



Friends of Kirkcaldy Old Kirk

Newsletter No. 63

Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Trust

September 2020

Doors Open Days: 12th and 13th September

If you passed the Old Kirk at a weekend recently, you might have seen the door standing open to the public to come inside and have a look.

Now our summer is changing into autumn, we finish our Open Church season with the usual Doors Open Day on **Sunday 13th September 12.30pm –3pm (last entry)**

Except this is not the usual Doors Open Day, just as this has not been a normal Summer! There will be just the same welcome if you come along to view our Stories From Stones exhibition—including the plans for the Tower Restoration we hope will start next

Guided Tours on Doors Open Days

As well as visiting the Old Kirk itself, we will be offering an outdoor heritage walk on each of the two **Doors Open Days at 2pm** with guides to tell you about Adam Smith's Kirkcaldy on Saturday and "Stories from Stones" of the graveyard on Sunday.

These tours can be booked in advance with up to 7 places available.

Spring.

But if a number of people come at the same time, you may have to wait your turn to see a particular display board or climb up the tower, as you must stay 2 metres apart from other visitors at all times.

The Old Kirk has plenty of space to do that easily but in the more restricted area of the tower, for guided tours to the top of the parapet walkway, we ask you to wear your face



The Old Kirk from the East Gate

covering, and disposable gloves (supplied) to keep touchpoints safe for all. Only 2 individuals or a family group can go up at the same time but tower tours can be booked in advance at 01592 265499.

To give more time to make your visit, the Old Kirk will be open also on **Saturday 12th September 10am–3pm (last entry)**

We hope Kirkcaldy folk and visitors will take this last chance in the year to visit the Open Church and tower. Many other venues which might have been open are not doing so this year and instead are doing virtual tours online. You can find them on <https://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/>

The Old Kirk is online too with a 360° tour at <http://www.kirkcaldyoldkirktrust.org.uk/>

We thought it important however to be physically open to our community if we can be safely, and so we ask you to come along at the weekend and be inspired by the beauty and history of your heritage—but stay safe and act sensibly!

Kirkcaldy Old Kirk



Historic church open to visitors

Guided Tours 2020

Leaving from Tower Door

**"Stories from Stones"
Graveyard Tour 2pm Sunday 13th
September**

**"Adam Smith & Enlightenment
Kirkcaldy"
2pm Saturday 12th September**

MAXIMUM OF 7 IN EACH GROUP
PLEASE OBSERVE 2-METRE SOCIAL
DISTANCING AT ALL TIMES

Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Trust is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated in Scotland with registered no. 38720, registered charity SC042128
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September is SAM!

September is Scottish Archaeology Month (SAM). It has existed for more than 20 years and along with Doors Open Days, coordinated by the Scottish Civic Trust, constitutes Scotland's contribution to the European Heritage Days.

This week in September 2020 we had our own wee bit of an archaeological dig at the Old Kirk! The structural engineers on the Tower Restoration Project had commissioned some trial pits around the base of the tower to investigate the depth of the foundations and the nature of the ground on which they stand.

Because the graveyard is an important historical site and also a place of human remains to be treated with due respect, an archaeologist was engaged to come and dig the pits. Peter Klemen spent two days neatly digging down to the sand base, discovering a couple of shards of pottery and the bones of some of our Kirkcaldy ancestors under the path and flower border, and recording his findings, before reburying the human remains and filling the pits in again.

The engineers inspected the open pits and viewed the depth of the



Bones from our Kirkcaldy ancestors were found and reburied in the graveyard.

foundations. They were satisfied with the reports and you would be hard put to find the place now where Peter has dug, so neatly is it filled in.

Yet it is strange to look on the bones of someone just like us who walked into the Old Kirk perhaps 600 years ago. Were they anxious about the plague in their day?! Was there special significance in burying them at the door of the 15th century tower? Of course Peter carefully reburied the bones where they belong so the person from our past community is back at rest among us in the Kirkyard.

Onwards and Upwards!

The Old Kirk Tower has had a testing time lately with a deluge from 11th August's thunderstorms that flooded it like so many parts of the town. 55 litres of water came through the roof into the buckets and lots more on to the tarpaulins everywhere—all in little more than 3 hours!



This was followed by another downpour a couple of weeks later that soaked it again.

However this served to make the point to grant funders and visitors that repairs to the roof, windows and stonework are now needed if the tower is not to be closed to access soon.

Meantime the Design Team and Old Kirk Trustees have been working hard on the Tower Restoration Project. We have secured the promise of £50,000 from Fife Environment Trust towards the tower restoration

and have submitted a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Trust.

Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent have been granted for the project and tenders invited and submitted for the building work. A contractor is about to be appointed and if all goes well and all the money is secured by the end of the year, the restoration should start in Spring 2020.

As part of the restoration, the clock, which is not keeping good time just now, will be repaired and refurbished too. It seems it is a struggle for the minute hand to move uphill to the hour but when it does, it falls forward to catch up! One thing is true, time does not stand still!

In applying for funds, I was reading some of the history of the clock recently. It seems there is mention of the tower

clock in a Session minute of 3 August 1708 agreeing to pay Francis Henderson £20 Scots to paint the 'dyall of the kirk clock'. In 1857 however there was a report of the clock falling off the tower!

As part of the existing funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund, Heritage Fund and Kirkcaldy Common Good Fund, the Old Kirk is currently advertising for a Volunteer Coordinator for an initial 127 hours to set up the volunteer recruitment and support scheme. It is hoped this would then lead into the 37 hours a month job next year for 12 months. If you are interested and have experience of recruiting and supervising volunteers, please contact Rosemary Potter overleaf.

Langtoun Jazz and Music in the Old Kirk

At the Old Kirk we have been privileged to have some live music from our regular organist Norman Milne as he puts the organ through its paces while the Kirk is open.

However the Old Kirk was hopeful that soon we would hear more! The Old Kirk is ready to start back with a programme of live music when the Scottish Government gives the go-ahead. We have all the hygiene measures in place. We have a plan to ensure social distancing in our spacious auditorium which could accommodate 60-70 people safely with prior booking. Today it looks like that may be a few weeks off yet but we look forward to whenever

we can safely, with minimal risk for all, enjoy live music again.

Grace Black of Langtoun Jazz has been encouraged by the public interest in coming to such a concert, and is hopeful of staging a jazz event in the Old Kirk in October if Government regulations allow then, with Rose Room, "the most popular jazz quartet in Fife."

In the meantime she is looking at what "tasters" she can give folk online to whet their appetite!

We too have the promise of more musical treats online—so watch this space!



"Music is what has kept me going in lockdownso many people are longing to experience live music again!"

Grace Black

Action Earth In On The Secret!

Do you recognise this corner of Kirk Wynd? Probably not, as it has had a recent transformation into the "Secret Garden"!

This open door leads out from the Downie Lounge to a sheltered spot to sit beside the mirrored garden, which you can also access from Anderson's Coffee Shop through the back, ordering a coffee, ice-cream or snack on the way!

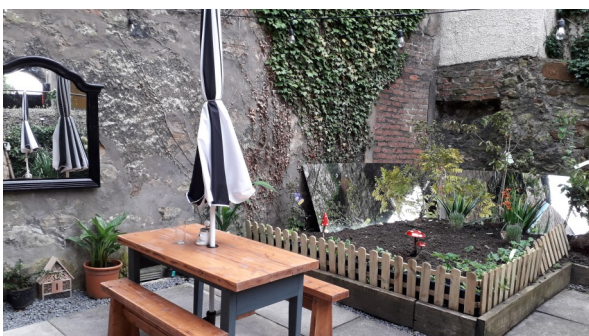


Ross Anderson and his friends have been responsible for a lot of the hard work of transforming the overgrown neglected space. However this is a work in progress and volunteers to help here—and with the Kirkyard borders across the road — are welcome.

We are delighted that Action Earth Volunteering Matters has donated £200 for resources to make this corner of the natural world

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a
garden
Than anywhere else on earth.

Dorothy Frances Gurney



an environment for people to enjoy and birds, plants and insects to thrive. With the threat of Climate Change, growing more vegetables and encouraging green spaces is vital.

If you can help by volunteering some time to help with the garden, please contact the Old Kirk office on 01592 265499, or speak to Ross in the shop at 27 Kirk Wynd.



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maintaining Kirkcaldy's heritage for the community



News in Brief

- The Auld Kirk Players are the oldest amateur dramatic group in Kirkcaldy—but they are adapting to new forms for safe viewing of their work. Unsure whether they can present their stage play in November by Auld Kirk Player Graeme Ferguson, on Lillas Adie, the self-confessed “witch” from Torryburn, the AKPs are making it into a film, to be shown when permitted. Watch out for it!
- The Quakers have moved into the Old Kirk itself meantime for easier social distancing at their services. These take place at 10.30am on the second, fourth (and fifth in a 5-week month) Sundays in the month. All are welcome.
- Recent enquiries were made about the Highland Cycling Battalion. This was a volunteer bicycle infantry battalion, which in August 1914 was based in the Drill Halls built by John Hunter in Hunter Street. They were at one stage part of the Black Watch and were used in work on signals, scouting and the like.

Frances Macdonald

Frances Macdonald, who died at the beginning of August this year, was almost 100 years old, a warm, feisty, Irish lady with a chuckle that emanated from a fine sense of humour.

Frances was a stalwart member of Kirkcaldy Old Kirk, and during the years of her faithful attendance there, she knew 3 Ministers of the Old Kirk—Mr. Ferrie, Mr. Sim and Mr. Ferguson. Frances had inherited strong views of how Ministers and church members should behave from her early childhood in her beloved Church of Ireland and was not slow to criticize or use her pungent wit when she felt any had departed from these high standards. Frances was

never reconciled to the fraught Union imposed on the Old Kirk in 2000 and made her views vocally plain! She worshipped for a while with St. Peter's Episcopal Church congregation but missed the familiar words of the responses of her Irish childhood.

Amongst her friends in the Downie Lounge, Frances was in her element and I remember her there, happy, laughing, joining in the conversation. Another good memory is of her warmth and hospitality to me as a visitor in her own home, with the great affection she showed for her family, and appreciation of Duncan and Jenny's daily care of her.

I never knew Frances well before her husband died in 1973 but I will always



remember her in her later years as a generous, warm, kind and humorous person with whom it was a pleasure to be in company, and a faithful member of the Old Kirk. Several years ago, Frances was very concerned to ensure her funeral would be in the Old Kirk, with Ian Ogilvie playing the organ, and it was a privilege to make that happen for her. She feels to be at home there.
