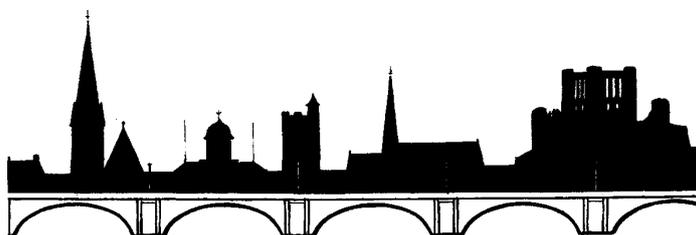


KELSO HERITAGE SOCIETY



Logo courtesy of A. Binnie

August 2021

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the August 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. Contributions to the Newsletter are welcomed.

I am pleased to advise you that we will be starting our 2021-22 programme of talks in September with a new venue and a new date in the month. Suitable venue space in Kelso is at a premium at present and we have been very fortunate to have succeeded in obtaining a venue. Further information on the full programme for the year and details of the September event will be circulated to members in the next few days. Initially the events will be bookable to ensure all Covid restrictions are adhered to.

Venue - **Kelso Rugby Club**

Date in Month - **3rd Monday**

Return to School

As the children return to school this week many parents will be reflecting on their own schooldays and the lasting memories of the old High School in Bowmont Street, known locally as the 1939 building.

In 2018 Kelso Heritage Society staged an exhibition in the Town Hall telling the story of the schools of Kelso from the Abbey schools right up to the present date. A book recording the memories of the High School 1939 -2017 was launched at the exhibition. Copies of the book can be obtained by emailing – info@kelsoheritagesociety.co.uk

KELSO HIGH SCHOOL
MEMORIES 1939-2017



The 1939 Building (Bowmont Street)

In 1934 the pupil roll stood at 697 and it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide facilities to educate the pupils to the desired standards. The search began for a suitable site on which to build a new school. Various locations were considered until at last an inspector's report stated that a site had been purchased and that proposals for the much needed new school were under consideration. This became a reality in 1939 when a new building was completed at the top of Bowmont Street.

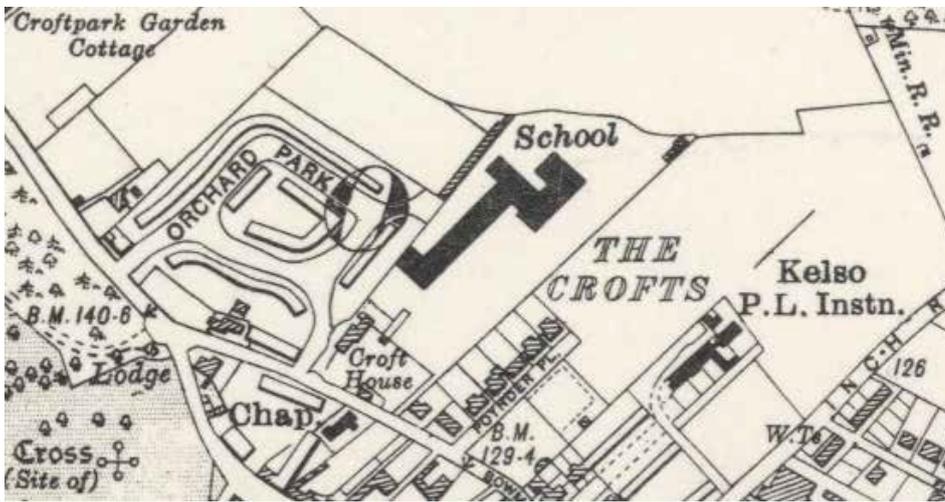
The new school opened on 3rd August 1939 with 693 pupils

The Rector when the School opened was – Mr Beattie who had been in post since 1934

On 13th July 1939 the pupils marched out of the Edenside Road building for the last time with Mr Beattie formally locking the school door. The new school opened on 3rd August 1939 with 693 pupils but the Second World War started the following week and by 11th September the intake had increased by a further 283 children evacuated from various cities. Mr Beattie guided the school through the difficult war years and the succeeding years at a time of tremendous change for the entire country. The total roll when he retired was 853.

The New Building

Most references date the building to 1936, but it is clear that the school did not move to the new premises until 1939. It would appear that some of the problems related to restricted access to the site. Map evidence suggests a possible reason for this: the 1938 OS map shows the school, but also shows Croft House with its garden grounds continuing to extend across the full plot width on Bowmont Street. The entrance to the High School site from Bowmont Street was restricted to the same narrow path that led to The Crofts – suggesting that the local authority had not been able to purchase the full site, at least in the very early years.



A press announcement in *The Builder* journal in 1933 stated that the estimated cost for erecting the new school was £50,000. Shortly afterwards architects Messrs. Reid and Forbes were appointed. According to a report in 1987, the Kelso High School building was, '*considerably more accomplished*' than the architects' earlier works. The dominant central clock tower and the arrangement of the east block were singled out as being in Reid & Forbes favoured Art Deco style but with clear North American influences with the internationally respected Frank Lloyd Wright in particular being mentioned. The interiors also hint at Reid & Forbes ability when given an appropriate budget, and show their concern for commissioning high quality interior finishes and joinery.

The inevitable alterations and extensions in the lifetime of the school on this site (almost 80 years) have in some cases been sympathetic to the original design while in other cases attention has been paid more to their functionality than design. The Games Hall built in 1978 being a typical example.

Move to new site & Closure of the Building 2017

Following various discussions from 2010 onwards, which involved a feasibility study and a conservation statement, a decision was taken by Scottish Borders Council to build a new school in Angraflat Road. Work on the £22.5 million building was completed in late 2017 and on 14th November of that year the pupils were welcomed into the building. There was a short ceremony to mark the occasion when the historic Kelso High School flag was raised.



The flag which had flown at the old High School for many years was lowered in a ceremony on Tuesday 7 November 2017 to mark the last day in the old building.

Final Memories from the 1970's – Extract from the Book

I did enjoy school. I enjoyed being with friends, I enjoyed the company. I enjoyed the extra-curricular activities. What I really admired about the school is what it instilled in you, friendship, work hard, play hard, to get on and not take life too seriously. The school did teach kids that. The Teachers were, by and large, fair and good and they did inspire you.

Derek Robeson 1974-1980

Trustee and former Chair Kelso Heritage Society

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 September issue 31st August 2021