

The Ferry News

Issue 49

Feb 2005 - May 2005

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Ferry News Special

This is issue 49 of the Ferry News. Next June's issue will be number 50.

We'd like to mark this milestone by creating something special and we need your ideas and help. What do you think would make a really memorable newsletter? What would you like to see?

Please phone 415022 with any thoughts, ideas or suggestions or email mary@ferrynews.co.uk

Ferry News Website

Because the Ferry News comes out only three times a year, there's a lot happening in the village that never makes it into a printed copy of the newsletter.

To get round that problem, we run a website, www.ferrynews.co.uk, that's updated every few weeks and includes a "What's On in NQ" as well as bits of useful information about village groups, back copies of the newsletter, photographs of village happenings, etc.

We're always happy to receive additional material. Perhaps you have a village-related website and would like a link. Or you'd like to be added to our emailing list for reminders about village events. Or you'd just like to comment on what is (or isn't) on the site. As always, phone 415022 or email mary@ferrynews.co.uk.

Community Centre

The Hogmanay Party at the Community Centre was a great success with numbers over 100 – a good time was had by all.

It was decided that all proceeds from the evening would go to the Tsunami Appeal and this was added to the other collection around the village – Thank you to everyone who donated

The total for the collections in the Albert, Corus (the Lodge), Church, Ferrybridge and the Community Centre came to £998.67

Neighbourhood Watch

Some time ago the Neighbourhood Watch organised a meeting at which the various services provided by Fife Council to residents were outlined. Leaflets about these services were distributed then and should still be available at the Community Centre. This is just a reminder about these leaflets which include information on the Fife Energy Efficiency Office and Fife Home Check. Crime prevention leaflets are also usually available. For further information on crime prevention contact the local police at Dalgety Bay or one of the Neighbourhood Watch committee members.

We are still looking for someone to join the Committee with the intention of carrying on the running of the Neighbourhood Watch. Any volunteers please contact one of the Committee. It is not an onerous task, but we need some new blood to revitalise the Scheme.

Finally, we can only try and improve security if we know what needs doing. It is the member's Neighbourhood Watch not just the Committee's. If you have any concerns get in touch with a Committee member or Dalgety Bay Police. If you see anything suspicious call the Police at Dalgety Bay or call 999 if it is really urgent.

Anyone wishing to join The Neighbourhood Watch please contact a member of the Committee whose names and telephone numbers are listed below

John Done	415731
Marion Gargett	414829
Olive Fairley	416057
Dalgety Bay Police	318900
British Transport Police (Kirkcaldy)	01592 641517



Ferry Birds – Sept 2004 to Jan 2005

As usual the avian visitors have settled in for the winter. There are a few differences from previous years, but the overall pattern is familiar. One of the first signs of approaching winter is the appearance of **little grebes** along the coast. They breed locally-Otterston Loch just north of Dalgety Bay is one place-and spend the winter in coastal waters. Most of the bird books say that **little grebes** (also known as **dabchicks**) stick to fresh water but this is definitely not the case around North Queensferry. There have been at least 6 along the coast throughout the winter with a maximum of 8 seen in Inverkeithing Inner Bay on the 15th of October. They were joined by up to 19 **great-crested grebes** near Port Laing in early January. These larger grebes also breed by fresh water but are often seen in quite large numbers on the sea in the winter. The other relatively unusual winter visitor to our coastal waters is the **red-throated diver**. It is really an autumn visitor with 3 or possibly 4 seen from the coastal path in October and November and one in particular coming very close to the shore at Port Laing. The last one I saw was one on the 15th of December near the ruined pier. Other winter visitors on the sea have been the usual **goldeneyes**, **red-breasted mergansers** (40 at Port Laing in October and 25 there in January) and a few **razorbills** and **guillemots**. Interestingly more **razorbills** than **guillemots** are usually seen in the winter although there are about 4 **guillemots** for every **razorbill** in the breeding colonies in the United Kingdom.

The waders wintering around the coast and feeding on the mud in West Bay and Inverkeithing Inner Bay are mostly here in their usual numbers. I counted

about 70 **oystercatchers** on Long Craig at high tide at the beginning of January and there was a large flock of **dunlins** in West Bay on the 16th of November. However I have hardly seen a **dunlin** since. The **oystercatchers** have been around all winter along with maybe a dozen **curlews** and up to 75 **redshanks**. A small flock of **turnstones** has also been present around the bay with at least 6 feeding on the crustaceans hiding in the seaweed. When the tide is out the **turnstones** often feed on the breakwaters but they return to the seaweed on the mud as the tide comes in. A particularly good time to see them is when they feed at the tide line as the tide reaches its highest level in West Bay. Choose a high tide which isn't too high. Check the tide tables at the marina before searching. I rarely see **lapwings** and **ringed plovers** in West Bay. They seem to prefer Inverkeithing Inner Bay where there has been a flock of about 100 **lapwings** by the breaker's yard and up to 19 **ringed plovers** on the rocky shore near Cruickness Point or roosting on the pier on the north side of the bay.

Other notable recent visitors to North Queensferry have been two **shelducks** on several occasions in December and January and 3 **mute swans** in West Bay off and on for several weeks. You may notice that one of the **swans** has a light plastic tube round one of its legs with 3 letters on it. This is used to identify the individual **swan** and I will pass on sightings to the people who have ringed the birds. **Swans** in East Lothian and Fife have been studied for a long time and there is usually a report on the breeding and wintering whereabouts of many of the ringed **swans** in the annual Fife Bird Report.

Birds of prey have been quite noticeable around the village. There have been 2 or 3 **peregrines** on the

Earl Haig Fund

Thank you to all villagers and visitors to North Queensferry for their contributions to the Poppy Boxes within the village. A total of £101.15 was

collected. This amount exceeds previous collections by nearly £20. Thank you to Wilma's shop, the school, the Ferrybridge Hotel and Albert Hotel for displaying the poppies and collecting tins.

School PTA

May we thank everyone who supported the Christmas Fair by giving donations, buying raffle tickets or attending the event. We would also like to thank all the local businesses and families who kindly provided prizes for the raffle. The fair raised a grand total of £1730 towards valuable equipment and resources for the school. The children had a wonderful time visiting Santa, wrapping secret presents for their parents or friends, making place-mats and decorating mini Christmas cakes.

A meeting is planned for the end of January when we will discuss activities for 2005, we will keep you posted.

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Rail Bridge for at least the last 2 months. I have seen 2 perched on the girders rising to the first tower and also seen them soaring around apparently playfully chasing the **feral pigeons** which roost on the Bridge. I have also seen a **sparrowhawk** more purposefully chasing the **pigeons** near the school and flying around Pierhead buildings.

Other exotic species I have seen have been the usual **kingfisher** in West Bay on the 24th of October, in Inverkeithing Inner Bay on the 9th of November and along the Keithing burn on the 10th of December. **Waxwings** have appeared in large numbers this winter as many of you may have seen reported in the Press. I saw a flock near Tesco's in Rosyth on the 28th of December and about 150 near Charlotte Square in Edinburgh on the 2nd of January.

There were also some late sightings of summer visitors last year. The most unusual was a **common tern** which was flying off Port Laing on the 11th of November. **Sandwich terns** are regularly seen in November and they occasionally winter in the Forth but a **common tern** in November is very surprising. An **arctic skua** near Port Laing on the 17th of November was another surprise. I also heard and saw a **chiffchaff** near Cruickness Point on the 15th October.

Many of you may have heard the **song thrushes** around the village starting to proclaim their territories. They have a very characteristic song consisting of 3 or 4 repeats of the same short musical phrase, but each phrase being different. The birds start singing about now on mild quiet days and I have heard them near the station, at Port Laing and in the lower part of the village. One or two were even singing in December.

It has occurred to me recently that the common names we use for birds which are descriptive are often of little use in identifying them. There are, of course, reasonably accurate names, such as the **pied wagtail**, **blackbird** and **redshank**. Female **blackbirds** are however more brown than black and **redshanks** are not the only waders with red legs. Other names such as **red-throated** or **black-throated diver** describe the birds in breeding plumage so that when we see them this description is not very accurate. In fact both these divers would be more aptly called white-throated divers in winter when they are present along our coasts. One of the most confusing is the **grey wagtail** which, although having some grey plumage, has a distinct yellow colouring under its tail which catches the eye. To make matters worse there is also a **yellow wagtail** which breeds very occasionally in Fife and East Lothian. This bird is more yellowish overall with the male being brighter in his summer breeding plumage. There are several other examples of more or less accurate descriptive names. **Whitethroats** have white throats as do **lesser whitethroats**. The latter is also smaller. Male **blackcaps** have black caps but so do **great tits**. Female **blackcaps** have brown caps however. Finally **common gulls** aren't that common, **black-headed gulls** have brown hoods rather than black heads and this only in breeding plumage. On the other hand **little gulls** and **little terns** are pretty small. The answer to all this is to get a good bird book and take it with you when you are out-and-about in the village or surrounding countryside searching for the **waxwing** flocks and other less familiar birds. Good hunting!

John Done

Heritage Trust

Village Photographic Archive

We will be holding another special video demonstration of the Photographic Archive collection, as it is at present, on Tuesday April 19th in the Community Centre

We still need more photographs especially of the ferries and of the Road Bridge. So please search out your treasured photos, bring them along and see them on screen. Photographs brought along on the evening can be scanned in there and then (from 7pm onwards) and returned to you straight away. These photographs will then be added to the Archive, which has increased considerably since last year thanks to everyone's help.

Entry is free!

For further details contact John Clemmens on 418442.

Beach Cleans

Saturday April 16th 9.30am Beach by the Albert
Sunday April 17th 2pm Port Laing Beach.

Events

Friday Feb 18th 7.30pm in the Community Centre - "Recent Archaeology in Fife" presented by Stephen Liscoe - an evening discovering Fife's archaeology.

Tuesday April 19th 7.30pm - Photographic Archive Evening, Community Centre

Wednesday May 11th 7.00pm - Spring Bird Walk led by John Done meet at War Memorial.

Tuesday May 31st 7.00pm - Historical Walk led by Carol and Peter Dean, meet at War Memorial

Scottish Wildlife Trust

A Conservation Workday will take place at Carlingnose Point on Saturday 16th April at 10am. for the clearance of Cotoneaster. All are welcome. For more details contact Stephen Blow on 01324 666654

West Bay

Some would like to fill it in for housing and car parking. Some couldn't care less. Others like me and the other 40 members of SOB like it just as it is. SOB members (plus some others who have not yet joined) believe that the Bay and the surrounding land currently owned by Fife Council, should remain in public ownership for public use. The future of the Bay first became a matter of public concern in April 2004 when Fife Council published its first draft of "North Queensferry Harbour: Development Opportunity". It invited interested parties to make proposals for the development of the Bay area. This raised the possibility of commercial development (housing, property for business use, who knows what?) in the West Bay area.

To understand the issues fully we have to consider four separate areas: (i) the Bay itself which is covered at high tide; (ii) the land area near to the railway pier (the road down to the pier and its verges, the railway tunnel entrance, the two green areas set aside for public use and the land occupied by the Boat Club); (iii) the two piers; and (iv) an outlying parcel of land to the west of the Town Pier near the children's swing park.

i. The Bay itself is apparently safe from development. As part of the coastline of the Firth of Forth, it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under UK legislation and a Special Protection Area under parallel EU arrangements. Also we have had a verbal undertaking from Fife Council that the Bay itself will not be filled in. Nevertheless it could be developed at its margins. A commercial developer worth his salt (her salt if you prefer!) would wish to infill around the edge and increase the useable land area for development. Take an inch now and another in five or ten years, and the Bay will soon be gone. So my attitude to this is: over my dead body!

ii. The land area near the railway pier presents development possibilities. For the last 14 years the North Queensferry Boat and Sports Club has occupied a site there on a 28 day lease from Fife Council. This absurd arrangement is incompatible with creating better facilities (and an ironic reflection

on Fife Council's professed support for sport, recreation and local interests). Security of tenure would allow badly needed improvements to be made. As for the remaining land, a part has been set aside for public use (although canine misuse is regrettably obvious). With respect to the land, opinions range from doing nothing to a housing estate. SOB is unanimous in insisting that the Boat Club be given adequate security of tenure and the right to create a proper club house and other facilities. SOB is equally determined that the areas currently devoted to public use (the green areas) remain in public use. For the remaining land, Fife Council suggests a "sympathetic" development. Presumably this means as many as possible multiple occupation properties, crowded together and looking vaguely nautical. There is an example of this at St David's Bay. I am not entirely against some development of the site, (some SOB members disagree with me). But I am against a faux marina development for flatted property.

iii. The two piers are listed monuments. The Town Pier is now falling to bits and can no longer be used. It was rebuilt by John Rennie and extended by Thomas Telford in the early 19th Century. Its simple beauty and association with two engineers of world renown, fully justify its preservation. Besides it has a place in the memories of many thousands of travellers, which also argues strongly for its preservation. The railway pier is not beautiful, but it is necessary. Imagine the village without it. There would be no mud flats in the Bay and thus few or no wading birds. Several existing houses would be uninhabitable in the sort of wild weather experienced in January 2005. A strong wind from the west coupled with a high tide would drive the waves directly into the village. Any new building around the Bay would be equally vulnerable. The railway pier is therefore a necessity. Repairing both piers is bound to be costly. Selling the land for private development is not an adequate method of meeting the cost because the amount raised would be insufficient. Repair and upkeep are continuous, not once and for all activities. Even for short-term preservation, a private developer is likely to be of little use. My attitude is: the best ownership of the piers is public ownership. Fife Council should not



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be allowed to sell off historic structures which it has a public duty to preserve. The idea that the Council prefers to make a few bob rather than fulfil its statutory responsibilities is quite frankly, appalling. Public bodies should not be allowed to shirk their responsibilities so easily.

iv. That leaves the small parcel of land by the swing park. Conceivably a building could be constructed there. My attitude is that this is undesirable on aesthetic and environmental grounds. The swing park itself should be treated as sacrosanct. Any plan to close or move it for a development of all the land owned by Fife Council at this site, should be strongly resisted.

The debate on the future of the West Bay goes on. There is no shortage of ideas. One concerns what is known as the King's Highway. This is a historical route round part of the Bay, which has long since disappeared. If developed, it would start at the archway opposite the Albert, follow the edge of West Bay northwards and end up by Willie's Well (although the king's highway in fact extended further than this). The route could be further extended around the edge of the West Bay via a walkway ending at the railway pier. It is essential to consult all those living close to this route before going any further with this. Another popular idea is that the appearance of the Bay should be improved. Opinions on its beauty range from disgusting/appalling to ravishing/better than the Bay of Naples. Such opinions apart, there is obviously scope for improving its appearance simply by tidying up.

Save Our Bay is determined to preserve West Bay and its environs. David Greig of Dean Cottage is its chairman. If you are sympathetic to our aims and have not yet joined please contact him or me. I am the secretary of SOB (tel 418781). Please come to our meetings. They are frequent and well advertised. We still await the final version of Fife's invitation for expressions of interest in the development of West Bay. Apparently it is held up because issues with the Crown Commissioners (who are responsible for the seaward part of the bay) have not yet been resolved.

As for the future, I wonder whether Fife Council will

respect village views. The danger is that they may do what they have done in the past: pursue an agenda contrary to the good of the village, like it or lump it. If you doubt the severity of these words, just ask yourself why both the Boat Club and the Community Centre cannot acquire the land on which they stand. Bear in mind that the land involved is "public" land belonging to Fife Council.

Several SOB members have recently been elected to North Queensferry Community Council. This is reassuring (at least for some!). SOB has already defined its agenda. Soon, the Community Council will have to do likewise. What principles will it use? Here are some issues representing a spectrum of views:

- No development should take place.
- The Bay and adjoining land area should be tidied up to improve it visually.
- The play park close to the town pier should not be closed, moved or reduced in size.
- Fife Council should transfer to the Boat Club a plot of freehold land on the site currently occupied by the club, of adequate size and location for its members to develop the club's facilities.
- Whatever form development takes, continued public access to, and use of the two green areas near the railway pier should be guaranteed.
- No infilling of the Bay should be allowed even at its margins so that the current high water mark is respected.
- A single building of exemplary architectural design should be erected to house several users each of whom would occupy entirely separate parts of the building (e.g. the Boat Club, a Centre for visitors to the Fife coastal path, commercial tenants, etc).

These are some of the issues requiring resolution. I sincerely hope that we can arrive at a solution which will enhance the beauty of North Queensferry and earn maximum acceptance and support from its residents.

Peter Dean

Gala Committee

As a result of the advertised EGM on 14 December the gala committee has disbanded and reformed as a sub committee of the Community Centre Management Committee.

The community centre is a registered charity which means that many of the donations made to the gala will now qualify for Gift Aid.

At the EGM the committee also decided to start fund raising earlier this year. Collection envelopes are enclosed with this edition of the Ferry News. By doing the collection now we will be able to collect

and bank the money before Gala week.

If you would like to help organise the gala or any of our fund raising events please contact one of the committee members. Alternatively you can contact Myra McDavid on 416 388.

We have three forthcoming events -

- ♦ 12th February Valentine Dance at the community centre. 7.30. Adults £3 accompanied children free.
- ♦ 7th May - Family Fun evening at the community centre
- 18th June - Gala Day.

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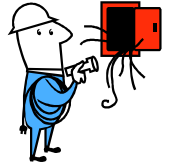


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Church News

North Queensferry Church is very pleased to let you know that our new minister took up his post on Thursday 13th January. He is Chris Park who comes to us from Colston Milton in Glasgow, where he has been minister for the past 10 years. Chris will be minister for St John's Inverkeithing linked with North Queensferry. Our Sunday services will continue to be at 10am with our Sunday School also at that time. The old manse in Inverkeithing has been sold as it needed a lot of costly repairs, and a new manse has been bought for the minister in Dulloch Park where Chris and his wife will stay.

We welcome Chris and Moira and you, if you would like to come and join us on a Sunday.

Several successful events were held in the latter part of 2004. Our thanks go to everyone who supported us and we look forward to having you with us again this year. The autumn Sale raised £863 in about an hour which was a very rewarding result. A donation from this, along with the collection from the Watchnight Service, resulted in £239 being sent to Chogoria Hospital in Kenya to assist with the Palliative Care programme. We know from their response that these donations from North Queensferry are always greatly appreciated by the hospital. A new venture for us was the Sunday Brunch which raised £324 for PiggyBank-Kids. It was such a happy gathering that we plan to repeat it for the benefit of some other village groups. Watch this space!

Next Issue

Articles

to be with Dave & Mary by Fri 13th May 2005
to 7 Carlingnose Park (415022)
or e-mail Mary@ferrynews.co.uk

We would prefer articles to arrive either on disc or by e-mail if possible, failing which paper is fine
Small ads. items of interest, letter etc. are all welcome

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