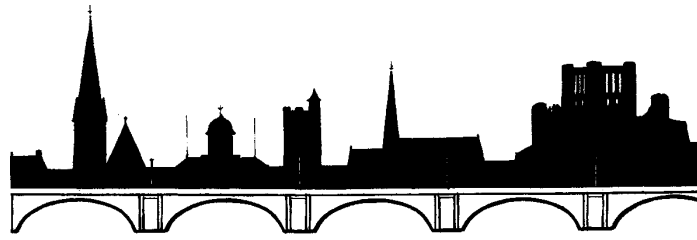


KELSO HERITAGE SOCIETY

Logo courtesy of A. Binnie



July 2021

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the July 2021 issue of our Newsletter.

We will continue to produce a monthly newsletter over the summer with articles of local historical interest, update information etc. We would welcome your feedback.

In September we very much hope to be hosting face to face talks and have prepared a syllabus for the year to April 2022. At this point in time we still do not have a venue for the talks but negotiations are continuing with a few possibilities. We will update you as soon as possible.

In the event that we are unable to achieve this due to continuing restrictions we will continue with a programme of zoom talks.

Visitors & Visits:-

At the start of the 19th century, when the Town Hall was built, Kelso was a thriving little town; its population had risen from 2,781 in 1755 to 4,860 in 1821. It was the commercial centre for this part of the Borders with its flourishing agriculture. The Duke of Roxburgh's race course, which was moved from Caverton Edge to its present site in 1822, was a great draw for the members of the Caledonian Hunt, a society for the aristocracy and gentry, who flocked to the Kelso races twice a year. And of course they came here for the fishing too. The Border Union Show began in 1813 and, along with 'The Ram Sales' formed in the 1830s – 1840s, has gone on to gain worldwide fame.

Kelso has remained popular for visitors to this day with some returning year after year. Some of them have enjoyed the hospitality of the Town Council, while many others just come to enjoy the grandeur of the Square and the Town Hall.



Kelso Races – Racing at Kelso, with its Classical Styled Grandstand erected in 1822, continues to attract crowds from all walks of life. It is known as 'Britain's Friendliest Racecourse'. On race days the town is alive with visitors from all parts of the UK.



Fishing – The River Tweed at Kelso enjoys a worldwide reputation as one of the best salmon fishing rivers in Scotland. For hundreds of years anglers have flocked to Kelso to fish some of the best beats. Today many anglers, including well known sports personalities and entertainers come regularly to fish in Kelso.



The Border Union Show & Showgrounds –

The Border Union Show which arose from a proposal put forward to his friends by Sir Alexander Don of Newton Don has grown in popularity to the prestigious two day show it is today.

The Show has been based permanently at Springwood Park since 1953. In addition the venue provides conference, exhibition and rally facilities which play host to a number of regular high profile events ranging from Goldwings Rallies, Craft Fairs and Flea Markets to Educational Conferences

The Royal Highland show visited Kelso 7 times between 1832 and 1952. Each time it was held at Springwood Park

Royal Visits –

Kings, Queens and Princesses have visited Kelso in the past 200 years as well as a number of Royal Dukes and Duchesses. The most notable are –

Queen Victoria -1867

On 20th August 1867, Queen Victoria (on her way to Balmoral along with various members of her family) arrived by train to visit the Duke and Duchess of Roxburghe at Floors Castle. There was a procession of dignitaries from Shedden Park to greet her as she passed through the town on her way to Floors and in the evening a bonfire was lit in front of the Town Hall.

His Royal Highness Prince of Wales – 1926

On 29th June 1926 HRH Prince of Wales spent 2 days in Kelso as the guest of the Duke of Roxburghe. He arrived at Kelso Station to a rousing reception. There was a civic reception in front of the Town Hall where the Prince also met a large company of ex-servicemen before making his way to the Highland Show being held at Springwood Park.

HRH spent more time in the bee tent than at any other exhibit.

King George V1, Queen Elizabeth, Princess Elizabeth, Princess Margaret & Lieutenant Phillip Mountbatten - 1947

On 18th July 1947 the Royal Party arrived in Kelso, the first stop on their Tour of the Borders. Large crowds thronged the route including the square. The Town Hall was decorated with bunting and flags as were all the surrounding streets. A special dais had been erected in front of the Town Hall where a Civic Reception was held. The King, Queen, Princess Margaret, and the recently engaged Princess Elizabeth and Lieut. Mountbatten then carried out an impromptu walk about round the square, stopping to chat with many of the spectators especially the children.



Queen Elizabeth 11 & HRH Duke of Edinburgh -1962

The Royal Party visited Kelso briefly on 5th July 1962. The Town Hall was once more decorated with bunting and flags. As in 1947 large crowds thronged the route. Following a civic reception a capsule containing various mementos of the occasion was placed under the Bullring. The Queen and Prince Phillip chatted to a few spectators before signing portraits of themselves. They then boarded their car to loud cheers and proceeded up Roxburgh Street to Floors Castle.

Other Notable Visits to the Town Include -

Julian 'The Tank' – WW1 Fund raising campaign 1919

During the later stages of WW1 a fund raising campaign to promote the sale of war bonds and war savings certificates was set up using six Mark 1V tanks. The tanks, known as Tank Banks, were individually named. Julian the Tank visited Kelso in October 1919 and attracted large crowds while parked outside the Town Hall.

Household Cavalry at Massed Bands Day 2011

In August 2011 the Household Cavalry attended the Massed Bands Day at Floors and put on a Marvellous Display. The previous day during a photoshoot in the Square in Kelso they formed a guard of honour for a very surprised bride and groom.



Gold Wings

The Gold Wings Owners Club of Great Britain first came to Springwood Park in August 1999 to hold their International Treffen.

Treffen is a Germanic word for 'meet' or 'hit'

It is the custom of the Treffen to hold a Parade of Nations with all the country flags being displayed and a Lights Parade with the bikes being decorated in a chosen theme. Both of these parades were held round the streets of Kelso to the entertainment of the people of the town.

During the few days that the Goldwings were in the area they went out on trips around the town and countryside, singly and in groups stopping off to talk to the locals and to discuss their motorcycles.

It is not customary for the Club to return to the same area but they enjoyed themselves so much that they have returned on four other occasions. In 2003, 2009, 2013 and again in 2015. The Gold Wings Club have said that the wonderful facilities at Springwood Park, easy access to the town and most of all the warm welcome from the people of Kelso and the surrounding area have contributed to their reason for returning so often.

The policy of the Gold Wings Club is to fund raise for nominated charities each year and to nominate a local charity in the area wherever they are holding their Treffen. Among the Groups who have benefitted in Kelso are, Kelso Carers Support Group – Alzheimer Scotland, The Christmas Lights Group, Kelso Community Events, Kelso in Bloom and in 2015 a very generous donation was given to Heartbeat to enable them to provide defibrillators for the town. Our own Margaret Riddle has been a key figure in the fundraising and has been honoured by the Club.

The Visit Scotland Team who were based in the Town Hall, until three years ago, shared a close relationship with the Gold Wings Club by ensuring that a supply of area maps, town maps, local interest leaflets etc. were available for all.



Citroen 2 C V Rally at Floors in July 2005

Floors Castle hosted the Citroen 2 C V Rally in July 2005. It was a cold and wet few days but that did not deter visitors or locals from enjoying the parades round the town, photoshoots in front of the town hall and even a wedding in the town hall.

The first international rally was held in Europe in 1975 and takes place every 2 years usually in the grounds of stately homes. 3000 visitors attended the 16th rally with visitors from USA, Japan and Canada as well as a large contingent from Europe. It was reported that the local economy benefitted to the tune of £1.4 million.



Kelpies Visit to Kelso – May 2015

The Kelpie Touring Sculptures came to Kelso from 15-18th May 2015 and were on display in front of the Town Hall where they attracted a great deal of attention.



Tour of Britain Cycle Race -

The Cycle Race has visited Kelso on three occasions 2015, 2017 and 2019. In 2015 the visit was fleeting as the finish was in the ground of Floors Castle. The cyclists whizzed through to town and were gone in a flash. However in 2017 and 2019 the finish took place in the square. The local community embraced the occasions with children's events, local cycling club events and businesses in the town decorated their windows and doorways. The Heritage Society set up a small historical exhibition in the Town Hall windows in 2017 and in the Men's Shed windows in 2019.



Online

National Museum of Scotland

<https://www.nms.ac.uk/>

Various exhibitions to view

National Library of Scotland – Map Library

<https://maps.nls.uk/>

Well worth a visit!!

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcomed

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Deadline for August issue 31st July 202