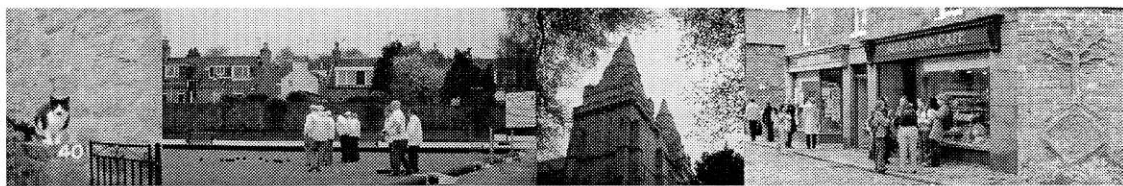


The Auld Toon News

The Old Aberdeen Community Council's newsletter is published in May, October and February
www.oldaberdeen.org.uk



Old Aberdeen Post Office Closes Despite Vigorous Campaign

The arguments for keeping the Post Office in Old Aberdeen were many: it is a unique site with unique circumstances, sitting within the City's prime Conservation Area in the heart of the old town; it is beside one of the UK's oldest universities serving both international and local community; it had been trading since the early 1800s.

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Unlikely Alliance gains strength

In our May Issue we reported on the meeting at St Machar School organised by the Council as part of their public consultation over the siting of the Third Don bridge. Since then there has been the report to the Environment and Infrastructure committee which failed to mention the overwhelming feeling of that meeting to focus planning and resources on the Haudagain roundabout.

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Things Hot Up as University Proposes New Heating Plant

Readers of the Evening Express will be aware that the University have submitted plans for a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant to be situated on the north west corner of the Bedford Road yard between Meston Walk and Hermitage Avenue. The initial controversy centred round the height of the chimney.

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Got a story?

Contact **The Auld Toon News** editorial by email on editor@oldaberdeen.org.uk or submit your story online at our website www.oldaberdeen.org.uk (you need to be a registered user of the website).

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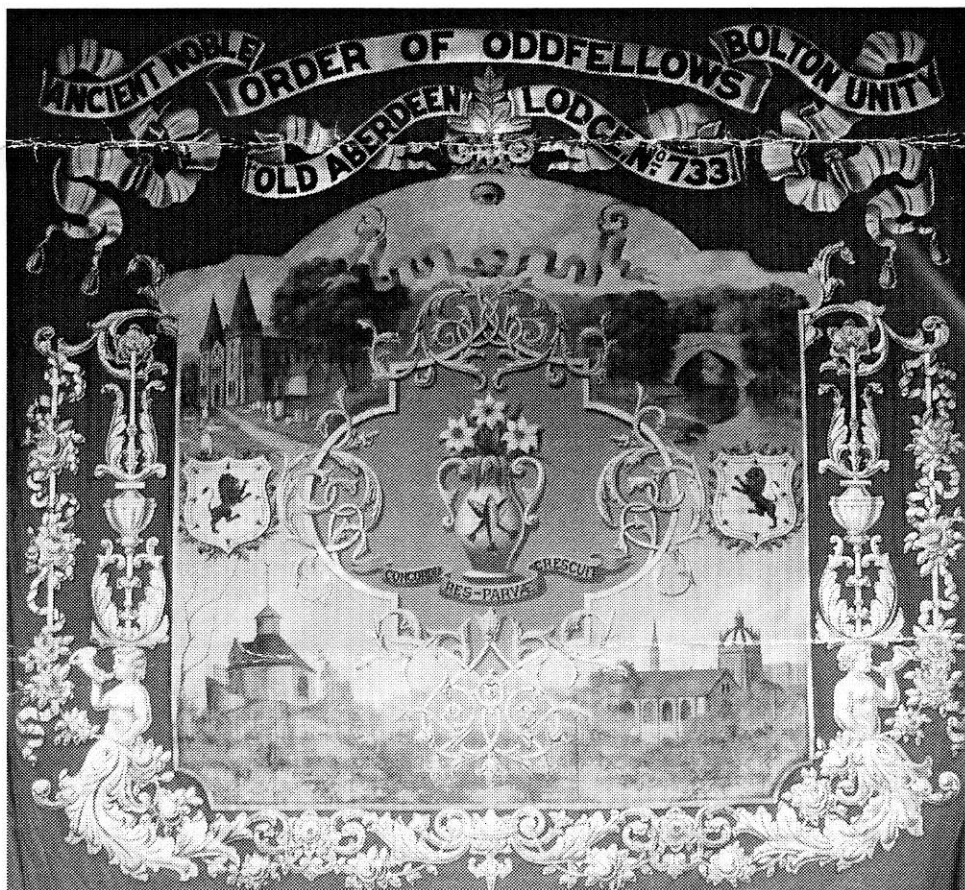
6 St Machar Place,
Old Aberdeen AB24 3SF

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Moving Times

[x] On the 6th November 1787 the Masonic Lodge of Old Aberdeen decided to contribute £25 towards the building of a new Town House in the City of Old Aberdeen. They were able to meet there both rent and rate free in perpetuity. However, in 2001 the now Old Town House was leased for 150 years to Aberdeen University. On the 7th August the masons moved out of the Town

House and across to Dunbar Street into their new Lodge, a former stables building dating from around 1700. With the support of the Old Aberdeen Community Council, the University has now secured a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to renovate the building; it will host the student reception and offer other community facilities; the Town House will be the ideal place for the monthly community council meetings.



A Banner that shows Old Aberdeen

When the masons started to clear out their old lodge, they found a massive banner left there by the now dissolved lodge of the Old Fellows. The front of the banner

shows the Odd Fellows' emblems, the back shows the landmarks of Old Aberdeen (clockwise from top left): St. Machar Cathedral, the Brig o'Balgonnie, King's College and the medieval tower. The banner will be displayed at the Maritime Museum.

Putting Old Aberdeen Back on the Map

There are two words noticeably absent from the maps with the Local Plan draft document - Old Aberdeen! Was it that the central area designated as 'Existing Community Sites and Facilities (CF41), what the University likes to call its campus, disguised the fact that people actually live there too? Was it that the planners, like us, found the many different boundaries to Old Aberdeen – community council, neighbourhood services, electoral wards, Conservation Area – all too confusing and decided just to leave us out altogether?

We can only guess but the need for strong community identity and focused community action has never been greater. Old Aberdeen is currently being faced with a huge increase in traffic on King Street and more development at Dubford in the offing; a major road artery being pushed through Tillydrone Avenue to the St Machar Drive roundabout with little consideration of the onward infrastructure; a large heating and power development by the University with substantial local disruption for the next 12–14 months; and – the loss of our post office that had for so many years been at the heart of the community.

So often it is a question of rearguard action on major planning developments. OACC is therefore working hard to represent the best interests of the community in the consultations and meetings that precede these major decisions. Only in drawing together all the main stakeholders in the early stages, will the planning processes become more open and more inclusive and the results more fitting and more successful.

Our next opportunity for community input is on Tuesday 26th October at 6.30 p.m. This meeting is being held as part of "You Said It" Neighbourhood Planning process which aims to draw the local community and service providers together to agree local priorities and use these priorities to allocate budgets and develop service plans. This is a meeting for all residents. It's an opportunity to get in there early and to make sure that Old Aberdeen's voice is heard and that we're back on the map.

Things Hot Up as University Proposes New Heating Plant

[NL] Drawings submitted with the planning application had used sea level as a datum leading both residents and the Evening Express into mistakenly thinking the chimney was much higher than is actually the case. The newspaper's article even featured a picture of the Bedford Road site with a superimposed image of the tower from the Exhibition Centre.

In truth the chimney attached to the new plant will be 24 m (78 ft) in height, considerably smaller than the existing 41 m chimney situated between Meston Building and the Queen Mother Library which will be demolished once the new system is up and running. The proposed building is 36m long, 19 m wide and 7.5 m high. The CHP option was selected as the most environmentally friendly with reductions in CO2 emissions of 10% and NOx by 45% compared to existing arrangements. The scheme is being backed by the Energy Savings Trust.

However, the impact on the adjacent residential areas of Hermitage Avenue and Sunnyside Avenue also needs to be considered. Two public meetings have taken place with residents and a number

of their concerns aired, including safety, visual impact and noise. Balancing the needs of residents and the University is rarely easy and members of the OACC have spent considerable time and effort addressing the issues in discussions with representatives from the University, City Planning and the local residents. OACC would like to express their thanks for the support they have received.

These discussions have led to a proposal for the construction of a raised landscape on the site to act as a noise barrier and an aesthetically pleasing visual screen with trees and shrubs alongside Hermitage Avenue. The OACC submission to Planning included this proposal and a request to refuse the temporary entrance close to the pedestrian crossing by Hermitage Avenue on safety grounds.

At the time of writing the outcome of the planning application is not known. But work will commence soon after permission is granted and this will involve trench excavations and road closures in the High Street, Meston Walk and Elphinstone Road. The University has assured us that this will be carried out in a carefully managed and staged process so as to keep disruption to a minimum.

The Bishop's Palace

Archaeologists Alison Cameron and Chris Croly of Aberdeen City Council recently had a close look at the site at the east end of St Machar's Cathedral, where the Dunbar halls of residence used to be. They found the foundation of a large stone building, shreds of medieval pottery, and a large pit of clay. Yet in the late 15th and early 16th century this was an important area in Old Aberdeen: the place of the Bishop's Palace.

The palace itself served not only as the residence of the Bishop of Aberdeen but it fulfilled a number of other functions as well. Courts were held in the palace and in 1503 during a northerly trip King James IV stopped off at the palace. When in 1497 the Council of the Royal Burgh of New Aberdeen were taking measures to protect themselves from a perceived threat from the English King Henry VII (in response to Scottish and Aberdonian aid for the rebel Perkin Warbeck) the council also ordered the creation of a defence force for Old Aberdeen. This force was to protect the important buildings there and to ensure the 'saiftie of our cathedral kirk, [and] my lord of Aberdenis palace'.

The palace was destroyed in five stages during the 17th century. For example in August 1644, Dr William Guild, Principal of King's College, ordered the removal of the pavement from the hall in the palace, as well as removal of timber and stone work. One month later he had the roof removed: presumably he used all of this material in new building works that were being undertaken at King's.



In 1655 the English troops took away all the stones from the walls of the palace, which were then taken to Castlehill, to the barracks which were being built there at that time. The rubble that remained on the site was taken to King's in 1657.

