

Friends of Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Newsletter



Kirkcaldy Old Kirk

Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Trust

June /July 2020

Newsletter No. 61

Old Kirk Re-opening!

This week Kirkcaldy Old Kirk opens its doors to the public for the first time since March and lockdown! - on **Wednesday 1st July from 10.30am to 1pm and Friday 3rd July from 10.30am to 3pm— simply for private prayer or meditation**, not yet for public worship, gatherings or events, in line with Scottish Government rules.

If you would like to come in for a quiet time in our beautiful sanctuary, to gain inspiration from the artistry and colours of our stained glass windows or to spend a peaceful moment with your thoughts, memories and hopes after this trying time, our doors will be open and you will be welcome. You will be following in the foot-

steps of many generations whose prayers in this ancient church, through years of plague, war and economic difficulty have sustained them for the week ahead.

To keep everyone as safe as possible, we ask that you use the hand sanitiser on entry and leaving, and follow the hygiene and distancing procedures in place.

We hope to continue with this next week and subject to further Government review, to open on Fridays and Saturdays from 17th July for visitors to our summer exhibition on "Stories From Stones" between 10.30am and 3pm. If the weather is kind, we will also be offering guided tours outside in the graveyard, telling some of the stories of those who have lived here in

Kirkcaldy and now are at rest in the graveyard - the butler who made his fortune from a beached



whale; the opponents in the last fatal duel in Scotland; the man with a sum on his tombstone who set up schools for poor children.

We know many folk are

longing to hear live music again and the first concerts, once we reach Phase 3, might be organ recitals and ones with solo/duet performers and a smaller socially distanced audience. We have plenty room in the Old Kirk to distance people safely. Just watch for further announcements.

The rainbow is the sign of hope, sun shining through rain, the sign of God's promise to Noah after the Flood that the seasons and the cycle of life would always remain, and now in the face of Covid-19, children's displays of hope and colour to lift spirits. We put one in the Old Kirk flowerbeds to remind passers-by of hope and God's promise.

Virtual Walks

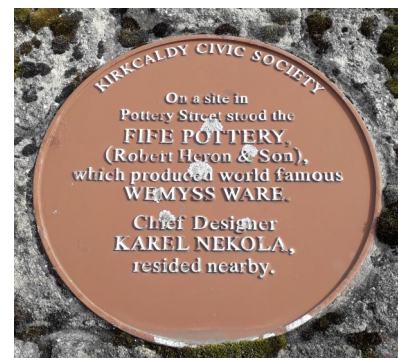
Two activities that have become popular during lockdown have been using social media, computers and television inside and walking (and cycling) for exercise outside.

Walking together in a group, however, has

not been possible, so Kirkcaldy Civic Society has taken its heritage walks around the town indoors and online!

See the virtual Gallatown & Sinclairtown Walkabout at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=W7rSJ3STpZQ&feature=emb_logo and the latest High Street one at <https://t.co/9zE0QLPUM7?amp=1>

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Civic Conversation in the *Fife Free Press*

**Civic Conversation :
Contribution by
Rosemary Potter, Chair-
person,
Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Trust**

Folk entering Kirkcaldy Old Kirk for the first time often exclaim: "It's like a Tardis!" Usually this means they are surprised by the bright, airy space inside, unexpected from the grey stone exterior they have passed by.

But perhaps it is also about recognising the Old Kirk as a part of Kirkcaldy's timeline, a central point for travelling back and forward in time, for remembrance of the past, enjoyment of the present and hope for the future, always against a backcloth of eternity.

What will the future of Kirkcaldy look like after coronavirus lockdown? I don't know the whole answer, but I can say that as Kirkcaldy Old Kirk has survived plague, fire and wars, and now coronavirus, it will be part of that future. It will adapt to meet the new situation as it has in each generation through its thousand years of Christian worship and community service in the town.

Over centuries, the Old Kirk's tower has looked over a busy, working, town from a mediaeval harbour that sent sailors to trade

across Northern Europe and the Baltic, returning with goods for a bustling market place on the High Street. From the parapet walkway at the top of the tower you can see the growth of Kirkcaldy as industry developed and flourished with the arrival of the railway, till the town disappeared over the inland horizon in the 20th century. Kirkcaldy has a heritage to be proud of – but it was built on the

This article was written as part of the series in the Fife Free Press about the future of Kirkcaldy Town Centre after Covid-19.

people who made it happen. People with ideas, like Adam Smith, who was baptised in the Old Kirk as an infant, people with new products, like Michael Nairn and linoleum, people with vision, like Rev. John Campbell who supported women's right to vote in the 1900s, people of hard work like the weavers, sailors and factory workers buried in the graveyard.

Going forward from lockdown we can all appreciate the advantages of digital connections we have experienced over the past few weeks. Inevitably that will play a bigger part than ever in the days ahead. In the Old Kirk too there are plans to enhance some of the heritage offering to

local people and visitors by state-of-the-art interactive digital reconstructions of its history. These are part of the Tower Restoration Project planned for 2021. There will be workshops in some of the digital technology for older students and local interested individuals.

And our AGM this year may have to be a Zoom meeting!

However some of us are all Zoomed out! One of the other lessons from the coronavirus lockdown has been just how important other people are to us. Relationships and social interaction face-to-face are now being taken seriously and talked about at highest levels as essential components for our welfare and good mental health at individual and community level. Love, kindness, compassion and sharing have been demonstrated in this crisis and surely must be built into our future community life if it is to thrive. These are values which are also fundamental to true Christian faith and therefore as church, as community venue and as heritage conservator, the Old Kirk will be looking to engage with people, and serve community needs on personal, group and community levels.

Face-to-face interactions

will of course have to follow the phases of the Government guidelines, but we plan to offer some access to the Old Kirk’s heritage in the summer, be it by guided tours of the graveyard outside to restricted groups or by digital recording of our exhibition on “Stories from Stones”. For “Doors Open Day” in September we will be open to restricted numbers at any one time or if that is not possible, by online tour.

Our support groups and our worship groups may have to wait longer to be allowed to meet again as togetherness and companionship is key to their meetings. This is true also of our orchestra friends and choirs, who need to blend their music in a group – but there is nothing to compare in the best recording with the great experience of live music! So we look forward patiently to the return of these larger musical events in time.

However we have a big space in the Old Kirk and social distancing is not a problem for some of the smaller events with one or two performers. We envisage these and the

return of our interrupted Organ Recital Series as being among the first of our reintroduced musical events, possibly in the autumn in Phase 3.

We hope too to offer in time a place for people to remember those loved ones they could not gather to share memories of during lockdown. Previous years have seen Memorial Services for those of faith and of no faith held by individuals and by the NHS in the Old Kirk. Meantime we can hold a memorial record of a loved one for anyone wishing to send it to us.

Further ahead, in Spring 2021 we hope to see the Tower Restoration Project start. As reported recently in the Fife Free Press, the building project is with the Planning Department for consents just now, and will see the 15th century tower with its 1553 bell and iconic clock repaired and refurbished. We are currently trying to raise the necessary funding to match a National Lottery Heritage Grant, seeking this investment to bring jobs to town, with training oppor-

tunities in building conservation fields.

A Volunteer Co-ordinator will be sought as soon as lockdown measures permit and anyone self-employed with the necessary experience is encouraged to contact Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Trust. This part-time role will be instrumental in providing training to potential volunteers to learn new skills, participate in this community venture and encourage more visitors. We want to connect local people with their heritage and invite more tourists to the town centre to spend a day or a weekend, viewing Kirkcaldy’s rich heritage.

People will be the future of this venture, volunteering as guides to the tower, a volunteer handyman, researchers for our exhibitions, social media communicators, a book-keeper.

Kirkcaldy is a community built on people of enterprise and hard work. It is people that will forge the future shape of the town – and the Old Kirk will play its part in that future.

Picture Diary

May Morning 6am 2020—David Potter kept the tradition of singing up the tower



Early June – sun, blue skies and blue Californian lilac!!



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**maintaining Kirkcaldy's
heritage for the community**



Tower Restoration

During lockdown we have been proceeding with the Tower Restoration Project as best we can in online meetings, emails and phone calls. This involves

- ◆ Making grant applications for the remainder of the £480,000 required—no mean task!
- ◆ Planning for the Activities we hope to provide for the community in volunteering, training, interactive digital exploration of history, and tours of the site.
- ◆ Compiling reports on how we will interpret the history of the Old Kirk and Kirkcaldy for visitors, children and young people; on the Business Plan; on how we plan to maintain the building after restoration; and what we plan to do to restore the building
- ◆ Studying the drawings and cost plan drawn up by the Design Team of the Architect and Quantity Surveyor to ensure the best use of the money spent and the greatest benefit for the town
- ◆ Collating tests and survey information to inform the construction when it goes onsite.

All the activity is aiming for a start to the project in Spring next year.

Busy Birds and Bees in the Downie Backyard!

In the early days of the Downie Lounge, Sandy Thomson, an elder of the Old Kirk, created a little garden out of the small back courtyard at the fire exit outside, where retired members could sit.

Sandy has long since passed on and the garden has become overgrown and wild. However, interest in recreating it as a garden courtyard at the back of his coffee shop has been rekindled in Ross Anderson and together we have set about the task.

Imagine our surprise then when we discovered that far from being a nature wilderness, the little area had become a nesting site for a diligent mother pigeon, sitting so still that only when her



unblinking eye came into focus did we see that she was there, camouflaged against the ivy. We cannot disturb her at this crucial time.

In another corner a sudden flurry of bumble bees told us we had blocked their nest entrance but soon it was found again and all was quiet.

Nature finds a way to colonise the wildest corners!

ANNE MANSON

It is with sadness that we record here the recent sudden death of Anne Manson on 25th June.

Anne was a long time member of Kirkcaldy Old Kirk and her father was an elder before her. She was a Sunday School teacher for many years and I remember many Sunday School picnics and outings with Anne and her family, Neil, Eric and Judith.

Les, Anne's husband, died some years ago.

Anne was a cheerful member of the Downie Coffee Ladies and will undoubtedly be missed when these gatherings restart.

We send her family our thoughts and prayers at this time.