



Report on activities 2020/21

Summary: The 2020/21 period was severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. This curtailed almost all the types of annual events and activities in which the charity is usually involved, and also limited our volunteers' ability to commit as fully to the Friends, given their own personal, family and professional priorities and challenges. Nevertheless, the Committee still remained busy across various fronts, to the extent possible given Government lockdowns and other social restrictions – therefore especially online and digitally. Some of the main highlights since last year's AGM are listed below:

2020: September

- Intensive, successful lobbying effort to Falkirk Council's Emergency Executive Committee and Council Leader to overturn proposed designation of Kinneil Museum as a 'community building' threatened with 'Community Asset Transfer' (i.e. public service cuts, and offloading onto unpaid volunteers), and [instead to recognise both Kinneil House and Museum as of regional importance and to place them into the category of 'Transformation'](#) for capital investment within the Council's ongoing 'Strategic Property Review'.
- Presentation to Sustrans of comments/ideas for their [investment of >£100k in Foreshore development](#) projects.
- Online talk to Glenlockhart Probus Club on *Kinneil – Over 2,000 Years of Scotland's History*.

October

- After some easing of lockdown restrictions, Kinneil 'Hidden Heritage' volunteer group re-started by Falkirk Community Trust to progress [installation of trail interpretation panels, and production of trail leaflets and video](#).
- Meeting at Kinneil with Dr Alan Montgomery, [historian of Roman Britain](#) who was walking the Antonine Wall.
- Completion by the '[Re-Discovering the Antonine Wall Project](#)' of installation of new '[Gate Guardian](#)' sculpture and interpretation panel at front entrance to Kinneil Estate.
- Kinneil Museum re-opened by Falkirk Community Trust, following lockdown.
- [Publication of an independent research report](#) on the social and community value of Kinneil House and Estate, by Liz Robson of the University of Stirling, forming part of a wider project supported by Historic Environment Scotland. The full report gives an excellent analysis of the unusual complexity and depth of community/spiritual value associated with an outstanding, multi-layered heritage site.
- Production and online publication of a very entertaining series of '[White Lady](#)' videos for Hallowe'en Week by Committee member Yvonne McBlain.

November

- Further tree clearance by Falkirk Community Trust to open up viewpoint below modern 'beacon' near Kinneil Kirk.
- Friends join the [British Association for Friends of Museums](#).
- Friends invited to join [Advisory Committee](#) of the Scottish Local History Forum.
- First new 'Hidden Heritage' interpretation panel installed next to James Watt Cottage.
- Christmas newsletter sent to all members.

December

- Participation begins in Council consultation workshops about their Strategic Property Review within Bo'ness area.
- [Installation of further new 'Hidden Heritage' interpretation panels](#) around estate.
- Production of a Friends Christmas card for sending to all members.
- Kinneil Museum closes again, due to a further national lockdown.

2021: January

- Design and publication of a New Year '[Kinneil Word Search](#)' on social media.
- Six Friends members begin participation in a 'Digital Storytelling' course tailored for us by the '[Great Place Falkirk](#)' local heritage initiative.
- [Decision](#) announced by Falkirk Council to abolish Falkirk Community Trust and bring its sites and services, including Kinneil Estate and Museum, directly back under Council control.
- Publication of a feature on the Friends in [Clish-Clash](#) - the newsletter of the Scottish Local History Forum.

- Publication of [excellent new history of Kinneil House/Estate](#) by Geoff Bailey/Falkirk Local History Society
- ['Watt! Zoom!! Bingo!!!'](#) – a James Watt Social Evening for members and non-members, which we held online.

February

- Sustrans agree to fund [new Foreshore-related content](#) and other enhancements, to be developed by The PR Store (Adrian Mahoney) within Friends of Kinneil web site.
- Publication of a [feature](#) by Committee member Iain Kirkman about the Barony of Kinneil and the land 'improvements' of the 18th Century.

March

- Volunteer morning to prune and tidy up Kinneil Orchard.
- Beginning of lengthy application process to Falkirk Council's new '[Community Choices](#)' fund for a substantial grant for play equipment and enhancements along the 'Hidden Heritage' trail.
- Detailed correspondence and meetings with local Councillors and senior Falkirk Council officials about Kinneil walled garden repairs and Kinneil Masterplan.
- [Publication of an open letter](#) to the *Bo'ness Journal* asking Falkirk Council and Historic Environment Scotland to celebrate the Centenary in 2022 of Kinneil Estate and House first becoming public heritage assets in 1922, and to give renewed impetus to the Kinneil 'Masterplan' 2015-25.
- First of a series of election campaign meetings at Kinneil with the main political candidates standing for election to be MSP for Falkirk East.
- Historic Environment Scotland [announce](#) that they will not open Kinneil House at all during 2021, due to COVID constraints inside the house.

April

- Co-operation with Falkirk Community Trust on an [Easter trail](#) in Kinneil Orchard, and production of videos of [Easter dawn sunrise over Kinneil Kirk](#) and [House](#) for social media.
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) start a new weekly '[Green Gym](#)' at Kinneil Foreshore.
- Late in the month, Kinneil Museum re-opens following the winter lockdown period.
- Falkirk Community Trust [organise a catering/ice cream van franchise](#) for weekends and holidays in Kinneil Estate but, for unspecified reasons, it leaves after only a few weeks of trading.

May

- Filming of a new '[Hidden Heritage Trail](#)' video for Kinneil with Falkirk Community Trust.
- Falkirk Council launch [second consultation about Kinneil walled garden](#) development proposals.
- Historic Environment Scotland do a [geo-magnetic archaeological survey](#) of areas of interest within Kinneil Estate.

June

- Volunteer evening to carry out weeding and plant bedding in pots in front of Kinneil Museum.

July

- Committee fact-finding [meeting](#) with Falkirk Council and Sustainable Thinking Scotland CIC in Kinneil walled garden – followed by submission of detailed response to the Council's consultation about the walled garden.
- Family '[Foreshore Explore](#)' event run by TCV.
- Falkirk Council tourism team help to promote Kinneil via some widely-followed [travel 'bloggers'](#).

August

- Falkirk Community Trust [outdoor theatre performance](#) of the play '*Allotment*' in front of Kinneil House.
- Meeting with Historic Environment Scotland inside Kinneil House to re-start future planning.
- Filming and script-writing with Falkirk Community Trust's Great Place project for production of a digital interior guided tour of Kinneil House.
- [Announcement](#) that the Friends are successful in Falkirk Council's 'Community Choices' [public vote](#) and will be allocated £84.3k (Falkirk area's largest single award, and the largest ever grant achieved by the Friends) towards play equipment and enhancements along Kinneil Estate's 'Hidden Heritage' trail.

September

- [Launch of our new, free, weekly outdoor guided tour](#) around Kinneil House/Kirk every Saturday at 2pm.
- Sustrans [publish planning proposals](#) for new Foreshore play area after also providing [updates on their other improvements](#) to the Foreshore area.
- Co-hosting of [Geoff Bailey talk](#) at Bo'ness Library about 'Arthur's O'on' for Roman Week.
- Great Place Falkirk host major '[Big Dig](#)' event with family activities and guided tours in Kinneil Estate.
- Production of new Friends of Kinneil free promotional postcards.

Ian Shearer (Chairman), October 2021