We recently learned that this application was unsuccessful as there was significant competition from many other projects. Whilst this is disappointing news, the funds set aside by NAC will be used to carry out as much of the restoration as possible. We will continue to work with NAC to try to ensure that the necessary repairs and structural issues are addressed so that the people of Kilwinning can enjoy the Tower and Heritage Centre in years to come.

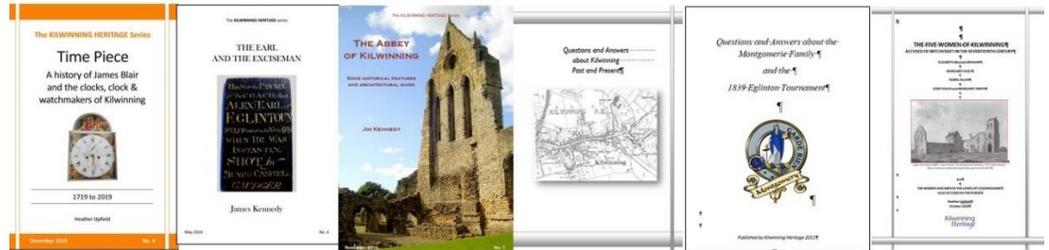
The bell tower today is owned by North Ayrshire Council and was completed in 1816. It stands on the foundations of the original medieval tower which was one of two at the western end of the Abbey's nave. This category "B" listed tower is still the location for the annual papingo shoot of the Ancient Society of Kilwinning Archers, a possibly unique archery competition held by the oldest archery organization in the world, whose records date back to 1483.

(For more information, visit our website)

Have you explored our website?

- ✓ Heritage Centre information
- ✓ History of the Abbey and the town
- ✓ Archaeology project reports
- ✓ Photo gallery
- ✓ Free downloads
- ✓ Free out-of-print books
- ✓ Free information leaflets
- ✓ News
- ✓ FAQs
- ✓ Video links

Book launch



We held a successful online launch of our latest publication *The Earl and The Exciseman* by Jim Kennedy. The sun shone on our book sale day at the Abbey Tower, and many members and local people bought books totalling over £360 in sales. We now have ten of our own publications for sale in our on-line bookshop, all written by our own members, costing from £1.50 to £12.00. If you haven't yet had a look, follow the link below. If you live locally, free delivery is available contact Christine to arrange. www.kilwinningheritage.org.uk/shop

Interactive 3D scan of Abbey Tower



We are so lucky that our Vice Chairman, Craig, has worked very hard to produce a fully interactive video scan of the inside of the Abbey Tower.

YOU can turn the camera round and look at all our exhibits without leaving home.
YOU can even go up the stairs and have a look at all 4 floors including the roof.
YOU are in charge by clicking on the circles
YOU decide where to go and what to look at.

We cannot thank Craig enough for this fantastic resource. Please have a look and let us know what you think. To see it, click on the link.

[Kilwinning Abbey \(matterport.com\)](http://Kilwinning Abbey (matterport.com))

Tower re-opening

We have taken the big step to reopen the Abbey Tower to visitors after a break of 680 days. A HUGE thank you to everyone who has contributed to the gradual re-opening. Clive, Anje, Jeni, Jim and I have worked so hard on clearing 2 years' worth of weeds and bucket-loads of sandstone dust from inside. Craig has taken care of all the arrangements and bookings and led the first group visits upstairs. We are also trying out guided tours of the Abbey grounds. (Pre-booked tours only.) As of 8th August, many restrictions will be lifted, so we hope to be able to open more fully soon. Many thanks to our wonderful Tower volunteers are making this possible at last. If you're not currently one of our volunteers, please get in touch for more information about how to help.

Other news

★ Discussions have taken place between KH, NAC and Historic Environment Scotland about replacing the outdated and badly weathered interpretation boards in the Abbey grounds. We are keen to see more attractive and informative signage.

★ Our on-line talks have proved very popular, with over 300 people tuning in over last winter, and we have built up a following from the UK and abroad. We are already beginning to think about next winter's programme, which may be a mix of in-person "live" talks and Zoom meetings. We'd love to hear from you if you have any suggestions for topics or speakers for next winter.

★ We are most grateful for the support shown by Jill McColl of North Ayrshire Council, who has guided us through Covid, and has worked hard to help us both financially and practically with advice about all sorts of issues. We hear so many criticisms about Local Authorities, but the help provided by Jill has been outstanding, and we are very appreciative. Jill has been working away behind the scenes, not only on helping us to reopen the Tower, but also on our archive project. You'll hear more about this in the next newsletter.

★ Our membership currently stands at 88, the highest number since KH started. This includes 2 members in USA and 4 in Canada. This is our tenth anniversary year, so I think we can pat ourselves on the back and say "Well done us!" Many thanks to all members for their support and encouragement.

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