



Since the last newsletter in January much hard work has been undertaken by committee members and willing helpers, members and friends alike and it seems appropriate to outline some of the planning and work to arrive at the opening of our Heritage Centre on Saturday April 18th 1992.

For six weeks in January and February there were very few days when Robin Ade and myself were not involved in work to complete our geological and historical timespan of the area. Contributions to this came from Mike Ansell, Daphne Brooke, Anne Rutherford, Anna Campbell and Tony Burns of the Forestry Commission. When context, illustrations and layout were completed Robin and myself worked closely with Tony Key and Julian Gillespie of the Regional Council who did the graphics for us.

To create our Heather Garden and the Rock Exhibition took about 100 man hours of physical labour. Two tons of river gravel were transported by John Clark Kennedy, 1100 litres of peat and 450 heathers by myself and Anne Rutherford and countless river boulders by Beryl Hamilton. The large boulders were brought off surrounding hills by Colin Campbell and John Clark Kennedy. We are indebted to Dr. Beryl Hamilton who translated our original ideas and spent many hours locating rocks and laying out the exhibition. She was assisted by George Woods in positioning of the larger boulders. Additional labour was supplied by John and Rory Clark Kennedy, Robert Cumming junior, Doug Lewis and myself. Once the drainage problems have been resolved this area will be concreted.

When the required number of heathers had been gathered together at Speyside Heather Centre neither the owner, Mr Lambie nor Anne Rutherford and myself could initially see how they could be packed into a Volvo 340. Mr Lambie almost gave up even trying when he opened the boot and two large dogs jumped out to add to the problem of space.

With maximum ingenuity and minimal allocation of space to human and canine passengers we made it. Fortuitously Helen and Fiona Campbell and Emma Cathcart were espied as we arrived back in Carsphairn and consequently unloading was speedily carried out.

Over the ensuing week John Clark Kennedy carried innumerable bags of gravel to the site and the following weekend over two days this was dug in with peat to try to help drainage in the awful clay soil we have to work with, and the heathers were laid out and planted with additional help from Hughie Adanson, Douglas Lewis and Angela and Louise Ferguson.

In the last few days before the opening Stewartry District Council planted shrubs and trees and thinned out the trees on the periphery so that we now have more open views. Daffodils and crocuses donated by Allan Wright were planted by Alison and Shona Campbell, Julia and Anna Clark Kennedy, Jo, Ben and Aletta Ade, Graeme Sinclair, Aileen Pringle and Leila Holmes.

In the week before the opening The Heritage Centre was cleaned by Evelyn

Watret, Moya Johnstone, Pauline Tilbury and myself and the Timespan and Display boards etc. set up with additional help from Peter and Beatrice Marshall, Ian Watret and Robin Ade. Robert Cumming senior helped with his drill, screwdriver etc as did Gordon Black the night he delivered the desk. Margaret Moffat folded hundreds of leaflets with assistance from her husband.

Our cupboards, picture rail, corner shelves and desk are made of oak and were crafted by Gordon Black. His work has done much to enhance the appearance of the Heritage Centre.

The video was produced by Jim and Bunty Glendinning from local slides taken by Ian Watret and Arthur Howatson and again many hours of work went into its creation. Alison Campbell, Louise Ferguson, Gavin McMorran and Aileen Pringle are to be congratulated on their clear reading of the script. Anna Campbell, Carol Cathcart and Anne Rutherford researched and mounted the Leadmines Exhibition which involved painstaking attention to detail and content and time consuming work to mount the information so pleasingly.

Carsphairm W.R.I. contributed our very individual and attractive squabs for the chairs donated by David and Sylvia Dawes. The material was screen-printed by the Grierson Brothers and made up by Mrs Lindsay.

To all those people and many others who contributed in so many ways must go the credit for the creation of Carsphairm Heritage Centre which is a symbol of what can be achieved by a small community working in harmony.

Rhoda Campbell.

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### Carsphairm Heritage Centre Opening.

At last the afternoon of Saturday April 18th 1992 arrived and Carsphairm was ready for the occasion. Lagwyne Hall looked festive with tables colourfully set with peach cloths and spring flowers, and a magnificent afternoon tea of scones, pancakes, sandwiches and mouth watering home baked cakes all donated by members of the Heritage group and friends.

Mr. William McRobert helped set the scene by playing his bagpipes as Heritage group members, Carsphairm residents and guests arrived. Over 150 guests were welcomed by Rhoda Campbell on behalf of Carsphairm Heritage Group. Representatives from Scottish Development Agency (now Scottish Enterprise), Scottish Countryside Commission (now Scottish National Heritage) and Stewartry District Council all of whom provided funding for the project together with representatives from Solway Heritage who acted as enabling body and Robison and Davidson Building Contractors were among those present as well as Gordon Black who made the interior furnishings.

In her opening remarks Rhoda Campbell paid tribute to the interest and support received from the community over the past four years. It was this commitment which helped the Heritage Group Committee to persevere and overcome the problems large and small which occurred. For such a small community the creation of the Heritage Centre was a major achievement in its history and one on which we can build in the future.

Sir Michael Herries, our first guest speaker in assigning the building to the Heritage Group management, recounted the history of its creation, recalling the news of the burning down of the A Frame building which was to have been transferred to Carsphairn just when funding for the project was in place. He congratulated all concerned for their perseverance at that stage. This, he continued, resulted in the replica of a traditional Galloway hill shepherd's cottage which we see today designed by Mr Glyn Shackleton of the Stewartry District Council and blending so well into its surroundings. "It was an ill wind that blew us some good!", he quipped and wished the Heritage Group every success in the future.

Prior to opening the Centre Mr Alfred Truckell entertained those assembled with his reminiscences of the area spanning 55 years and touched on history going back to 6000 B.C., much of the evidence of which had been brought to light by Mike Ansell.

In his years as Curator of Dumfries Museum he had often worked for communities to take an interest in their history and was delighted to see that we in Carsphairn were doing just that. In conclusion he remarked that in many ways today's opening of the Heritage Centre was only a beginning.

The guests were then piped from Lagwyne Hall to the Centre which was then officially opened. Thereafter the Centre was viewed by all and the sumptuous afternoon tea enjoyed by all.

Rhoda Campbell.

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The frontispiece showing the remains of Kars Castle in Dundeugh Forest was done by Carol Cathcart.

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#### Spent Gro Bags.

Please don't throw away any used Gro-Bags at the end of the season. We can use them or any donations of peat to improve the Heather Garden soil.



McKerlie also states " the only remains of the castle now left consist of a single arch." About fifty years prior to his visit there had been two arches. " There is a tradition that the castle had belonged to Robert the Bruce. It appears from the trace of the walls to have been of considerable extent."

Trotter in his " East Galloway Sketches "(1901) states that Loch Doon Castle appears to have been one of the three chief fortresses of the Earls of Carrick (Bruce's family), and the other two having been Turnberry and possibly Kars Castle at Dundough.

During his guerilla warfare campaign in the War of Independence it is recorded that Turnberry Castle was stormed by Robert the Bruce at the expense of the destruction of the building and it is thought that it was never again inhabited. This policy denied the enemy the use of the building and it is likely a similar fate befell Kars Castle. Edward Bruce reduced thirteen fortlets in Galloway prior to Bannockburn.

Kars, as one of the few very early stone castles, and situated as it is on the main route from Galloway to Carrick must have been involved in some exciting events, even though they are not recorded. Certainly all the principal personalities on both sides were circulating in the area and must have called at Kars.

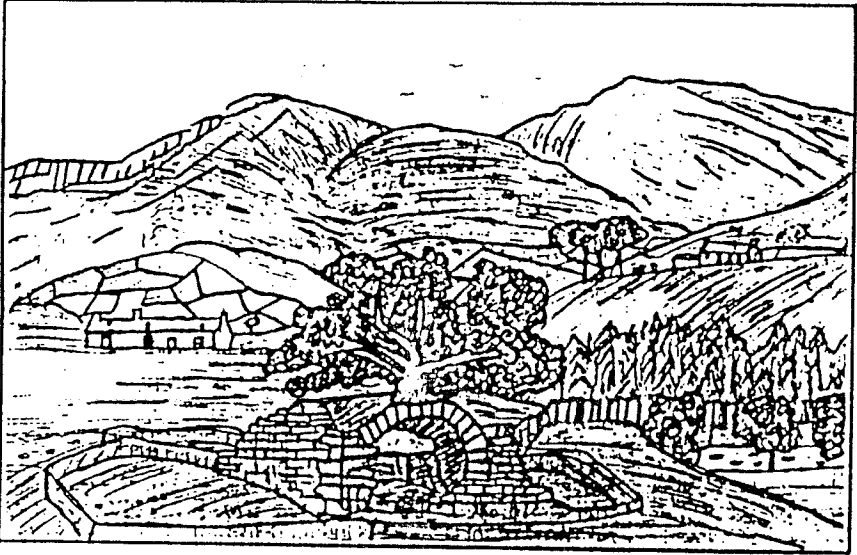
For example, just over the hill, neighbouring Loch Doon Castle was besieged by the forces of Edward the First. The castle was surrendered by the Governor, named McNaught, (a name long associated with Dundough) and Sir Christopher Seton, Robert the Bruce's brother-in-law captured. Seton was taken to Dumfries where he was cruelly executed by being half-hanged, drawn, quartered and his body put on public display.

All the historical footnotes indicate that prior to the conclusion of the War of Independence Kars and the surrounding area was under the control of the Earls of Carrick represented firstly by a branch of the Lords of Galloway family and later by the Bruces after the marriage of Robert the Bruce's father to the Carrick heiress.

One such footnote indicating administration from Carrick states that in 1190 a Lincolnshire knight, Thomas Colville, leased a quarter of the lands of Almedin (Dalmellington) to Melrose Abbey. The bound were from the burns Pollenshan and Pollnescunt to Loch Doon. Some years later Melrose Abbey arranged to exchange these lands for a sheep walk on Lammerrmuir. Their reason may have been that Colville wanted to grant the Carsphairn lands to Vaudey Abbey in his home county of Lincolnshire. They were certainly installed by 1220 when Henry the Third of England gave Vaudey permission to buy corn in Ireland for their monks dwelling in Kar in Galloway.

Trotter's sketch of Kars in 1865 shows the arch and the vaulted basement with a large oak tree growing in the centre. Today the vault has all collapsed. There remains the rotting stump and limb of an oak tree.

Although Trotter labels this sketch "Dundeugh Castle" it is almost certainly Kars Castle. Mckerlie's description of the remains in 1893 would support this.



The ruin has obviously been quarried over many centuries. Much of the good stone, including the facing stones and lintels, have gone and been used in building elsewhere.

The nearby medieval village of Polmaddie is likely to be contemporary with Kars and would have supplied the castle with labour and victuals. Polmaddie would have been the original village of the area long before Carsphairn itself came into being.

No doubt one day the site of Kars will be cleared of the growing and decaying trees. Another generation will excavate the site properly and expose the foundations so that a proper analysis and understanding can be made and a fuller history emerge.

In an age when Conservation and Heritage are very much in vogue, how can such an important and potentially lovely site be treated with such great insensitivity.

Contributed by Bill Blyth, Blowplain, Balmaclellan

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Since this article was written the Forestry Commission has become aware of growing concern regarding the castle and signs are hopeful that something will be done at the site.

Gifts.

Mrs Nancy Fergusson who was, at one time, secretary of the Carsphairm Carpet Bowling Club which is now no longer in existence has lent to the Heritage Group the cup which has the following inscription on it.

" Presented by Stevenson and Biddle to Carsphairm Carpet Bowling Club  
There is little known about the origin of the cup except that Biddle had a circus. There is a reference in the school log book about a travelling circus. " September 19th 1902. A travelling circus was passing through the village and as it stopped for about an hour the children were allowed out to see the elephants, horses etc.."

The following speech was gifted by Mr A. Gordon. There is no date on it but it was probably given at the Carsphairm Herds Ball in 1930. Lagwyne Hall was opened on June 14th 1929. In Newsletter no.9 (January 1990) there is a newspaper account of a Herds Ball at the hall in the early 30s and it may have been the same occasion.

It is thought that the speech was given by either Thomas Fergusson from Knockengarroch or his brother John Fergusson from Woodhead.

" Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have to thank you for asking me to preside here tonight. I congratulate the promoters of the Ball in having such a good turnout as I see here tonight. Carsphairm Herds' Ball goes back to a very old date. I can remember hearing old people speak of it when married and single came long distances to grace the Ball. At that time the function was held in the Crosskeys Inn, better known as the Greenhead. There was not much accommodation, two or three rooms, the large room for dancing, the other two for refreshment. When the Greenhead ceased to exist the Balls were transferred to the show hall, a place for a dance but not much accommodation but tonight you have the tidiest and best equipped hall in the Glenkens. We have to thank Major Wright for his kindness and generosity in providing such a tidy and convenient place for the inhabitants of Carsphairm. Major Wright holds the shepherds of Carsphairm in great esteem. Had it not been for such respect there might not have been a hall here tonight. I think I need not further take up your time but on with the dance. No rest till morn when youth and pleasure meet."

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Old Time Dance.

This will be held on November 20th this year with music by Roger Dobson's Band. More details later.