STRANRAER AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY TRUST

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Winter 2025 Newsletter.

Winter has arrived almost overnight. Between sudden squalls, sunshine breaks though, lighting the hills around the loch like a Norman Wilkinson railway poster. We welcome you to the winter newsletter to share the latest stories from the Trust.

Elaine, Tom and I were delighted once again to attend Stranraer Academy Awards evenings and present prizes to top History pupils from each year.

Two former Stranraer Academy pupils were this year's recipients of our annual bursary award. Both girls were presented with a cheque and a selection of the Trust's publications. Iona Ferries-Anderson secured a place at the University of Glasgow to study History, Theology and Religion whilst Georgina Lane is off to study Law and History at the University of Aberdeen.



Left: Georgina Lane, Elaine Barton and Iona Ferries-Anderson at Stranraer Academy's Award Ceremony.

Below: Elaine Barton, Iona Ferries-Anderson Tom Stevenson.



In July, we were delighted to celebrate with Margie Ferguson and Pam Macmillan, authors of *Stranraer Suffragist Storms Scotland*. At the Stranraer Agricultural Show they met MSP Emma Harper, who presented them with a framed copy of the motion she had raised in the Scottish Parliament in recognition of their work.



Margie Ferguson, Emma Harper, Pam Macmillan and Elaine Barton

Almost forty veterans from the Mid and East Antrim Council Veterans' Programme recently visited the Rhins of Galloway, led by historian Dr David Hume MBE. Their tour included Stranraer Museum, the Mull of Galloway lighthouse and Portpatrick RNLI station, before concluding at the MV *Princess Victoria* memorial in Stranraer. Elaine acted as historical tour guide for the day.



At the memorial, wreaths were laid by Dougie Bennett and Irene Beattie, both of whom lost relatives in the 1953 disaster. Dougie's uncle was Lt Commander Douglas Bilney of the Royal Navy. He was en route to accept command of the Royal Naval base at Eglinton, County Londonderry at the time of the disaster. He was lost along with his wife Rebecca (Ruby) Bilney who was travelling with him.

Irene's great uncle was William (Billy) Parker who was a second steward on the ship. He was a native of Castle Kennedy but had lived in Larne for about 12 years. Billy was only 35 years of age and married with three children. During WW2 Billy had served on the *Princess Maud* at Dunkirk and at the Normandy invasion.

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In September Elaine gave a talk to the Better Lives group at the College on the history of Lochryan and presented them each with a copy of *Stranraer in WW2* by Archie Bell. Later that month Elaine and I spoke at the Oyster Festival to a full house. We spoke about the close connections to the Loch and the sea – and even managed to sell a few copies of *U-Boat: Shipping Losses Along the Wigtownshire Coast in WW1*. This month I gave a talk to the Rotary on history related to farmer owned creameries in the area.



This month we've launched the updated Town Trail Guide and Map and thank Stranraer Development Trust for hosting us and keeping a stock of the leaflets. The guide is also available in the Museum, Library , North West Castle, and Driftwood Café. It offers a heritage trail which can be extended for those who would like a longer walk. The first two people to pick up a copy were visitors from Moncton, New Brunswick in Nova Scotia who were tracing their Agnew ancestors who once lived in King Street.





Left: Elaine, Carolyn Mears from Stranraer Development Trust and Julia launch the leaflet. *Right:* Scott Agnew and Stephanie Craig are the first to pick up a copy of the Town Trail .

Finally, we feel very privileged to become the new custodians of Jack Hunter's much loved collection of Galloway books. Jack's children Fraser and Lindsey, have entrusted us with this treasure and we are so grateful to them for allowing us to care for it.

It will take us a fair bit of time to sort and catalogue everything, as it's a comprehensive collection, but we will share a list of titles on our website, along with suggestions of where readers might still be able to find copies for themselves. We will feature extracts of some of the books along with highlighting some of the rarer pamphlets so that Jack's passion for Galloway's history can continue to be shared with others.

Thank you for your ongoing support

Julia MacDonald

Honorary Secretary