

SPRING. The season after the winter when everything comes alive. Newhaven is a bit like that, too, with so many activities happening in the village during May. This edition of the Bow-Tow highlights some of these.

Newhaven Heritage will be active at the Children's Gala Day and Citizen Curator's Newhaven History Day, details below. We have also contributed to the regeneration of Starbank Park, through the magnificent efforts of one of our trustees, Janet McArthur.

And, we are also pursuing recognition by Historic Scotland of a Newhavener, Dr Thomas Latta, with his major contribution to medical science.

We may not yet have a premises in Newhaven but we are doing our best to have a continuing presence.

UPDATE

by Dr George Venters
Clerk to Newhaven Heritage

Recent Progress

Following our discussion with staff in the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, we have been told we will be registered as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This is a useful step forward as it lets us take on more substantial projects than was sensible before.

We are still looking for suitable local premises and there are two possibilities we are working on. Matters will be clearer in the next month or so.

The work Duncan Bremner has been doing as a "Citizen Curator" has been invaluable in putting Newhaven in the limelight and getting the community involved in a variety of cultural activities. He was instrumental in organising—and took part in—a very interesting broadcast about the village on the BBC Scotland's Saturday morning programme "Out of Doors". The resurrection of a choir in Newhaven has been particularly worthwhile and good fun for all of those attending it. Currently it is meeting in the School at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday nights - everybody is welcome and I can thoroughly recommend it.

The different events that are being organised will give us a feel for what might be viable long term in the village. It's clear that there are many good people who want to improve life in the village and once we get a community base we should have an accessible focus for that wealth of goodwill.

NEWHAVEN EVENTS

Newhaven Children's Gala Day, 24 May: Come and support the Gala Day on Saturday, 24 May when Newhaven Gala Queen Amina and Fisher King Jana will be crowned in the playground of Victoria Primary School. They and their entourage will arrive at the harbour at about 12.30 p.m. and be escorted along Newhaven Main Street to the place of their Coronation.

Cruise Ship Arrival, Sunday 25 May: Cunard's cruise ship, Queen Victoria, will be sitting off-shore in Leith Roads and passengers will be tendered to Newhaven Harbour so that they can visit the sites and attractions of Edinburgh. The flags from the Children's Day will be still flying so a festive air will prevail — especially if the people of the village are out to greet the visitors.

New Exhibits at the Wee Museum, Friday 30th May: Victoria Primary School's Wee Museum has had a makeover with new exhibits added. The launch takes place at 5 p.m. Contact the school for details on 0131 476 7306.

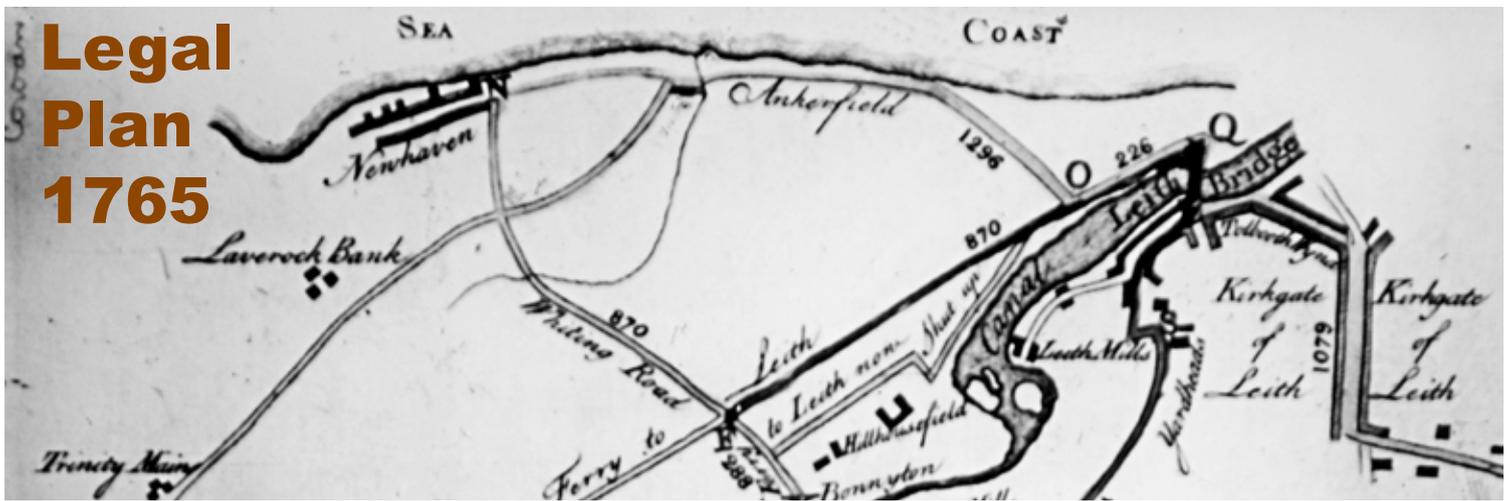
Newhaven History Day, Saturday 31st May: An afternoon celebrating the rich heritage of Newhaven in the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop at 21 Hawthornvale, Edinburgh EH6 4JL, courtesy of the Citizen Curator project. Talks, with some film footage, some food and a bit of music will be sure to feed the mind body and soul.

REMEMBRANCE

There is to be a short Act of Remembrance for those of this area who made the supreme sacrifice in time of war. The scattering of poppy seeds will take place in Starbank Park (Starbank Road Gates) by youth members of Wardie Parish Church and Newhaven Parish Church on **Saturday 17th May at 3 p.m.** All are welcome. It is anticipated that the poppies will be in flower by August to mark the centenary of the Great War.



Legal Plan 1765



AN EXCITING FIND

by Edward Oyadiran and Ruth Milligan,
Victoria Primary School



There was a very exciting event in our playground. Archaeologists found a Bronze Age skeleton while looking for where the Great Michael (a famous ship) was built. They did this because our school is going to build an extension. The digger first scraped away the topsoil to no avail, however when they excavated deeper they found humans remains. Soon they stopped the digger and went in with trowels and brushes to carefully remove and chart the bones.

One of the team of archaeologists was called Charlotte and she did workshops with all the classes in turn. They think the body is 3000 to 4000 years old. The body was in a crouched position which suggests they died in the early Bronze Age.

At the workshops we were asked what we thought about having archaeology in our playground, and we thought that it was amazing!

ANTIQUÉ CORNER

**NEWHAVEN'S NEWEST
OLDEST ARTEFACT - Bronze Age Bones**

THE RECENT DISCOVERY OF a Bronze Age Cist is now thought to be an isolated example therefore unlikely to be investigated extensively. It should come as no surprise, however, that the area has been populated for centuries. A burn which would have provided fresh drinking water, later given the name of the Anker Burn, flowed into the Forth at the area now known as Anchorfield. Fish, oysters and mussels would have provided food for these hunter-gatherers as well as any animal they could hunt.

The areas along the coast in prehistorical times were a mixture of forest and pasture. It is reputed that James IV would approach his newly founded Newhaven through fields of wild strawberries, hence the name of the area in the village called Strawberry Bank.

The map above is taken from a legal plan dated 1765 and clearly shows the shoreline before man's hand significantly influenced its topography.

BURSTING INTO SONG

**COMMUNITY
CHOIR LAUNCHED**

by Duncan Bremner
Citizen Curator

SINCE EARLIEST TIMES Newhaven has been famous for its unique cultural traditions, celebrated through song and photography. As part of Fishing Folk, Citizen Curator is working with contemporary folk musician Jed Milroy and artist Johnny Gailey to raise awareness of the importance of this heritage.

So, do you sing? Would you like to sing? Then come to Victoria Primary School in Newhaven every Tuesday in April and May from 7 pm – 9pm. With support from an experienced singer, we are running weekly drop-in rehearsals as we create a Newhaven Fishing Folk Choir.

Participants old and young have already joined us to find out more about the songs of Newhaven and to experience community singing at its best.



NEWHAVENERS of HISTORY

Dr. Thomas Latta

179?-1833

A Brief History by Dr George Venters

IN JUNE 1832, the editor of The Lancet thanked Dr Thomas Latta for: “.....*the intrepidity, scientific zeal and assiduity he has displayed.*”

This was in response to Dr Latta’s letter reporting on his treatment by intravenous saline infusion of moribund patients in the final stages of cholera. He had brought the virtually dead back to life.

A sense of excitement and hope filled the editorial — not just because of the scientific percipience which underlay the treatment nor the technical competence with which Dr Latta carried it out, but for the courage he showed in undertaking it *de novo*. He was an extraordinary and admirable man.

Thomas was born in the last decade of the eighteenth century in Jessfield House in Newhaven. From his house he could look out over the Forth and run down the Whale Brae into the village and the society of the fisherfolk.

He was the fourth of five sons sired by Alexander Latta, a Leith merchant, who died in 1807. Alexander was an elder of the Kirkgate Church, a dissenting Presbyterian congregation so births and deaths were not systematically recorded about the family. Therefore we do not know Thomas’ date of birth nor of his mother’s death though we know she predeceased her husband. Nevertheless we can presume that Thomas spent the formative years of his childhood in Newhaven.

After his father died, it seems that he lived with his elder brother – also Alexander and a medical student in Edinburgh at the time. When his brother set up in practice in Perth, Thomas moved with him then returned to Edinburgh in 1815 when he himself became a medical student.

As a young man he was adventurous. When a medical student he had gone on an expedition in 1818 to Spitzbergen as a surgeon companion to Captain William Scoresby, a contemporary expert in exploration of Arctic regions. Evidently he was considered practically competent enough to work as a doctor on his own before graduating M.D. in 1819. Certainly he was physically able, scientifically observant and curious and went on exploratory and specimen gathering expeditions on the island. His experience there was put to good use, drawing on it both to illuminate aspects of his M.D thesis “On Scurvy” and to

demonstrate his capacity to draw his own conclusions. His recommendations on the treatment of scurvy show particular consideration for the welfare of seafarers.

The epidemic of cholera was advancing inexorably west from Asia. Leith, a major trading port trading with Eastern Europe, was well prepared. Specific cholera hospitals were set up and the general public persuaded to use them as the only places to nurse cholera cases.

Local doctors were organised to provide supervision and care in these hospitals. They worked one week in four on continuous call night and day. Thomas Latta was one of them. Confronted with the epidemic, Latta and his colleagues were trying to understand the nature of the disease and how it should be treated in the light of the prevailing medical wisdom of the time. They agreed that loss of water and salts was the major problem but could see that replacing them by ingestion or enemata did not work for the worst afflicted. Dr William O’Shaughnessy suggested that intravenous injection of the normal salts of the blood might be beneficial. Latta had the skill and bravery to act on that suggestion for the first time ever as a treatment of last resort with patients at death’s door often with miraculous results. In Latta’s hands it enabled recovery of a third of patients who formerly would have been mortally afflicted. Those who died either had demonstrably serious concurrent pathology (the doctors did their own post-mortems) or, on his own admission, were treated too late.

Within a year the cholera epidemic was already in decline and the need for this skilled and daring intervention was similarly diminishing. Intravenous fluid replacement fell out of fashion for nearly fifty years. Medicine complacently turned its back on the door to enlightenment that Dr Latta had thrown open by his brilliant example of the application of science to medicine.

In just over a year after his introduction of his revolutionary treatment Thomas Latta was dead. He died on the 19th of October 1833 from consumption. Given the demands of his clinical work and the burden of disease among the people he cared for this was no surprise.

A submission to Historic Scotland has been made by Newhaven Heritage for a Blue Plaque to be mounted on Jessfield House in recognition of this pioneer of medical science.



SPRING TIDE



ABOVE: The two planters that were installed last autumn by Janet McArthur's team are now resplendent in Spring flowers despite the wettest winter in generations.



ABOVE: One of two boats which will be splendid additions to Starbank Park when they are planted up with flowers (see article).

JANET McCARTHUR, one of our trustees, is not a lady to let the grass grow under her feet. She is also Secretary of Friends of Starbank Park who are regenerating this park much loved by Newhaveners. The fountain, donated in 1910 by Thomas Devlin, a Newhaven fish merchant, has been cleaned, planted up and now makes an attractive welcome to visitors. Two boats were donated by a local mariner member called Bill Simpson. One of these will be named *Newhaven Heritage* and planted with poppies, surrounded by begonias, nasturtiums and trailing petunias. Why not come along to the Park for a poppy scattering ceremony by youth members of Wardie Church and Newhaven Church is being planned for Saturday 17th May at 3.00 p.m.

More information about becoming a Friend of Starbank Park can be found at <http://www.friendsofstarbankpark.org>.

BOW-TOW, THE MUSICAL

Bow-Tow, A Newhaven Story, is a commission on behalf of the people of Newhaven utilising a grant through Creative Scotland. Presenting traditional music by internationally acclaimed artists, alongside performances by local residents old and young, this project celebrates traditional arts and demonstrates how they are applicable to contemporary life. Bow-Tow will present stories and songs about local lives, creating a dialogue and a narrative that relates to the community of Newhaven, one that charts an evolution of traditional music, and one that demonstrates how the traditional arts are applicable to contemporary life.

Jed Milroy, the Lead Musician, said: "Our new production, Bow – Tow, A Newhaven Story, will work with the community to present Newhaven in music and

song charting an evolution of traditional music and demonstrating how the traditional arts are relevant to everyday life."

Johnny Gailey, who is the Project Artist, points out, "The history of Newhaven is that of the sea, of fishing for and of selling fish, however, the story of Newhaven is one that goes beyond that. It is one of ship building and fishing, of industrialisation and mechanisation and of land and social reform. Newhaven's story reflects a wider history, a history of Scotland."

Duncan Bremner, who has been appointed as Citizen Curator, has been working with the schools and the community for two years. He explains, "As the last generations who remember the once thriving fishing industry reach old age, Bow – Tow, A Newhaven Story will celebrate and revive the traditions of music making and of oral history that once made this place unique. It is expected to put this event on sometime late October."

MEET THE STEERING GROUP

Dr George Venters:

Title - Clerk of Newhaven Heritage



GEORGE VENTERS IS a retired Public Health Doctor who spent his childhood in a room and kitchen in the "old" New Lane. This marked him for life - in a good way. Though times were hard then, there was a strong sense of community and people supported each other.

A sense of fairness and social solidarity was the norm in Victoria Primary - where he went to school - among the children he played with and the adults who looked out for them. These values influenced his choice of profession. They guided his career as a doctor in the practices, Universities and Health Boards where he worked for more than forty years and he still believes in them.