# Community Newsletter

Reiss - Killimster - Sibster - Keiss - Nybster - Lyth - Ackergill - Papigoe - Staxigoe - Noss

ISSUE 5 - AUTUMN 2024

# SINCLAIR'S BAY TRUST

Improving and developing Sinclair's Bay as a place to live, work & visit.

Web: www.sinclairsbay.co.uk
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Find us on Facebook & Instagram

Photograph credit: Gilly Begg.
Photograph featured in the April installment of our A Year in Sinclair's Bay Project

## Hello and welcome to the fifth edition of our newsletter...

Sinclair's Bay Trust has been extremely busy and we're keen to share our news. Earlier this year, we were delighted to launch the Caithness at War Trail in collaboration with Wick Development Trust. This is one of, I hope, many projects to be completed by the Trust and has landed with great enthusiasm locally as well as attracting world wide attention. Read all about it right here along with some other great things the Trust has been getting up to so far this year. Enjoy! Take care, Maysie Calder, Chairperson

## Sinclair's Bay Social Spaces

Thanks to a grant recived from the North Highland Initiative's Community Resilience Fund, we were able to run our warm spaces project for a second year at the start of 2024. We re-branded the project to Sinclair's Bay Social Spaces and scheduled a 10 week program commencing in January and concluding in March. We opened the doors of Keiss, Ackergill and Reiss & Killimster Halls on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday respectively and were delighted to see good numbers of people attending sessions as well as numbers remaining consistent throughout the project. Sinclair's Bay Social Spaces served over 300 lunches and many, many more cups of tea and coffee over the 10 week period! We'd like to say a big thank you to our session facilitators, caterer and to everyone who came along to support the project. Feedback has helped us to understand and evidence the importance of this project to the Sinclair's Bay community and we are currently working away in the background to try to secure more funding to enable the project to return in 2025.

Sinclair's Bay Trust board members are: Maysie Calder, Maria Aitken, Ian Ross, Pat Ramsay, Christina Calder & Emma Fraser. We would like to welcome Pauline Gibson, William Munro and Alistair Jack who recently joined the Trust as board members. Sinclair's Bay Trust is supported by Kerry O'Keefe, Community Development Officer employed by CVG. We would like to say thank you to Andrew Mackay for the time and support that he has given to Sinclair's Bay Trust from the beginning. Andrew has stood down from his position as board member and Treasurer.

# CAITHNESS AT WAR

It has been almost three years in the making and has taken over 4000 hours of research and work to bring the Caithness At War Trail project together and we are delighted to announce that the trail is now finally finished and open to the public.

The trail was officially opened on Saturday the 20th of April at a ceremony held at Wick John O' Groats Airport. The opening ceremony was attended by invited dignitaries as well as the Directors of Sinclair's Bay Trust and Wick Development Trust, and approximately 250 members of the public who turned out to support the project.

*Over 250 people attended the opening ceremony*

The event started with a speech by our very own Maysie Calder, who is the Chairperson of Sinclair's Bay Trust. This was followed by a speech from Jonathan Miller, the Chairperson of Wick Development Trust, and then a speech from Viscount Thurso, Lord Lieutenant of Caithness. Once the speeches had been completed, Viscount Thurso cut the ribbon, marking the Caithness At War Trail officially open.

*Viscount Thurso, Lord Lieutenant of Caithness cutting the ribbon to officially open the Caithness At War Trail*

Due to the fact that many of the panels on the trail are also memorials, a short remembrance service was held as a mark of respect. As the RBLS flags were lowered, a wreath for the Army was laid by Viscount Thurso, followed by a wreath for the Royal Air Force which was laid by Flight Lieutenant Falconer, and finally a wreath for the Royal Navy which was laid by Commander Walker.

School children from Keiss, Noss, and Newton Park Primary Schools also laid some poppy crosses on behalf of the children of Wick and Sinclair's Bay as a mark of thanks for the sacrifices made during the war so we could all live in freedom today.

Once the wreaths and poppy crosses had been laid, a pair of pipers played 'Flowers of the Forest' which was followed by a one minutes silence.

*Wreaths and poppy crosses which were laid, along with the opening plaque below the information panel.*

Once the opening ceremony was completed, the dignitaries and guests were piped up to the Airport Terminal building where Onor Crummay from Spitfire AA810 Restoration Limited (pictured below with Dougie Cook, General Manager at Highlands and Islands Airports Limited) delivered a speech and unveiled a signed painting of Spitfire AA810. Tea, coffee and cakes were provided for everyone and there was also a display of wartime memorabillia which was provided by Andrew Guttridge.

The event was covered by local as well as regional newspapers and BBC Alba and BBC Radio Scotland. There was a great local turn out and Wick paid homage to the event by flying the flags at the War Memorial, the RAF Ensign at the pillbox and the Union Flag over the Town Hall.

The Caithness At War Trail is our biggest project to date, and has been delivered in collaboration with Wick Development Trust, but would not have been possible without the work and support of many.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the project or who helped to make the launch the success that it was, and of course to the SSE Caithness Beatrice Community Fund, without whose support this project would never have happened.

What started as conversations about how we, as a Trust, could mark and acknowledge the rich wartime history in Sinclair's Bay, quickly grew in to the project it is today: Caithness At War.

*Andrew Guttridge with his display of wartime memorabillia*

Promotional items created for the opening ceremony and the all important trail maps. These can be picked up from various locations in Caithness or can be downloaded from the Caithness At War website.

## Caithness At War Sinclair's Bay AR App

Following on from the launch of the trail, we are also excited to announce that our AR app is now live. Years in the making, this app was created by DeuXality Games in collaboration with Sinclair's Bay Trust and the Caithness at War subgroup. It is an augmented reality app which accompanies sites 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 16 of the Sinclair's Bay branch of the Caithness at War trail.

The app is available for free via Google Play and Apple App Store. N.B. Apologies - some older devices do not support the app and we are aware and working on this. Once downloaded, at any of the above sites, open the app, follow the instructions, turn up your volume and point your phone or pad/tablet camera at the yellow target at the bottom right of the relevant Caithness At War panel.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work put in by members of our board on the project steering group: Maysie Calder, Ian Ross, Maria Aitken and Andrew Mackay, but special thanks and acknowledgement must go to our previous Development Officer/now board member, Alistair Jack. Alistair took the project from seed, saw its potential and drove the project forward with passion and determination! He saw scope in the project far beyond what we could have imagined and has put in countless hours of work in his development officer role as well as his own personal time.

## CAITHNESS ALLIED AIR FORCES MEMORIAL

As our collaboration with Wick Development Trust went so well when creating the Caithness At War Trail, we were delighted when they asked us to become part of the second part of their Caithness At War project. The plan is to create a Caithness Allied Air Forces Memorial to remember the aircrew that set off from RAF Wick, RAF Skitten, or RAF Castletown during the war but never returned.

The memorial is planned to take the form of a life-sized replica of Spitfire AA810 and a massive 2m high by 9m long flagstone wall with all **577** names engraved. There will also be flagstone benches and eight flag poles to fly the flags of the countries that these men came from which includes: United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Norway, France and the United States of America.

If you would like to help fund the memorial, please scan the QR code opposite to make a donation.

SCAN ME

If you are interested in wartime history in Caithness, there is a dedicated group on Facebook, Caithness at War: https://www.facebook.com/groups/354073943195726

Visit the Caithness at War website:
**https://caithnessatwar.com**

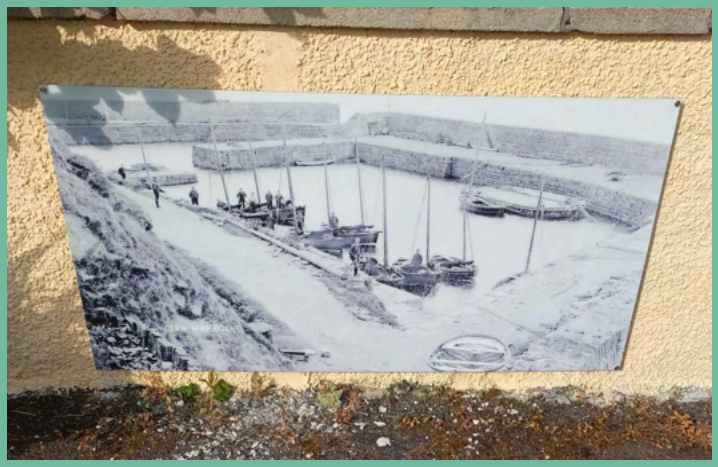
## Community Volunteer Groups
## Keiss Volunteer Group Update

Keiss Volunteer Group have been busy continuing to improve the car park area in Keiss which was looking very neglected. The damaged wall has now been repaired, with many thanks to the GMR Henderson team for doing such a professional job. The wall now looks great.

The group have also now displayed beautiful photos of 'Keiss in the past' on the car park wall area and would like to thank to Fergus Mather (Team Leader of the Wick Society, Johnston Collection Digitisation Team) for his valuable help with this, and again, GMR Henderson's team for attaching them to the wall. There is now also trellis on the metal posts for climbing plants (thank you to Chick and Lillian). Many thanks to everyone that has helped with this project, both young and old; the support from everyone has been amazing.

If you would like to help improve Keiss village and be part of our small and friendly team of volunteers please contact us and look for updates on the 'Keiss Volunteer Group' Facebook page or email mariakeiss@googlemail.com.

As a Trust we are very keen to support and see village volunteer groups popping up in other areas of Sinclair's Bay. If you are interested or keen to form a volunteer group in your area as a subgroup of Sinclair's Bay Trust, please get in touch with us: admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk



## Points of Interest: Jean Stephen, Reiss Beach

On 18th January 1958, the Jean Stephen, sheltering in Sinclair's Bay was shipwrecked on Reiss Beach in a night of high winds and heavy snow.

The vessel was originally launched on the 14th of December 1916 as the steam trawler Savitri, built in Aberdeen and measuring 115.5′ x 22.1′ x 11.9′. She had a gross tonnage of 212 tons, given the registration number GY1028 and delivered to William Barrett of Grimsby. Savitri was immediately requisitioned by the Admiralty for minelaying and minesweeping duties but was released from naval duty in 1919, finally entering the fishing fleet.

After changing owners a number of times, she was purchased, in 1936, by the Stephen Fishing Company Ltd. of Aberdeen. Re-registered, she became Jean Stephen (A420).

Photo credit: Chris Haden-Homer

On the fateful night, Aberdeen trawler Strathdee relayed the distress call to Wick and a team of coastguards were sent to assist from the beach. On arrival they could see the stricken vessel rolling heavily in the surf, the lifeboat by this time attempting to reach her, unsuccessfully. They assembled the rescue apparatus and, around 11.30 pm a line was fired across the vessel. By now, with an ebbing tide, the immediate danger to life had passed and the crew waited until 2.30 am to abandon ship with the help of the coastguard. The skipper and mate remained for another hour hoping she might be refloated on the next tide, but it wasn't to be, and they too abandoned ship, leaving the Jean Stephen to become a total wreck. All 13 men on the vessel were saved.

An inquiry found the skipper and mate at fault and responsible for the loss. The skipper, John Cowie has his certificate suspended for 12 months and was fined £100 towards court expenses. The mate, George Christie, had his certificate suspended for 6 months with a fine of £50.

Today the wreckage, still visible with her boiler protruding from the sand, is a poignant reminder of the power of the sea and the strength of nature.

## Sinclair's Bay Creatives

Sinclair's Bay Creatives has been running since October 2023. The group meet on the last Wednesday evening of every month (with the exception of December) in Keiss Hall from 7pm-8.30pm. Creatives is a small, informal, friendly group and is open to anyone - you don't have to be 'good at art', just enjoy spending time being creative. To date the group has been funded by a small grant from the 2023 Sinclair's Bay Community Council Microgrant Scheme as well as Sinclair's Bay Trust. The group have applied for further funding to sustain the project and hope to develop it in new, exciting directions! Fingers crossed!

## Community Council Corner

You may have seen new barrel planters cropping up in some areas of Sinclair's Bay. These were purchased earlier this year alongside compost & plants to brighten up the area. Speed signs from Reiss & Staxigoe/Papigoe are also in the process of being repaired.

Sinclair's Bay Community Council are administering a new micro-grant scheme kindly funded by Stroupster Windfarm Community Benefit Fund. Groups, projects & activities which benefit the Sinclair's Bay area are welcome to apply. Applications are assessed on a quarterly basis, the next deadline is 4th December. Application forms can be requested via e-mailing the community council.

Sinclair's Bay Community Council meet on a regular basis (rotating meetings between the halls in Sinclair's Bay) to identify, discuss and raise issues concerning their local area. The community council are keen to encourage more members of the community to their monthly meetings.

For more information or to raise any issues visit their Facebook page or e-mail sinclairbaycc@hotmail.co.uk

## A Year in Sinclair's Bay Photography Project

In 2023, the first year of our project, A Year in Sinclair's Bay, concluded. The project is a collaborative project, recording the year in photographs taken by the community every month. In 2023, the project shared 349 photographs captured by 45 community photographers. The photographs were shared every month on our social media channels and the full album can be found by visiting this link: https://sinclairsbay.co.uk/year-sinclairs-bay-2023 The photographs from 2023 were also used in a recent collaboration with Wick Voices - more information below. We loved this project so much we have continued the project this year. We've continued to collect photographs every month and love seeing our regular contributors return month and after month as well as some new names cropping up! Take part by sending your photographs from the month to us by e-mail: admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk by the 1st of the next month.

We've used some of the photos from the project to create A Year in Sinclair's Bay 2025 calendar is on sale now - please see our social media or e-mail us if you're interested.

Photo credits: Richard Ewart, Anne Campbell, Hayley Grant, Fiona McAulay & Ian Nicolson

## Wick Voices - Collaboration

We've been delighted to have the opportunity to collaborate with Wick Voices and make use of some of the photos captured in the 2023 edition of our A Year in Sinclair's Bay project. Wick Voices attended some of our Social Spaces sessions to make recordings as well as inviting members of the community to share their favourite and/or special places or memories of places in Sinclair's Bay. We're thrilled with the final piece and would like to say thank you to Wick Voices for their time and dedication to this project. You can view and listen to the final piece 'Sinclair's Bay - so much to see and do' here: www.wickvoices.co.uk

## Community Noticeboards

You may have seen some new community noticeboards popping up in Sinclair's Bay. Following consultation with the community, we identified three areas in Sinclair's Bay in need of noticeboards and successfully secured funding from Beatrice Caithness Community Fund and Highland Council Community Regeneration Fund to purchase and install noticeboards in Reiss village, Keiss village and Reiss beach. We are keen that they are used for their purpose - to share information with the community and welcome local groups relevant to Sinclair's Bay getting in touch with information for noticeboards.

Photo credits: Nina Mackay & Donna Sinclair

## Thank you - Newsletter Delivery Volunteers

This edition and previous editions of our newsletter have made their way through your letterbox thanks to a small team of volunteers who offer their time to support Sinclair's Bay Trust! It is a huge task & we're extremely grateful for the support! Please get in touch if you'd like to help or support the Trust in any way.