



The Voice

Queensferry Heritage Trust

February 2017



Queen Margaret and pilgrimage

Margaret, sister of Edgar Atheling of England though born in exile in Hungary, came to Scotland in flight from the Normans after the invasion of 1066. It seems Scotland wasn't her intended destination, but a storm blew her ship onto the north shore of the Forth, the supposed landing place commemorated by the name St Margaret's Hope. In 1070 she married Malcolm III and spent the rest of her life dedicated to religious reform, which involved bringing Christianity in Scotland more in line with Rome. She was also the mother of seven children, three of whom – Edgar, Alexander I and David I – became Kings of Scots.

Among her pious activities was the establishing of a ferry across the Forth for pilgrims making their way to St Andrews. Pilgrimage to several destinations in Scotland was a common undertaking in the Middle Ages, as it was believed to lead to salvation. The ferry was free for bona fide pilgrims, identified by their dress and their pilgrim badges. Margaret also set up hostels on either side of the Forth, where the staff were instructed 'to wait upon the pilgrims with great care'. Iona was another destination for pilgrims, and it was Margaret who was responsible for the restoration of Iona Abbey.

Margaret died in Edinburgh in 1093, was buried in Dunfermline Abbey, and canonised in 1250. After her death, Dunfermline also became a place of pilgrimage. At the time of the Reformation her relics were dispersed, and her head came into the possession of Mary, Queen of Scots. It eventually ended up with the Jesuits who presided over the Scottish College in Douai, France but was subsequently lost. The quest for St Margaret's head might be a project to rival that of the unearthing of the body of Richard III.

The Pilgrim's Cross

Before the Reformation, one of the pilgrimages made in Scotland was to Dunfermline Abbey, to worship at the shrine of St Margaret.

The remains of the Pilgrim's Cross can still be seen about a mile from South Queensferry, on the south side of the Edinburgh road, near the Leuchold Gate on the summit of the rock, through which the road has been cut.



The site has retained the name of Crossall Hill and it is commonly assumed that the cross marked the spot where the first sight of Dunfermline, previous to the trees being planted, would be had by a pilgrim. The cross was demolished after the change of religion.

The upper part of the shaft of the cross has been broken off, and only the socket stone remains.

It measures 3 & 1/2 by 3 & 1/4 feet. It is roughly bevelled and in its centre is a 15 inch square socket, 10 inches deep. The stone is embedded in a modern sandstone base, 5 & 1/4 inch square. In the socket there is a loose stone which does not appear to have formed part of the original monument.



The lower part, about a foot in height, still remains in the centre of the old stone pedestal, which is between three and four feet square. For security it has recently been surrounded by four new stones, fastened together with iron.

Queensferry Crossing

From 11th century crossing of The Forth to 21st century.



February 3rd was an important day for Bridge workers when the last section of the bridge was lifted into place marking the completion of the 1.7mile deck span between Edinburgh and Fife. The deck-lifting started in 2015 and the 122 segments have now been put into place.

The bridge is presently being fitted with baffle barriers across its length to break up and deflect gusts of wind. This should almost entirely eliminate the need for closures because of high winds.

It is still advised that the Bridge, weather permitting, will be completed by May

Forth Road Bridge



Transport Scotland is advertising for a suitable contractor to undertake a £9million programme of work to replace the expansion joints on the Road Bridge. It is envisaged that this work which was deferred from 2010 because of the disruption it would cause will begin in the Spring of 2018. These expansion joints which are now worn are under the main carriageway and expand and contract during changes in temperature.

After the opening of The Queensferry Crossing the road bridge will become a public transport corridor for buses, taxis, cyclists and pedestrians.

Sgian Dubh



The sgian dubh which is a small single-edged knife was originally used for preparing food or defending yourself from intruders. It was known as the black knife, in gaelic “sgian” meant knife and “dubh” meant black. Black was used to mean sinister or hidden as it was originally worn in a place of concealment under the armpit (oxter) so that people did not know whether or not you had one. If you took it out and put it into your stocking it showed openness and was a symbol of friendship. Courtesy demanded that when entering the home of a friend the sgian dubh would be removed from its hiding place and be displayed in the stocking top where it was held securely by garters. It is now worn as a part of traditional Scottish dress tucked into the top of the kilt hose with only the upper portion of the hilt visible. It is normally worn on the same side as the dominant hand

Fred Graham has a barber’s shop called “A Cut Above” in East Terrace. In one corner there is the barber’s chair and the rest of the room is his workshop. Fred has been making sgian dubhs since 1967. He served his apprenticeship with Robert Allison and Son in Glasgow, one of Scotland’s leading silver smiths.

Fred has made sgian dubhs for kilt makers throughout the world and in his time has made them for Prince Philip, Prince Charles and the late King Olaf of Norway as well as many other VIPs.

All the sgian dubhs Fred makes have 3 and 1/2 inch long blades made from nickel silver, hall-marked silver or 9 carot gold. The handles are carved from blackwood, various rosewoods or from Scottish red deer antler

Fred maintains that his two trades go hand in hand . When you give someone a knife it’s a sign of honour and trust just as a lot of trust has to be placed in the barber who cuts your hair

South Scotstoun housing proposals

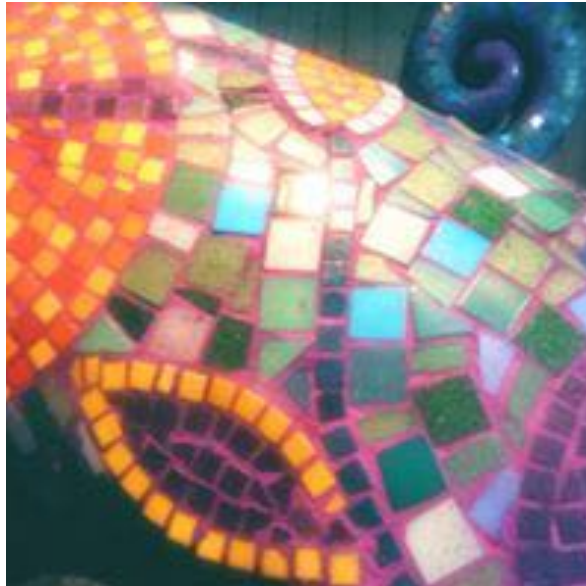
Edinburgh City Council’s planning committee are now assessing the 88 objections and one letter of support which they have received with regard to Taylor-Wimpey’s application to build hundreds of new homes in South Scotstoun. If approved building will start this year on greenbelt land beside the A800 Kirkliston Road.

New Flight Path

Edinburgh Airport is currently going through an Airport Change programme and is committed to modernising and improving routes to and from Edinburgh Airport in a way which will maximise benefits across Scotland and minimise the impact on local communities. Regulations which cover modernising airspace ensure that the airport is obliged to carry out a two stage public consultation process. The first consultation ended on 12:9:16 and feedback directed the design of potential flight path options. These flightpaths are presented in the second consultation programme which will run from 30 January until 30 April 2017. The preferred route will take -off in a S.W. direction before turning right towards the Forth, and it would appear possibly overflying Queensferry. The planes will climb over the river before turning to fly back over land near Musselburgh Race Course.

To participate in the consultation process go on-line at letsstofurther.com

Guardian of the Forth



Queensferry Ambition has gained planning consent from City of Edinburgh Council to site a £25,000 mosaic sculpture of a dragon -like creature called “Guardian of The Bridges” by artist Debbie Ryan at a viewpoint overlooking the Firth of Forth at McIvers Brae in South Queensferry. The sculpture was created to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Forth Road Bridge.

Debbie ran workshops with local pupils and other members of the community in North and South Queensferry to design and create the sculpture. A total of 700 members of the community were involved in the project. The pupils created their own mosaics and also worked on panels which have been incorporated into the sculpture. Debbie previously worked on a range of projects including the sculpture for the Oor Wullie Public Art Trail in Dundee.



Clydesdale Bank, South Queensferry

The Clydesdale Bank has confirmed that it will close 40 branches round the country in 2017. The Fife and Edinburgh closures will begin in May with the Queensferry branch being the first to close on 19th May. The bank has a prime position in the High Street and has been very much a part of the community for a long time. The nearest branch is 6miles away at Davidson Mains.

Queensferry Ambition has opposed the plans and appealed for a stakeholder meeting to ascertain whether it is possible to protect the bank.

The building originally housed the post Office which as well as having a telegraphic service operated as a savings bank. It dates back to 1860-1870 and is part of a two story granite building with an elaborate stepped-effect gable roof which has been decorated with thistle finials and flowered medallions.



Photograph showing original site of Post Office.

23rd February: illustrated talk by Andrew Kerr Rosyth, the River Forth and WW1

Andrew Kerr is a retired lawyer with a lifelong interest in ships and the Royal Navy. He was the Consultant Naval Historian for the recent BBC Television programme 'Scotland's War at Sea', and is a member of the Scottish Government's Battle of Jutland Commemorations Working Group.

Visit to General Register House, 30th March

In addition to the autumn/winter 2016/17 programme of evening talks, Queensferry Heritage Trust has organised a daytime visit for members to General Register House in Edinburgh.

General Register House is one of four buildings in Edinburgh in the care and management of The National Records of Scotland (NRS), the others being New Register House, West Register House and Thomas Thomson House. The National Records of Scotland only became a single institution in April 2011 following the merger of the General Register Office for Scotland and the National Archives of Scotland. NRS therefore holds records spanning the 12th to the 21st centuries, touching on virtually every aspect of Scottish life, and is the repository for the public and legal records of Scotland as well as many local and private archives.

The opening in 2008 of Scotland's People Family History Centre attracted new audiences to General Register House and, on Thursday 30th March, a presentation has been arranged for Queensferry Heritage Trust members to see archives relating to Queensferry's history as well as learning about family and historical research carried out in this fine building.

There are still a few places available. Please email Clare Meredith at clare.meredith@btinternet.com if you would like to join this visit. Timings are likely to be 2.30-4 pm, and General Register House is situated at the east end of Princes Street at 3 West Register Street, EH1 3YT.

