



OUTLOOK

Christmas 2023

Wishing you
all a Very Jolly
Festive Season
and a Happy
New Year.



In this issue

From the Chair, Your membership 2024, Town Hall Talks, Welcome Day, News from Groups, Members pages, a Pirate in Ayr, some pictures to brighten a winters day and more.....

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Welcome to “Outlook” our OiR Newsletter for the Festive Season 2023.

Thank you to all our Group Leaders and Members for the articles and pictures you have contributed to this Christmas edition.

Remember if you don't have access to a computer we can arrange to have your handwritten article (s) typed and your photographs scanned. Pictures which are copyright protected cannot be reproduced. Please contact the office for help. Some articles may be amended slightly to fit the space available but editing of text will be kept to a minimum. When submitting articles and pictures for publication please use a Word document and ensure that 'read only' is **not** applied to any of the text/pages. **Please send text and pictures separately. Pages containing both pictures and text will not be accepted.**

Final submission date for our Summer edition of “Outlook” will be the end of June 2024.

Groups and Town Hall meetings will resume in January and members will be able to enjoy the company of others again after the Christmas and New Year Break. Information was correct when our pages were created but readers should check the OiR Ayr website, or contact the office, for current information about group meetings or dates for Town Hall Talks.

If you have access to a computer but the office is not aware of your current email address please send a message to:- office@oirayr.org.uk so you can access Outlook online and reduce our postage costs.

Stephen Dodd– Layout & content

Isabell Rogers– Typing & proof reading

Margaret Fagan—Circulation & printing.

Our mission statement

To make OiR the organisation of first choice to enable our 50's and over community to participate in co-ordinated and supported opportunities which enhance their lifestyle and personal well being.

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From the Chair

Hello, and welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of Outlook. Time certainly passes quicker as we get older! It seems no time at all since I was writing for the summer edition.

The Committee has decided that there will be no increase in the membership fees for 2024. However, we are asking everyone who is agreeable, to donate, perhaps, an additional £5 to help defray our ever-increasing costs. Various methods of payment are available. The preferred option is by BACS. Card payments can also be made on-line through the web site. A valuable source of income for us is Gift Aid. Anyone who is a UK taxpayer and has not signed a Gift Aid form, please consider this option. Contact the Office for details.

A very successful Welcome Day was held on October 11th and was attended by existing and new members and by our MSP and local Councillor. Events like this are very important for promoting OiR and for creating good publicity. Photographs taken on the day were uploaded to Siobhian Brown's Facebook page that evening.

Several links with VASA (Voluntary Action South Ayrshire) have been established and these will be of great benefit in the future. Members attended an afternoon disco in October which was enjoyed by all. There will also be discussions about the various grants available.

For a successful organisation, such as OiR, efficient administration is necessary. For that I must thank Margaret, our Office Manager, and our many willing volunteers.

To save on printing costs, only a few copies of this newsletter will be printed. These will be available from the OiR Office, or at the Town Hall meetings. If you wish to receive a digital copy, of Outlook and our fortnightly email news please ensure that the office has your correct email address.

With Best Wishes from the Committee for Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Kind Regards

Barrie Southwood (Chair)

Limitation of Liability

OiR Ayr does not assess the fitness of its members to participate in any of its various activities. The decision on your fitness lies within yourself, in conjunction with any medical advice that you might wish to take. It is your responsibility to ensure your personal safety and that of your belongings.

Town Hall Talks

Many of you who regularly attend the Town Hall Talks will know David Bowman is giving up his role as Organiser at the end of December. His last meeting will be the Christmas Party on December 19th.

The Committee will ensure that the Talks continue into the New Year. However, if you wish the talks to continue in their present format, it is essential that someone comes forward to take over the role of organiser. Please contact the Office if you are able to help.

Barrie Southwood (Chair)

YOUR OIR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2024 : WAYS TO PAY:

There are many ways to pay your Annual Subscription for 2024. Listed below are your options. Please call the office if you need any assistance to renew your membership for next year. We will be pleased to assist.

You can:

- Post a cheque (including a stamped addressed envelope) to the office and we will return your new card to you.
- Pay using a BACS payment through your Bank. Please email or call the office to obtain our banking details on (01292) 260086 or office@oirayr.org.uk.
- Pay online by simply following the instructions on our web page under the 'Membership' tab.
- Most of our lovely Group Leaders have agreed to help with renewal of subscriptions again this year. Please ask them about this when attending your Group meetings during January.



Meeting times, and venues

If you intend to visit/join a group please check the meeting place and/or meeting time before you travel, as they may have changed.

Also please confirm the group is able to accept new members as some groups impose limits on the number able to attend.

Visit the OIR website for current information or call the office.

OiR OFFICE - Closing for Christmas and New Year holidays.

Please note that the Office will be closed from 2pm on Tuesday 5th December 2023 until 10am on Tuesday 9th January 2024.

Please may we remind Group Leaders to continue to make appointments when coming into the office. This cuts down on congestion in the office. We all very much appreciate your co-operation.

We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and Health and Happiness for 2024.

Note: This item should have been included in the previous edition of Outlook.

Annual General Meeting – April 18th 2023

The 38th AGM was held in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall on 18th April 2023. As Chair, I read out a report of OiR's events since the AGM of 2022. I also put forward our optimistic hopes for 2023.

John Rattenbury, OiR Treasurer, presented the accounts for 2022. He emphasised the importance of reducing our overheads and the need to increase our membership. Members of the Committee, who were due to stand down, were all re-elected for a further two-year term. Lesley Brown was co-opted on to the Committee. All members were thanked for their commitment.

The meeting continued in a very relaxed fashion with the OiR choir entertaining us in their usual, accomplished manner. A Vote of Thanks to all was given by our Vice-Chair, Arnie Green.

Barrie Southwood

Happy Christmas

They were looking for a shelter, where they could spend the night,
To be out of doors, with pregnant wife, didn't seem quite right.

Joseph led the donkey, with Mary perched on top,
When a friendly inn they spied, and decided they must stop.

"Hello my man", said Joseph, "We need a place to stay",
"I've got no rooms", the worthy said, "you'd best be on your way".

"I'm not looking for a mansion, just a roof above my head"
"Any covered space will do, where I can make a bed".

The worthy thought a moment, then said that he was able,
For a small consideration, to let them use the stable.

"But my wife is pregnant, as you can plainly see",
"Your hard luck stories touched my heart, but it's nowt to do with me".

I don't know if those reading this, are classed as a believer,
But Josephs' reply to the worthy was, It's nowt to do with me, either"!!!

By Stan Lees



WELCOME

Our Welcome Day Photo Album

Pictures taken on Wednesday 11th October 2023 in Newton Wallacetown Church Halls.





Thank You

We wish to extend a big "Thank You" to all who attended our Welcome Day at Newton Wallacetwon Church Hall. Thanks to our Group Leaders who booked a table, our lovely office volunteers, and those of you who donated on the day. It was a very successful afternoon. We welcomed lots of new members and we hope to repeat this event again next year.

Gaiety prize draw. Congratulations to Ella Simpson who won two free tickets to Cinderella at the Gaiety Theatre.



Thanks to David Bowman and Tom Brawn for Welcome Day pictures.



Ladies Fit for Life Gym Class

This is a new class which started in September. We have two classes on different days. These are designed to improve your strength, endurance, balance and flexibility. Each class lasts 45 minutes with exercises to follow at home if you wish. The exercises can be adapted for people who cannot lie down or would prefer to sit.

Group Leader - Maggie Roebuck
Location - Blast Fitness Gym, 34 Crown Street, Ayr
Days & times - Thursdays at 3.30 pm & Fridays at 3.00 pm.

This is a small, friendly gym owned by Allan Bell. I joined at age 75. I had never been to a gym before. I have never felt healthier or fitter. Cost is £5.00 per class. Contact the Gym office to book 01292 160086.



Tuesday Walking Group

The Tuesday Walking Group regularly attracts between 20 to 30 walkers on alternate Tuesdays. Walks have taken us to Johnstone, Irvine, Kilmarnock and Saltcoats. An interesting walk in Tarbolton in September, concluded with a visit to a local farm to see a robotic milking machine at work. Many thanks to Martha Bailey and her son Willie Dunlop for giving us this opportunity.

The walking weekend in Scarborough was very successful, the weather was not very kind to us at times but we didn't let that spoil things. A full description of the weekend is given elsewhere. The initial stages of planning for the 2024 walking weekend have already taken place and full details will be available soon. **Barrie Southwood - Group Leader**



Pictures - Top left - Saltcoats Walk in July.
 Bottom left - Tarbolton Walk in September.
 Above right - West Kilbride Walk in October.

Walking Weekend, Scarborough, 20th – 23rd October 2023

On Friday 20th October, the long planned for day finally arrived, and the weather forecast for our Scarborough destination was not good.

Nevertheless 40 walking group members boarded our Dodds of Troon coach, some at the depot in East Road Prestwick, and the remainder at Mill Brae, Ayr, all looking forward to our weekend away.

Our journey allowed for two scheduled stops, one at the Gretna Retail Outlet, and the other in northeast England. By 5.00pm we were outside our Scarborough hotel, in utterly atrocious weather conditions. A warm welcome at the hotel, allocation of rooms, and a welcome meal, were followed by evening entertainment, during which we were able to help Lesley celebrate her birthday.

On Saturday morning, following breakfast, it was decided that although the weather had improved a little, we should make a change from our proposed walking plan, and travel to York to have a walk there. As we awaited the arrival of our bus, word came through that it had broken down and was unlikely to be available that day. Plans were hurriedly changed, once again, and the majority opted for a local walk, with a few deciding to go to York, but by train.

We set out on our walk, the wind and rain had abated, but the seas were still very rough, and breaking over the sea wall with so much force that we decided to abandon our walk from North Bay to South Bay, along Marine Drive. It was agreed that we make our own arrangements, and many of us decided to have a stroll through the town, with some taking the opportunity of looking around the local shops, while others walked further afield.

By evening, the weather was much calmer, and the sky much brighter. Our evening meal was followed by an enjoyable evening during which a raffle, and a quiz, were held. Our driver, Jim, was now able to update us regarding the bus, which was unable to be repaired locally. A hired coach would be available for our Sunday trip, and a replacement coach was being sent down by Dodds for our journey home on Monday. A low loader was also coming down to take the broken-down bus back to Prestwick.

On Sunday, the planned walk was from Robin Hood's Bay to Whitby. As it was thought that the Cleveland Way path might be rather muddy, an alternative itinerary was put in place – a trip by coach to Goathland (aka Aidsensfield in the TV series Heartbeat) and then to Whitby for a walk there. Six of our number still opted to walk from Robin Hood's Bay to Whitby.

Our walk in Whitby took us from the bus park at the marina to the Abbey, via the climb of 199 steps as we neared the Abbey, then back down into the town for some free time. Following our return to Scarborough, and our evening meal, entertainment was again provided by the hotel. Our replacement Dodds bus had arrived safely.

On Monday morning, following breakfast, we set out on our journey home. One stop was scheduled, again at the Gretna Retail Outlet. The initial part of our route home was scenic, through villages and a moorland road – a very pleasant journey.

All agreed that we had had a great weekend, and we had stayed in an ideal hotel for our type of short break. Alma and Barrie were thanked for all of their hard work in arranging our trip. We are already anticipating where next year's outing might take us.



Pictures from our Scarborough Walking Weekend

On previous page the view of North Bay from our hotel on the Saturday.



Pictures

Above - Lesley enjoying her Birthday cake on Friday evening.

Above left - View of North Bay from our Hotel.

Middle left - Waves breaking over the sea wall on Marine Drive, on Saturday.

Picture below - Evening view over North Bay.



Thanks to David Bowman for this article and for his atmospheric pictures.

The Tuesday Photography Group

Having completed our summer town visits with Mauchline on Tuesday 29th August, we turned our attention to the New Session, commencing on 5th September with 'Meet and Greet' (and accompanying 'goodies' from Fresh & Tasty, Prestwick)



On 12th September, we had a very interesting visit from PC Blair McGarva on Safety and Security – advising how to be careful online and always alert for the increasing number and variety of scams.

After viewing members' images on 19th September – always a popular meeting – we visited the Belleisle Conservatory on the 26th for an exclusive hour of information and the opportunity to take photographs of the colourful plants.

On Tuesday 3rd October our Group Leader, Christine, gave us a fascinating presentation of her visit to New England in all its 'Fall' glorious colour.

The following week we had a workshop – with one of our group, Rod, telling us about his methods of presenting his images for selling online. We also reran the eternal topic of renaming images which members send in for our weekly and monthly challenge.

On 17th October some members took an excursion to The Botanic Gardens in Glasgow to view inter alia the magnificent Kibble Place. We await viewing of the images taken.

On the 24th we viewed more of our members' images and on 31st October we welcomed Allan Dunlop a speaker on 'Antique Weapons'. Members' presentations (including a survey of our Trips and Visits since the group's commencement in 2010) followed, then a presentation by Bob J, a member of our group, on 'The People of St. Kilda'.

We plan a visit to 'Glasgow at Christmas' on Tuesday 5th December, and the session will end with our Christmas Lunch at the Chestnuts Hotel on 12th December.

As always, we welcome new members and have several places available. We are a very welcoming and inclusive group. All levels of ability and camera equipment are accepted – there are no restrictions. More experienced members are always delighted to help with any questions or problems.

If you would like to join us, please contact the OIR office. Our Group Leader will contact you to provide more information.

We meet on Tuesdays 10.00 am to 12.00 in Newton Wallacetown Church Hall.



Cutting Silage



A Macro Fly.



Picture above - Art Shop Window. Centre - Stones from stone. Above - Burns Collage.
TPG continued from previous page.

SATURDAY WALKING GROUP – 2023

Membership of the Saturday Walking Group can introduce you to many parts of Ayrshire and beyond.

In 2023, we enjoyed a January walk in Rozelle and Belleisle parks, with lunch to follow in Belleisle Café.

February, and a good linear walk in dry, bright weather along the Water of Lugar, Ochiltree. We then headed to Ochiltree Hub to enjoy excellent soup and sandwiches. This was much enjoyed, as were the home-baked goodies sampled with a coffee.

Pollock Country Park, and a visit to the Burrell Collection nourished both body and mind in March.

The group enjoyed another river walk in April – the path beside the River Nith, Dumfries, and continuing into the Crichton grounds.

Largs by train in May – another walk in lovely spring weather along the promenade, and, of course, fish and chips in Nardini's to follow.

A walk around Lanark Loch in June with the surrounding trees dressed in spring blossom – beautifully reflected in the water.

July – by train again – destination Girvan, with a walk along the promenade. We were impressed by the clear views of Ailsa Craig a short distance across the water.

Bonnie Galloway is always a favourite destination for walks. This time, Newton Stewart – in August – a circular walk, partly beside the River Cree, followed by good food in a choice of restaurants.

September's destination was Glasgow once again – Rouken Glen. The many, varied paths there supplying good walking, and a choice of food in the restaurant.

At the time of writing, the Walking Weekend will take place in Scarborough from 20th to 23rd October. The Saturday walk on 28th October will be from Maidens to Culzean Country Park.

The last walk of 2023, on 25th November, will take place in Cumnock, with lunch to follow in the Royal Hotel.

Many thanks to Barrie, our Group Leader, for all the time and effort he has put in to enable the group to look forward to, and to enjoy, OiR's Saturday Walking Group.

Amy Kinnaird



Anne Patterson 1940-2023

Anne Patterson, whom many of you will know, sadly passed away on 5th September.

Anne joined OiR shortly after retiring 21 years ago and was a very active member until lockdown and illness forced her to slow down. Her daughter, Shirley, told me she knew her mum wasn't going to sit at home knitting as, even while working, her lunch hours were spent in the gym!

Anne thoroughly enjoyed her OiR activities. She was in both the Tuesday and Saturday walking groups and was joined by her husband, Walter, on some of the Saturday walks. She also loved walking weekends away.

Anne was also in the tennis, table tennis and short tennis groups. Through being part of the walking group, Anne organized the Christmas Lunch for three consecutive years, with military precision, until Walter "persuaded" her to hand over the reins as he wanted a less stressful run up to Christmas.

She had never played tennis before joining OiR but enjoyed it so much that she was group leader for over 10 years.

Anne was also in the Mah Jong group – again, something she only took up on retirement. Her three grandchildren loved playing Mah Jong with their Granny and Anne's granddaughter, Rachel, has now taught her boyfriend and his parents to play – using granny's Mah Jong set, of course.

Shirley described her Mum's OiR years as "20 years of exercise, fun, travel, food and, of course, friends! Too many names to list here but Fiona Paton, Sheila Mason and Therese Lan deserve special mention for the friendship they showed Anne and also for the support they gave her when she became ill".

Isabell Rogers - With thanks to Shirley Wright, Anne's daughter

After Anne retired, she was very active in several OIR groups: short tennis, table tennis, outdoor tennis, mahjong and two walking groups. She was the leader of the outdoor tennis group for several years and on the committee of the Tuesday walking group. Whether it was Summer or Winter Anne always wore her cap and gloves when walking and playing outdoor tennis.

She was very particular about the arrangements when she organised the Christmas Lunches, and about her name being spelt correctly, Anne with an e and Patterson with a double t.

Outwith with her OIR activities, when the Gaiety Theatre reopened, Anne was one of the many volunteers who assisted behind the scenes.

After a period of ill health, Anne passed away peacefully in Templeton House. **Sheila Mason**



Jim and Anna Irving– Amy Kinnaird

Jim and Anna Irving recently celebrated their 70th Wedding Anniversary. A truly remarkable couple – OiR members for many years – both have contributed much to our organisation. Jim, and the late Neil Rowan, were very supportive assistants to the late Bob Smillie, Group Leader of the Tuesday Walking Group.

The OiR Coffee Morning – an annual, and very successful day for many years, saw Jim and Anna working hard, with many other members, to help make the event a truly red-letter day in OiR's calendar.

When I think of Jim and Anna, I seem always to see both with smiling faces. Jim, like myself, was from Coylton. From one Coyltonian to another, much love and admiration to both of you, and may you have many more happy years together.

JIM & ANNA IRVING – OUR 70th ANNIVERSARY

Anna and I met at Ayr Ice Rink in Beresford Terrace, where we both spent much of our leisure time. Anna was quite an accomplished ice dancer, whereas I, with my two left feet, was often left watching from the sidelines.

We were married in Newton-on-Ayr Old Church and, after our marriage, lived at Newark Estate, where Anna was recruited as part of the castle's staff.

I started my working life as an apprentice compositor then as an engineering apprentice before starting my two years National Service. My military service started by being drilled for parades as King George had died a few days earlier, followed by the preparations to see Princess Elizabeth's succession as Queen. After my National Service, I was fortunate to be selected for training as an aircraft mechanic.

After leaving military service, I returned to an engineering role and was employed by S.A.L. This work allowed me to travel both in the U.K. and Europe, which I was only able to do as Anna was prepared to stay at home looking after the family.

With the change to part time employment, Anna's brother, Charlie King and his friend Robert Smillie, urged us to join them in the OiR Tuesday Walking Group, which we did. We are still members of OiR and I enjoy coming along to groups when I have the chance.

Jim Irving

CHRISTMAS QUIZ 2023



1. In which Pacific Ocean Island nation is Father Christmas known as Santa-San?
2. What did 4 Scottish students steal from Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1950?
3. Which UK monarch delivered the first Christmas Broadcast to the BBC in 1932?
4. What is St Stephen's Day also known as?
5. Who wrote the poem "A Visit from St Nicholas"? (Better known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas")
6. Feliz Navidad is Happy Christmas in which language?
7. Christmas fruit cake, Stollen, is traditionally associated with which country?
8. Which Christmas Carol demands figgy pudding?
9. Between 1996 and 1998, which girl band had 3 consecutive UK Christmas No. 1 singles?
10. How many ladies were dancing in the song "Twelve Days of Christmas"?
11. How many Christmas number one singles did Cliff Richard have as a solo artist?
12. "Walking in the Air" is a song from which Christmas film?
13. In which city was the Christmas movie "Miracle on 34th Street" set?
14. What was the first name of the main character in the Christmas film "Home Alone"?
15. In the Christmas film "It's a Wonderful Life", what does Clarence receive for accomplishing his mission?

Answers on page 18

A Childhood Memory

Not many people living in Scotland today can remember carrying a bag containing a gas mask to school.

Our small country school in the village of Coylton in Ayrshire seemed far removed from the 2nd World War. However, the Clydebank raids, which happened on two nights in March 1941, did impact on life in our village – situated 5 miles from Ayr.

I was nearly 8 but I still have a clear memory of these events.

My dad was a Volunteer at the Royal Observer Corps Post – a building perched on top of a small bing near the A70. The bing was a relic of past coalmining.

As the eldest child in a family of five, I was ‘the message girl’. I frequently did the grocery shopping in the local KECS – ‘the store’ – we called it!

My father was occasionally asked ‘to stand in’ and do another shift, so I was delegated to ‘take a piece’ to the ROC Post for him. I enjoyed doing that, as dad and his companion would encourage me to look through the large telescope on the upper observation deck.

The Clydebank raids’ devastation was discussed at home. I did not fully understand the implications of that disaster, but I can still remember my parents’ sorrow while they listened to the wireless.

Dad was not on duty on the two evenings, 13th and 14th March 1941, but Mum and Dad did hear the drones of the Luftwaffe as they flew overhead on their return to Germany. They said that the sound was different then, as the planes had dropped their loads of bombs.

As the Messerschmitts flew back to Europe, the crew of the planes off-loaded any remaining bombs. These landed erratically in the fields in the countryside near Coylton.’

There was a deep crater in a nearby farmer’s field. Another crater could be seen outside the byre door of another farm. Those unexploded bombs were detonated by soldiers a few days later. The craters remained for a time, and we children would go to have a look at them.

The Clydebank Blitz largely destroyed the town, which suffered the worst destruction and loss of life in all of Scotland. 1200 people died and 1000 people were seriously injured. Hundreds more were injured by blast debris. Families were left homeless and bereft.

Evacuation was the result. Coylton residents welcomed many evacuees. The school roll increased. We had new playmates who had never seen a cow, and didn’t know that those creatures were our source of milk! Hens were also strange – ‘so that’s where eggs come from!’. They called fields – ‘parks’, and were surprised that we played there often, and we also paddled in the River Coyle.

After a time, many evacuees returned home. They missed city life. I remember one family who stayed and made their lives in the village.

More than 80 years have passed since then, but the memories of that event remain with me still.

Amy Kinnaird

Friends Remembered

Since the last issue of Outlook, we have sadly lost the following members.

Romy Finch
Sheena Burrell
Anne Patterson

Our sincere condolences go to families and friends.



THOUGHTS ON A WALK – AUTUMN

(With apologies to William Wordsworth)

I wandered lonely as a _____
No! There are no daffodils on show.
I wandered, walked beside a wood.
In quiet and in pensive mood.

In mind, those years were never sad,
Those years I spent on walks with Dad.
He showed me nests with eggs inside,
And taught me why birds have to hide.
We picked hedge fruits in autumn late,
I hear him say “Please shut the gate”,

Those childhood days of long ago,
When life seemed simpler, slow to go.
Left memories in thoughts I see.
While on a walk – which pleases me.

But life goes on, a walk is good,
On many days, can lift my mood.
And OiR still gives me pleasure.
It is my life in time of leisure.

My life these days is OiR
No other group is on a par.
So many thanks to all I've met.
There's much life in this “oldie” yet.

Amy Kinnaird



A LIFE RECIPE

Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate in one hand, a glass of wine in the other, totally worn out and screaming “Wooo Hoooo what a ride! I wanna go round again”!

Anonymous (This anonymous suggestion was printed on the back of a birthday card I bought recently for a friend).

Amy Kinnaird

The Pirate of the Vennal - by Alastair Osborne

The Vennal always smelled of fish but then Ayr was a fishing port. Wattie Wilson lived at number 4. He had retired from being a pilot in 1901, the year the old Queen died. It was also the year Ayr's electric trams began running. Wattie had no plans to board one. He spent his days resting one hand on the banister of his outside stairs. He dressed each day as if he was still in charge of his pilot cutter, with his peaked cap pulled down almost over his eyes, looking out for anyone coming or going on the Vennal. He would intimidate them with demands to know their business. Folk regarded him as an eccentric, if intimidating figure, - the "Bully of the Vennal". However, after a few drinks on a Friday night, Wattie's demeanor changed. He became the animated storyteller holding forth with tales from his seafaring past. The Steamboat Tavern was his local. Wattie would take his seat to the right of the door as you entered so you wouldn't see him until you reached the bar and turned around. The air was thick with tobacco smoke and the stale smell of beer and spirits. On this particular Friday, Wattie had a new tale for the regulars, one they had not heard before. He had spied a stranger in the Vennal and challenged him as usual. But there had been something very unsettling about this figure and his appearance.

"I saw him as clear as I see old Tam Logan over there in the corner. He was nae mair than twenty feet awa". When he told the same story the following week, the stranger was "nae mair than ten feet awa". By the third week of telling, he was "staunin richt ferment me, giein oot a sweet reek o rum".

Wattie painted a vivid portrait of the man. He wore a canvass doublet and breeches and a 'motley' cotton waistcoat of blue, yellow, and green. "Fittin for a man who sailed with a motley crew." He bellowed with laughter at his own joke. On his head a knitted Monmouth cap, on his feet silver buckled shoes. He had a thick belt around his midriff and over his shoulder a bright red silk sash. Any chance that this was merely a rather flamboyant sailor was dispelled by the jangling of his silver bracelets, two on each wrist, the rings on his fingers and a single gold earring. "Yes" said Wattie triumphantly. "A pirate had visited the Vennal." Wattie enjoyed many a Dram for the telling of this tale until folk tired of hearing it. He would still recount the tale in a booming voice, but no one was really listening anymore.

A very different Wattie Wilson could now be found slouched against his banister each day. His peaked cap had gone, leaving his long white hair to follow the bidding of the wind. His dress had become dishevelled, whereas he used to be neatly turned out. He no longer challenged anyone on the street. His gaze seemed fixed far off, somewhere in the direction of the harbour breakwater.

When a couple of weeks passed with no sighting of Wattie, a delegation from the Fishermen's Mission was despatched to investigate. When they forced his door, they were met with an overpowering rancid smell. They found Wattie dead in his bed. He was wearing a bright red silk sash over a multi-coloured waistcoat and was surrounded by some curious artefacts. Laid out around the body were four silver bangles, some rings, a gold earring, a knitted Monmouth cap, silver buckled shoes and an empty bottle of Bumbo. Bumbo. This was a Navy grog favoured by Pirates, made by mixing rum, water, sugar and nutmeg. The Fishermen's Mission preaches temperance and as such the delegation had no direct knowledge of Wattie's pirate story recounted every week in the Steamboat. However, everyone, drinker, or teetotaler, had heard of it. The delegation thought it best to say no more about what they found. They simply reported back the sad news of Wattie's death. The Box Master was given the job to boost the mission's funds by discreetly selling off the artefacts collected from the house. And that was an end to it.

And so, it would have been but for an article in the Ayrshire Post last year. While digging foundations for a new housing development near Ayr Harbour, human remains were found. Carbon dating concluded it was a 17th century male. Experts speculated that he might have been a Pirate executed on the old Tolbooth Gibbet which used to dominate the Sandgate; commonly used to hang witches, criminals, and pirates. They thought the man could have been hanged, then his body dumped in nearby wasteland. His burial in a shallow, unmarked grave suggested he had no relatives or friends in the local area. However, both puzzling and unexplained was the discovery, alongside the bones, of what appeared to be the well-preserved remains of a peaked cap of the kind worn by maritime pilots about a hundred years ago.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1 Japan
- 2 Stone of Destiny
- 3 George V
- 4 Boxing Day
- 5 Clement Clark Moore
- 6 Spanish
- 7 Germany
- 8 We Wish You a Merry Christmas
- 9 Spice Girls
- 10 Nine
- 11 Two (1988 and 1990)
- 12 The Snowman
- 13 New York
- 14 Kevin
- 15 His wings



Quiz devised by Isabell Rogers -

Our thanks to Isabell for creating this quiz and others in previous editions of Outlook.

Some diary dates for December

1st the Meteorological start of Winter.

11th National Christmas Jumper Day

21st Yule/Winter Solstice, the Astronomical start of Winter.

25th Christmas Day.

26th Boxing Day (a Bank Holiday in Scotland since 1974)

31st Hogmanay, New Years Eve.



Outlook Summer 2024

We hope you have enjoyed reading this festive edition of "Outlook" 2023.. Our next edition will be published in the Summer of 2024. To fill the pages of Outlook we need to hear from you, so please, if you are a Group Leader, or Member, and enjoy putting pen to paper or tapping your computer keyboard we would like to receive a contribution from you. Group News, short stories, recipes, poems and pictures all contribute to making Outlook an interesting read, so please send your articles to the office and we will do the rest.

We look forward to hearing from you.