

Kirkbean Parish Heritage Society.

4th Newsletter January 2011.

HYPERLINK "http://www.kirkbeanheritagesociety.org.uk"
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Our BBQ at John Paul Jones museum on 4th July had to be cancelled on the morning following a night of heavy rain and gales which badly damaged a marquee. However the afternoon turned out sunny and many members turned up to enjoy the displays. The society now have a number of local history items on display at the museum thanks mainly to Alice Rourke.

On 7th of October your committee met when Geoffrey Smith a member and Kirkbean church elder brought us up to date with the future of Kirkbean Church. This was followed with a discussion about any opportunities for the society. James Gatherer, minister for Colvend Southwick & Kirkbean church, has contributed an article to this newsletter and I would draw your attention to his last paragraph.

Our funds are adequate to cover the little we are spending. We have been given a generous donation and some wind farm money. To upgrade our website is a priority.

Kaye Clark and Alice have now read all 555 grave stones with 1864 engravings. A pre-application form has been submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund to cover the cost of a permanent display board for this material. This has produced mixed results. As grant money reduces, more " hoops " are introduced to eliminate those who do not meet the stricter qualifications of grantors. However a fresh application is underway and other sources of funding are being explored.

An enjoyable evening was held in the Steamboat Inn Carsethorn on 3rd December when Ian Robson told us about his childhood in " The Carse " and the vacations from Edinburgh University which were spent fishing to fund university life. His vivid descriptions of the different types of nets, the methods used and the prices fish made in those days was of great interest to everyone. His talk has been recorded. This was followed by a quiz made up by Alice, with Kaye acting as question master. Over thirty people took part when we all discovered how little we knew about our local history.

Our Honorary President Tom Clark has recorded some of his memories and Lori Carnochan is writing them up for society records. Some of the older parishoners are being asked to record their memories of school days and interesting facts of bygone events.

At a social evening, possibly in March, would you like a talk on genealogy, Southernness

lighthouse or a history of local buildings? Would you like a summer outing, perhaps a visit to our local brick/tile works and harbour?

Dawn Biagi, our membership secretary depends on you coming forward with your subscriptions and informing us of any address or e-mail changes.

The Saga of Kirkbean Church. From Rev. James Gatherer.

For over three years the congregation at Kirkbean have been looking for means to repair Kirkbean Church so that it may continue to be a place of worship in the community. There has been a Christian presence in Kirkbean since the 12th century and the present building has been used for public worship since 1776. Local families and friends have gathered together within its walls to worship, celebrate and mourn for nearly 250 years.

Five years ago a regular survey indicated substantial repairs to the roof and further investigation revealed major roof and ceiling work was necessary. A Working Party was set up to look at ways of funding these repairs and engaged an architect to do a feasibility study on future use for the building. The report described the interior as being 'significant as a good example of a little altered 19th century Scottish country church' and the exterior as an important example of an 18th century church. Converting the back of the church into a multi-purpose/heritage area was considered the best way forward and steps were taken to see if Heritage Lottery Funding might be available.

The wider context is the decline in membership of the Church of Scotland and reduced attendance at Sunday services. This led the Working Party into realising that it would not be possible for the local congregation to keep Kirkbean Church open as a public building and that the Church of Scotland does not have such resources either. The situation was explained to a public meeting held in Kirkbean Church Hall in December.

At a meeting of the Kirk Session in February a final decision will be made about the future of the church however it is most likely that the Session will have to decide to put the building up for sale. In the event that the building cannot be sold it may have to be demolished. This would be a sad loss for the village and wider community but also a sad indication that times are changing and an old world coming to an end.

It may be possible for the local community to take ownership of the church, repair it over a period of time and convert it into the multi-purpose heritage area first hoped for. This would take considerable interest and support from both the local community and friends of Kirkbean far and wide but it would save an irreplaceable landmark and create a community space to be proud of for the generations yet to make the parish of Kirkbean their home.

Your committee will meet on **February 24th** at 7pm in the Steamboat, so please give them your ideas and hopes for the society before the meeting.