



The Voice

Queensferry Heritage Trust

March 2018

WANTED

(in the nicest possible way)

New committee members

The Queensferry Heritage trust is heading towards it's fourth AGM which will be held on **26 April 2018**. With the exception of two new members, elected at the second AGM, the committee has remained the same since year one. Membership and attendance at our public meetings and other activities indicates we are healthy and have made a good start. However we need new faces and fresh ideas to drive the Trust forward.

Apart from planning and running our own programme we endeavour to play our part in the wider community through participation on the Queensferry and District Community Council and other organisations such as the Forth Bridge Forum and the Forth Bridges Tourism Marketing Project. In addition we are regularly consulted on matters relating to planning and development within the Queensferry Conservation Area. This we welcome in the belief that heritage not only relates to what we have inherited but also to ensuring that what we do in the present is of a quality that leaves a good heritage legacy for future generations.

We are full of good ideas but we need your imagination and fresh ideas to add to these and bring them to fruition.

As members you will soon receive a formal calling notice for the AGM. In the mean time it would be good if you could think of nominating new names for committee membership or indeed volunteering yourself.

Also, Eleanor has given notice that she will be standing down as Honorary Secretary. We will miss the invaluable service she has given, well over and above that implied by the simple "job" title. Be aware we are on the hunt for a new Secretary!

I would be glad to hear from you with your ideas for new committee members.

John Murphy (Chair) E-mail: artsmurphy@hotmail.com

Next Talk : Thursday, 15th March

Geoffrey Stell. Defending the Forth, 1296-1660

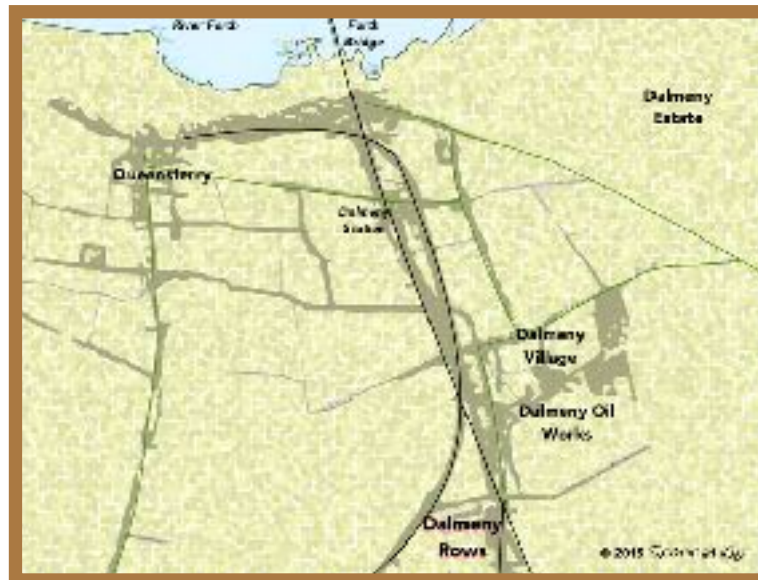
In 1304 King Edward I of England almost sealed the conquest of Scotland with a programme of castle-building in the Forth valley, closely akin to the manner in which he had recently and effectively consolidated his military grip on North Wales. His plans never materialised but with his ruthless acuity Edward had demonstrated that the River Forth was a vulnerable artery leading directly into the heart of the northern kingdom, and from his time onwards, the Forth always remained in the front line of intermittent Anglo-Scottish maritime conflict, particularly after the loss of Berwick in 1482 and during the 'Wars of the Rough Wooing' in the 1540s. Like Edward I, Oliver Cromwell and his generals also later recognised that the Forth was strategically vital to the conquest of Scotland in 1650-1.

By the later 15th century major strongholds around the Forth had come to be regarded as the 'keys of the kingdom' and were among the first in Scotland to witness heavy investment in early artillery defences. On the other hand, as elsewhere across Scotland, the surviving architecture of most late medieval castles and towers in this same riparian region point more to the everyday habits and lifestyles of peace than to the occasional demands of war, kitchens and halls clearly being every bit as important as battlements and curtain walls. In the first phase of dynastic union between 1603 and the outbreak of war again in 1637 buildings, commerce and industry around the Forth also appear to have benefited from a temporary 'peace dividend'.

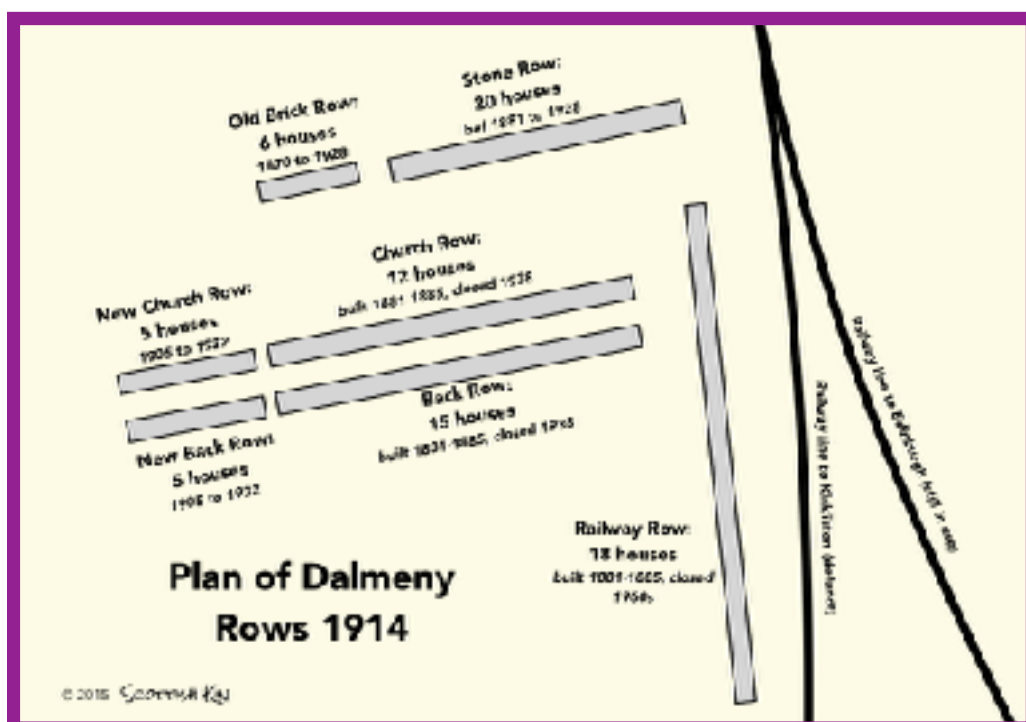
Dalmeny Shale Mining

February's talk by Dr Robin Chester on Shale Mining in Dalmeny welcomed a number of new members. One of them, Alex Porteous who started working in the shale mining industry when he was fifteen was able to share a number of very interesting memories about what it was actually like. He started on what's known as "the ham and egg" shift. At fifteen he enjoyed jumping on the hutches which winched the shale up from the area where it was being collected and going back down in the bogeys which transported the pit props. He remembers the pit props were man-handled into place and the men who carried out this job had hands stained with resin. One of the more dangerous jobs was to use a heavy steel rod called a "snivel" to put a brake on the back wheels of the hutches. The shale was taken by a small train called a pug to the refinery which was on the site of the primary school.

Between 1871 and 1926 Dalmeny was part of the rapid growth of the shale oil industry which at its peak 1912 -14 employed up to 10,000 men and accounted for 2% of the world's oil production.



The Dalmeny oil Company which was formed in 1871 built houses to accommodate some of the shale miners. These houses were called the Dalmeny Rows or “Raws” and were situated in the field opposite the water tanks on the road from Dalmeny to Kirkliston.



There were 7 individual “rows” of houses, built at different times between 1870 and 1905. Following the closure of the Dalmeny works in June 1926. Old Brick Row and Stone Row were demolished shortly afterwards. New Church Row and New Back Row followed in 1932, and Church Row and Back Row in 1938. Railway Row was taken over by West Lothian Council in 1934 and survived until the 1960s. A “two-room” house consisted of the kitchen and one other room, with box beds in each room. Three to four children to a box bed was normal. Each house had a “dry” or “pail” closet and water was supplied by communal stand-pipes. Many families took in boarders and there could be up to 14 people living in one two-room cottage. There was open channel drainage and in wet weather the surroundings were very dirty. Yet these properties were considered better than those in many coal-mining villages and at least met the minimum standards which had been introduced by the time they were built

THE PEOPLE OF The DALMENY ROWS



This was a community of migrant workers with 95% of the adults born outside the local area, the majority coming from other shale or traditionally coal-mining areas, such as Lanarkshire or Ayrshire. Most stayed in the Dalmeny Rows for less than five years, and nearly half of

households stayed for only one year. It was also a young community, and the 1911 census showed half of the Dalmeny Rows population were aged under 15. Shale miners were generally contractors paid on a tonnage basis to extract the oil-shale using explosives. They employed drawers (often their sons) to take the shale to the surface in the hutches which the young Alex enjoyed stealing a ride on. These hutches were hand packed , the men who packed them placed large pieces of shale around the outside to act as a barrier and then put smaller pieces inside. The oil works used retorts to heat the shale to release the crude oil, employing specialist craftsmen (such as blacksmiths) in addition to the retortmen.

Bridge Logo



AGM Thursday 26 April

