



## Winter 2024 Newsletter

As the winter weather seems to have arrived with a blast, we're happy to share with you the work of the Trust over the past few months.

The Wigtown Spring Weekend was well attended and Elaine and I had a good audience for 'Gallivanting Around Galloway' a talk that linked history, tradition, landscape, literature and people across the region. We were also lucky enough to be introduced to author Lynne McEwan in The Old Bank Bookshop in Wigtown. Lynne's series of crime novels are set in Galloway and she came along to our talk!



Elaine, Lynne and Julia



Tom, Lachlan and Elaine

Committee members of the Trust attended Stranraer Academy's awards ceremonies in June donating prizes of our books and money to top history students.

Former Stranraer Academy pupil, Lachlan Ross, was this year's recipient of the Trust annual bursary award. Lachlan is studying at Strathclyde University for a combined degree in history, politics and social policy.



The Marriage Stone from 1672

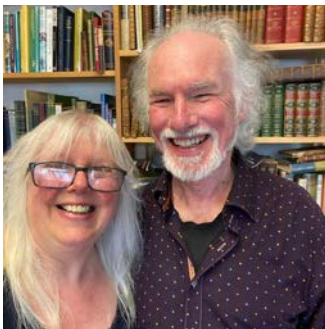
In June the mystery surrounding stones we donated to the Museum during the refurbishment of their building appeared on display with some of the history attached. The stones were



known to have been in a house in McCulloch Place – where Morrisons car park is now in Stranraer. Their demise was noted in our publication *The Magic of a Name*. However, the stones appeared for sale more than half a century later and the Trust purchased and donated them. The marriage stone commemorates the union between Patrick MacDowall of Freugh, his initials with the MacDowall coat of arms (lion rampant) and Barbara Fullarton, her initials with the Fullarton coat of arms (three otter heads), who were married in 1662. Their home was Balzieland Castle, the ruins of which can be seen in Logan Botanical Gardens. The stone is dated 1672 which is when it may have been added to the castle. How it ended up in a small cottage as a lintel in the town, vanished and then appeared again we'll perhaps never know.

On 4<sup>th</sup> October as a fundraiser for Ardwell Kirk Trust, Elaine and I once again took another virtual tour of Galloway, linking past culture, accents and tradition locally to a very welcoming audience. The talk was once again supported with photographs from the Nelson-MacDonald Collection.

In September we congratulated Joyce and Ian Cochrane on 20 years in business running the Old Bank Bookshop. From the beginning they have been great friends and supporters of the Trust and our authors. They stock all our current titles and are one of the few places where you might find some of our early titles that even we don't have.



Joyce and Ian Cochrane



Table at the Oyster Festival

In October we were in the Eco Tent at the Oyster Festival, highlighting the work we do. We had a number of the postcard albums from the Nelson-MacDonald Collection for people to browse through. Hopefully we may gain some further interest and membership from that. Elaine was invited once again to give a talk at the Festival which was very well attended.

Earlier this year the *MV Princess Victoria* Memorial Group was formed. The purpose of the group is to preserve the memory of the 1953 *MV Princess Victoria* disaster. This is mainly achieved in the form of the annual memorial service on 31st January. The annual service has previously been organised by the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (The Buffs), who have retired from this duty and the new group was formed to work with Dumfries and Galloway Council towards maintaining awareness of the disaster. The Trust along with representatives from other local organisations forms the group membership. Representatives include those from the Merchant Navy, the Council, RNLI, Coastguard, Royal British Legion Society, KOSB,



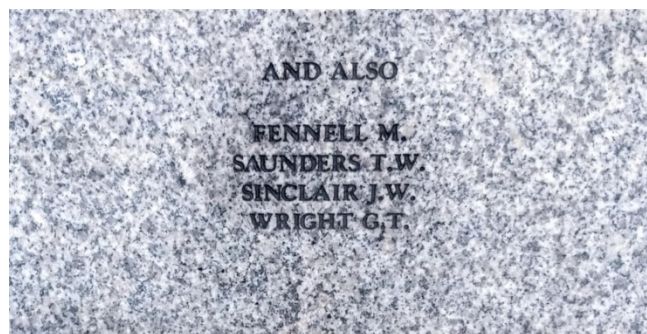
## STRANRAER AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY TRUST

Millennium Centre, Stena, P&O, Stranraer Parish Church minister and those representing relatives of the tragedy.

The group noted that the piece of granite at the bottom of the main Memorial which was laid in 2018 and bears the names: SAUNDERS T.W. & WRIGHT G.T. was almost illegible and it was felt that some restoration work needed to be done.



David Hume, the historian from East Antrim Council, contacted Elaine to tell her that there were a further two names of people who were lost on the *Princess Victoria* but their names do not appear on our memorial. They are FENNELL M. and SINCLAIR J.W. Elaine was provided with the provenance by David to prove that these individuals were definitely aboard and were lost. SINCLAIR J.W. was added to the Larne Memorial last year. He was omitted from the original list because there was another passenger with the same surname and it was thought for years that there was only one person with the surname Sinclair. Mary Fennell is being added to the Larne Memorial in time for January 31st 2025.



The History Trust liaised with Stuart McNeil and his colleagues and arranged to have the stone at the Stranraer Memorial removed, re-lettered and replaced. We are grateful to Stuart for his important restoration work on the stone and its prompt return.

Elaine has been invited to Larne in January to give a talk on the *MV Princess Victoria*, from the Stranraer perspective and to lay a wreath at the Larne Memorial.

Our next publication isn't quite ready for release. Keep your eyes peeled for the launch date of *Stranraer Suffragist Storms Scotland* by Margie Ferguson and Pam McMillan. The book is



## STRANRAER AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY TRUST

meticulously researched and is a remarkable story that really does need told. We can barely wait to see it in print!

I couldn't end the newsletter without mentioning that the Trust is deeply saddened by death of our friend Eric Wison. Eric was a dedicated Committee member from the outset of the Trust in 1998. Before he retired Eric had been head of music at Stranraer Academy and Music Advisor for Dumfries and Galloway. He organised the annual Music Festival and was Musical Director for the Operatic Society. He played organ at St Ninians Church and was resident pianist at North West Castle and a past President of the Rotary Club of Stranraer. As a Committee member of the Trust, he and Christine hosted committee meetings at their home. Eric took charge of the Audio Section, recording oral histories and memories of local people. These important recordings capture and preserve the Galloway Irish accent, Scots words and the culture and changing times of our local area. The significance of this work was recognised by the Ethnological Department of Edinburgh University with a book, *Stranraer Lives* which contains extracts from these recordings. Our sympathy goes out to Christine, his sons Robbie and Andrew and his grandchildren Fergus, Hazel and Oscar.



Thank you for your ongoing support

*Julia MacDonald*