



# Tolbooth Times



## Stonehaven Tolbooth Association 2017

### From the Editor

The end of September brought our summer opening hours to a close. The Tolbooth has enjoyed another successful summer with an increase to date in visitor numbers of 1405 compared to last year.

October saw the start of the winter opening hours when the museum only opens on Saturdays and Sundays. However, we did open every day (except Tuesday) from 16th to 23rd October as these are the school holiday dates.

Both the Harbour Festival and Aberdeenshire Doors Open Day were a great success with excellent weather and huge crowds of visitors. The museum opened all day for both events and reports are on page 2.

The Tolbooth continues to enjoy excellent reviews on TripAdvisor and a selection is included in this issue.

*Tom Macpherson*

Issue: July—September 2017

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### 2017 AGM — CHAIRPERSON REPORT

Another successful year thanks to our volunteers who gave their time and energy to support the Museum and the Clock Tower. Sometimes this has been difficult and I have the grey hairs to prove it! However I express my sincere thanks to all for your continued support.

We welcomed new volunteers to the wearing of the famous 'Red Fleece' and said goodbye to others. We wish our young volunteers who gave their time every success for their future and would welcome them back at any time. We continue to offer support to younger volunteers working towards The Duke of Edinburgh or Saltire Awards. Special thanks to Liz Molloy who stood down as a 'volunteer' but continues to supply comments from 'Trip Advisor'.

Thanks to information from George Strang we were able to offer a 'placement' for Aberdeen University Museum Studies Programme and in the months May to July we had with us Amanda Hoffman. Amanda worked closely with Louise Coates our Curator to establish an up to date museum inventory. Amanda is now back home in the USA and we wish her well for her future. At this point in time we are still waiting for a report from Amanda on her time with us.

We have again put our advert advertising the Museum on the Land or 'Happy' train as I call it.

Worldwide and local visitor numbers continued to grow with fantastic comments in our Visitor Book and Trip Advisor. The Museum and Clock Tower opened at Hogmanay, we hosted a musical session at the Stonehaven Folk Festival by Jonny Hardie and opened all day on both Stonehaven Harbour Day and 'Aberdeenshire Open Doors Day'. Dr Eileen Bresnan, Marine Scotland thanked us for all our help on the latter including the gazebo which provided excellent protection.

We received £4000 from the Meikle Carewe Wind Farm Community Fund and this part funded the new lights for the Museum. These certainly enhance both Museum and visitor experience. We received a donation of £25.00 from Stonehaven Probus Club and £250.00 from Stonehaven and District Lions Club and send our thanks.

We have hosted a number of visits from a local Nursery, Primary Schools and other groups throughout the year.

Our Tolbooth Times is still a very popular publication and we receive favourable comments from Local Councillors, Chief Officers of the Local Authority and other interested parties e.g. Lord Lieutenant of Kincardineshire who praise the work of the 'Volunteers'.

The Museum was featured in the Scotland History Magazine. Neil McLennan visited the Museum and recorded interviews with various volunteers. The recording known as a 'podcast' was placed on the magazine's web site.

Our shop continues to thrive and offer a variety of goods to suit all which is always a good thing.

## Stonehaven Harbour Festival

The annual Stonehaven Harbour Festival took place on Sunday August 27th 2017, As usual the museum opened all day. The weather held fine and the harbour was crowded with visitors.

In addition to the main museum and clock tower, Jim Bruce set up his gazebo and stalls in the courtyard. As in previous years, he brought a collection of interesting and in some cases weird and wonderful exhibits from bygone days. On Saturday George Strang, Bill Skinner and myself helped Jim to erect the gazebo and tables and Jim returned early next morning to set out his exhibits. Both the museum and courtyard were extremely busy, with a combined total of **1249** visitors.

Volunteers who were on duty on the day were Cressida Coates, Louise Coates, Jim Bruce, Shona Barclay, Jean Skinner, Freda Adams, Clare Thomas, George Strang, Ian Balgowan, Tom Macpherson and Kelley Macpherson. The pictures show the courtyard preparation on Saturday and the volunteers who were on duty at various times of the day.



## Aberdeenshire Doors Open Day

Doors Open Days is Scotland's largest free annual architectural event. It takes place in September throughout Scotland as part of the Council of Europe European Heritage Days. It's a joint initiative between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and aims to give people a greater understanding of each other, through sharing and exploring cultural heritage and encouraging everyone to appreciate and help to preserve their built heritage.

The event took place on 16th September 2017 and a number of volunteers attended, Jim Bruce, Gwynne Stewart, Mary Sutcliffe, Dennis Collie, Ian Balgowan, Tom Macpherson, Kelley Macpherson. Once again Jim Bruce set up his gazebo in the courtyard, but this time to host the staff from the Marine Scotland Laboratory in Torry for a display of the valuable work they do.

Marine Scotland is responsible for the integrated management of Scotland's seas. Their key responsibility is to ensure the prosperity and environmental sustainability of Scotland's seas, working closely with their key delivery partners and others. To find out more about them go to <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine>.

Sadly in the afternoon when Kelley and I were on duty, we were so busy that I didn't manage to visit their courtyard exhibition, so can't really report on it. However the Marine Staff commented that they had had around 300 visitors to their courtyard exhibition, with great interest being shown in their work.

Our afternoon was hectic, visitors came in to the museum in droves, we ran out of boards for the children's dinosaur hunt at least 3 times and after taking down the banners etc. at the clock tower and museum we both went home shattered! Visitor numbers on the day were 738 for the museum including the courtyard and 343 for the Clock Tower.

## Tripadvisor comments

### *"lots of interesting bits"*

This is a free place to visit near to the harbour. It is run by volunteers and has an assortment of antique collections. It also houses a large presentation of the New Year Fire ball ceremony including a video and exhibits of the fire balls. Worth dropping into.

### *"A trip back in time"*

We paid a visit to the Tolbooth Museum yesterday afternoon, which happens to be Stonehaven's oldest building. Not a huge museum, all set out on the ground floor level, but nonetheless some very interesting and unusual exhibits. Interesting to see the little cell, and read up about and see the 'punishment device' which was weighted down and involved prisoners turning the crank. If the screw was tightened it made it harder for the prisoners to turn. There are a number of exhibits associated with Stonehaven's heritage, plus many other items that were of interest to us including an old washing machine with a handle which was turned to agitate the clothes.

Overall, an enjoyable visit, and a trip back in time. Staff were very friendly and helpful, and there is a small shop within the museum. Admission is free, but donations I'm sure will be greatly appreciated.

### *"Interesting, friendly visit"*

We visited this museum and I would definitely recommend this. Interesting information on Stonehaven and surrounding area, Dunnottar school and a DVD on the fireballs. My daughter participated in a 'find the dinosaur' activity which was great to do where you had to find 10 paper dinosaurs located around the museum and you got a small prize. We have to mention Tom, who welcomed us into the museum and told us many interesting facts, he was great and made our visit even more interesting and special. It's free entry and you can make a donation.

### *"Lovely wee find"*

Popped in today on a visit to Stonehaven, lovely older gentleman greeted us and was lovely with our young daughter. Although small, it is packed with interesting items etc. My daughter who is 6 loved seeing it all! Wee gift shop excellent with little Knick knacks that won't break the bank.

## Furry Pest Problems

Unfortunately there have been further reports of a rat infestation in the Inner Courtyard. The pest controller has investigated and is of the opinion that the animals are feeding in a waste composting bin that has no base. This bin is used by the restaurant. Bait has been laid but this is only a short term solution. The Head of Aberdeenshire Council's Environmental Control has been informed and she has requested a report from the pest controller.

## Museum Extension

There is still no official word from the planning department concerning our application. Informal contacts suggest that there are no major issues but the official concerned is on 3 weeks holiday and a definitive answer cannot be expected before mid-November.

## Footfall July to September 2017

Month	Museum	Tower	Combined	Days Open	Museum Avge	Tower Avge
July	3860	887	4747	25	155	35
Aug	4978	981	5959	27	184	36
Sept	2923	937	3860	26	112	36
Totals	11761	2805	14566			

### Accumulative 2017 Totals

Museum	21,191
Clock Tower	5,329
Both Attractions	26,520

### Comparative 2016 Totals

19,584
5,531
25,115

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## Stonehaven Tolbooth Association

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The Stonehaven Tolbooth is thought to have been founded by George Keith, 5th Earl Marischal (c. 1553–1623), with the original purpose of the rectangular building being to act as a storehouse during the construction of the nearby Dunnottar Castle. In 1600, an Act of Parliament provided that the building become a Tolbooth.

After 1624, the town business functions were conducted on the upper level of the Stonehaven Tolbooth, with the ground floor being used as the prison. It remained a courthouse (upper floor) and prison (ground floor) until 1767 when these activities were relocated.

The building then reverted as a store until the 1950s by which time it had fallen into disrepair. In 1963 the building was renovated and officially re-opened by Her Majesty the Queen Mother. In 1975 the lower floor was converted into a museum reflecting Stonehaven's long history. Currently the museum occupies the ground floor whilst a separate restaurant operates on the upper floor.

*Entry is free.*

## Snippets

The museum electric heaters have been replaced and hopefully will provide a warmer environment for volunteers and visitors on the cold winter sessions when the NE wind blows into the museum open door!

STA committee members would like to thank Stonehaven Lions Club for their generous donation of £250 and Stonehaven Ladies Proboscis Club for their donation of £25.

The fault with the Fire Balls TV has still not been resolved. Frances Swanston (Historic Asset Management Project lead) is now responsible for the Clock Tower. Andrew Newton will contact Frances about the enduring problem over the TV.

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## Become a Tolbooth Volunteer!

The Tolbooth museum is supported by Aberdeenshire Council, but managed and operated entirely by a team of volunteers.

The museum is visited by over 22000 people a year of all ages, and from 108 countries across the globe, as we can see from our visitors book. We regularly have visitors from Europe, Asia, Australasia, the USA and Canada and many other parts of the world.

Volunteers play a vital role in providing a warm greeting to visitors as they arrive and in answering the many questions

about items in the museum .

Also, we frequently act as an information service, including providing directions to other attractions such as the castle.

We have a dinosaur hunt for the children with a small prize at the end which they find great fun.

No experience is necessary, just an interest in being part of an enthusiastic team dedicated to preserving and sharing this incredible piece of history .

We're a friendly bunch and volunteers are on duty while the museum is open. Most volunteers do one or two afternoons a month,

but you can do as many or as few as you choose.

The museum's opening hours are

### Summer Season

Daily except Tuesday,

13:30 — 16:30

### Winter Season

Saturday & Sunday 12:30—15:30

**If you'd like to join us, you can complete the form on the website or drop in when the Tolbooth is open.**

**You'll even get one of the famous red fleeces!**