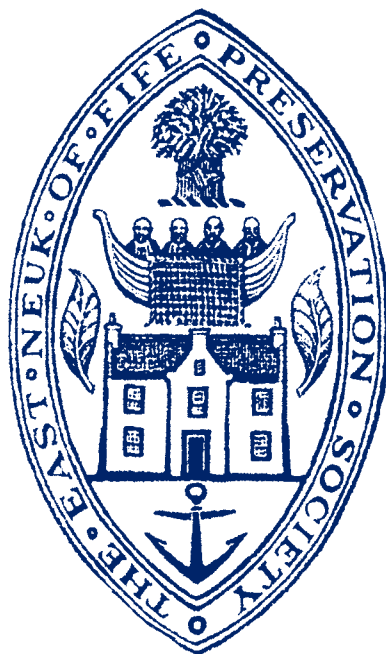


EAST NEUK OF FIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY



ANNUAL REPORT YEAR 2024

www.eastneukpreservationsociety.co.uk

A Scottish charity SC051336

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A DATE FOR THE DIARY **MEMBERS' VISIT at 2pm on TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2025**

You are warmly invited to visit the house and garden of Balcarres, near Colinsburgh, at the invitation of the Earl and Countess of Crawford and Balcarres.

You are invited to hear about its history and stroll around the lovely grounds before sharing in light refreshments. Proceeds from the event will go to our hosts' chosen charity.

Tickets are £10 and are available at the AGM. Tickets can also be reserved by contacting Bill Kennaway, Gyles House, 6 The Gyles, Pittenweem KY10 2NG via chair@eastneukpreservationsociety.co.uk or 01333 313172.

Advance booking is essential.

THE EAST NEUK OF FIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY (SCIO)

NOTICE OF 4th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday 5 May 2025 at 7pm
in Kellie Castle**

Agenda

- 1 Welcome and Apologies
- 2 Approval of Minutes of 13 May 2024 (previously circulated)
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Treasurer's report and Approval of Accounts
- 5 Chair's report
- 6 Election of Trustees (the constitution states that trustees shall retire from office at the AGM but shall be eligible for re-election; the current trustees have indicated their willingness to serve again). Martin Gorrie has agreed to stand for election as a further trustee
- 7 Election of Management Team
The Chair, Vice-Chair, and Hon Secretary have indicated their willingness to continue to serve in their roles; Martin Gorrie has been co-opted as Hon Treasurer and is willing to stand for election to the role
- 8 Any Other Competent Business

Dr David Jones - an illustrated talk 'New thoughts on East Neuk furniture' - covering 16th and 17th century carvings in the burghs of Crail, Pittenweem and St Monans.

Non -alcoholic refreshments will follow the talk

Annual subscriptions

Annual subscriptions are now due - please pay promptly to save the Treasurer extra work and expense. You can pay now or at the AGM. If paying by post, please make out the cheque to "East Neuk of Fife Preservation Society (SCIO)" and address your letter to ENFPS Chair, Bill Kennaway, Gyles House, 6 The Gyles, Pittenweem KY10 2NG

If paying by bank transfer, ENFPS's account no is 16067868, sort code is 83-24-24, bank name is RBS, Kirkcaldy Branch, account name is East Neuk of Fife Preservation Society (SCIO).

If you wish to set up a standing order, please contact our Treasurer via treasurer@eastneukpreservationsociety.co.uk . Annual subscriptions are £20 per person; Joint membership £35; Life membership £300 per person; £525 per couple.

If you pay your subscription annually and are a taxpayer, you can assist the Society by completing a Gift Aid Declaration form which is available from the Treasurer.

THE EAST NEUK OF FIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY (SCIO)

ORGANISATION

Honorary President

Dr James Carstairs

Honorary Vice-Presidents

The Right Hon The Earl of Lindsay

John Beaton

Trustees

Dr James Carstairs, John Beaton, Bill Kennaway,
Angus Cameron, David Jenkins, Jane Forbes

Management Committee Members

Chair	Bill Kennaway chair@eastneukpreservationsociety.co.uk
Vice-Chair & Planning Convenor	Angus Cameron vicechair@eastneukpreservationsociety.co.uk
Hon Treasurer	Martin Gorrie treasurer@eastneukpreservationsociety.co.uk
Hon Secretary	Jane Forbes secretary@eastneukpreservationsociety.co.uk

Area Representatives

Anstruther	John Campbell
Elie & Earlsferry	Margaret Lambie Alastair Graham Andrew Nicholson
Kilconquhar & Colinsburgh	Stephen Aynscough Debbie Birrell
Kilrenny & Cellardyke	Steven Liscoe
Landward	Pat Hughes
Largo & Lundin Links	Alison Genet
Pittenweem	Bill Kennaway Jane Forbes
St Monans	Angus Cameron/ Kim Cameron Kay Bryant

If you wish to contact an area representative, please do so through the Hon Secretary

The East Neuk of Fife Preservation Society (SCIO) is a Scottish Incorporated
Charitable Organisation with charity number SC051336

REPORTS FOR 2024

REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE SOCIETY

The Society's AGM was held on 13 May in the Drawing Room of Kellie Castle, and it was a delight to be to be back at what many of us consider to be the Society's spiritual home. The AGM confirmed the current office holders in their posts at the AGM and retiring trustees were re-elected.

Thereafter we were enlightened and musically entertained on the subject of 'Fiddler Tam' aka Thomas Erskine, 6th Earl of Kellie who was a significant composer of the mid 18th century and a leading British exponent of the Mannheim school which influenced Haydn and Mozart. After an introductory explanation of the 6th Earl's colourful 'Beggar's Benison' backstory, a lecture on his musical works was delivered by Dr George Kennaway, an authority on the music of the Scottish Enlightenment, followed by a stirring performance of some of Fiddler Tam's music on the harpsichord by Jim Tribble.

The evening concluded in Kellie's undercroft where we enjoyed drinks (necessarily non-alcoholic due to licensing restrictions) and the Society's usual marvelous nibbles created by our members.

Our organized members' visits during the year took in two very memorable houses, Gilston House near Largoward on 9 June and No 46 South Street St Andrews on 8 September.

We again organised a Xmas Social Event in Pittenweem Coastline Church, held on 7 December, where Rosalind Garton gave us a very informative lecture 'Geology and Building Stones in the East Neuk of Fife'.

David Jenkins has stepped down as Treasurer after no less than 10 years in the role, with our sincere thanks for his exceptional dedication. And Pat Hughes is standing down as Landward rep, also having been the mainstay of the catering wonders at our social events over the years.

Our committee has kept up to strength with some record attendances at its meetings in the Society's St Monans office.

And the Society's project for interpretive panels at Pittenweem Priory is progressing well, with our funding target achieved in August and design work now progressing.

Elsewhere the Society is supporting East Neuk communities affected by church closures through assisting local working groups aiming to secure the buildings as community assets, either by taking prominent roles in the groups as at Pittenweem and Elie or by committing financial support at St Monans.

PLANNING CONVENOR'S REPORT

There have been no major planning issues that have caused concern to the Society this year. However, a number of objections were lodged with Fife Planning in connection with relatively minor issues including an oriel window and extension in Elie, an oversized flag pole in Earlsferry and a large glass fronted balcony extension in Williamsburgh.

Several documents published during 2024 are of interest from a general planning perspective. These comprise the recently amended Permitted Development Rights (see Appendix – Permitted Development Rights for a summary of these regulations), a review of the performance of Fife Council Planning Services and Elie and Earlsferry's Local Place and Community Action Plan.

Fife Council Planning Services publishes an annual review of performance which includes details of the times taken to process planning applications together with success rates. The indication is that there has been a general improvement in review times over the past few years (decreasing from 11 to 8 weeks for householder developments) with overall approval rates being very consistent at approx 96%. The review contains one example from Fife as a best practice case study in delivering Sustainable Living and Wellbeing (one of the key aspects of the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4). The example used is the new housing development in St Monans. The Local Development Plan allocated the site for residential development which, as well as private housing, required affordable housing and the provision of an area for allotments (which had been much sought after by the local community). Negotiations with the developer and Planning Services and the Community Projects Team of Fife Council resulted in the delivery of fully serviced allotments. The scheme includes multi-use paths to connect with the existing community and the provision of a SUDs basin, landscaping with additional tree planting and wildflower meadows. The report contains much in the way of "planning speak" and states that the mixed tenure development "integrates well with the existing community and provides new opportunities for sustainable living both in terms of the allotments themselves but also the wider opportunities provided by a mix of affordable housing provided on the site".

The St Monans development does demonstrate that input from the local community can influence the planning process, and a recent example of local input is Elie and Earlsferry Community Council's Local Place Plan and Community Action Plan issued in 2024. Fife Council intends to adopt a new Local Development Plan (to be known as Fife's Place Plan) in 2028 (although the date keeps slipping!) and Local Place Plans are seen as key components.

The adopted plan will form the statutory development plan for Fife and set out the planning policies and proposals for the use and development of land for the next 10 to 20 years. Fife's Place Plan will replace the existing Local Development Plan (FIFEplan) that was issued in 2017.

Of interest in the Elie and Earlsferry Plan is a section highlighting some of the planning issues that are of concern in conservation areas throughout the East Neuk. These include the overdevelopment of garden areas with house extensions, the alteration of roofs by insertion of large dormers and the design of new houses that are built within conservation areas.

Links to source documents as follows:

PDRs: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/circular-1-2024-householder-permitted-development-rights/>

Fife Planning:

https://www.fife.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/603816/National-Planning-Improvement-Framework-202324.pdf

Elie and Earlsferry:

https://www.fife.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/653308/Elie-and-Earlsferry-Local-Place-Plan.pdf

Fife Plan: <https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/planning-and-building2/planning/development-plan-and-planning-guidance/local-development-plan-fifeplan>

https://www.fife.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/175664/Development-Plan-Scheme-2024-Landscape-Final-PDF-2.pdf

ANSTRUTHER

New Lifeboat Station

The new lifeboat station and ramp planning application has been approved. Work has yet to commence, awaiting funding. Part of the approval included a condition enabling Fife Council to demolish the old RNLI building to give more parking space.

A Community Council initiative to retain the whole of the old RNLI building for community and commercial use has fallen through for lack of people willing to form a board. There is however some local interest in saving the stone core of the 1902 lifeboat station to house a restored historic lifeboat.



Over the past year several vacant retail premises along Shore Street have reopened with new businesses.



15 Shore Street (The Fudge Lass). The Indian Restaurant closed and is replaced by The Fudge Lass.

Externally the changes were limited to the name change on the existing signage and the addition of some signage on the windows.

23 Shore Street (Bread & Bottles)

The exterior alterations were limited to repainting the shopfront in a colour scheme more sympathetic to the historic character of the area.

The existing traditional shop sign design has been maintained.





47 Shore Road (Harbour Break Lounge)

Exterior work was limited to painting and new exterior signage.

While it is good news that new retail premises have successfully opened along Shore Street, there are a number of vacant retail premises with several closures within the last year; The Shellfish Shack (10 Shore Street), Studio One Hairdressing (21 Shore Street), and the Wee Couper of Fife (25 Shore Street). The Post office (35 Shore Street) remains closed.

This recently completed housing on Pittenweem Road is a successful infill on the site of a derelict garage.

By local architect Jon Frullani, its modern design manages to be sympathetic to the scale of the 19th century houses along the road.

The garage wall sits forward of the road's building line but this usefully provides a windbreak at the bus stop.



Dreelside Woods Path Upgrade

The Dreel Burn Project as developed by Anstruther Improvements Association is proceeding with this substantial scheme for the upgrade of 400m of the Dreelside Woods Path connecting the Dreel Tavern at the A917 High Street to the old railway path alignment at the western end. The work includes resurfacing, fencing, handrails, placemaking and retention works to create a 1.80m wide cycle and pedestrian footpath providing an alternative route to using the busy and narrow A917 road.

The design also includes a section of the path near the Dreel Tavern to be extended along the Dreel, allowing for a new ramp to be installed, with an upgrade and repair of the existing steps to the existing railway path at the western end. This is an exciting project which will encourage a greater connection with nature and promote active travel through cycling and walking in a safer environment.

COLINSBURGH AND KILCONQUHAR

On the eastern boundary of Colinsburgh, Kirkwood Homes ‘The Paddocks’ development with some 50 properties is now well into the construction stage.

As part of the planning process for the development Fife Council Archaeological Unit (FCAU) discovered evidence from aerial photographic records suggesting the probability of archaeological remains on the development site.

Specialist archaeologists AOC Archaeology carried out an excavation that came up with important finds including an Iron Age farming settlement with a largely complete stone roundhouse floor. Detailed information and further photographs are provided in the Colinsburgh Archaeological Dig section of this report.



FCAU’s investigations also drew attention to some interesting information on Colinsburgh’s history, identifying the origin of Colinsburgh as dating from the latter 17thC when land known as Nether Rires, comprising a few cottages and a smith, was acquired in 1681 by Colin Lindsay, 3rd Earl of Balcarres. The story goes that the Earl had commanded a cavalry troop of “gentlemen of reduced circumstances” for King Charles II during the 1670s. After the troop was disbanded he was disquieted by the hard-up situation of his former comrades and when the chance arose he founded a village on his land to provide homes for his men. Originally known as Nether Rires the new village was later raised to the status of a Burgh of Barony in 1707 and renamed Colinsburgh, to be under the feudal superiority of the Earl.

In Kilconquhar the past few months have seen the sale of a number of houses in the village, and several of the new owners are now living permanently in Kilconquhar rather than as second-home owners which is also good for the general ambience in the village.

The Kinneuchar Inn continues to go from strength to strength and has been positively featured in the press on several occasions, winning the accolade of “Best Local Restaurant in Scotland 2023” awarded by The Good Food Guide.

Kilconquhar Church continues to host services and gatherings. The church provided a focal point of winter interest for the anyone passing through the village as it was beautifully floodlit throughout the dark nights of December and January.



ELIE AND EARLSFERRY

The future of Elie Parish Church has been a priority for the local community, following the decision by Fife Presbytery of the Church of Scotland to schedule the church for closure with 2027 as the date for its disposal.

A local steering group has been set up which has recently formalised its status as a community enterprise with the name Elie Kirk Community Enterprise Ltd.



Chaired by Alastair Graham, Preservation Society Elie area representative, the group is now carrying out a feasibility study for adapting the building to various uses including a café.



Back in 2002 these lamps and posts at the Parish Church were gifted to the Elie & Earlsferry community by local residents Elizabeth & Graham Meacher and installed by the Community Council to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth.

In 2024 the lamps were refurbished but then damaged beyond repair by storm Éowyn.

They have now been replaced by Elie & Earlsferry's Environmental Action Group (EAG).

Many decades ago, one of the Preservation Society's earliest projects was to place traditional lamp standards and lanterns at the entrance to the Church.

EAG, in collaboration with the Community Council, works hard to enhance the amenity of the village. Recent projects have included the refurbishment of the village name sign located in Park Place, pollarding of the trees on Toll Green (Fife Council) and the floral displays throughout the village, including feature planters.

The project for renovation of the water fountain at Toll Green is being progressed by EAG and various bodies have been approached for funding. ENFPS was responsible for a previous restoration of the fountain many decades ago, and has made a donation to EAG's project matching that of the bequest from long-time ENFPS member Stuart Hall.

The general condition of streets, footpaths, public spaces and street signage remains a concern. Local interaction with Fife Council has achieved some success with repairs to an access onto the beach in Earlsferry impacted by storm damage and pollarding trees enclosing Toll Green.

Over the past year there continues to be a high level of planning applications for alterations, extensions and new build developments. These fall mainly within Conservation Areas to each village but also outwith where design guidelines are normally less onerous.

In order to highlight various planning issues Elie & Earlsferry Community Council prepared a Local Place Plan (LPP) within which these issues were documented and is now registered with Fife Council. The emphasis is on addressing the impact of alterations and additions to existing buildings many of which are listed to ensure these respect the original building within the overall streetscape.

Where the development involves a new build or replacement house the design should also take account of how this will affect its neighbouring buildings and surroundings. It is anticipated that the concerns raised within the LPP will be addressed by case officers and also agents submitting applications. The Society will continue to monitor these and respond with an objection if required.

The major housing developments at the Grange Earlsferry and Wadeslea Elie submitted by Nairn Estates have not progressed to the actual development phase due to the ongoing resolution of site servicing and provision of upgraded facilities for sewage treatment. Both developments will also require to be submitted for detailed planning approval.

A sizeable number of ENFPS members attended Lady Dorothy Stewart's reception on 21 September at the clubhouse of Elie Sailing Club which followed the scattering of the ashes of her late husband Sir Moray Stewart at the harbour.

This image shows Dorothy with Jim and Jane Carstairs, Jane Forbes and Bill Kennaway.



Moray and Dorothy lived in Elie for many years before their move to Pittenweem and latterly to Surrey. Dorothy had a long association with the Society, including her time as Chair from 2007 to 2010.

KILRENNY AND CELLARDYKE

In Cellardyke the epidemic of grey paint continues to spread, as does use of the new development term of “formation of hard standing”, which has been frequently noted in planning applications being used as a euphemism for ‘demolition of 18/19thC head dyke and laying a concrete block pavé parking area’.

Following the unlawful demolition of a head dyke in East Forth Street (ENFPS Annual Reports passim) which was subsequently rebuilt, and then demolished again a year later with approval to make a parking space, a number of similar applications for removal of back dykes to create parking spaces have been submitted since.

Approval has recently been given to a property with a ‘heid’ dyke in West Forth Street which will see a substantial loss of one of the very few surviving sections of “tarry wa’s” in Cellardyke,

Another in East Forth Street (if approved) will see the complete removal of a ten yards section of the ten foot high head dyke.



As shown above the head dyke in one form or another, has most likely marked the burgh perimeter alongside the “Back Road” of Silderdykes since the 16thC.

Finally, the unmaintained and increasingly derelict ‘Tam Blyth’s Byre’, on the Cellardyke Back Road, aka West Forth Street, succumbed to its neglect, and recent severe storm events, with the structure being declared unstable and partial (substantial) demolition being subsequently approved and quickly carried out.



Had the building been kept in good order it would have presented a ready made opportunity for conversion to a dwelling, or Airbnb, but with the location now a virtual ‘gap site’ it remains to be seen what plans may be held in store for its future.

The majority of Planning Applications made for the Kilrenny and Cellardyke catchments during the past twelve months were, unusually, almost exclusively for properties within the two Conservation Areas that enclose the essentially 18thC urban cores of the two settlements, and therefore most of the extant examples of vernacular architecture and of both historic and Listed Buildings.

However, barely two dozen applications have been submitted, considered and approved since this time last year, which, if the duplicated Listed Building Consents and those applications concerning modern properties are discounted, then only fifteen applications related to properties with the two Conservation areas. There was also, once again, the rare occurrence of a TCA (Tree - Conservation Area) application for maintenance work on a group of trees within the Kilrenny area.

The smaller percentage of applications related to making good the wear and tear, that is inevitable with buildings of advancing antiquity, and these concerned a number of replacements of roofings, doors and windows etc. On the other hand, the predominant applications were for new works to enlarge and improve properties, with both ground and first floor extensions, rooflights, dormers, and conversion of outbuildings to new domestic use.

Dormer, or bonnet windows are a popular way of creating additional usable space or living areas within a property's roof and many houses, whether in the Conservation Area or not, have these features as part of the original build design or retro fitted as later improvements to a home.

Though most modern dormers have little architectural merit when retrofitted to traditional buildings one would think that some attention to the aesthetics of the architect's design would be considered by Planning Officers. Whilst not within the Conservation Area (it's just the other side of the road) a new dormer was approved to replace two mis-matched 20thC examples in the roof of an Edwardian terrace house. It is a great way to improve your property, but when fitted in full compliance with the current tasteless fads of materials and design it ends up looking like nothing less than a grey tin shed stuck on your roof that will never assimilate into the prevailing architectural style of the rest of the streetscape.

As an aside, during the process of scanning through the planning applications for Cellardyke and Kilrenny it became quite noticeable that within the "East Neuk and Landward" applications an encouraging percentage included the installation of either, or both, PV solar panels or ground source heat pumps as part of proposed private developments.

Whilst there is an inclination for folk to smirk at the idea of sunshine in Scotland being able to provide a practicable source of energy the reality is that it only takes daylight to produce viable amounts of electricity. So it is heartening to see these domestic initiatives which will supplement our power infrastructure, and to contribute to the country's overall effort to simply "Stop Burning Stuff".

Following on from similar applications made for a number of popular locations for “wild swimming” (what we just used to call ‘swimming’) around the east Fife coast, another has been approved for the ‘sauna in a horsebox’ to operate as a mobile facility at the East End, adjacent to the Cellardyke pond. This application attracted an unusually high number of supportive statements, with many comments such as “Can’t wait to use the sauna” and “Would love to be able to warm up” which implied the common incidence of cold water immersion hypothermia cases occurring at the site for some reason.

With the current popularity and continuing improvement of the pool facility by the Cellardyke Tidal Pool group <https://www.cellardyketidalpool.com/> this additional attraction will no doubt complement “The Grind” in offering restorative therapeutic treatment to swimmers.

Not too far away at Kilrenny a commensurate number of applications reflected that much of its population are happy with their parking arrangements, with only four relevant planning application being made within the village.

Following previous objections and a refusal of planning consent to develop grade B listed Rennyhill Farm into a wedding venue the same applicant has now received approval for internal demolition and reconfiguration of Rennyhill farmhouse and steading, which was home to Andrew Johnston (1798-1862), MP for Anstruther 1831 – 32, and St Andrews 1832-37.



This involves the conversion of the large range of farm buildings into domestic dwellings; this time with no formal objections made to the plans.

The Airbnb epidemic has also reached out to Kilrenny with an approval for a “Short term let” in the heart of the village, whilst two more such properties within the Cellardyke Conservation Area also received similar “Short term let” approvals.

A notably diminished number (3) of planning applications were made outwith the Conservation Areas. Two were for the usual extensions etc. but one approved application was for the renewal of a planning application previously approved several years earlier. An instance that highlights the situation that if approved works do not commence within five years that consent becomes invalid.

LANDWARD

Not much has happened for “Landward” over the last twelve months regarding planning matters, but Landward had its fair share of events of interest to Society members.

The Society’s visit to Gilston House near Largoward took place on 9 June.

About 40 of our members enjoyed glorious weather visiting the house.

Gilston is a grade B listed early 19th century mansion with far-reaching vistas across the Forth to the Bass Rock and to Largo Law.



Our hosts Edward and Cath Baxter showed us the interior of the house, with Edward telling us of its history and the way it has changed over the years.

Cath enlightened us on the planting of her Chelsea Flower Show-standard perennial borders.



And both Edward and Cath accompanied our party on a tour of Gilston’s extensive grounds.

This included its walled garden with its wild Hebridean Soay sheep visible behind the gate, which is the work of Carnbee-based artisan blacksmith Mihai Cocris. The tour culminated with the traditional ENFPS drinks and nibbles on the terrace.



Our circuit of the grounds took in in Gilston’s loch.

Inspired by Charles Jencks, Cath and Edward have cleared, reconfigured and landscaped the loch which is complemented by this beautifully restored 1890s boathouse.



On 25 May a talk on The East Fife Central Railway, or 'Lochty Line', was given by Bill Kennaway at East Neuk Probus Club in Pittenweem Coastline Church.



One of the few visible remnants of the line is this bridge abutment just south of Largoward. The line's numerous railway cuttings have disappeared, having been used for landfill sites.

The railway ran from Cameron Bridge to Lochty, a mile or so east of Largoward, where it served Balcarres Colliery which operated until 1924.



The route had some of the steepest gradients in Scotland reaching an elevation of 500 feet, with weather conditions to match.

This image shows two locomotives derailed in a blizzard in 1963 near Largoward.

Built in the 1890s to serve nine coalmines along the route, the line's only passenger services were miners' trains that ran from Kennoway to Largoward till the 1920s.

The original plans had the line going through to St Andrews, but it never extended beyond its unlikely terminus at Lochty Farm where geological surveys had identified substantial coal deposits which proved unworkable. The line lingered on till 1966 surviving on agricultural traffic with only 3 trains a week.

From 1967 a short section of the line at Lochty Farm was used by the Lochty Private Railway for steam-hauled passenger trips. These lasted until 1992, meaning the Lochty Line had the distinction of being the last operational section of the East Neuk's memorable rail network.

On 5 October at Kellie Castle, the Lorimer Society held its Autumn Lecture, which was delivered by architectural historian Simon Green on the subject 'A Scottish Architect Abroad - Robert Lorimer's work in England and further afield'.

Simon examined how Lorimer responded to the different vernacular styles in England and elsewhere utilising different materials but still adding his own style.

The lecture was followed by a chamber recital by young members of St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh.

LARGO AND LUNDIN LINKS

Life goes on in Largo and the villages continue to thrive with a lot of local folk making a positive contribution to the community.

In Lower Largo the former St David's Church has new owners who are committed to using it for the benefit of the community. Naming the building the 'Aurrie Mor', new owners Andrew and Carol Duff see it as the big brother of their existing 'Aurrie' in the burgh, which is a wonderful cafe that they have worked incredibly hard to develop for the community, and beyond, and one which many enjoy! St David's served the community from 17th July 1872 to its last service in 2017 and has changed hands a couple of times since its closure.



It was an important part of the community and many will have memories of the services, weddings, christenings and funerals held there over the years. Acknowledgement of its valuable role was celebrated with a special transitional service held on Sunday 1st September. The well attended service was led by The Very Reverend Russell Barr of Largo Parish Church.

An official opening of 'The Aurrie Mor' was held on 7th December with the Largo Xmas Fair. The event was also celebrated with a wonderful organist putting his skills to use on the historic organ that, for now, they have decided to retain. At this stage exactly what The Aurrie Mor's future will be is not clear. Andrew and Carol are in no rush to decide but welcome suggestions from the community to see what will be the best fit, "complementing the community assets already in place". To track developments keep an eye on www.theaurriemor.com.

An interesting artefact associated with the medieval Sir Andrew Wood Tower near Upper Largo has recently been brought to the Society's attention.



This salamander weathervane complete with copper globe was installed under the Society led restoration of the Tower in 1978. In 2016 following a report that the vane was damaged, a Fife Council archaeologist visited the site and noted that it was hanging down from the apex.

In due course the vane fell from the tower and when this happened the vane was recovered by Fife Council Archaeological Unit (FCAU). The copper globe was found to have suffered damage in the fall but otherwise the vane was intact and was taken into safe keeping by Fife Council.



The Tower being a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the situation was reported to Historic Env Scotland and the weathervane has since been held in store by FCAU. The salamander has lost its original gilding, revealing it is of stainless steel so therefore dates from the 1978 restoration, with the only component of possible earlier date being the globe. However it is understood that restoration of the weathervane would require Scheduled Monument Consent from HES should it be decided to mount it, or a replacement, to the roof of the tower.

ENFPS will be contacting the owner of the Tower and other parties to see if it can assist in reinstating the vane as part of other measures to restore the Tower which remains in poor condition despite recent clearance work to stave off imminent deterioration.

At Largo Pier, progress has sadly stalled for its restoration. The Pier Group was formed by Largo Communities Together (LCT) in 2020 in order to seek funding to maintain and protect the pier from further deterioration from coastal erosion and winter storms with a longer term view to bring the pier back to its former glory. Over the last 6 years the group has worked diligently to win funding to cover initial investigation, engineering works and maintenance to help prevent further deterioration. However a decision has now had to be made to halt this process.

Despite a massive effort by the group, adequate funding could not be found to cover the estimated £2m required all be it 40-50 different funding applications were made. The most positive of these was from Levenmouth Reconnected (potential Government / Local authority funding). This grant however came with an insurmountable caveat that all work on the pier would have to be completed by 31st March 2026. Unfortunately this would not be achievable. Funding was also required to pay for legal advice to protect the community from the future liability and complexities of ownership of the pier. While a route forward was identified, progress was not able to be made regarding these legal requirements.

The future of the pier is now back in the hands of the owners of The Crusoe Hotel, Thunder Holdings. They have recognised the huge amount of work that has been put in by The Pier Group and are now exploring ways to move forward to save the pier from further erosion. This in turn, if not addressed, may of course impact on The Crusoe and beyond.

The design for a new pier is still in the hands of the existing members of The Pier Group who have kindly agreed to work with The Crusoe and share the knowledge and expertise they have gained during this process. Fife Council has stated that there is no budget for coastal erosion however it is hoped that they would be willing to be part of future discussion considering the potential threat to the road.

The Pier Group is to be highly commended for the work it has done over recent years to clear storm damage and return the pier to a basic safe and usable condition, with the result that after a gap of many years, visiting yachtsmen can again tie up at one of the East Neuk's loveliest harbours and sink a couple of pints at the Crusoe.

Other good news is that the Lundin Links Hotel site is understood to have found a buyer, two and a half years after the devastating fire destroyed the village landmark with its Tudor facade. The once-prominent C listed hotel, that closed in 2014, was burned to the ground in August 2022 having been left empty for 8 years. Since that time it has been in the hands of the liquidators.

There are conflicting reports as to who the new buyer is. According to the Land Register of Scotland, the site was sold to Glasgow-based real estate company Surplus Property Investments however further reports suggest that the new owner is Rosyth firm Blue Sky Projects Ltd. Either way, it appears the land has been acquired by property developers.

Kapital Residential who previously owned the site had planning permission to build 35 flats, albeit work never started. Kapital went into liquidation two months before fire destroyed the building, and after receiving hundreds of thousands of pounds in covid shutdown compensation from the Govt.

At Kirkton of Largo the longer term future of the 100 year old primary school now looks very uncertain as Fife Council have decided to 'mothball' the school. It has had no pupils for the last 2 years. The school roll has sadly seen a steady decline since 2013 with most of the 21 children within the catchment area now attending other local schools. The expected school roll for 2024 was fewer than 5 pupils. In the knowledge of this parents decided to enrol their children in Lundin Mill School. There were no pupils due in for the second academic year. Mothballing is a temporary closure which gives the option to reopen if circumstances change. This will be reviewed by the end of the year.

A few local people are very keen to try to repurpose the school to try to ensure it continues to play a role in serving the local community in whatever form.

The Friends of Largo Bay, a sub-group of Largo Communities Together, continue their good works with their environmental initiatives helping to protect the waters of Largo Bay and beyond. Their work engages with children as well as the adults within the community.

And Largo too now has its own Castaway Sauna for anyone that fancies warming up after a chilly dip!

PITTENWEEM

Scheduled for closure by the Church of Scotland, the grade A listed Parish Church, is the subject of an initiative to take on ownership of the building for community use by local group 'Friends of Pittenweem Kirk' (FoPK).

FoPK has partnered with the East Neuk of Fife Preservation Society (ENFPS) which has secured Architectural Heritage Fund support on its behalf for a viability appraisal of possible future options for use of the building. ENFPS has also received a Fife Council Local Community grant for a feasibility study by ARC Architects who directed the Tolbooth restoration



The appraisal and feasibility work is well underway and involves consultation with a wide range of local organisations, businesses and individuals, also market research and consideration of options for re-configuring the building for different possible uses for the building. Discussions have started with the Church of Scotland which has confirmed its willingness in principle to transfer the building to FoPK, conditional on an independent valuation.

Recently ENFPS also secured Scottish Govt funding on behalf of FoPK for a viability appraisal and architectural feasibility study for the interior of Pittenweem Tolbooth, which abuts the Kirk but is owned by Fife Council. The Council's recent major restoration did not include the interior, hence the study by ARC Architects looks to assess what is needed to restore the Tolbooth interior to a useable condition and to suggest possible viable community uses for the building.

The Society's Pittenweem Priory project for interpretive panels has achieved its £22,000 funding target, and design work is now underway for its project, which will provide three large size panels of the same standard that Historic Environment Scotland and National Trust for Scotland provide at their sites.

These panels will explain the historic, religious and architectural importance of the Priory's remaining Great House, Fortified Gatehouse, Prior's Lodging buildings and the Priory's links to St Fillans Cave and the monastery on May Isle, and also cover the Tolbooth and Kirk.



Despite it being more than a year since Fife Council's completion of the emergency stabilization work following the sea wall collapse at The Gyles, there has been no physical progress towards reinstating the stone facing of the wall, leaving something of an eyesore. And after months of research into property records, Fife Council declared the wall ownerless, implying that it does not have a duty to reinstate it.

Nonetheless Fife Council has had its engineers carry out the design work for replacing the stonework, implicitly recognizing its responsibility, and has advised that they are 'pursuing funding internally' for the work.

The first East Shore phase of Scottish Water's major sewage outfall works has now been completed, with all the installations concealed underground and an existing visible sewage pipe now removed from the foreshore. The larger scale West Shore phase of the project begins in spring 2025.

At the grade C listed Larachmhor Tavern, the owner failed in his appeal against Fife Council's enforcement notice requiring the contentious witch mural to be removed, and the Council is now reported to be considering court action. Because of the backlog in the Scottish courts it is not expected that this will result in removal of the mural any time soon.



At grade B listed No 5 High Street, a planning application has been submitted for demolition of the severely fire-damaged structure of the Fish Bar, justified by a structural engineer's report that the walls are in dangerous condition. Historic Env Scotland has objected noting that the lack of pavement closures suggest collapse risk

is low, also pressing for details to be provided of the proposed appearance of the replacement frontage. The Preservation Society supported the HES response.

At No 1 Abbey Wall Road an application was approved for a new two-storey house that is side on to the main road, in the grounds of Abbey Lodge; a good modern design with stone, render and glass frontages and slate roof.

ST MONANS AND ABERCROMBIE

2024 was a quiet year for planning applications in St Monans with the majority of requests relating to the usual round of replacement window and re-roofing works.

The Dance Studio at the Loft, 2 Mid Shore, was granted change of use from 'class 11' (indoor sports) to residential, and indeed issues around access and welfare make this a more appropriate use. The property has its own parking space underneath so should avoid attracting more cars left on the street.

Number 7 Narrow Wynd has been granted permission for alterations and renovation involving re-roofing and additional dormer windows. The owners plan to remove the damaged cementitious render and hope to restore the external stonework. The plan includes additional insulation and an EV charging point; it is good to see older houses being sustainably updated whilst conserving their traditional appearance.

Surely Fife Planning department's most contentious decision locally was to grant change of use of the old Spar Shop in West Street to residential accommodation, despite a dozen objections. These were on the grounds of losing this amenity, particularly when some local trades people, who had been trying to lease the shop, were met with excessive costs or no response.

The property itself suited use as a shop, being terraced with a single storey rear extension, and will require roof lights to provide daylight to the proposed three double bedrooms.

Additionally, the fire-escape at the rear comprises a narrow fenced off band of garden ground right against the building, hardly a safe place of escape in a conflagration.



Not requiring actual Planning permission, but a 'License for work', is the Fishermen's Memorial Garden. This will include a seated area, some garden ground and a plinth with an anchor and noticeboards telling the story of the tragic accident off the Norfolk coast in November 1875.

Five fishing boats were lost in hurricane conditions, three of which were from St Monans and two from Cellardyke, with the loss of thirty-seven fishermen. A memorial stands in King's Lynn, but 150 years after the event, St Monans will recognise the sacrifice of life in this dangerous occupation. Fife Architects are liaising with the Residents' Group to coordinate the work and ENFPS have made a small contribution in support of the project.



Another much-loved local feature honouring seafarers is the St Monans' sea mine. Positioned on the harbourside in 1951, the mine was one of around 200 originally donated by the Admiralty to the Shipwrecked Mariners Society for use as collection boxes in recognition of the Society's significant help to thousands of shipwrecked survivors during WW2.

Not just sailors but soldiers, airmen, nurses and civilians who were landed at British ports after being rescued – particularly during the Battle of the Atlantic – Britain's worst maritime conflict. The Shipwrecked Mariners Society provided immediate financial assistance to survivors arriving back in Britain for clothing, food, accommodation and rail passes to get them home to their loved ones.

Today there are around fifty mines remaining and the Society, a charity, still provides financial support to fishermen, merchant mariners and their dependants in need and also to those injured or too ill to continue working at sea. It receives roughly 500 new applications for assistance each year and distributes almost £1.5m.

The St Monans' mine has a slightly chequered past. It fell into disrepair and had to be replaced in 1977. It was regularly vandalised, and in 2006 St Monans Community Council took over its care, but as a landmark only and it was welded shut. However, in 2012 the local (volunteer) Honorary Agent for the SMS Charity brought the mine back into service.

More recently, the local Agent was very ill and unable to check the mine regularly. Happily, he is now much better and plans to ensure the mine receives some necessary TLC and a new sign, something that ENFPS would wish to support. The mine has been part of the St Monans harbour scene for almost seventy-five years and appears in innumerable visitor photographs of our village – a significant landmark.

A good number of ENFPS members attended the ‘Harmonies for Heritage’ organ recital and talk on 14 September at St Monans Old Kirk, organised by Dr Bess Rhodes of St Andrews University. A performance was given by organist Chris Bragg of St Andrews University followed by a duet by organist Andrew Forbes of Glasgow Cathedral and cellist Andrew Huggan and a talk by Dr Rhodes on her Sacred Landscapes project which conducts surveys of organs of significance in Fife.

The Kirk’s organ was built in 1850 by London organ builder John Flight, and installed in St Monans in 1995, after relocation from a church in Edinburgh. Another such relocation was noted as Crail Parish Church whose splendid organ was transferred from the Kirkcaldy mansion of linen manufacturer John Blyth, Michael Portillo’s grandfather.



Impressive progress has been made towards securing the future of the Grade A listed Old Kirk for community use, following its closure. St Monans Auld Kirk Enterprise (SMAKE) has established itself as a company limited by guarantee and is applying for registration as a charitable trust.



Chaired by local farmer Peter Peddie, SMAKE’s design team have come up with ambitious and imaginative proposals for use of the building primarily as a wedding venue and community café; it is now developing a business plan to support funding applications for the property acquisition and capital costs involved.

The design proposals do envisage removal of the Kirk’s Flight organ. If Listed Building consent is granted, it is vital that every effort is made to ensure the future of this beautiful instrument by transfer to a suitable alternative location.

A new book ‘St Monans –We Live by the Sea’ has been published, authored by Jerzy T. Morkis and with photographs by William Easson. Produced with the help of long-standing ENFPS member Margaret Sutherland, it is full of images that capture a long-gone way of St Monans life.

VISIT TO 46 SOUTH STREET ST ANDREWS

More than 40 Society members attended the Society's visit to No 46 South Street, one of the most impressive town houses on South Street's parade of fine medieval houses.

Built in 1600 for the Balfours of Mountquhanie, the frontage has a distinctive doric column pedimented doorpiece with a Balfour armorial panel.



Our host June Baxter told us about her family's ownership of the house. Dr Robin Evetts then gave us an exposition of the history of the house and of how St Andrews' layout of broad streets was created in the 12th century to provide impressive processional routes to the Cathedral, with the cellars of No 46 being the remains of an early structure on the route. Thereafter Robin conducted us on a tour of the house and cellar.



Our party explored No 46's renowned town garden which has a medieval long rig layout, with its orchard underplanted with wildflowers and many unusual flowering shrubs; roses and other climbers clothe the surrounding high walls.



The tour included the restored lectern doocot at the bottom of the garden which dates from the 17th century.

And drinks and nibbles were much enjoyed in June's dining room.



GYLES HOUSE, PITTENWEEM

In the Pittenweem section of the authoritative ‘The Buildings of Scotland, Fife’ by John Gifford, Gyles House is described as ‘a three-storey captain’s house of 1626’ and its title deeds record that the house was first owned by a Captain James Cook.¹ Later in the 1600s ownership passed by marriage to the Horsburgh family, where it stayed for almost 300 years, eventually being sold in 1930 to artist John Henry Lorimer, who at that time held Kellie Castle.



Perhaps inspired by his father’s rescue of Kellie Castle, Lorimer realised that by restoring the house and white harling its stone walls, he could make something of a ruin. This initiative by Lorimer and the subsequent popularity of Gyles House as a subject for artists and photographers even from the 1930s can be seen as a precursor for the postwar conservation movement that saved many of the hitherto unappreciated vernacular buildings of the East Neuk.



This image of Gyles House shows its condition in the 1880s.

John Henry Lorimer bought Gyles House for £5 in 1930, by which time it was severely fire-damaged and roofless.

Lorimer bought Gyles House for its position and the light off the sea and to provide himself with a winter studio, for which reason he installed a radiator central heating system - something Kellie Castle still lacks to this day.



Lorimer also added this large rooflight to one of the upstairs rooms at Gyles House.

This is practically identical to the rooflight in his studio at Kellie Castle, which is located at the top of one of its towers and is accessed by a very tight spiral staircase which would have been a challenge for Lorimer who was by then in his 70s.



This entrance gate to the side of Gyles House marks John Henry Lorimer's ownership with his initials JHL and the numerals 1930.

It is a replica (by artisan blacksmith Mihai Cocris) of the original gate that had mostly rusted away and which was likely to have been made by John Bennet of Arncroach, who did much of the Robert Lorimer-designed ironwork at Kellie Castle.

John Henry Lorimer died in 1936. A bachelor without a direct heir, he bequeathed much of his estate including Gyles House to the Edinburgh Astronomical Association (later the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh). He had been a vice-president of the Association and his telescope is still held at Kellie Castle. His Lorimer nephews later successfully contested the will, but not before all the contents of Kellie Castle, including much Robert Lorimer furniture, had been sold at auction and dispersed.



JH Lorimer's watercolour of Gyles House, from a private collection.

It was included in the 'John Henry Lorimer – Reflections' retrospective exhibition at Edinburgh's City Art Centre gallery in 2022.

In the early 1940s sculptor Hew Lorimer, a son of Sir Robert Lorimer, and John Henry's nephew, moved into Gyles House with his young family and used the house as his studio, but his residence was terminated by the explosion of a naval mine which again rendered the building roofless.

It was for this reason that Hew Lorimer moved to Kellie Castle, setting up his studio in the stable block, where it is now preserved and used by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) for an exhibition on his life and work. Hew Lorimer subsequently arranged the transfer of both Gyles House and Kellie Castle into the care of the National Trust for Scotland.

In the 1960s Hew Lorimer, as NTS Fife representative, led the implementation in the county of NTS's national 'Little Houses' Scheme under which NTS extended its preservation work to smaller homes through buying and restoring domestic buildings and selling them on to private owners.²

The Little Houses scheme rescued many of the most iconic historic buildings of Fife and the East Neuk burghs, particularly in Culross, Crail, St Monans and Pittenweem, which even had its own NTS branch office, so many were the burgh's Little Houses projects. And the East Neuk Preservation Society itself organised a good number of restorations funded by NTS Little Houses grants.

In the 1960s Gyles House was acquired by NTS as its first of the Little Houses projects in the burgh, together with the other properties at Nos 1-5 The Gyles; these underwent major reconstruction whereas only minor further work was carried out to Gyles House beyond John Henry Lorimer's 1930 restoration. NTS's project at The Gyles became a flagship for the Little Houses scheme, winning its first architectural design awards from the Civic Trust and Saltire Society. Since NTS's disposal of Gyles House in the 1960s, the house has had four owners and for the last 25 years it has been in Kennaway family ownership.

Gyles House comprises a three-storey two bay frontage with stair wing, a two-storey rear block and a small walled garden. The house faces the harbour to the front and directly faces the shore at the rear, with a narrow slipway on one side, meaning that during very high tides and storms the house is surrounded by water.



The house is Grade A listed, and a number of its internal features are specifically covered by the listing, including a wide internal stone arch, several fireplaces and this seventeenth-century wall panelling, which one suspects may have been transferred from Kellie Castle, which John Henry Lorimer also held at the time.



Recently the garden area at the rear has been significantly changed by the demolition of a large brick washhouse, which planners allowed to be demolished as it dated from the twentieth century.

It was replaced with a raised platform that now enables views over the sea wall, with iron railings in the style of John Henry Lorimer's restoration, in a project designed by conservation architect Stephen Newsom.

The centuries-long Horsburgh family ownership of Gyles House has thrown up some interesting stories of royalty associated with the house.

The best known is that Charles II escaped on a vessel owned by Captain James Cook of Pittenweem after his defeat by Cromwell. The only source for this story is a 1851 pamphlet 'Historical Traditions of Pittenweem', anonymous but the National Library of Scotland copy has a handwritten postscript 'signed JH, i.e. James Horsburgh'.³ Unfortunately the pamphlet contains a number of howlers suggesting it was not meant to be taken seriously. For instance, 'that Captain James Cook the same who carried King Charles II to Holland when the King abdicated the throne'.

The historical record is that Charles II escaped from Shoreham in Sussex to France, not to Holland as stated in the pamphlet. His flight came after his defeat by Cromwell at the 1651 Battle of Worcester.⁴ He had been crowned King of Scotland in 1650 at the behest of the Scottish Parliament, who were understandably miffed that their English counterparts had chopped their King's head off without consulting them. And although Charles did visit Pittenweem en route to his coronation at Scone not long after he first arrived from Holland, he never abdicated the throne of Scotland as the pamphlet alleged.

Horsburgh family papers suggest that the source of the Charles II myth was their Auntie Martin, born in 1776, who passed on a somewhat similar story, i.e. that Charles escaped over to France via the Channel Isles in Cook's vessel.⁵ The author of the papers confesses 'I much fear this story is not historically correct' - the historical record is that after hiding in a tree and various escapades, Charles sailed directly from Shoreham to Fecamp in Normandy.

The Horsburgh papers contain a further unsubstantiated claim about James Cook and Charles II, stating that 'when King Charles passed through Pittenweem he desired James Cook and his daughter to dine with him at Anster Place', and 'gave him a piece of ground on the Langlands on which to fry (sic) his nets'.

The evidence quoted in the Horsburgh papers for this claim is given as a Scots Magazine article found in a country house library, and a long lost charter for the land grant.

The 1786 Scots Magazine's article 'The King's visit to Pittenweem' does have it that the King dined in Pittenweem, but at what was a very large scale banquet, and it does not mention James Cook or his daughter.

The magazine article is a retelling of the 1651 Pittenweem Burgh Annals' account of the King's reception, which describes it as including '8 or 10 gallons of good strong ale with Canary, Sack and Rhenish wine, white and claret wine, ...and with a 36 cannon salute on his Majesty's departure'.⁶

The King did go on to stay at Anster Place, the then home of the Anstruther family, who he famously insulted by calling it a 'craw's nest', but again there is no record of him ever dining there with Cook.

The myth about Gyles House and Charles II is repeated in tourist history books of the East Neuk right up to this day.

A better verified aspect of the Horsburgh family history is their victimhood in Pittenweem's witch persecution mania. Burgh records state that in 1643 'Thomas Cook paid £5 sterling for the execution of his mother Margaret Horsburgh'. Gyles House is not specifically mentioned, but the coincidence of the Cook and Horsburgh surnames means it was very likely the same family.⁷

In 1704 a Janet Horsburgh was accused of witchcraft, imprisoned and tortured, but later had her two main persecutors charged and sentenced, but they were subsequently freed under a general amnesty for the 1707 Act of Union.⁸



There is physical evidence of major change to Gyles House over the centuries.

This image shows the projecting stones that indicate that the house originally had a further bay or a tower.

And the Horsburgh papers contain an interesting suggestion that that the stair wing of the house was originally finished off with a tower of the kind Kellie Lodging on Pittenweem High Street still has.



Further evidence of change over the centuries is the spiral staircase's blind doorway, which is blocked up and covered by the harling on the outer face.

This door would have opened out on the side of the stair block, and logically onto a first floor wooden gallery across the front of the house.

This would fit with the gallery going over to a second stair block or tower.



And the existence of first floor galleries is also hinted at in the square markings on the side walls of Gyles House and the adjacent No 5 The Gyles.

According to Gifford, these 'show the points where timber stumps were found.... which would have supported wooden galleries'.⁹

Latterly Gyles House has been used as a film location, in 1997 for 'The Winter Guest' with Emma Thompson and her mother Phyllida Lloyd, directed by Alan Rickman, and in 2019 for 'Mr Jones' with James Norton and Vanessa Kirby.

¹ 'The Buildings of Scotland, Fife' by John Gifford, Penguin 1988, p. 351.

² 'Little Houses - National Trust for Scotland's Improvement Scheme for Small Historic Homes' 2006.

³ 'A Glance at the Historical Traditions of Pittenweem over the last two centuries by an old inhabitant'. Pamphlet 'printed and sold by James Scott in Pittenweem, price one penny' 1851.

⁴ 'The Escape of Charles II after the Battle of Worcester' by R. Ollard 1966.

⁵ Horsburgh correspondence 1898 and annotated photo album of same date.

⁶ 'Annals of Pittenweem: being notes and extracts from the ancient records of that burgh' 1526-1793.

⁷ 'The Witches of Fife, Witch-hunting in a Scottish Shire 1560-1710' by Stuart MacDonald 2002 p. 66.

⁸ 'Murder, Malice and Misogyny The Pittenweem Witch Hunt' Historic Environment Scotland 2023.

⁹ 'The Buildings of Scotland, Fife' by John Gifford, Penguin 1988, p. 351.

COLINSBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

The Colinsburgh and Kilconquhar section of the report gives the background to how the archaeological dig was initiated following the identification by Fife Council Archaeological Unit (FCAU) of the probability of significant remains at the site of the Kirkwood Homes Colinsburgh development.

FCAU is maintained by the Council as part of their Planning Services, with two archaeologists who are in-house consultants providing information and advice as part of the planning process. Their purpose is to satisfy the requirement by law to give consideration to the impact of development on the finite archaeological resource of Fife. FCAU uses a wide range of resources to assess this impact on known, or anticipated, archaeological remains and can ask for archaeological conditions to be part of a planning consent. Such conditions are only relevant to a small percentage of applications, but the likelihood of archaeological remains at the Colinsburgh site warranted an investigation before any development commenced.

Though able to provide basic history and many records related to the current settlement of Colinsburgh neither the Fife Sites & Monuments Record (now known as a Historic Environment record) nor the Historic Environment Scotland databases held any information specifically relating to the site of the proposed development.

However, buried archaeological remains that predated the existence of Colinsburgh were known of in its vicinity from aerial photography of the 1980s.

Some of these showed a number of undated enclosures and an overlaying system of mediaeval rigg agriculture to the west of the modern South Wynd.



The probability for similar archaeology to survive in the field to the east was considered high enough to ask for an evaluation of the site's potential to be made prior to the commencement of works and Kirkwood Homes appointed AOC Archaeology to undertake this.

When an archaeological condition is applied to the consent of a development, FC Archaeological Unit will be available to advise the developer regarding what is required to satisfy the condition and help them appoint an archaeological contractor to undertake the works required. The objective of an archaeological evaluation is to determine the existence and nature of any archaeological remains within the development area by undertaking a programme of trial trenching to investigate, typically, 8-10% of the area proposed for development. In this instance that amounted to over 2,800m².

Dependent on what the evaluation discovers further archaeological works may be required, such as a more focused excavation of parts, or all, of the site or the implementation of appropriate mitigation methods to allow *in situ* preservation of discovered archaeological remains, or, if nothing of consequence is discovered, let the development proceed with no further archaeological works required.

Kirkwood had the evaluation take place over five days early in March 2024 and some thirty five trenches were opened across the field in a pattern designed as likely to uncover any archaeological features lying beneath the topsoil. Of these trenches most contained nothing; and remarkably almost next to nothing in the way of the expected ‘background radiation’ of small post mediaeval finds and modern rubbish that usually contaminate agricultural topsoil. Another unusual feature of the field was how shallow this topsoil was, barely 12” in places, and conversation with the farmer, who had formerly cultivated, the land confirmed that this particular field had never ever been ploughed very deep. This was good news for archaeology, which promptly turned up in abundance in a small cluster scattered across 7-8 trenches at the centre of the field.

Here and there in these trenches areas of stone surfaces, pits, ditches, and clusters and linear arrangements of boulders were discovered. Some of which had indeed been impacted by ploughing but, thanks to that not being taken any deeper, much remained undisturbed that would otherwise have been destroyed without trace, leaving no evidence of the field’s ancient history.



What had been uncovered by the evaluation was of course only a snapshot through the keyhole of trenches just two metres wide, so this initiated a second phase of investigation to be scheduled into Kirkwood’s plans for the site. In May a much wider area was completely stripped of topsoil and the fragments of archaeology that had been found were excavated fully prior to their removal to allow investigation of any earlier material or evidence beneath them, and finally to allow the housing development to take place.

The full excavation took a little over six weeks and was completed by the start of June. When development of the site then commenced, a watching brief would be maintained by AOC during any ground breaking works to record any further chance finds of archaeological remains that might require any further targeted excavation.

There is an adage used by archaeologists, often in jest, that if you find three stones in a line it must be a settlement. At the Colinsburgh site the full excavation revealed not only an abundance of lined up stones but large areas of flat stones carefully laid to provide floors for buildings.

It was without doubt a significant discovery of a cluster of late prehistoric structures of what was probably a small Iron Age farming settlement of round houses and ancillary buildings. A possible partial souterrain was also discovered, two large roundhouses, stone lined pits and other features typically clustered to form a small farmstead.



Reference to LiDAR mapping of the site showed that the farmstead stood on a raised plateau of relatively high ground overlooking a small paleo channel that would have been either a small lake or area of marshland in the Iron Age.

Analysis of environmental samples taken will possibly determine whether this area was a source of food, providing fish or wildfowl for the small community.

Whilst the excavation was ongoing, a tour of the work in progress was organised by AOC for the school and interested residents which attracted members of the Tayside & Fife Archaeological Committee to attend and see what had been revealed.

Finds of artefacts on such Iron Age sites are generally few, and such discoveries at the Colinsburgh site were noticeably scarce, though several quern stones were found. Most of these were worn out or broken examples that had been recycled as flooring within the roundhouses, but one outstanding, and complete, set of the two intact stones of a hand mill were found still together, as in use, but most curiously these had been carefully inverted and buried in the ground.

The floor of at least one of the two roundhouses that were identified remained so intact that central hearths and internal divisions were clearly recognisable with the doorway easily identified by differential wear on the stone flooring and a socketed stone to take a pivot for the door. However, two of the best, and most unusual, discoveries were made outwith any of the buildings.

From one of the pits a very large piece of degraded bone was recovered, and by 'large' it means bigger than anything you will ever have seen from a domesticated animal. The single bone filled a tub of ten litres capacity. Suggestions were made as to what it may have come from: an Aurochs perhaps, but it was too large, part of a Mammoth was one idea, but unlikely. Some later research by the FC archaeologists identified the bone to actually be the humerus from the fin of a whale.

This was later confirmed, though how a piece of whale came to be on the site we will never know, but it clearly implies that this inland farming community had links to the coast of the Forth where whales were probably not uncommon at the time.

The other artefact has yet to be seen, fully. A little away from the larger roundhouse the rim of a fragmented bronze cauldron was uncovered. Enough was exposed by excavation to determine that it was in a very fragmentary condition and had had repairs made to it using iron. The fragility of the sheet metalwork dictated that it was lifted in its entirety, still embedded in a single block of soil, to be taken away and excavated in more refined and controlled conditions before it could be analysed and recorded. The thought at the moment is that this was originally a Bronze Age cauldron, from the early centuries AD, that possibly had centuries of use before being repaired with iron. It would have been a substantial asset to the family or community who owned it and its burial at the Colinsburgh farmstead is likely to have had a ritual significance.

Even without exact knowledge of the cauldron at this stage, it is a highly significant, and rare find to be made in an apparently rural agricultural context, such as this. In Scotland the very few discoveries of Bronze Age cauldrons have generally been from votive deposits in Highland bogs and the discovery of this example in an ostensibly domestic context is possibly unprecedented.

At the time of writing field work is virtually completed at the site, and there will now be a period of post excavation research before a full report will eventually be published in a suitable public journal fully describing the work undertaken, the finds made and the significance of the site. A report of the excavation will also be submitted to the Fife SMR to be added to the archive of archaeological information held by the FC Archaeological Unit.

The stone roundhouse floor will have been lifted by the archaeologists to recover any evidence of earlier structures and to take samples from the environment before the roundhouse was there.

In line with the Scottish laws of Treasure Trove and Bona Vacantia relating to ownerless goods, all the finds from the excavation will in due course be allocated by the Finds Disposal Panel to a relevant museum, where the collection will be curated and available for future research and public display.

APPENDIX – PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

The review of Permitted Development Rights (PDRs), as mentioned in last year's report, has been completed and the Scottish Government issued an amendment to the Town and Country Planning legislation in May 2024. PDRs refer to those forms of development which are granted permission by legislation, meaning they can be carried out without an application for planning permission being made. The amended guidance updates and replaces that issued in 2012. The section specific to dwellinghouses covers extensions to buildings, garden sheds, decking, fences and walls. Other topics include the installation of microgeneration equipment (e.g. air or ground source heat pumps, solar panels and wind turbines), the altering or replacing of windows and installation of closed-circuit TV cameras. As usual with planning legislation, the guidance is very detailed.

PDRs remove the need to apply for planning permission where proposals comply with the terms of the rights. However, a submission is still required prior to taking advantage of the scheme and this takes the form of a Prior Notification to the planning authority which then determines whether Prior Approval will be required. If approval is needed then the planning authority may request additional information before deciding whether to give Prior Approval and they may also set conditions or limitations that have to be met.

The section addressing windows in conservation areas and on listed buildings is of particular relevance in the East Neuk. Prior to altering or replacing a window in a conservation area you must apply to the planning authority for a determination as to whether Prior Approval is required if the following conditions apply:

- The window is situated on the principal elevation or side elevation where that elevation fronts a road, and
- the window as altered or replaced would not be the same, or substantially the same, as the window to be altered or replaced in the following respects:
 - Opening mechanism (e.g. sash and case);
 - The number, orientation and colour of panes within the window (e.g. six over six configuration);

The dimensions and colour of the window's frame and any astragal bars.

You will not need to notify the planning authority if the proposed window matches (i.e. is the same or substantially the same as) the existing window. However, as the legislation does not define what "substantially the same" might mean this will be open to interpretation. Listed Building Consent (LBC) is still required for alterations to, or replacement of, windows in listed buildings but Prior Notification will only be required to be submitted with LBC if the changes to be made and location are as detailed above. It is still the case that LBC will only be granted where altering or replacing windows can be justified and where all proposed windows will be of an appropriate design, opening method, colour and material. Although the legislation does not specify materials the guidance issued by Fife Planning states that UPVC will not be acceptable on Listed Buildings.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Year ended December 31 2024

The Society is now holding substantial sums in the account that are destined for ongoing projects.

The balance at Dec 31 in our RBS account was £31,189 of which £8985 is held for St Monans Auld Kirk enterprise, £11,191 is held for the Pittenweem Priory Information Panel project and £5450 is held for Friends of Pittenweem Kirk.

The balance remaining that is due to the Society is therefore £5563. This sum has remained fairly constant over the last few years reflecting the fact that we are welcoming new members and getting good support for our visits and meetings thanks to an enthusiastic committee.

Despite the rapacious behaviour of Scottish Power our expenses are met by our receipts and when the Scottish Power contract expires in January 2026 we will have scope for renegotiation.

Statement of Receipts & Payments

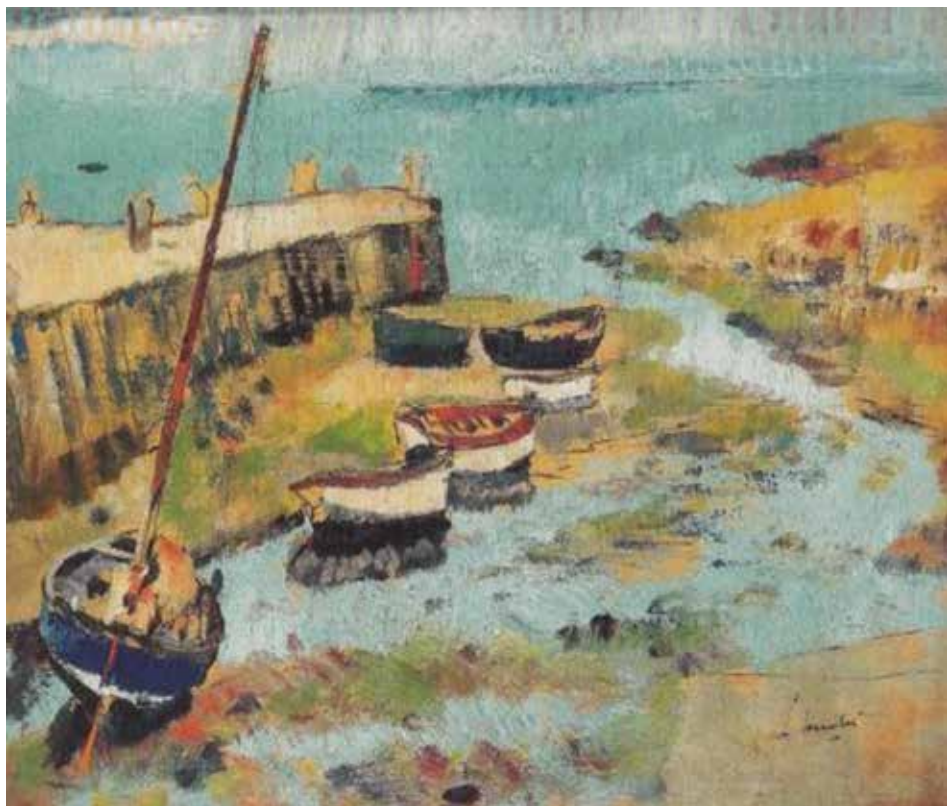
Year Ended 31st December 2024

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
	£	£
Receipts		
Bank Interest	310	299
Members subscriptions	1833	1,695
Tax recovery on subscriptions	360	395
Donations	7460	11,256
Outings	1604	1,111
M&G	2700	2,565
	14,267	17,321
Payments		
Printing	847	773
Admin	261	551
Website		
Insurance	296	277
Cleaning, Heat & Light	922	529
AGM, Visit and Reception expenses	926	520
Donations	400	500
St Monans Church payments		
Pittenweem Boards Project	2065	1,769
	5717	4,919
Surplus / (Deficit) for the year	8550	12402

Statement of Balances as at 31 December 2024

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Fixed Assets		
Heritable Property	30,000	30,000
	<u>30,000</u>	<u>30,000</u>
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	49,470	40,920
	<u>49,470</u>	<u>40,920</u>
Net Assets	<u>79,470</u>	<u>70,920</u>
Reserves		
Balance B/Fwd	70920	38,518
Surplus / (Deficit) for year	8550	12,402
Revaluation of 5 Station Road		20,000
Total Reserves	<u>79470</u>	<u>70,920</u>

The East Neuk of Fife Preservation Society (SCIO) is a registered charity under Scottish Charity number SC 051336



George Lesley Hunter, Lower Largo, 1922