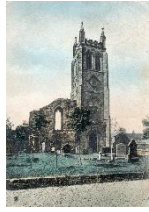


Kilwinning

Heritage News

August 2023



It's been a busy time for our Society. We hope you enjoy reading about what been happening and what's still to come this year.

The Frew Archive

The vast collection of legal documents from Hugh King, Solicitor and kindly donated by Jim Frew has been producing some fascinating work for our team of archive volunteers. Already they have cleaned and documented nearly 3,000 of the estimated 20-30 thousand documents in the collection, which is currently stored in Dreghorn Library. So far Phase 1 of the project has revealed some surprising stories about Kilwinning people and their lives. Jeni Park has been following some of these families and their businesses with forensic determination, and she plans to reveal some of the best stories later. (See **Winter Talks** below.) We are learning a lot about the status of women in Scotland in the 19th century, funeral practices, global business connections of Kilwinning people, and even blueprints for expensive yachts. Who knew that Kilwinning had so many interesting connections?

There's still plenty of opportunity for you to get involved. If you like the excitement of opening a box of papers untouched for more than 100 years, this is for you! We are currently waiting to hear the outcome of a funding bid which could take this project to the next level. If you would like to know more about the project and how you could help, contact Christine on kh.2011@hotmail.co.uk

NHS 75th anniversary



The Abbey Tower was lit up blue to mark the anniversary of the National Health Service. Thanks to Craig for arranging.

Ramblings around Kilwinning

We were pleased to welcome the Kilmarnock Ramblers in July. Nineteen visitors had guided tours of the Tower and the Abbey ruins. We will be pleased to welcome back Cunninghame Ramblers for a guided walk round the Abbey ruins on 12th September.

Visits

Members' outings have returned this summer. 16 members and friends enjoyed a visit to the stunning Dumfries House in July. We also had a lovely afternoon at Largs Museum and the Skelmorlie Aisle. The most recent outing was to Ardrossan Castle, where the group heard about the castle's history and the recent archaeological investigations there.

Jim Friels

We were very sad to hear about the death of Jim Friels, our past Treasurer and long-time supporter of the society. His many stories and his cheerful approach will be greatly missed, both by Tower volunteers and by visitors. He was delighted recently to be presented with Honorary Membership of KH. Our sympathies go to his family.

The Byres Road Story / Hidden Histories

In 2015 when an accident with a bus meant that a cottage in Byres Road had to have substantial repairs, some surprising discoveries were made. The story that emerged is now available on the North Ayrshire Heritage website blog, written by Christine Watson.

You can read it here [Accidental Discoveries - North Ayrshire Heritage \(naheritage.co.uk\)](http://naheritage.co.uk/AccidentalDiscoveries-NorthAyrshireHeritage)

On the same website, you can read a short blog by Heather Upfield on her latest research on the history of the town stretch of the River Garnock. See below.

[Hidden History of the River Garnock - North Ayrshire Heritage \(naheritage.co.uk\)](http://naheritage.co.uk/HiddenHistoryoftheRiverGarnock-NorthAyrshireHeritage)

To see the full article on the Hidden History of the River Garnock, you can read it free on our website: [hidden-history-garnock-final.pdf \(kilwinningheritage.org.uk\)](http://kilwinningheritage.org.uk/hidden-history-garnock-final.pdf)

There are a few printed copies of the article available free from the Abbey Tower.

Congratulations and a huge thanks to Heather for her hard work to once again provide us with a detailed report on another aspect of Kilwinning's history.

New design for displays

Gradually, our newly re-designed brands and displays are beginning to appear. If you've been at the Tower recently, you might have noticed the new information boards outside the door. These were needed because there are frequently visitors to the Abbey who are looking for information, even when the Tower is closed. The new boards are attractive as well as informative. We hope we'll have the exciting indoor designs to show you soon.

Another Kilwinning Longcase clock

Many thanks to Heather Upfield for the following information:



In August 2023, Kilwinning Heritage was contacted by a couple from the little town of Hudson in New York State, telling us about a longcase clock they owned. It was made by James Gibson of Kilwinning, who was known to be making clocks

in Kilwinning from around 1867 till he ceased trading in 1882. The clock came into their possession around 1998, when they purchased it from a local antique shop in Hudson, named The Irish Princess. Nothing is known of the clock's history before then. The correspondent was particularly asking for an explanation of the paintings in the four spandrels and break-arch. She was hoping they represented Mary, Queen of Scots!

It became evident that, in common with the time it was made, the spandrel illustrations represent a random woman, surrounded by imagery and symbols of the four countries of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The break-arch painting depicts a Highland Betrothal. So sadly, nothing to do with Mary, Queen of Scots, but the

owner is delighted with the information she has been given.

New exhibition

We are planning a new display of class photos from Kilwinning Junior Secondary School in the 1960s. Thanks to Hazel McGibney, a collection of 120 photos have been rescued. A trip down Memory Lane for some people . . . more details to come!

Winter Talks

Here's the programme of talks we have lined up for you this year. These are free events, and everyone is welcome.

Thursday 14th September at 7-8pm in Congregational Church Hall

[Law & Order: managing a treasure trove of 18th and 19th century legal documents](#)

Jeni Park talks about the ongoing archive work by volunteers and tells some of the fascinating stories revealed about long-passed Kilwinning residents.

Sunday 17th September (afternoon)

[Planned guided visit to Seagate Castle, Irvine.](#)

This is subject to NAC's on-going building inspection and Risk Assessment. Details to follow.

Thursday 5 October at 7-8pm in Congregational Church Hall

[Coalmasters, Collieries and Miners: the history of Kilwinning's mining past](#)

Chris Hawksworth shares his investigations into our mining past, discussing the pits, their owners, and the miners working at the coalface.

The above events are part of Scottish Archaeology Month and will be marketed nationally.

Thursday 9 November at 7pm in Congregational Church Hall

[AGM followed by Quay Moments: the changing face of Irvine and Troon harbours in the late 20th century](#)

Veronica Hartwich, KH member and volunteer cataloguer at the Scottish Maritime Museum, charts the story of these ports through this unique photo-archive. Veronica was the Curator of Collections at the museum from 1991-2002.