



## Stonehaven Tolbooth Association 2017

### From the Editor

As January heralds in 2018 we can look back on yet another successful Tolbooth year. Annual visitor numbers continued to grow with a new record of 24,365 for the museum, an increase of 1013. Combined total for Tower and Museum was 30,366. We participated in major events, opening the museum on both the Harbour Festival and the Open Doors Day both of which were reported on in the previous issue.

It was with great sadness that we received the news of the death of long-standing member George Swapp OBE. He is fondly remembered by volunteers and his obituary can be found on page 2 together with a report on the well-attended launch of his new book. Which took place in the Tolbooth.

We again hosted visits from local primary school children and articles on both of these events are included in this issue.

I hope you all enjoyed your Christmas and New Year festivities and I wish you good fortune for 2018.

*Tom Macpherson*

Issue: October—December 2017

### Inside this issue:

George Swapp OBE— Obituary George's Book Launch	2
Clock Tower New Year Opening Tolbooth Extension Project Footfall	3
Museum facts & contact details Snippets Volunteering	4

### Volunteers' Christmas Party

The annual volunteers' Christmas Party took place on Wednesday 5th December in the Invercarron Resource Centre. Unfortunately I was unable to attend this year due to personal circumstances.

From other members I gather that the numbers were down this year, which is a shame as Cressida always goes to considerable lengths to provide entertainment and an excellent buffet with drinks. This year's entertainment was a return visit of the Mearns Singers.

It is a busy time of year to try to organize pre-Christmas parties etc. and I hope that the smaller than usual company wasn't too disheartening. I'm certain that those who did manage to make it along enjoyed the event.

### Schools Visits

We had a number of visits from Stonehaven primary pupils. As usual these were hosted by volunteers and the museum was closed to other visitors. The visits followed the usual format of splitting the children into smaller groups, each with a volunteer who explained an area of the museum and answered the numerous questions.

Before visiting, the children provided different topics that they were interested to hear about on their visit. We were amused that they wanted to hear about **"the ancient history of the 90's"** and **"what it was like before electricity"**. I know that the many volunteers are either approaching, or like myself, are in their mature years, but after that I really felt like Methuselah!

For the **ancient 90's** we gathered together a selection of cameras, radios, video cassettes, a Sony Walkman (remember those) and other artefacts from that era. The children seemed particularly mystified by the music players and old film cameras and the involved process required to produce photos using 35mm film cassettes. As usual the firm favourites were the oatmeal grinder and the prison cell!

## George Swapp OBE Obituary

We were greatly saddened to hear of the death of George Swapp OBE, a long-standing Tolbooth volunteer. George was born in Borneo in 1931, returning in 1933 to the family home town of Stonehaven.

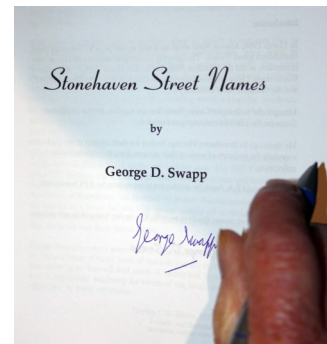
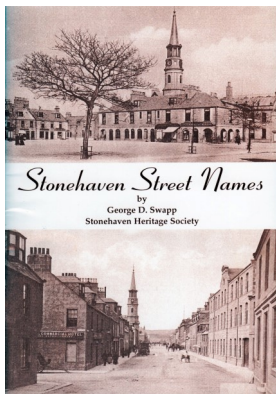
His life was one of service to both his country and to the community. He had a successful career in the Royal Air Force and while at RAF Waddington married the love of his life Eva, who he had met at school. The couple would go on to have four children – Gordon, Lesley, Susan and Murray.

Rising to the rank of Wing Commander, in 1982 he was appointed Officer Commanding the RAF Individual Studies School at Bracknell, Berks, where as head of the establishment he commanded a teaching staff of about 30 who were responsible for training several hundred RAF officers each year in communication and other management skills. The School also provided a grounding in defence and air-power studies.

After a fulfilling RAF career, in 1984 George was awarded an OBE in recognition of his RAF service. On retiring from the RAF he became an elected member of Grampian and Aberdeenshire Councils and at the same time accepted the role of a Deputy Lieutenant for Kincardineshire, assisting the Lord Lieutenant.

George was well known to Stonehaven residents as he served as a local councillor and Kincardine and District Community Council secretary for 21 years, retiring in 2007. Throughout his life George was involved with many local organisations, including the Air Training Corps and Stonehaven Heritage Society. George's achievements are far too numerous to record here.

George's last visit to the Tolbooth was his book launch, which is described below. He was a true officer and gentleman who will be missed by everyone who met him. His funeral service was held in Fetteresso Church on 11th January. The church was full and included a group of Tolbooth Volunteers wearing their Tolbooth red fleece. Our deepest condolences go to George's wife Eva, sons Gordon and Murray, daughters Lesley and Susan and their families..



Centre image shows Douglas Cusine (Stonehaven Heritage Society) and George Swapp holding the new publication.

### Book Launch

On Saturday 28th October 2017 George visited the museum to sign copies of his latest book entitled '**Stonehaven Street Names**'. The event was hosted by the Stonehaven Heritage Society who published the book and provided the refreshments. There was a large turnout of the local community who wished to purchase a signed copy of the book and to reminisce with George over the history of Stonehaven.

As an "inabootcomer" to Stonehaven (35 years ago) over the years I'd gleaned a basic knowledge about the Barclays and other bits of Stonehaven history, However, I found the many stories about the origin of the street names to be both fascinating and informative. It's well worth obtaining a copy if you're interested in the history of Stonehaven and these can be obtained by contacting the Heritage Society or from the Tolbooth Museum shop.

In 1996 George and Eva produced a leaflet entitled **Dunnottar Woodland Park: A Walk Through the Dunnottar Woods** which describes the many features, fauna and flora to be found while enjoying a stroll through the extensive woods on the south edge of the town. Both publications are a fitting legacy for a man who clearly cared deeply for his community, his family, friends, neighbours and his town.

## Clock Tower

The barometer in the Tower has been stuck in the one position for a very long time now. This was recently reported to Stonehaven Heritage Society who had paid for the renovation and re-installation of the barometer. Douglas Cousine of SHS has been active on this issue and on 17th November a barometer expert attended.

His diagnosis? A couple of serious spider's webs, but more importantly exposure to the sun had dried up all the oil in the mechanism which drives the brass and steel bushes. The barometer has been re-oiled and is now working fine. The technician's recommendation is that the barometer should be serviced every two years.

Meanwhile, the TV with the videos of Clock Tower refurbishment and Fireballs ceremony is still out of action. This has been reported yet again to Aberdeenshire Council Historic Asset Management.. Over 6000 visited the tower this year and It is frustrating that despite our volunteers opening and closing the clock tower and after the work, expenditure, publicity and efforts of all concerned, the focal point of the Clock Tower Visitor Experience remains out of action.

## New Year Opening

It was agreed that, as in previous years, the Tolbooth would open on both Hogmanay and New Year's Day to add to the new year experience for both visitors and locals. On Hogmanay we opened from 12:30—15:30, then again from 19:00 — 22:00 We had 343 visitors for the day.. On New Year's Day, we opened from 11:00—14:00. .

Many visitors to the museum attending the Fireballs for the first time asked questions and were given advice on when to turn up, where they would get the best view and about the history of the event, whilst many expressed their appreciation that we had opened up to provide something to do whilst waiting for the Fireballs and on New Year's Day.

On New Year's Day the harbour was thronged with visitors for the "Nip and a Dip" and again a large number of the crowd visited the museum. Total visitor numbers for both days were .

## The Tolbooth Extension Project

At long last Andrew Newton, the STA secretary, received written confirmation that the project has been granted full planning permission and listed building consent. We now have 3 years in which to start. As Andrew remarked, it has been a long road; the next stage may be even longer but at least we will have tried.

Achieving planning permission and listed building consent has been a long and frustrating process with many hurdles to overcome including some unexpected demands, such as the requirement to analyse the mortar used in the Tolbooth's original construction to ensure that restoration of original stonework matches the existing material.

The application process was managed by Andrew who must be commended for his tenacity and determination to succeed in the face of the numerous challenges and the inevitable bureaucracy. At the most recent committee meeting members recorded their appreciation of Andrew's work in successfully progressing the project to the current stage.

At the meeting it was agreed to proceed with the recruitment of a Project Manager and to issue an *Expression of Interest (EOT)* document inviting interested companies/individuals to submit a CV and cover letter. Appropriate candidates will be issued with an Invitation to Tender. The full EOT can be viewed on the Tolbooth Facebook page.

## Footfall October to December

Month	Museum	Tower	Combined	Days Open	Museum Avg	Tower Avg
Oct	1615	391	2006	17	95	23
Nov	800	182	982	8	100	23
Dec	759	99	858	10	76	10
Totals	3174	2805	3846			

### Accumulative 2017 Totals

Museum 24,365  
Clock Tower 6,001  
Both Attractions 30,366

### Comparative 2016 Totals

23,352  
6,654  
30,006

---

## Stonehaven Tolbooth Association

OSCR Charity SC043279

Stonehaven Tolbooth Association  
Old Pier

Stonehaven AB39 2JU

Phone: 07512 466329

Email: [inquiries@stonehaventolbooth.co.uk](mailto:inquiries@stonehaventolbooth.co.uk)

We're on the web!

[www.stonehaventolbooth.co.uk](http://www.stonehaventolbooth.co.uk)

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

After the last issue of the Tolbooth Times we received a very positive email from Cllr Sarah Dickinson praising the work of the Tolbooth volunteers.

Thanks go to our Treasurer Dennis Collie for his excellent refurbishment of the office, which now includes a proper tea/coffee preparation area and cupboard space.

We are delighted to report that Jim Bruce, one of long-standing volunteers who does so much for the Tolbooth, has now returned to good health after being ill. Jim recently celebrated his **80th** birthday, Best wishes to Jim and wife Iris. Happy Birthday Jim!

---

### 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!**