



Registered Charity No. SC003089

## **Newsletter No. 95: October 2021**

### **AGM for 2020 and 2021 – Wednesday 26th January 2022**

Aberdeen Civic Society has not managed to hold the AGMs for both 2020 and 2021. It is therefore planned to hold a joint, two-year, AGM at **7pm on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022**. Formal notices will be sent out nearer the time. The AGM will take place at the Royal Northern & University Club but will also be available by ZOOM. So, if you would like to attend the AGM, but are not keen to attend the event itself, please let us know (email us) on [info@aberdeencivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@aberdeencivicsociety.org.uk) and we will send you a link to the meeting.

After the AGM, Jon Tyler, Chairman of The Ferryhill Railway Heritage Trust will give a talk on the work done to restore the Edwardian railway turntable in Ferryhill. This work received Aberdeen Civic Society's main award in 2020. Jon's talk will also be available on ZOOM.

### **Future Direction for Aberdeen Civic Society**

Over recent years it has proved to be increasingly difficult to maintain an active programme for Aberdeen Civic Society. People engage with groups such as ours through social media. In person meetings and events are less popular. Covid-19 has shown us all that a greater use of technology is the future. We will be moving more in this direction.

There is no doubt that there remains considerable interest from local people across all age groups about development and the state of the built environment in their local area. Because of this, there remains a need for an organisation like Aberdeen Civic Society, but we need to move with the times.

To start the process of change, every member is going to be sent a short questionnaire, which we would be grateful if you could answer and return. These will be sent out, either by post or by email, depending on your advised preference. We look forward to receiving and analysing the responses.

### **The Historic Bridges of Aberdeen**

Aberdeen is fortunate to have many historic bridges some of which are still in use today.

The first bridge to review is the **Wellington Suspension Bridge**

Built in 1830 and designed by Captain Samuel Brown and City Architect John Smith. The metalwork was manufactured by James Abernethy at the Ferryhill Foundry



on the banks of the river. The span of the bridge is 217ft and cost £10,000. The chains on which the bridge is suspended are original and based on the Thomas Telford design used on the Menai Suspension Bridge in Anglesey. Captain Brown a naval captain had been a supplier of chains to the Navy and was also the designer of the Union Chain Bridge over the river Tweed a much larger span of 449ft which was completed in 1820 at a cost of £7,700 a third of the cost of a stone bridge.

## **Union Bridge**

This is the largest single span bridge in the world 130ft constructed in 1805 as part of the Union Street plans by Charles Abercrombie. Initially a three-span bridge by Rennie was proposed.



Telford proposed a span of 150ft and Thomas Fletcher the 130ft. After deliberations and involvement with Telford the 130ft span was constructed. In 1908 the bridge was widened on both sides with a three pinned steel arch with new parapets surmounted by Kelly's Cats.

## **Bridge of Dee**

Originally built in 1514 from a bequest from Bishop William Elphinstone it was virtually all rebuilt in 1723 and widened from 14ft to 26ft in 1841. The widening involved the careful dismantling of the whole of the west face of the bridge including turrets abutment and wing walls spandrels and arch stones. The project was designed and executed under the direction of the City Architect John Smith.



*Contributed by Alan Silver*

## **The Bon Accord Baths**

July 2020 will, hopefully, be seen as a turning point in the campaign to save the Bon Accord Baths. This was the date when Bon Accord Heritage, after five years of negotiations with the Council, signed a License to Occupy agreement and got keys to the Baths.

Since then, we have organised two open day weekends for the public. The September 2020 open days were the first opportunity for the public to see inside the building since it closed in 2008, and over 1600 people attended, with a long, socially distanced line stretching down Justice Mill Lane. We heard many interesting stories about the Baths – one visitor had been at their opening in 1940 – but it was not only nostalgia, as we raised over £10,000 in donations. There is no doubt that Aberdonians want the Baths open!

The feasibility of running the Baths remains the big question, and we are now undertaking professional feasibility planning, which should be complete by the end of the year. In the meantime, we have been doing essential maintenance (clearing gutters and roof drains, blocking broken windows) and carrying out daily security checks, so that the condition of the Baths does not deteriorate further while our plans take shape. We have also continued cleaning up the interior of the Baths, with the intention of opening up more of the building for each open day.

The next open days will be on 27/28 November 10am - 2:30pm, with Bon Accord Baths themed Christmas cards and gifts on sale. We hope to see you there!

[www.facebook.com/savebonaccordbaths](https://www.facebook.com/savebonaccordbaths)

Bon Accord Heritage (Save Bon Accord Baths) SC046052 Regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)

*Contributed by Jack Burnett-Stuart*

*We welcome contributions from guest writers to our newsletter. Please send them to [info@aberdeencivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@aberdeencivicsociety.org.uk).*