

F.O.L.K. NEWSLETTER

Vandals strike again



A phone call from a member of the public brought the sad news that Loudoun Kirk had once again been the target of vandals. The lady, who first advised us of the problem had been visiting her family grave just before Christmas and noticed pieces of lead at the base of the kirk.

We have to carry out all repairs to the kirk according to Historic Scotland's standards and unfortunately we are not allowed to use any of the modern preventative measures to deter metal thieves. All the lead was taken from the kirk during autumn 2010 and the company who carried out the work of renewing the lead fitted the lead in such a way, that it would make it difficult for any would-be thief to remove it all again easily, whilst still working within the bounds of Historic Scotland's legislation. Thankfully this worked and recent attempts were thwarted by this simple but ingenious method. Although in this instance, the lead on one side has been badly damaged, none of it was removed. It can be clearly seen in the photograph how the lead on the lower half of the right side of the roof has been ripped up (with the use of an 18" chisel, found at the scene). Some of the lead tabs holding it on were taken off and sadly the stone cross broken off from the top.

Although there is a reasonable amount of damage to the lead and cross, nothing has been taken. We notified the police of the incident, although there is nothing they can do to help in this case, we were advised that 3 men from Galston had been charged with the theft of metal after the previous episode.

The Calendar of events for and around Loudoun Kirk :-

- May, 1st** - **AGM, 7pm Peelhill Farm, Drumclog, Lanarkshire.** All members welcome
- May 11-13th** - Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership annual **Walking Festival**,
For more details and a copy of the Festival brochure, phone 01560 322966 or email ivrp@btconnect.com
- May 17th** - **Clairvoyant night with Sally Buxton** to be held in the **Newmilns Masonic Lodge, 10 Greenside, Newmilns at 7.30pm**
Tickets £5 each, available now. To reserve your tickets for collection at the door, contact Agnes on **01560 321813** or email **amwilson122@hotmail.com**
- June 2nd**- The Friends of Loudoun Kirk have attended the **South Ayrshire History & Family History Fair** in **Walker Halls, Troon** for a number of years now. There are many interesting speakers and stalls - Specialist Book Shops, Local and National Family History societies, Historical Groups and Societies. Visit the FOLK stall or if you enjoy chatting to people, you would be welcome to join us on our stall.
- Sept. 4th**- We will be open on Sun 4th, 10am – 4pm as usual on **Doors Open Day**. It's well worth visiting some of the places open to the public during Doors Open Day weekends in September, look out for posters and leaflets to find out the current buildings open to the public. See the article on the following page on Doors Open Days and check out their website for all areas, dates and times <http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/opendays/>
- Dec. 1st** - Our annual **Ceilidh** is going to a new home in the **Hurlford Community Center** for the 2nd year. A regular event previously in the Galston community center until the building closed for refurbishment and we had to find a new venue for the ceilidh last year. This proved to be one of the most successful nights we have had and we are happy to once again make this our venue for 2012's ceilidh. The turnout took us all by surprise last year and was supported by many young families who have indicated that they would like to return in 2012. The band were excellent at encouraging the children to take part.

Committee meetings are held bi-monthly (and as required) and if anyone is interested in coming along, either to take part or just visit, they will be very welcome. Contact Agnes for times and venue on 01560 321813 or email amwilson122@hotmail.com

Please don't forget to renew your annual membership

The Friends of Loudoun Kirk depends on donations through membership subscriptions as well as holding fund raising events. Vandal ensure that our work is not complete and we need to keep going to continue a maintenance programme. We are indebted to our membership for their support and appreciate their interest in helping to keep this historic kirk & kirkyard as a reminder of our local heritage.

Please complete the attached membership form, not forgetting to tick the grant-aid box if you are a tax-payer, it means we can reclaim the tax on any donations you make at no extra cost to you.

Or if you are familiar with Paypal, payment can be made to FOLK122@hotmail.com, not forgetting to add your name and address!

Tommy Raeburn – The Ayrshire Hermit

Although in the parish of Kilmarnock, Tommy Raeburn's farm bordered Loudoun parish and was about 2 miles along the road from Loudoun Kirk to Crookedholm. He inherited the farm from his father when he was about 30 years old. His father was described as a "quiet, honest, frugal man" but who lived "in comfortable circumstances" in Holmhead Farm. As far as we know Tommy only had two sisters and after he took possession of the farm, his sisters were left to find their own way in life. Margaret Paterson, who had been his father's housekeeper, remained at the farm and for a time it was thought, the departure of his sisters was to make way for Margaret being a new wife for Tommy. This was not so and the one and only record of any of his romantic intention was towards the daughter of a neighbouring farmer who after eyeing her at the church services, decided to set off, dressed in his Sunday best, to play court to her. When she answered the door, he lost his nerve and after a lengthy silence asked "could ye tell me the road to Finnick?"

Tommy's next door neighbour, a cousin by the name of Thornton owned a farm, close to the road leading to Kilmarnock but because part of Tommy's farm cut him off from the highway, he had to travel nearly a mile to reach it. He offered Tommy as much land as he wanted if he would allow him to put a road through the corner of his field to the road. Although both parties had agreed, they later quarreled and Tommy closed the new road. The affair went to court and as the exchange had been legally binding in front of two witnesses, Tommy lost the case.

Being of a morose character, and soured by the failure, Tommy swore a solemn oath that he would never shave his beard, cut his hair, change his clothing, nor till the land until his ground was lawfully restored to him. A number of years passed and his appearance had changed beyond description. What had been blue wool cloth, had become so patched with all sorts of coloured rags that even at a short distance, the original cloth could not be distinguished. His hat was without a brim, his clothes were hanging in tatters like a sheep's fleece ready for shearing. His shoes had long since worn out and had been made into clogs and his legs were bare. The uncombed hair & beard hung matted over his back and chest.

He was a well built man about 6 feet tall and broad shouldered. Although nicknamed "The Ayrshire Hermit", he certainly did not live like a hermit, he frequently entertained 'tourists' with lemonade and ginger beer and occasionally illegal home-made whisky. For which he was once convicted and fined £25 for his infringement of the excise laws.

He had great bird taming skills and amused visitors by calling a robin from its perch to peck crumbs from his beard and lips. He drank water when nothing stronger was supplied free of charge. His farm was a popular walk for people and they probably provided him with a reasonable income as interest in him grew.

Tommy never relented and kept his oath until the day he died in June 1843 at the age of 73. Although a bit of a miser, he left an estate of £2,400 which was divided amongst his relatives. A few years later when Archibald Adamson wrote in "The Rambles Round Kilmarnock" (1875), he states that the farm (now ruinous) is now included in the estate of Grougar, and the trees of his orchard have been cut down. Adamson also states that Tommy is buried in Stewarton churchyard. A colourful character in many ways, he was "sufficiently famous to have his portrait appear in the Illustrated London News and for Dempsey* to have repeated his miniature as a silhouette"

John Dempsey, portraitist. First known dated work in 1821 was a portrait of Hon John Thomas Thorp, Lord Mayor of London.



Doors Open Days

Loudoun Kirk is open to the public on request but we also take part in Doors Open Day in September. Unfortunately not everyone is aware of what Doors Open Day is and miss out on seeing many interesting buildings not always open to the public. It is also an opportunity to see buildings free of charge, which normally have an entrance fee. It is Scotland's largest free architectural event which is coordinated by the Scottish Civic Trust and is part of European Heritage Days and Scottish Archeology Month and both supported by Historic Scotland.

Originally started in France in 1984, the scheme spread throughout Europe and was first introduced into Britain by John Gerrard, then director of the Scottish Civic Trust and was first piloted in Ayr & Glasgow in 1990, as part of the European City of Culture. *(John Gerrard was one of the people that Friends of Loudoun Kirk turned to in the early days for advice on the best way forward in the restoration plans for Loudoun Kirk).*

The idea spread outside Eastern & Western Europe and now countries such as Canada, America, Australia and other nations take part in similar schemes. Most events are held in or around September which only a few straying from end of August or beginning of October.

It would be worthwhile, anyone planning holidays in September, to check the area for participants in the Door Open scheme. The website takes you to the countries own details so you may need to use an online translator but it may surprise you which countries and how many take part.

All details and links on:- <http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk>