

Friends of Loudoun Kirk

*Ann Haigh & John Johnston
5th Dec 2008*



*Ann & John
signing the register*



The Altar



*Braving the bitter winds
After the service*

We are happy that Ann & John chose Loudoun Kirk for their wedding. The service was conducted by Rev. Graeme Wilson of Galston Parish Church and wish them every happiness for the future.

A.G.M.

A.G.M. is on May 5th 2009 at Peelhill Farm, Drumclog, at 7 pm
All members welcome.

It is with regret to learn of the death of Sheena Williams (nee Wakefield), daughter of the late Lady Jean of Loudoun Castle, sister to Madeleine Purdie. Sheena married Donald Russell Williams in 1968 and lived in Arizona, USA, they have one daughter, Amanda Sarah Edith Williams. Sheena died at home after a long illness, her ashes were scattered Arizona and some of them brought back to Loudoun where they were interred with her mother in the kirk vault. The following poem was read out on the day of the funeral and at Loudoun Kirk.

*God saw you getting tired and a cure was not to be,
so he put his arms around you and whispered " come to me"
with tearfull eyes we watched you and saw you pass away,
although we love you dearly we could not make you stay,
A golden heart stopped beating hard working hands laid to rest ,
god broke our hearts to prove to us he only takes the best.*

Places of Inspiration

When we started in 1994 as a small group of inexperienced people, little did we realise the enormity of the task we were attempting. We could not have done any of it without the support we had. The Millennium Fund (later to become the Heritage Lottery Fund) was still in its infancy and little was known about it. Applying for funds was not easy but we registered our interest and started looking at how we should go about not only applying, but being successful with it. We looked at other projects and contacted The Wardlaw Mausoleum Trust at Kirkhill, Inverness-shire. Their project had similarities to ours and their way of dealing with it gave us a great deal of confidence that it could be done.



Wardlaw Church

Wardlaw Mausoleum Trust were awarded a sizeable grant in spite of the church still being in private ownership, although it was conditional that it would be handed over to the Trust. Built in 1634, it is the burial place of at least four Lovat or Fraser clan chiefs. Overlooking the mouth of the River Beaully it was once the site of the ancient Lovat Castle. The mausoleum was built onto the eastern gable of the old Church of Wardlaw, dating from 1220 AD.

The Trustees are probably unaware of how much their project was an impact on ours.

Another inspirational building is a bit nearer to home - Loudoun Hall in Ayr. Built for a wealthy merchant, James Tait in the late 1400's who was provost in 1521 & 1527-29, it later became the town house of the Campbell's of Loudoun in the 16th century who were the hereditary Sheriffs of Ayrshire. It became derelict and was eventually rescued by the 4th Marquis of Bute early 20th century and later restored by Robert Hurd in 1948. The Trustees of Loudoun Hall lease it to South Ayrshire Council and it is in use as a venue for weddings, meetings and events. Restored to Historic Scotland exacting standards it incorporates many modern facilities inside. Visitors are made welcome and there are some 'hands-on' artefacts which are always an interest to children.



Loudoun Hall



We are arranging a Saturday afternoon visit to Loudoun Hall, Ayr, On May 30th 2009. Meet at the Hall at 2pm where Sheena Andrews will be there to show us round. Refreshments will be served. Phone 01560 321813 for information. No booking is necessary but it would be helpful to get an indication of numbers interested in going and would appreciate it if you would register your interest. Everyone welcome.

The Good Old Days (or not!)

I wonder how many of us have used the term "it was never like that in my day". It may shock some of you then to find out that nothing much has changed. Perhaps our memories play tricks and only let us remember the good times but when it comes down to facts, we have to depend on the written word as proof. Alastair Hendry who has been constantly researching the history of Loudoun Kirk (which incorporates Loudoun Parish Kirk in Newmilns) has put his work into print, and it was amusing to read the following which he has added as a postscript:-

"The minutes of the Loudoun Parish Kirk Session survive from 1759 and from then on the details of parish life become clear. The sequence of celebrated ministers (Dr George Lawrie 1763-1793, his son Dr Archibald Lawrie 1793-1837, Dr Norman MacLeod 1838-1843) is well documented, not least by their own writings.

On the 15th March 1838, Rev Norman MacLeod was ordained to the parish of Loudoun. It was his first charge as a young minister and the challenges he faced must have been similar to those of his predecessors. In a letter¹ to a minister friend a few days after his ordination, he described the situation he found on his arrival.

"The parish is in a terrible state—very terrible! Its population is four thousand. The rural part is good and respectable, and so is Darvel....But Newmilns! What a place! Never, never, was there such desecration of the Lord's Day: dozens and dozens of lads walking about and trespassing on fields, and insulting the people and fearing neither God nor man! A large proportion of the population are born before marriage! The mass of the youth are sent to work before they can read, and in a few years are independent of their parents. In short, between drunkenness and swearing and Sabbath-breaking, the village is in a dreadful state—and may God have mercy on it! There is in all the parish an awful want of spiritual religion".

By the end of his ministry (1843), he had achieved a great deal. His church was now too small. Built to seat 800, it was incapable of coping with the number of communicants regularly partaking of Holy Communion (over 900)."

1. His letter to his friend Rev A Clerk is printed on page 80 of the book 'Memoir of Norman Macleod, DD' written by his brother Rev Donald Macleod DD, published in 1892.

Hidden Graves



For some time we have talked about getting photos of the kirk in the snow. Usually what little snow there has been has disappeared before we had the opportunity to photograph it. This year, after what was thought to be a reasonably heavy fall, we thought we'd manage it. Unfortunately although the surrounding area seemed to have a generous covering, Loudoun kirkyard did not. I couldn't help noticing the indents on the ground and wondering if these were unmarked grave sites. The hollows which appear to have shown up in the snow are all oblong in shape and lying in the same direction. This is the area near to the gate—the base of Lady Flora's obelisk is in the top left corner. Unfortunately it is more difficult to see the shapes in print, they are much clearer in the actual photograph.



We know many of the gravestones have disappeared, some incorporated into the peripheral wall and some as an edging to the path.

The picture on the left is part of a gravestone from the path edging.

Repairs to the kirk

Two slates came loose, they have now been restored.

The heavy steel shield on the door has been altered to make it easier to remove when necessary.

The draw bolts were stolen from the gates, new bolts have now been made & fitted.

Annual membership:

Don't forget to renew your membership. Please complete the enclosed form and if applicable, tick the gift aid box, it means we can reclaim tax on the subscription/donation without costing you any more.

Members meeting

Loudoun Hall, Ayr.

May 30, at 2pm.

Meet at the Hall. Open to non members.

Phone 01560 321813 for information

South Ayrshire History & Family History Fair

The fare this year is on June 6th in the Walker Halls, Troon.

Whether you're interested in history or family history, the fair is worth a visit. Entrance to the stalls is free with a small charge if you want to go to one of the talks. We'll be there this year as usual, so come along and support us.

Speakers are :-

Simon Taylor - "**Ayrshire Place-Names: a rich seam still to mine**"

Eric Graham - "**If Robert Burns had gone to Jamaica**"

Tom Barclay - "**South Ayrshire around the World: Travellers, Settlers & Homecomers**"

Helen Foster - "**Family Affairs: how Scran's digital resources can help you illustrate the History of your family & your local area**"

Doors Open Day 6th Sept

We intend opening the kirk 10am—4pm as usual.

We are also happy to open the kirk at any time regardless of numbers, just contact the undersigned to arrange a suitable date/time.

Don't forget to visit our Wiki

The wiki is an interactive web site designed especially for those with interests in Loudoun & Galston parishes. Just have a look or add your own story. It continues to get new members. A lot more information on family history is still to be added so keep visiting.

For further information, contact Agnes Wilson, 14 Armour Terr, West Donington Street, Darvel
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*Friends of Loudoun Kirk (FOLK) Charity registered in Scotland SC023836
Loudoun Kirk Preservation Trust (LKPT) Charity registered in Scotland SCO 27987*