

Trust Talk

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE CORSTORPHINE TRUST

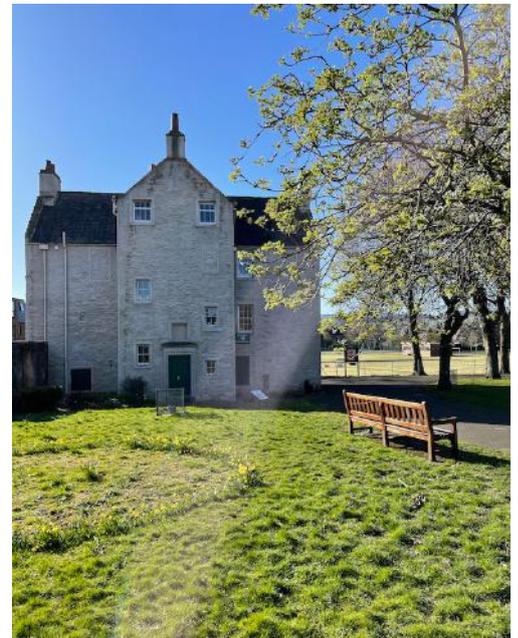
Spring 2021



Shaking off the Winter Doldrums

In our previous edition, we reflected on the past year and looked forward to brighter days. With lockdown restrictions easing, the hope of returning to some form of normality fills us all with joy. In this Spring edition of **Trust Talk**, we've invited some of our members to share their stories and our newly elected chair, Jane, shares her first letter. We also have an update from our Archivist, as well as a piece on the changing face of St John's Road.

This issue is one of progress and positive change, and we hope that you can take some joy from this.



Stay in touch

Although our doors may be closed for now, you can follow us on our Facebook and Instagram pages.



THE CORSTORPHINE TRUST



@THECORSTORPHINETRUST

Chair's Letter

Hello everyone and welcome to the spring edition of Trust Talk.

As I was sitting down to write this, it struck me that this edition has quite a few "firsts" in it.

It's the first time I'm writing to you as the chair of The Corstorphine Trust, Ian having retired at the AGM. It was the first time we'd held it online and although it excluded some of you (apologies!) it did allow some of our overseas members to join us. It got us to thinking that, relaxation of Covid rules allowing, we'll look into holding future meetings as a combination of in person and online so that as many of you as possible can be included.

It's the first time that we've reached out to some of our members, both near and far, and asked them to tell us a bit about themselves and their connection with Corstorphine. Fortunately, they all willingly agreed to contribute and their stories can be found on the following pages. My thanks to them.



It's the first time in its 51-year history that The Trust has three women trustees. Besides myself, Suzanne Vinall stayed on as secretary and Kathryn Clark took over the treasurer's role from me. I wonder what our founding fathers would have to say about it?! Kathryn has contributed to this edition as has Tristan our administrative assistant and Adriana our caretaker.

As The Dower House is still closed to the public, Frances, our Archivist (ably assisted by Tristan), has taken the opportunity to rearrange the museum and update the displays. Our fabulous tapestries have been brought down to the ground floor and are now front and centre so that everyone who comes into The Dower House will have the opportunity to enjoy them.

I'll close now by saying that I hope it won't be too long before we can welcome you back to The Dower House when you can get the chance to see the changes for yourself.

Best wishes.

Chair

ReDrawing Edinburgh

In February, we were invited to participate in the City of Edinburgh Council's **ReDrawing Edinburgh** project in celebration of the centennial of the Edinburgh Boundary Extension in 1920. The result was a video, produced by our archivist, Frances, and our storyteller, Ian (with some technical input from Jane and Tristan). The video, which charts the story of Corstorphine, from prehistory to the present day, can now be viewed on our website at <https://www.corstorphinetrust.co.uk/news/>.

We hope that you enjoy this wonderful celebration of Corstorphine's rich history.

From the Archives

On 21 March 2021, the decennial 2021 United Kingdom census, called Census 2021, occurred throughout most of the United Kingdom. Scotland made the decision to defer the census until 2022.

Census recording is something of which Scotland can be justly proud. There was an English census in 1695 but it was never published. In 1755 a Scottish clergyman gave Scotland its first census. The Revd Alexander Webster was minister of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh, and Moderator of the General Assembly in 1753. His position as a leading clergyman no doubt facilitated his collection of census facts. He enlisted the support of the SSPCK – The society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in the Highland and Islands. The SSPCK established many schools as far west as the islands and as far north as The Shetlands.

In 1755 Dr Webster persuaded the SSPCK to order every minister in places where the SSPCK had a school to enumerate his parishioners. Where there was no school established, Webster sent his schedule of questions to the parish minister who carried out his wishes. Information gathered included the length and breadth of each Parish, the number of ministers there, the number of Papists, the number of Protestants and the number of fighting men. No further census were taken until 1801 and since then have been done every ten years (except 1941) 1801 – 1831 were statistical records only.

Census records are an invaluable tool for anyone embarking on family research. Each subsequent census records slightly different information. The latest census record to be in the public is the one undertaken in 1911. Although the details from the census cannot be taken as 100% accurate, a fair picture of people and social conditions emerges. We are extremely fortunate to have in our archive copies of all the censuses (in the public domain) for Corstorphine 1841 – 1911. They have all been transcribed and make fascinating reading. I eagerly await the 1921 census to be made available to the general public.

Hopefully it won't be too long until we can reopen our archive, in the meantime if anyone has any questions or queries, I can be contacted at archivist@corstorphinetrust.co.uk.

Frances MacRae, Archivist

A Street Named Chalmers Crescent

The reason for naming Chalmers Crescent still remains a mystery - but could be connected with the famous architect of St Anne's Parish Church - Peter Macgregor Chalmers. Chalmers Crescent was renamed St John's Crescent as a result of becoming an incorporated suburb of Edinburgh, which already laid claim to the other Chalmers Crescent.

The pandemic lockdown was an ideal opportunity to stop and reboot our mindset from the daily grind. I used any spare time I had to research and study the history of our 1907 Edwardian home in Corstorphine.

Using the various ancestry websites and the online Scottish National Archive, I managed to piece together the previous occupants of my property. It became obvious that Corstorphine village shaped peoples lifestyles, where they worked, how they commuted and what they did for leisure, which remains true to this day. With the help of **The Corstorphine Trust**, I researched more about Corstorphine and its town planning development in the 1900s. There were many fascinating stories but the biggest impact on our local town planning, and specifically, my property, was that of the abundance of public transport links.



Now that lockdown has eased, the time has come for us to move home. I published my research into a historic journal which will remain with our property. As a parting gift to our beloved Corstorphine, I printed a copy for Frances to retain in **The Corstorphine Trust** archive.

Peter Aitchison

Meet our Team

I was born in the Merchiston area of Edinburgh. In the early 1970s, just after leaving Boroughmuir High School, I moved with my parents and brother to stay in Meadowhouse Road. I trained as a radiographer, a job I loved, and worked for over 40 years in A&E at the Royal Infirmary until my retirement from the NHS about 18 months ago. I now work one morning a week as a radiographer in a private practice. It's a hard life! I am married to Malcolm and we have two sons and a daughter who all live in or near Corstorphine.

Over the years, as the children grew, I have been involved with various organisations including the Boys Brigade and Carrick Knowe and Forrester High School's PTAs. I am a member of Carrick Knowe Church where I am a Rainbow Guider having 'volunteered' when my daughter was five years old. She is now 33! In 'normal' times I play badminton and enjoy yoga, flower arranging, knitting and sewing. I sing both in the church as part of the choir and also when allowed for the residents of the nursing home where my mother lived before her death. Singing and folk music have brought me so much enjoyment over the years, from singing with my two friends as a 15-year-old to singing with my friend for the members of the Jubilee Dementia Project in Carrick Knowe - what a privilege that is. Folk music led me to The Corstorphine Trust where your own Ian MacRae alerted me to the concerts there. I have enjoyed listening to so many wonderful folk singers in The Dower House and Astoria Centre over the years. As your new Treasurer, I bring no previous knowledge or expertise in the field; all I can offer is a willingness to learn and an enthusiasm to be useful. I look forward to the challenge!



Kathryn Clark, Treasurer



Hola, my name is Adriana and I am from Alicante, Spain. I have been living in this beautiful country for almost four years with my husband and young daughter - and we love it. Since the middle of last year, I have been part of **The Corstorphine Trust** team. I have been able to meet great people and found good, new opportunities for me. I also have a love for cooking and walks with our pug, Pepper. Corstorphine is a great place to live, and my family and I thank you for welcoming us to your community.

Adriana Palao, Caretaker

Having spent my twenty-nine years in the area - an area which I have nothing but love for - it would be fair to say that I'm Corstorphine born and bred. I joined **The Corstorphine Trust** in September of last year as the new Administrator, I've been able to use my design background to produce the new look **Trust Talk**, but when I'm not busy behind the scenes, I'm a soon-to-be third year student at the University of Edinburgh where I study Ancient and Medieval History.

Most of my interests revolve around the study of the past and am particularly passionate about making the Classical world accessible to everyone, regardless of academic background. I'm the Deputy Editor for the university's student-led history journal, *Retrospect*, where I also run an article series exploring pertinent issues in the study of ancient history and how we can make it relevant in the twenty-first century; you can read my work at retrospectjournal.com.

When I'm not deep in Graeco-Roman coinage and medieval cartography, I love art, music, and all things creative. I've been assisting Frances in renovating our museum and look forward to welcoming you all back.

Tristan Craig, Administrator



A Wee History of The Wee Shop



The Wee Shop, an unassuming doorway at the east end of St John's Road, has a place in the hearts of many local people. Some locals I speak to remember their parents or grandparents ordering coal from The Wee Shop back in the 1980s and before, but not quite as many are aware that The Wee Shop has a long history, going back more than one hundred years.

I moved to Corstorphine after having relocated from my hometown of Bremen in the 1990s, bringing with me my love of traditional German baking. Baking for fun turned into baking to make a living, and when, in 2015, the opportunity presented itself to take occupancy of The Wee Shop, I enthusiastically jumped at it – a quirky little place was a perfect step up from standing in the freezing cold at farmer's markets, where my business partner Judith and I had previously sold our wares.

I am proud to have joined a long line of what I think of as 'slight eccentrics' who have inhabited the shop over the years – including, according to our research at The Dower House archives, a watch repairer, a coal merchant, a tobacconist, the Corstorphine Temperance Society (its former owners), and – perhaps my favourite – a surgical corset maker.

In 2019, The Wee Shop featured in a German TV documentary about natives living and working abroad. The pandemic has highlighted for many of us the importance of local shops in our communities, and it's been rewarding to feel that I'm doing my bit. For the recent Window Wonderland exhibition, my sister, an artist also based in Edinburgh, designed and made a collection of dioramas to celebrate The Wee Shop's history.

Kerstin Marks

Combining Art and Conservation

I have almost spent my entire life living in Corstorphine, which has without doubt shaped and influenced my life by growing up overlooking the Pentlands and living close to the back entrance of Edinburgh Zoo – which was invariably my preferred route home – and having the woods on the doorstep too was ideal territory to explore nature.

My way of finding a close connection with animals was by drawing them and these skills opened the door to study at Edinburgh Art College, where I first encountered the tapestry workshop at The Dovecot Studios in Dovecot Road. Early on, I wanted to become a wildlife artist, after watching the Born Free movie about 'Elsa' the lioness in the Astoria Cinema and reading every natural history book about Africa in Corstorphine Library.



Two golden opportunities fell into place to make this to happen: becoming the Artist in Residence at Edinburgh Zoo and pursuing my dream to go to Africa. Being able to study these iconic animals in the wild led to many adventures gathering material for my painting, including being the artist for and volunteering with rescued cheetahs at the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia. Supporting conservation has always been extremely important and through my website, www.carolbarrett.co.uk, I am donating the total sale price of all my artwork to help protect endangered species.

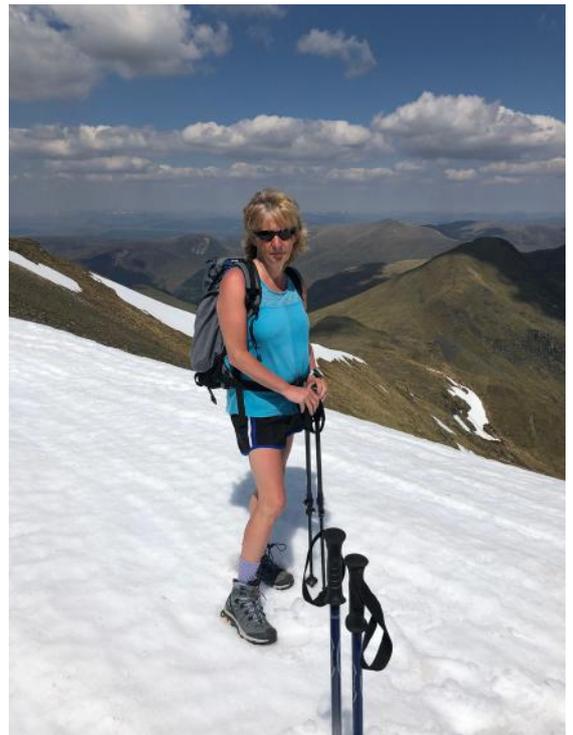
For the last twenty years I have felt very lucky to come back to live and paint in the original Dovecot Studio, and to be able to cherish the beautiful north light the Dovecot weavers would have used for nearly 100 years.

Carol Barrett

Reflections from Around the World

I was eight when we moved to Edinburgh in 1968. My dad had come out of the Navy and had taken a job with Ferranti. We lived in Clerwood and I went to Fox Covert - my third primary school. In 1972, I went to Craigmount, and spent six years there, enjoying school life and all the social activities round it. When I was 14, I had a part-time job in Woolworths in Corstorphine, working on the sweetie counter (dream job) as well as the back office. I worked there part-time until I went to Edinburgh University in 1978. While at university, I was a postie during the Christmas holidays for two years and was lucky enough to get Drumbrae and Clerwood on my route but had to get up at 4am to go and get the mail bag from the sorting office in town!

By the time I left university, I was married (to Allan, who was also at Craigmount) and we moved to Dundee. We then moved to the Glasgow area and my husband was offered a job in the Washington DC area in 1995 and we moved; we only planned to stay in the USA for a couple of years, but are still here almost 26 years later! We have both been very lucky to have great jobs in the healthcare industry here and Scotland and now find ourselves retired and living in a rural area of Western Maryland. Although we are many miles away from Scotland, I am still involved in many Scottish activities here and support Burns Suppers, Scottish Country Dancing and Celtic Festivals. We have two children and six grandchildren, who live here and in the UK.



Although I have moved around over the years, if anyone asks me where I am from, I will always say Edinburgh, as that's where my formative years were. We still have family in Corstorphine, as well great friends. When I am back, I like to run round the streets of Corstorphine to see what's changed, run past my old house and run up past the school. With social media, I sometimes think I know more about what's going on in Corstorphine than some of my family and friends!

Kathryn Darling



Trying tartan dress at an exhibition in Tokyo, 2019.

My name is Akio and I live in Kyoto, a historic heritage area of Japan. Let me write about why I have this pleasant opportunity to contribute to **Trust Talk**.

Everything began, two and half years ago, when I got in touch with Jane Kerr about the Corstorphine sycamore. At that time, I had been writing a new book about my experiences of the remarkable trees in Scotland and Corstorphine sycamore is one of them. As a tourist interested in the distinctive trees, I visited Corstorphine twice in the past to meet the sycamore trees which had grown from the cuttings of the parent tree.

Although unfortunately I had no chance to meet the parent tree, I would like to write about it in my book and I sent several questions to Jane about the tree. She didn't fail to give me valuable information as well as good advice, and before long I was able to complete an article on sycamore trees in Corstorphine. I published the book, which includes the article, in October 2019, and it was when I was almost ready to fly to Edinburgh to donate the book to the collection of The Corstorphine Trust that Coronavirus spread all over the world and prevented us from traveling. The rest is already history. However, I keep the idea still in my mind to bring the book *by hand* after our life comes back to normal. I hope all of the readers of **Trust Talk** go safely through this difficult situation and meet me at The Dower House.

Akio Hattori, Prof. Emeritus, The Cultural Studies Dept., Kyoto Notre Dame University

The Changing Face of St John's Road

The shops in St John's Road have had a few changes during the pandemic. During the initial 2020 lockdown, some vacant shops were occupied and, although a couple of shops were vacated during the summer, this recent 2021 lockdown has seen a few more businesses move in, with some still in the process of getting ready to open soon. This means that the St John's Road shops are now at the highest occupancy since around 2015/16.



Looking more closely at some of the easterly shops: in the block next to The White Lady is Cafe Vigo which opened in 2017 – many will remember this shop as Bayne and Duckett's or Keir's shoe shop, but it was originally a branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The block was built around 1928 and referred to as 'Bank Buildings', because of the RBS in this block. New at no. 82 is Squares, a Pizza & Pasta shop; this was previously William Hill, bookmaker, from the 1980s until it closed in 2019. Some may remember it as Smash Cash in the 1960s or W.J. Harvey & Co grocers in the 1950s. It originally opened in 1928 as W.W. Gerrard, grocer.

Next door to Squares is Sunrise Dental Clinic, Orthodontic & Paediatric Dentistry, which is also new to this block, previously Ladbrokes, bookmaker. Many may remember this as the Clydesdale bank (1970s - 2005). Before that, there were three shops; occupants included, T.J.W. Struth, butchers, who took over from Taylor's, butcher and poulterers. There was also the Edinburgh & Dumfriesshire Dairy, J. Raymond McClusky, and Olive Gowns, quality dresses, knitwear and costume jewellery and Robert Leith, watchmaker, jeweller, and optician.

DAM Security and 7 Star Sparkes Electrical have moved into P&S Donachie, the former baker's shop, at 64 St John's Road. This had been a family baker since 1836, originally James Dunn, then Adam Dunn, followed by James Dempster, John & William Mickle, John Henderson, David Stephen, Charles Weir, J. Bennets and finally P. & S. Donachie's (1970s – 2012). Dunn the bakers is one of the oldest photographs we have in our archive.



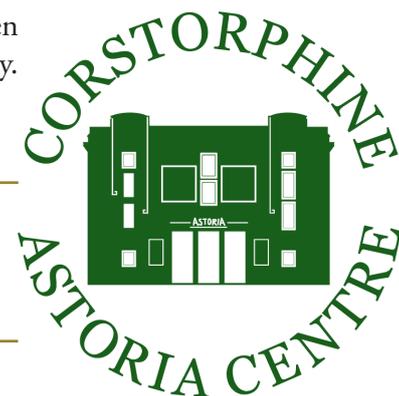
Perhaps Corstorphine's biggest food impact was the opening of the Grand Palace Chinese Restaurant in the late 1970s, which was also one of Edinburgh's early Chinese restaurants. It continued to operate, under various owners, until just before the first lockdown. It is now a restaurant again as Sofia's: Corstorphine's first Lebanese street food restaurant and takeaway. This was originally two shops – some may remember NcNair the butcher in the right-hand side, and Snow before him. In the left-hand side was Archibald Selkirk, painter (1950s). Before that it was Thomas Beach, the plumbers (1930s) and Janet Potter the fruiter around 1910. This block was built early 1900s.

The Refillery, described as Edinburgh's largest plastic-free and ethical grocery store, has just announced the opening of its second store in Corstorphine at 119b/119c St John's Road, and work is currently underway fitting this shop out. This shop has been vacant since December 2016, when White Hollow, hairdresser and beauty shop, closed. Many will fondly remember this as John Menizes & Co. Ltd in the 1960/70s. Some may also remember it as the Three Kays Café, opening after WWII and surviving until the later 1950s, run by Leo Valente. In between times, the shop was split into two shops: many will remember Nelsons (stationer), Dennis Finn (newsagent), R.S.McColls (newsagent) and Lomond Wools.

Kevin Aitchison, Digital Archive Coordinator

The Astoria Centre

In line with the easing of lockdown restrictions, we're delighted to be able to reopen **The Astoria Centre** from 8th May, with our adult classes resuming from 17th May. If you're interested in booking the hall, please send an email to contact@corstorphineastoriacentre.co.uk for more information.



MONDAY

13:45-16:30 Bumblebee Sports

TUESDAY

10:00-12:45 Music Bugs
13:30-15:30 Line Dancing
17:00-21:00 Capital Allstars

WEDNESDAY

09:45-11:15 Bumblebee Sports
12:30-13:30 Pilates
16:00-19:00 Taekwon-Do

THURSDAY

09:45-11:45 Tanya's Dance Fit – Hip Hop Babies/Tots
13:00-14:00 Easy Exercise Class
17:00-21:00 Taekwon-Do

FRIDAY

09:30-10:30 Pilates

SATURDAY

09:30-12:45 Inspire Theatre

SUNDAY

09:00-11:00 Rugrats Kids Rugby

Get in touch

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☎ 0131 316 4246
✉ info@corstorphinetrust.co.uk

We hope that you've enjoyed this Spring edition of **Trust Talk** and we look forward to welcoming you all back to The Dower House, hopefully in the not too distant future.

In the meantime, you can continue to contact **The Corstorphine Trust** via email, phone and post.