

# STONEHOUSE HERITAGE GROUP NEWSLETTER 14

## World Champion Pipe Band

James Laidlaw was one of the founder members of the civilian pipe band under the leadership of pipe major Hector McInnes. The band made a name for itself at various outings throughout Scotland, led by the exceptional pipe major McInnes. Hector was an expert in the writing of pipe music and James had been one of his pupils.



Before James died he wrote about the times and achievements of the band, as he was thought to be the only original member still alive in 1977. He recalls contests were becoming more popular and there were a number of yearly events. In 1909 the first world championship was held at the now famous Cowal Games in Dunoon. This event was open for the first time to civilian bands such as the Stonehouse band and not just military bands as was the case before. The trophy contested for was the family shield belonging to the Duke of Argyll, which had previously only been open to military bands. On the same day the Stonehouse band also contested the civilian world championship for the Lauder shield. The shield was presented to the champions by Sir Harry Lauder.

Another change that took place was that the judges, for the first time, were sent into tents set up for the event so they wouldn't know which band was playing. When all the bands had competed they did the normal mass march round the field and then lined up before the judges on the grandstand to hear the winning band name called out. James recalls that when Stonehouse was named as the winners of both shields the band and their followers went wild with delight. James remembers the band of the 1<sup>st</sup> Highland Light Infantry marching away while playing 'There is a Happy Land'. In 1910 the band won the Lauder shield again, and to follow this – they did it again in 1911!

James' recollection was that the band performed at various events such as cattle shows, sports days and lots of other occasions. Some events were in Reid's field where the old football ground was, just next to the Avon. They got great pleasure in attending such events.

Jack Muir, one of James' fellow pipers and a great friend, once asked him where he got his hand written pipe music from. Laidlaw replied "I assume it would have come from Hector McInnes as he wrote all our tunes". Hector was a perfectionist who strived for uniformity by writing all of the band's music which meant they could compete with the professionally trained military bands.

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**Members of the National Association of Memorial Masons**

## COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS 2008

Meetings are open to the public and normally scheduled for the third Monday of the month in the Public Institute Stonehouse starting at 7.30pm.

Monday 17th March 2008

Monday 21st April 2008

Monday 19th May 2008

Monday 16th June 2008

Monday 21st August 2008

Monday 18th September 2008

Monday 20th October 2008

Monday 17th November 2008

Monday 15th December 2008

# Tweedy Castle (Sandford)

The name Tweedy is thought to originate from the river Tweed in the Borders. However according to George F. Black (Surnames of Scotland) the name is derived from the lands of Tweedie in the parish of Stonehouse.

The Tweedy's ancestral home is a place called Drumelzier. Near the juncture of the river Tweed and one of its tributaries, is a spot reputed to be the grave of Merlin, the legendary wizard of King Arthur's court. Thomas the Rhymer, a 13th century mystic, predicted "When Tweed and Powsail meet at Merlin's grave, England and Scotland shall one monarch have." Three centuries later, on the day Elizabeth I died and James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne, the Tweed burst its banks and flooded across Drumelzier into the neighbouring Powsail river. It was in this magical setting that the history of the Tweedy family began to unfold. In the early 13th century, during the reign of Alexander II that John de Tuedy was granted a Royal charter to land in the rich and verdant hills along the Tweed. The record of this John de Tuedy suggests that the Tweedy name may have preceded the family's arrival in the borders. It is possible that the family brought the name to Scotland from Normandy and that the family name in association with the river is by mere coincidence.



Timothy Pont's map of Clydesdale 1596; area shown includes Avondale, Stonehouse and Glasford (Tweedy castle circled)

From its earliest days in Scotland, the Tweedy family grew in wealth and influence. Finlay de Twydyn of Stonehouse, is on record as having rendered homage to King Edward I in 1296. His son, Roger, greatly enhanced the family's fortunes by a fortuitous marriage to the heiress daughter of Sir William Fraser (supported Wallace during the wars of Independence against Edward). The union guaranteed the Tweedy's the privileges and protection of the powerful Fraser and made Roger Tweedy and his heirs masters of Drumelzier and the vast neighbouring estate of Oliver.

## Extract from the Annals of Lesmahagow (Spital p164)

The "Laird" of Lee possessed Tanhill, also Spittal Gill, now known as Gill, but which is correctly Hospital Gill. Some light is thrown on this by Cosmo Innes, the work, in the work, "Origines Parochiales Scotia" (vol.i., p109), where, in his treaties on the parish of Stonehouse, he states that "on the eastern side of that parish, near Castlehill, at a place still called Spittal, stood formerly a hospital, which is said to have been endowed with the lands of Spittal, Headdykes, and Langriggs, all in its neighbourhood, and with the lands of Spittal Gill, and the mill in Lesmahagow. The Templars had a house and considerable possessions in the neighbourhood of the village of Stonehouse. In 1674, William Lockhart of Lea, knight, ambassador to France, was served heir to his father, among other church lands, in the two Templar lands of Woodlands, in the Templar lands of Catcastle, in the three and four pence lands in Stonehouse, the half of Templar lands called Tofts, in the 40d land of Tofts, and in the 6s 8d Templar lands on the west part of the village of Stanehouse." (Retours, 328)

## Squadron Leader Alex Torrance

Alex Torrance was born at Stonehouse in 1916, growing up in the Meadowside cottage on Lockhart Street. He was educated at Hamilton Academy and began his working life as a compositor in the printing office at the Hamilton Advertiser.

In 1939 he volunteered for war service with the RAF and was trained at Drem in the Lothians. Hugh Burns, his cousin, who grew up in the same house as Alex, recalls that during this time the family received a communication to say that Alex would be over for a visit soon but no times or dates were mentioned. A short while later, Hugh heard the sounds of aircraft engines overhead and looking up saw Alex fly low over the length of the village and then turn to swoop under the railway viaduct. This kind of flying visit was frowned upon by the RAF but irresistible to the young pilots, keen to show their new talents to the folks back home.

On completing his training, Alex fought as a Hurricane pilot in the battle of Britain and later flew Whirlwind fighter bombers over occupied Europe.

July of 1941 found Alex stationed on the HMS Furious participating on the air defence of Malta. His involvement was suddenly curtailed when he was seriously burned following an accident on board the ship. The fuel tank of a Hurricane exploded during take off and resulted in many casualties. Alex sent a telegram home saying "Hands badly burnt but ok" despite his reassuring words to his family he still required a three month stay in hospital.

Sadly, in the same week, news reached the village that Alex's cousin, a merchant seaman and son of Mr and Mrs Robert Burns the proprietors of the Black Bull, had been killed when his ship was sunk.

Following his convalescence, Alex joined 137 squadron as a flight commander where he served for two years experiencing a great deal of the reality of war.

In October 1943, he sailed from Greenock to India arriving in Bombay a month later. Mid crossing his convoy was attacked and one ship was sunk although this time Alex was unharmed. He travelled on to Agartala on the Burmese border where he commanded the 45 squadron flying Mosquito fighter bombers against Japanese forces until February 20<sup>th</sup> 1945. He was repatriated from Singapore on Nov 12 1945.

Peace broke out and a career in civil aviation beckoned with Scandinavian Airlines at Prestwick and later as the flights operations chief with British Caledonian at London Airport.

In July 1971 Alex was able to play a significant role in an historic aeronautical event, the first solo flight over the true north pole. NASA had taken an interest in this project and were on hand to advise. The pilot, Sheila Scott had been the first Britain to fly solo around the world in 1966 and she enlisted Alex as her flight dispatcher. This was an important job, as the dispatcher plots the route according to the weather conditions and has the final say as to whether a flight should go ahead. On the morning of the flight Alex called Miss Scott saying simply "you're on". It was all she needed to hear to fly into history.

It seems fitting that a man who knew so much of the dangers and risks of wartime aviation was able to participate in such a bold and daring peacetime operation.

Alex retired with his wife to Littlestone on Sea in Kent though he still makes trips to his caravan in Kippford on the Solway Firth. He is much in demand by aviation clubs due to his extensive knowledge and vast experience of all aspects of flying in war and in peace.



## Heritage Group Membership Form

c/o Public Library, 4/5 The Cross, Stonehouse, Lanarkshire ML9

Stonehouse Heritage Group is a registered charitable organisation whose aim is to:

- Research, collect and document all areas of local heritage and to make its findings public.
- Monitor current developments within the locality and by research communication and education provide a safeguard for the local heritage.
- Collate, transcribe and make available other information in relation to Stonehouse as it sees fit

Annual subscription has been set at £10.00 and can be renewed online via the website or paid to the treasurer R Freel. Please send Cheque payment to 3 the Cross Stonehouse. Due to admin costs we can not accept cheques from overseas members.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax or email \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of interest \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to abide by the group's constitution and any research funded by the group shall be regarded as the group's property and as such all copyright or intellectual property in reports, booklets or data input sheets prepared by the member in connection with the group shall remain vested in the group. No member shall without written consent of the group publish alone or in consultation with any other person any articles, photographs, illustrations, or computer generated media relating to research undertaken on behalf of the group.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



*Stonehouse Hospital 1897*

# Caught by the Ghoulies

## New local history booklet

Probably Halloween would be a better time to release a booklet on tales of the supernatural but hindsight is a great thing. This latest publication from Stonehouse recalls stories have been collected over the centuries by local worthies who have either experienced or heard tell, stories of witches, fairies, ghosts, body snatching and boggles down through the years. These stories are principally of Stonehouse and the surrounding area and recount events during a time when superstitions and fear of the unknown were prevalent.

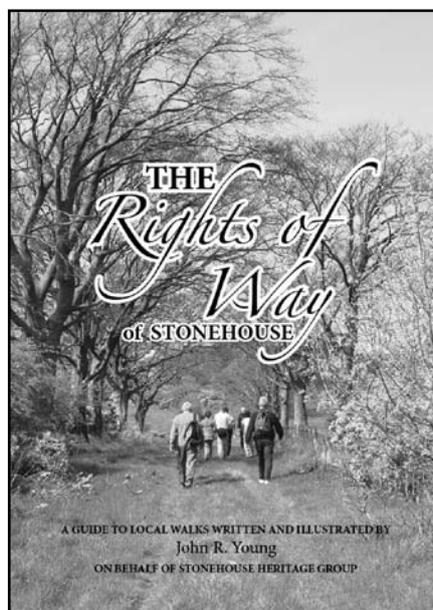
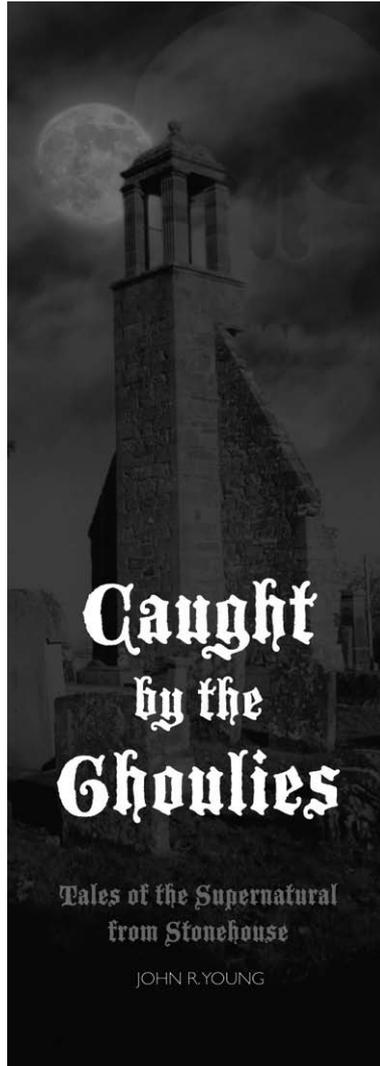
The idea for this short publication arose from the 'Ghaists an' Ghoulies' guided walks which were organised around the conservation area of the village and the auld kirk cemetery recounting tales most of which would no doubt be lost if not recorded for others to enjoy and experience.

This booklet has been produced to recall these events in exploring the unknown and mysterious occurrences to befall this ancient parish down the centuries from the crib to the crypt. Stonehouse can lay claim to many amazing facts and oddities such as the longest execution of anyone on record and the incredible but true story of the 'blood stone'. And who can forget the infamous witches of Stonehouse who were said to terrify neighbouring parishioners into protecting themselves with charms and sprigs of rowan trees from their evil ways.

Although I suspect the demon drink may have had its part to play in one or two of these stories, others have been passed on through the ages by rational, respected inhabitants of an open mind. Other stories are historical fact detailing murder, torture and bodily mutilation. Good bedtime reading for all the family.

The booklets are illustrated with photographs in full colour throughout and add to the ever increasing wealth of social and industrious history of our parish and its inhabitants through the centuries. Priced £3.00 this booklet is available from the Post Office, the Public Library and the Development Trust Office in King Street, Stonehouse. For further information on this publication and others available locally please don't hesitate to contact myself or the Heritage Group.

In 2008 a new booklet entitled 'The Rights of Way of Stonehouse' (right) will be published to promote access to our countryside and the treasures that lie within.



# Website Statistics

Stonehouse Heritage Groups new website ([www.stonehouseheritage.co.uk](http://www.stonehouseheritage.co.uk)) went live on 14th June 2007 with the first four weeks providing unlimited access to the resource information uploaded to the web site. The information loaded up included the 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 Census, School Admission Records, Paterson church Records and St Ninian Kirkyard Cemetery gravestone inscription records, World War 1 enlistees and Roll of Honour. Following the free period ten sample records could be viewed on the heritage services page however access to all records was subject to taking out a membership at a cost of £10.00.

Since 14th June 2548 hits have been made on the website since it went live. Over the same period the number of pages visited is 21.8 with an average visit lasting just over 10 minutes. The average visits per day works out at 11.

The majority of hits on the site have been from United Kingdom (1661) USA (511) Australia (145) New Zealand (64) Canada (45) Turkey (37) South Africa and Spain (5) Germany (4). The remainder are spread across Europe and World including Peru and Kyrgyzstan.

Any suggestions or ideas for the site are welcome and should be forwarded to the group at [www.stonehouseheritage.co.uk](http://www.stonehouseheritage.co.uk) or to 4/5 The Cross Stonehouse.

## Web Developments

Group member John Rogers has transcribed the headmasters diary for the Townhead public school, which cover 1904 to 1947 and the minutes of the Subscription School committee meetings from 1860's to 1890's. It is hoped that this will be transferred to the web during the coming year.

The 1901 census was transcribed from microfiche to paper last year and John has volunteered to transfer this to an electronic medium to allow it to be uploaded onto the web.