

STONEHYVE ·TOLBOOTH TIMES·





Editorial

In years to come, when we look back to the year 2020, it may be difficult to imagine a time when we were ordered by the Government to stay at home, and severe restrictions were put on our freedom to move around and travel. Thankfully ,we are now looking forward to our way out of this lockdown and a return to normal life. Our thoughts and sympathies go to those families who have lost loved ones during this time.

The Tolbooth Museum has been closed and when we do re-open, strict guidelines will need to be followed. As has now been said many times, life may not be the same again but I am sure we will all cope with the changes to come.

With the lovely Spring weather during April and May, I seem to have spent more time in the garden, and less time sorting through the very many photographs and other historical items formerly held by the Heritage Society and now passed to the Museum. These include a collection of old Guide books to Stonehaven. There may be fewer visitors to Stonehaven this summer, but the feature in this issue will help us to remember that ,at one time, tourism was a major part of the local economy, and the Town Council worked hard to improve the amenities of the Town.

I wish you all a very pleasant summer ,wherever you may be, and look forward to better times ahead.

Keep safe

Gordon Ritchie, MVO

Editor



Museum News

As many of you will already know, Ian Balgowan's wife Diane sadly passed away in May. A large number of volunteers turned out to witness the cortege leave the Harbour area. As requested by the family, they all wore bright colours, in this instance the famous red fleece. Chair Cressida Coates has heard from Ian and the large turnout meant a great deal to him and his family.



The Museum may have closed on 8th March but things are still happening behind closed doors. Aberdeenshire Council have requested that we undertake a weekly check of the premises for any damage, vandalism etc. A wise precaution in light of the damage done recently at Dunnottar Castle. The checks are being done and we are glad to report that everything is currently all in order.



Aberdeenshire Council have also announced that the annual Open Doors event, usually held in September, will not proceed this year. The Museum is however being encouraged to participate in the occasion as a digital event. As the Museum already has a virtual tour set up on its website, we will sign up to the online event.



The Co-op Community Fund has been earning money for the Museum each time you shop there. As long as you have nominated the Museum as your chosen charity, then a percentage of your shop will be given to the Museum for outreach work. So far we have earned £1491. New charities will be nominated in October 2020—so we still have 3-4 months to keep earning funds for the Museum.

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/39349>



The large collection of old Stonehaven images, donated to the Museum by Stonehaven Heritage Society, have now been digitised and you can see them on the Museum website at

<http://gallery3.stonehaventolbooth.co.uk/>



The Scottish Government road map to easing lockdown measures, suggests that museums will be able to re-open in Phase 3—currently mid-July at the earliest. Detailed guidance on the steps to be taken is awaited. Once we know what has to be done, we will be able to seek some funding from the Covid-19 Adaptation Fund being run by Museum Galleries Scotland.

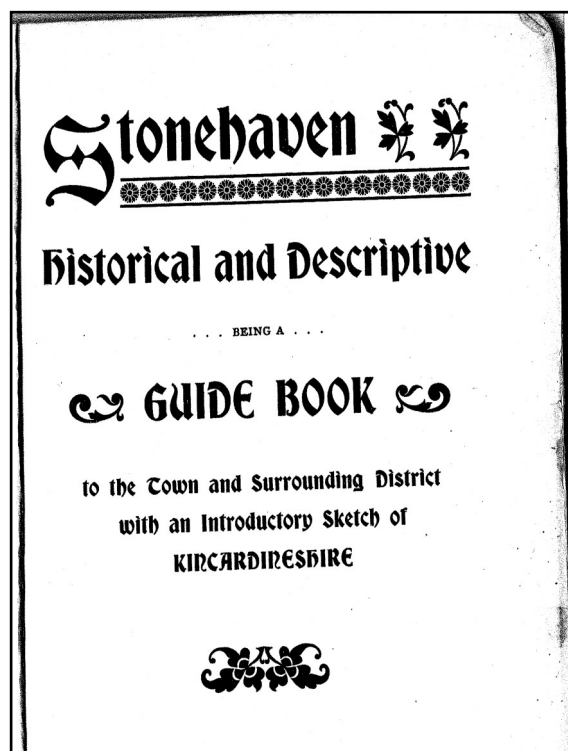


Guides to Stonehaven

By Gordon Ritchie

Before Stonehaven became established at the end of the 19th century as a holiday resort, it was obviously necessary to attract visitors to the town. Once the railways to Aberdeen came in the 1840's, travelling became much easier and people perhaps came to Stonehaven because of family connections or possibly to escape the harsh living conditions in the larger cities and towns of Scotland.

Stonehaven was of course by that time a thriving and busy town with a buoyant fishing industry, the tan works and several mills. The town was starting to develop various attractions including the Recreation Grounds, first opened in 1885, and the Golf Club which followed in 1888. By 1900, Stonehaven could boast nine hotels and numerous boarding houses catering for the visitor and also a large number of houses available to let during the summer season.



With the increase in the numbers of visitors, it would not be too long before guidebooks were published. A numbers of these were passed by the Heritage Society to the Tolbooth Museum and are now part of the Museum's collection. It is these guides which I would like to give you further details .

The earliest guidebook in the collection was published in 1897 by W. Jolly & Sons, The Albany Press, Bridge Street, Aberdeen and is entitled

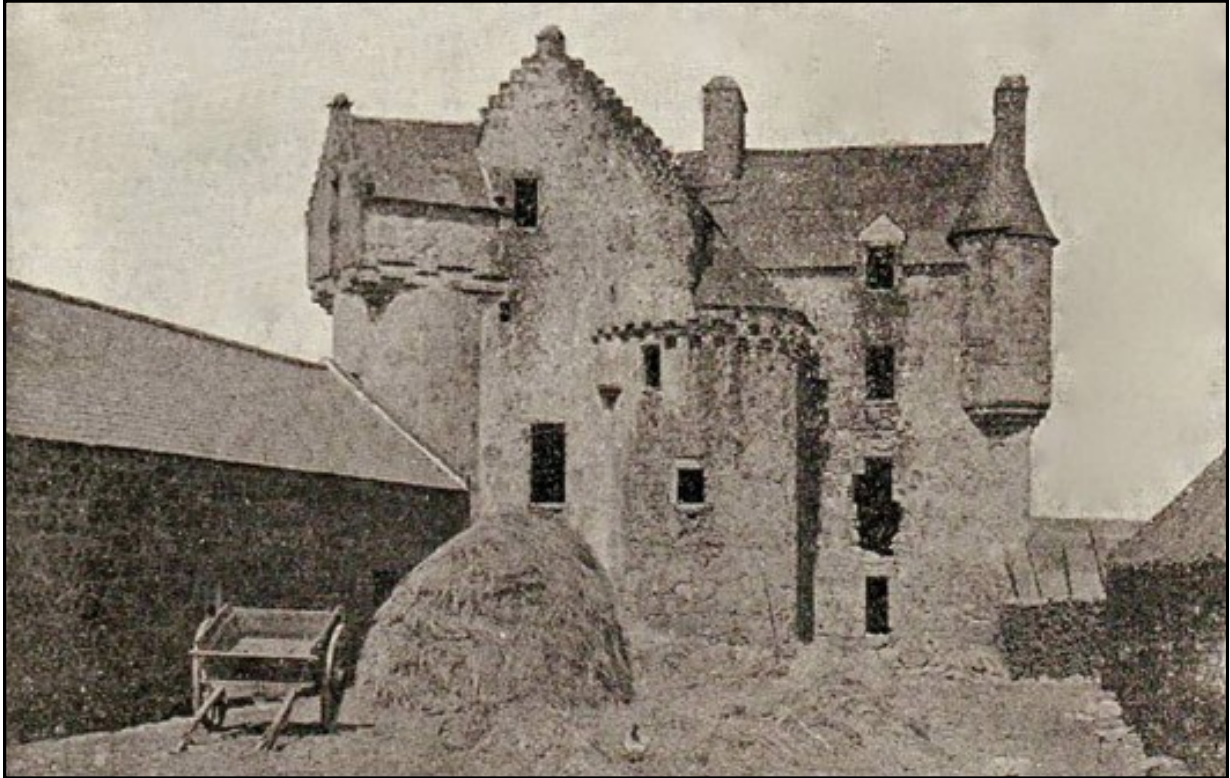
"Stonehaven—Historical and Descriptive"

This excellent small book extends to 80 pages and describes itself as being a guidebook to the town and surrounding district with an introductory sketch of Kincardineshire.

It gives topographical details of the County and a very detailed history of Stonehaven. It takes the visitor on a walking tour around the town and details the interesting places to visit within a radius of 2 miles and then within 5 miles. There are lengthy details of the history of Dunnottar Castle and also a detailed section on the Castle of Fiddes, which at that time lay in ruins.



Guides to Stonehaven By Gordon Ritchie (continued)



Fiddes Castle—taken from an old postcard 1905

©Scottish Castles Association

I was fortunate to visit Fiddes Castle , which is now a private home, in a very pleasant and secluded location. Most people would not realise the Castle is there, although it is quite close to the A90 road.

The guide also describes one of the prettiest bits of woodland scenery near Stonehaven as being the Den of Catterline, quite close to my home. As the guide states, the chief attraction to the Den is of course the waterfall ,decidedly the best in the neighbourhood but the wildness of the rocks and the variety of the bushes and trees are such as would never be expected in what looks from the outside a very ordinary wooded valley. “ *Like much else in the district, the Den of Catterline is unnoticed only because it is unknown.*”

Amusements in the town only take up two pages of the guide. There are however a number of advertisements for local shops and businesses in the town at them time.



Guides to Stonehaven By Gordon Ritchie (continued)

Jolly's guide was followed not soon after by "*Picturesque Stonehaven*" which was first published in 1899 by J. Reid of Stonehaven and with later editions appearing in 1906 and 1909. You will probably be better acquainted with this guide as it was re-printed by the Heritage Society in 1999 and was a combination of all three editions. It contained more photographs and was perhaps in a more readable style than Jolly's guide. As well as covering the history, it gives detailed walks around Stonehaven and district, stopping off to give more details of the history behind various places. Far more emphasis is given to the attractions of the town, its bracing air and dry climate, rock fishing, river angling, the golf course, recreation grounds and bathing in the sea.

A 30 page annexation to the guide gave photographs and details of some 60 houses available to let in the town, mostly in Bath Street, Gurney Street and Arduthie Road areas. A number of these houses were built by local shop keepers and business people and presumably to finance the purchases, they would let the houses for the summer months to families from Aberdeen or central Scotland.

A strong supporter of Stonehaven at the start of the 20th century was Professor John McKendrick of Glasgow University. He had spent his family holidays in the town from about 1870 and eventually took up permanent residence on his retirement, building Maxieburn at the top of Bath Street and becoming Provost of the town. In the first edition of *Picturesque Stonehaven* in 1899, he waxed eloquently on its many attributes and it is perhaps worth quoting some of these.

It would be difficult to find a place better adapted to serve as a health resort for allcomers, and, more especially, for residents in the south and west of Scotland and in England generally. The winds bring pure air from whatever quarter they blow, whether from the wide agricultural area of the Mearns, from the heather clad hills of Deeside and Braemar, or from the keen North Sea. Every visitor is struck with the bracing climate, that soon brings colour to the cheeks, sharpens the appetite, and stimulates to active muscular exercise without fatigue.



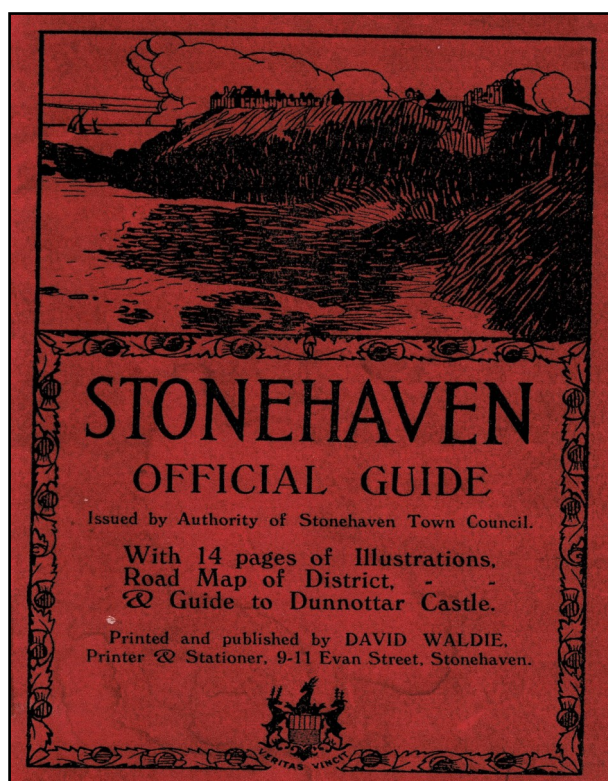
In these days of strain and stress, both in business life and in scholastic and literary life, a holiday time is absolutely necessary, and one cannot spend it better than by the side of the North Sea, where the sea breeze is always invigorating, even on the hottest day.



Guides to Stonehaven By Gordon Ritchie (continued)

Bold words indeed, but one wonders whether they would attract someone to 'Stonehaven today. Nevertheless, it must have done when these words were first written just over 100 years ago, as Stonehaven became a popular and thriving holiday resort, at least during the summer months. *Picturesque Stonehaven* is an enjoyable read and you will certainly identify many places in the district which have not changed greatly in a century. I will leave the last words to Professor McKendrick.

A few weeks of restful recreation in such a place as Stonehaven, living a simple, healthy outdoor life, in a district in which Nature at once presents some of her sweetest and sterner aspects, will do much to restore the jaded dweller in our large cities. He need not fly to the Alps or the Pyrenees in quest of pure air and health, when he can find these nearer to home.



In 1924 , a new *"Stonehaven Official Guide"* was published by authority of Stonehaven Town Council . This fine booklet was printed and published by David Waldie of 9/11 Evan Street, Stonehaven, a local name which still continues today. The guide is shorter than the earlier ones mentioned, with about 40 pages of text and over 50 pages of advertisements. The foreword is by Provost Charles Burns, a local doctor and a well respected figure in the town. Like Prof. McKendrick 25 years earlier, he truly loved the town as you will realise from the following extract.



Guides to Stonehaven By Gordon Ritchie (continued)

An extract from *Stonehaven Official Guide* of the foreword by Provost Charles Burns.

Approach it as you may from north, south or west, it has its beauties and surprises. Within a few miles around you have interest and beauty enough to make a holiday memorable. Come in the golden time, the month of April, or the early weeks of May, when the whins are in bloom and the broom is royally aureate. Get to the hills afoot, if your limbs be young, by Polbare and Glithno to the Roman Camp and you will think with me that youth itself is no more golden than are the hills in spring.

Come in the early summer—the roseate time—when there is still white in the hedgerows and the wild rose is in bloom, when by the roadside and in the fields the pink and red flowers show and on the hills the young fern beds are emerald against the olive green of heather.

Come in the autumn when the heather is purple and take to the hill road again, this time by Cheyne towards Swanley until you see the hills. Here step aside a little way by a field road and look in to the deep bed of Cowie, look upon the purple hills on each side and beyond to Mergie Glen, with Kerloch in the distance and I vow, though you may have seen more imposing sights, you scarce could see finer.

Mayhap your pleasure is more in the haunts of men than in the contemplation of these solitudes. Come then to the town. Come by the coast road from the south. The North Sea on your right stands up like a grey wall and here and there small craft move slowly like insect-life upon its surface. Now we see the great Tower of Dunnottar against the sombre sea. But here are not the haunts of men but of historic shades. They will bide your coming on an other day, though they may be the shades of a mighty and warrior race, for there is no history in the making. The play is ended and the tale is told.

Before us is a hill, a crown-capped hill, a hill—if you but knew it—a cold, black hill, leagued with despair through centuries of strife and anguish. It is the beacon hill of long ago. It is the hill of watching for the wives of men who steer a perilous course upon the treacherous sea. Here stood the English battery that stormed Dunnottar. And now it is crowned by the Memorial to Stonehaven's sons who fell in the greatest strife of all.

But what of the town? As you round the bend of the road, a bend which might have been planned for surprises such as this, the town is before you. Here we must halt. Before you is the harbour and the red tiles of the town. The yawls may be nodding at the jetty side. The note of the salesman's bell may reach your ears and the buyers and fishwives may move upon the jetty from catch to catch.

Inland and northwards is the new town, varied in its colouring, its streets terraced up the brae face, their trees in foliage, and the houses, you would think, upon the tree tops and further inland are woods in plenty and lofty hills. The town set like a theatre, tier upon tier, is a delight to look upon, and I venture to think you may return to this vantage point to look upon the entrancing scene again and mayhap you will climb the Black Hill by the path of pilgrimage to read the graven stone and view the wider prospect.



Guides to Stonehaven By Gordon Ritchie (continued)

An extract from *Stonehaven Official Guide* of the foreword by Provost Charles Burns.

Others will speak here of the recreations the town affords, of the invigorating air, of material comforts and many other things, but to me it would seem that Nature relented and placed this harbourage and the solace of the valleys upon our cruel and cliff-bound coast. I think too, that the enchantment of Stonehaven lies in this, that within so small an area you have that—the awesome cliffs, the romance of otherdays, the twin valleys of Cowie and Carron and the hill-lands about them—which is in tune with every mood, which please the intellect and exorcises care.

How could you fail to be entranced by such descriptions? The remainder of the text contains details of the history of the town and its popular features, the New and Old Towns, the Harbour, the Beach, the Recreation Grounds and the Golf Course. In addition to favourite walks, some ranging up to 10 miles, there are details of motoring excursions. The Stonehaven Motor Garage Limited had a regular charabanc service of popular tours from their premises at 12 High Street and their booking office at 12 Evan Street.

Again, there are several pages of advertisements, but only 2 businesses names are still around today—Leslies of Barclay Street and Dundee Equitable Boot Depot now known as DE Shoes on Evan Street. At that time, Stonehaven could boast 10 grocers. I was interested in the advertisement by Wm. Masson, Cabinetmaker of Beachgate, and maker of fine furniture including bedroom suites, sideboards and bureaux etc., and who could also claim that

“We are showing at Wembley Empire Exhibition, Bureaus made in our own workshop”



A pleasant view of the Market Square in quieter times.



Famous People of Stonehaven

It is proposed that the Tolbooth Museum will have display panels on famous people born in Stonehaven and district, or who have a strong connection to the area. However, who do we feature?

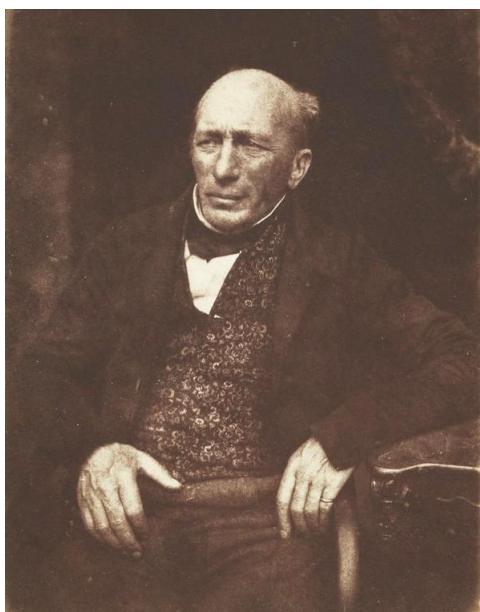
In 1990, 'Stonehaven Heritage Society published a small book by Archibald Watt entitled' **A Goodly Heritage**'. It contained details of 28 people, 27 men and 1 woman, born in Stonehaven or within a 12 mile radius or who lived in the area for an appreciable time or performed a major part of their life's work here.

In Archie's distinctive style, he included names from all over Kincardineshire , but if we narrow the names down to just Stonehaven, there are a number we can include.

The Barclays of Ury include David Barclay (1648–1690) who was a famous Quaker, Robert Barclay (1731–1797) who founded the new town of Stonehaven , and Robert Barclay Allardice (1779–1854) the famous Pedestrian who in 1809 walked 1000 miles in 1000 hours

Robert W. Thomson , inventor of the pneumatic tyre was born in a house in the Market square, and John Reith, first Director General of the BBC was born in a house at the top of Evan street.

There are others with Stonehaven connections, and if you have any suggestions, please let us know.

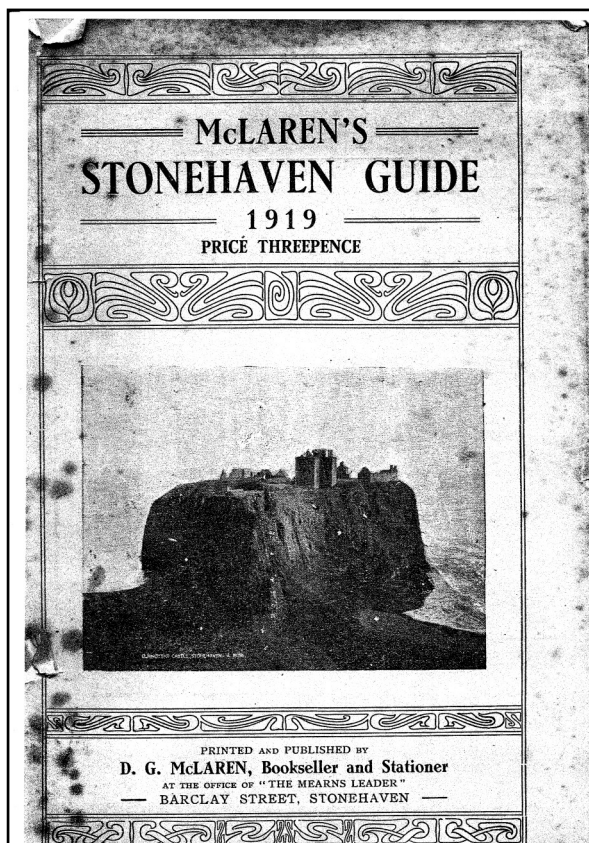


Robert Barclay Allardice

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In the next edition—



Guides to Stonehaven—Part 2

If you have any stories or information you think could be included in future editions, please get in touch with either

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