

The Independent

# Elie Herald

Mid-ish Summer 2020 Virtual

## Lockdown.



How was it for you?

### Editorial

The last week in March saw a radical and unprecedented change to the villages and villagers - not to mention the rest of the world. Lockdown meant that we were back to almost midwinter conditions, but worse. There was no one about; the Pavilion and all the shops had temporarily closed whilst they assessed what was needed and some of us on our daily single walk looked somewhat forlornly at the deserted streets. It was obvious that some had escaped the city either before or shortly after the lockdown and there was a rumour that Edinburgh Resident's parking stickers were being removed from parked cars by their owners lest they be identified as having broken the curfew. We had the "scandal" of a high ranking government official being caught out visiting a second home in Earlsferry. We were thrust, somewhat rudely, into the cauldron of public opinion as being an elite place where the rules don't apply to those living there. This was a completely false picture as those resident here observed, almost to the point of obsession, the rules about social distancing, about masks - voluntary or otherwise - and about one walk per day. Some visitors had been reported to the police as having not abided by the lockdown rules and the residents were carefully on the look-out for suspicious cars and houses hitherto empty being opened up. Both letting agencies eventually shut their doors and the isolated existence started in earnest.

### An interim solution?

In due course some businesses managed to work out a system whereby they could provide a sort of service and still abide by the rules. A few started up again trying to cater for the changes but soon found that the lack of customers and the necessary distancing precluded any viable opportunity to keep going even in modified form. The Pavilion tried to get something going but eventually decided that the lack of footfall meant that opening, even on a restricted scale, pointless. The Newsagents, chemist and Appletons kept going with modified rules and opening times and the residents scrupulously observed the restrictions. The Deli operated a phone up and delivery service as best it could and Ardross operated on restricted opening and phone up and collect orders. All credit to them having tried something.

### Catering

The 19<sup>th</sup> Hole succeeded we think in providing a carry-

out and delivery service of meals. Only the baker's shop seemed relatively unaffected. We must take our hats off to those businesses who managed to adjust their service and provide some sort of facility for the community.



### EAST NEUK COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLANNING TEAM

East Neuk Community Emergency Planning Team (ENCEPT) sprang into action rather sooner than it had expected and tried to identify vulnerabilities in the community and offered to help delivery for those most vulnerable. It issued the following statement:

*"Following the de-activation of our Community Emergency Plan, ENCEPT would like to take the opportunity to thank over 100 volunteers who put their names forward to assist their communities via ENCEPT. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the virus and from the clinical guidance we received we were unable to task everyone."*

Eventually rumours started to surface that the virus had penetrated Earlsferry House Care Home and much anxiety was expressed about the staff and residents and their plight but it seemed that the outbreak was relatively small and well contained. Well done to the staff at the home - it must have been a terrifying few weeks.



### Lessons

So, what did we learn during this period. Firstly, it was significant that speaking to some of the shopkeepers there had been a feeling of the whole community pulling together for the same end and almost a palpable sense of cohesion and togetherness. People started to realise and appreciate, if they had not before, that this was a very good place to have to spend one's isolation, even although the golf course was closed and the beach sparsely populated and the launching of the boats postponed. Reports surfaced of people speaking to shopkeepers who normally would not have done so. The feeling was one of "we are all in this together and will get through". Next thing we noticed was that the villages were inundated



with delivery vans fulfilling the change in shopping characteristics now for online. The delivery companies also had been diligent in providing safety for their drivers and customers by leaving parcels sufficiently distanced from the recipient. Did anyone else have a quarantine room into which all these deliveries and the daily post were isolated for at least three days? Ironic though it was, it applied also to urgent communications from the Scottish Government about the Coronavirus. Seemed rather pointless to send them by post when even the communication had to endure a quarantine.

We made do without having to visit the supermarkets as the Newsagent and Deli had increased their range of goods. All credit to them for their reaction to the community. It made us realise perhaps that we really could exist solely on Carol's marmalade and jams, two flagons of milk a week, and even without the daily papers - tonic water and Irn-Bru still being essentials!

Of course, "*the doctor would not be happy to see us*" so phone consultations and advice were freely and happily given - might this be something that could be extended.

The public toilets were closed - in itself not necessarily related to the campervan absence as we found out after the lockdown was lifted (see infra).

We tended to greet people with a shouted "are you ok?" rather than a "Hi". Long may that continue.

We learnt to use Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet, Blue Jeans and Facetime apps to speak to friends and family. Perhaps that is something else that will catch on.

Committee meetings, if not cancelled, were 'Zoomed' but the result was less wasted time - perhaps this will continue.

Oh, and haircutting - did we ever have to survive so long without our roots being touched-up, without a trim and blow dry, without a no 3? But we started to DIY with that cutting machine either we used for the dog or which we acquired in case we grew a beard. But it's become very useful hasn't it? We can do all the trimming ourselves. Ok - we can't see the back of our head, but that's a bonus. We can never see the back of our head anyway. We often wondered why the hairdresser using the mirror shows you the back of your head without your glasses on. You cannot comment on the work done but you do of course nod contentedly. While we are at it why do manufacturers of shampoo and conditioner not put huge letters 'S' and 'C' on their products so that we can identify which is which in the shower without our glasses? So, if you do it yourself it's the back that everyone else sees but not you - so what? Are we going to DIY our hair in the future once the hairdressing salons are open.....maybe - but maybe not.....



Sport behind closed doors - somehow it doesn't seem real when 22 guys rush about a pitch to an echoing empty stadium. It's surreal - even cricket looks strange without

the drunken louts at the end of the day singing songs and listening to the brass ensemble of the Barmy Army. Could we do without that? The jury is out.....

Golf social distancing is impossible - but you can bet it saves having to plough through thick rough looking for your playing partner's ball. Mind you, your partner will not reciprocate, so it's likely that you have become somewhat straighter off the tee than of old. We could not do without golf now - could we?



Remember the bread maker which we bought a few years ago in response to sell your home programmes, which recommended the smell of freshly made bread to entice a buyer - actually we thought it was to mask the animal smells from the dog. Anyway, did we all pull it out of storage and have another go? It was worth it, wasn't it - provided you could find the yeast at an acceptable price!!

### Next Phase

So, to the next phase of the defence against the virus. We are instructed that holiday homes, etc. can be re-opened. There was a sudden influx of people and the villages were actually busier than they have ever been - parking (legally) being impossible. Despite, at that stage, the catering establishments yet to open (other than Murray's Chippe van) there was almost full occupancy. It remains to be seen, therefore, if the protocols established by the Scottish Government were going to be observed. Generally, there is a feeling that they are being ignored.

The beach has been over-populated and it is difficult to see any social distancing. There have been parties in gardens (especially in Park Place) where a largish number congregated again with scant regard for the social distancing.

### Shops' Precautions

The shops in the High Street, bless their hearts, have done their best to mark out waiting places and stances for queues and it has been partially successful in that people are not barging into shops regardless. The wearing of face masks has been generally observed, though many of the children seem not to be covered by the protocols or a face mask.

There was an incident where an English visitor objected to having to wear a mask since it was not compulsory in England. He was told that was not where he was now. There is a reluctance when walking in the village streets to avoid those on a semi collision course and it has been obvious that the social distancing has seriously shrunk to what is its usually the norm. How that will change when there is a one metre rule? One does not know. Hugging and kissing are still out by the way.

So, what of the next few weeks as the influx no doubt increases and it will be standing room only. Here's a thought - the Scottish Government might well invoke powers to isolate local communities that see a spike in infections. If that were to happen here would all the second

home-owners and holidaymakers be trapped by the lockdown?

The residents of the villages since they tend to be in the more 'at risk' category have done their best to conform to the protocols. That has, so far, been successful in preventing an outbreak here but with the influx of people and scant regard by them to the protocols are we not at serious risk of a spike in the infection? Please, please, keep up the social distancing to keep others safe. You may very well either have had the virus or feel that **you** can deal with such an infection but have regard to the transmission from you to more vulnerable members of the community.

### Ruby Bay

Prior to lock down ("PTLD") there had been plans drawn up by Fife Coast and Countryside Trust along with the Community Council to devise a system at Ruby Bay for campervans with some designated stances and ticket machines (see *Elie Herald* passim). That was obviously in abeyance but should soon get up and running. Not before time - the World Record has been broken one weekend after the end of lockdown when 24 campervans were overnighing and 7 tents, some of them very large, were counted by the residents. Now the toilets are closed at night and it is claimed (anecdotally) that relief was being obtained in the open behind the toilets. This is very irresponsible, especially since the virus can be transmitted via human waste. We earnestly hope that the scheme being put in place by the Trust will be up and running soon to meet the expected visitors.

One of our local correspondents said the following:

*"Yesterday morning [11<sup>th</sup> July] there were 24 campervans on both levels of Ruby Bay car park, plus sundry cars, tents and vans where people had spent the night. I spoke with a dog walker from one of the campervans who was under the impression it was a camp site for vans because it said so on a web site.*

*Disappointed, he was, that the toilets and disposal facilities were not open and I explained it was not a campervan overnight stop but a car park.*

*This morning it was worse and the green area was covered with tents to the extent that it was difficult to cross and not trip over a guy rope. There was also strong evidence of human waste in the grass.*

*Given the age profile of Elie and Earlsferry this is beyond tolerable. It would be impossible for the waste lorry to access the bins at Ruby Bay over the weekend (especially the glass recycling bin).*

*The suggestion that they are bringing trade and supporting local commerce has to be balanced with the threat of importing infection. Most of the campervans occupants bring their supplies with them and leave only rubbish. I have heard them complain that the price of milk, bread, etc. locally is expensive and "they can get it more cheaply in a supermarket". I fully appreciate that living in the very attractive village residents have to accept that to enjoy that place outwith the tourist season the seasonal impact has to be balanced, but in these particular times I feel that it is so selfish of the visitors including the second homeowners and Airbnb to inflict*

*the possibility of coronavirus on the local residents. Many visitors from the south are totally ignorant of fact that there are different rules in Scotland or they don't care, which is worse. I mentioned this to a visitor who suggested that if we felt threatened we should stay indoors and let them enjoy their holiday."*

*Sic transit Gloria.*

### Dolphins

We have been so privileged to see videos of dolphins in Elie bay shot by various boat owners. The waters have generally been very calm and it is exciting to have such good footage of these magnificent creatures. You can see them usually on Facebook in the Elie and Earlsferry Photos group which we urge you to join.



### Fly Tipping

One of the downsides of lockdown has been the closure of recycling centres, but there is no excuse for fly tipping at Ferry Road and Cocklemill burn. Any information on the culprits will be much appreciated. There was also an earlier incident but then it was determined that this had fallen from a lorry. It is an offence to fail to secure a load on a lorry such that it becomes dislodged.



### Toll Green Hall

The application by Elie and Earlsferry Community Collaborative Ltd (Comcol) to be registered as a community group for buying Toll Green Hall from the Church of Scotland has been refused by the Scottish Ministers. As a consequence, the company, having been formed specifically as a vehicle to enable a community buy-out, has been dissolved. It is with regret and disappointment that the directors had to take this step and they wish to thank all those in the villages who supported the initiative and expressed their approval of the idea to acquire the Hall for the community.



### Earlsferry Town Hall

The news here is more encouraging. The committee now formed into limited company has received permission to proceed with a community asset transfer of the Hall to the company. Because the hall is a common good property the procedure is a little complicated.



Common good property is property which a burgh (especially a Royal Burgh) owns as an asset for the benefit of the community. Most of these common good properties go back many years if not centuries and Earlsferry Town Hall is no exception. It is highly likely

that the Town Hall was simply acquired by the village as time went on and thus there is most unlikely to be a title deed for it. It was owned by the citizens of the Burgh for their own enjoyment and use.

Initially therefore it would have been the citizens of Earlsferry who owned the Town Hall. With reorganisation of local government and with the amalgamation of the two burghs in 1929 it is probable that Elie and Earlsferry residents own the Town Hall. This property is classed as inalienable.

Therefore, the local authority has to go to the sheriff court or court of session for permission to transfer the common good asset to another body. The court can make such conditions as it may wish in relation to it. The point here is that since the asset is to be transferred to a community body it cannot be sold or disposed of by that body for its own benefit. Indeed, there is a fall back whereby if the company goes into administration the property cannot be sold to pay off its debts but it must be returned to the community whence it came or to similar philanthropic purposes. It is of interest to note that the other common good asset which Fife Council has on their books as belonging to the citizens of Earlsferry is the right to play golf over the old golfing tract in Earlsferry (effectively the fourth, fifth, tenth, eleventh and probably part of the seventh and eighth). Indeed, there is a memory of an Earlsferry Ratepayer some years ago insisting to us that he had the right to play a shot from the 4<sup>th</sup> tee without paying a green fee resulting in his offspring having a similar privilege - even on a Sunday it seemed. How that equates in money terms today, let us hope, is never put to the test.

### **Sewage, Water and the Loch Run**

It is probably widely known that there is an outflow from Kilconquhar Loch known as "the Loch Run" and it comes from Kilconquhar Loch through Elie Estate under the main road, across Baird Place and Wadeslea, eventually discharging into the sea at the Toft. You can usually see an outflow from a pipe in its wall. Originally, this Loch Run served at least three purposes. Firstly, since Kilconquhar Loch is spring fed it provided an overflow system - it is actually very shallow.

Secondly, it was made available, by virtue of a sluice and pit, as a source of water in the event of Elie House catching fire. And thirdly, it was used as power for a waterwheel at the old flax mill which was located in the Toft. It was also co-incidentally a source at one time of eels. This loch run is essential to stop the Loch from flooding but its use as a driving force is no longer required. However, there is a problem in Baird Place which has surfaced in the last year or two. There are two sink holes - one in the road and one in a private garden - which have caused a lot of damage especially to the foundations of the garage of the house. Now whether this is from the outflow of the Loch Run or not is difficult to say but the Loch Run seems to cross Baird Place roughly at this point. So what? you might ask.

Well, the proposed new development at Wadeslea is likely to be over the line of the Loch Run and whilst SEPA has suggested that a condition of planning be imposed that no buildings should be built over its line, it is a worry. Who has responsibility for the maintenance of it and if necessary repair? That is a good question, to which we do not currently have a good answer. During periods of heavy rain and when Kilconquhar Loch is under pressure, there have been instances of the drains opening up and flooding when the Run could not cope with the volume of water. Merely a fact to be noted - *in causa de los accidentes*.



And this is not the only area prone to flooding. The drains at the bottom of Ferry Road and Glovers Wynd frequently overflow during heavy rain distributing raw sewage over the area. Coupled with the ponding at the bottom of Castell Wynd, this seriously suggests that the Elie and Earlsferry drains are not up to proper standard to cope with the present use and it seems hazardous that in these circumstances there is a proposal to add at least 80 more units to the outflows.

### **Development at Telephone Exchange**

It seems that part of the planning permission for the erection of houses on the piece of ground beside the telephone exchange will be the removal of the grass area as one enters Park Place, which is where the flower boxes and boat are. This will diminish the village gateway. Perhaps more worrying is the humpback bridge just as you enter (the former railway bridge). Experience has taught us that emerging from the Telephone Exchange requires considerable stealth lest a boy racer appears over the bridge in excess of the speed limit. We suggest that this might be looked at again. Hope that there is something that can be done.



### **Right of Way?**

A controversy has opened up in relation to a notice that has been posted on the pathway up from Elie House to Kilconquhar Loch. It suggests that people are only **permitted** to use the pathway and that it is not a right of way. This history goes back a few years when Elie Estates applied for planning permission to build what was then described as being a manager's house in effect on the area of ground beside the boathouse. Along with this application, which was granted in principle, round about the same time Fife Council determined to designate the pathway past Kilconquhar Loch as a core path and originally it is our understanding that the line of that core path was intended to be along the pathway up to the north lodge house. However, it seems that Elie Estates prevailed upon Fife Council to re-route the core path to the west before the boathouse thence along the field beside Broomlees and eventually coming back to the original path well after the boathouse. This path has been used by Elie people for many years if not centuries and it is a good walk from the South Lodge at A917 to

the North Lodge at B941. If this house is to be built - and work has officially started - the pathway which has been used for many years will be cut off. Is it a right of way? That's for the lawyers, but there is a move afoot (where else would it be) to do something about it.



## Environmental Action Group (EAG)

You will have seen that, despite the current restrictions, we have done our best to brighten up the villages with planters, tubs, plants, flowers and hanging baskets - the last done by Karen W and Sue R in Colinsburgh. OK - the arrangements in the boxes have not been exactly professional in layout and choice of plants, but we are very much novices in that department being unable to obtain the practical advice from our two experts on the Group, who have been shielding. However, we hope despite the straggly nature of the chrysanthemums you are pleased with the brightness and colour. Our convenor, Graham Meacher, has set up a couple of crowd-funders to assist us with our endeavours and we are most grateful to all those who have donated. If you have not yet donated and would like to support us the details are:

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/2653199818283270/>  
JustGiving <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/eag>

We are planning to tackle the pollarding of the trees at Toll Green, which Fife Council consider is not their remit. It is hoped that pollarding will deter the jackdaws, at least for a time, from making it their home....sorry chaps! We are also anxious to create a nice sitting space round the water fountain and we would like to dedicate it to the late Callum Macintosh. We think "Callum's Corner" would be a fitting tribute to him. We have been given permission by the Sports Club to take their antique Victorian green benches, refurbish them and replace them in this area. We will provide the Sports Club with suitable replacements.



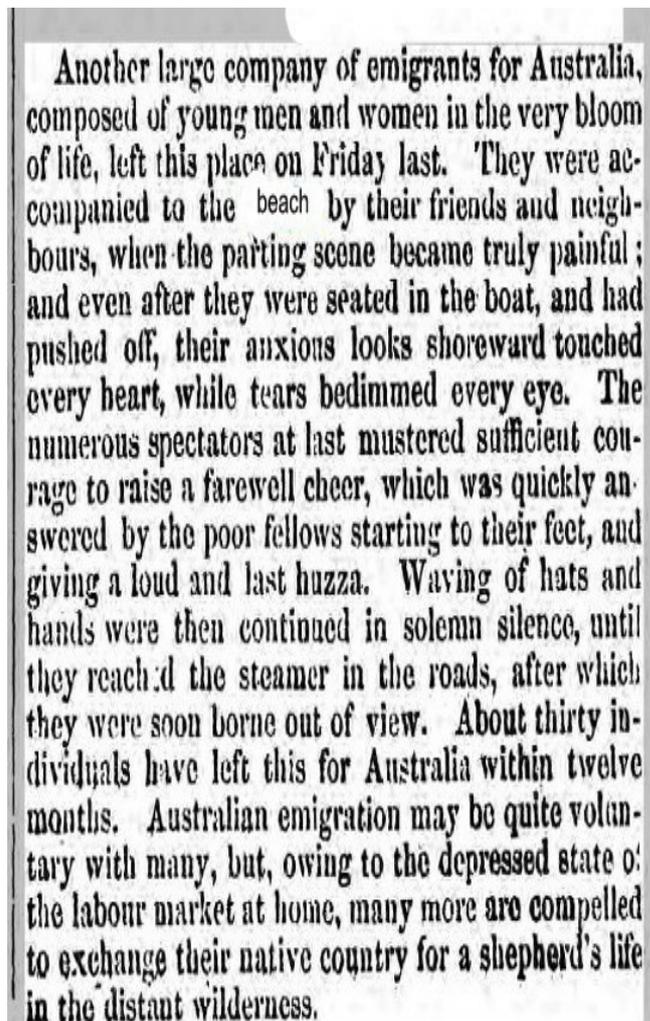
We have put various planters at Chapel Green and continue to trim the wilderness round it to highlight its iconic status and we have again painted the stanchions at the turning circle although we still await Fife council replacing one which was damaged and also to replace the village name sign as you enter from St Monans, but hey ho, Rome wasn't built in a day. We are mostly doing all this work ourselves. The Earlsferry High Street residents *et al* have excelled themselves this year with their individual displays which do so much to provide a welcoming aspect. We do hope that the visitors, second homeowners and holiday makers appreciate what we do to try to brighten the environment for them and respect our installations.

## The Magic Roundabout

We confess to being somewhat sceptical about the provision of this new roundabout at the Park Place, High Street Junction but we have to acknowledge that it seems to have slowed the traffic and made people more careful at that junction.

## A Blast from the past

This newspaper article from 1848



If anyone had relatives who may have been on this boat or who emigrated in the 1840-1850s we would love to hear from them.

## Glam Camp Champ

(Sorry couldn't resist "Red Top" headline)



Nairn Catchpenny Safari lodges have won an award. The company were regional winners for Central, Tayside and Fife at VisitScotland's Scottish Thistle Awards for 'Innovation in Tourism'. Scotland of Sunday did a feature on them at the beginning of July. It is nice to see recognition of this innovation even although perhaps we poked a little fun at them at the start especially being susceptible to the beasts from the east (and these were not intended to be Ardross cows).

## Beach Parties

We have often railed against the irresponsibility of those who wish to have a barbeque and fire on the beach. Each year we have a number of incidents of irresponsibility and the leaving of broken glass and other detritus on the site. Now we have the latest. A ten foot wooden gate was removed from a house in Castwell Wynd and put on a bonfire at the bottom Castwell this month. Apart from the irresponsible nature of the bonfire this is a criminal offence and we hope the perpetrators are suitably contrite - we doubt it.



## New posts

Seems a long time ago when we asked Fife Council (it was) to replace the deteriorating sign posts in the village. Delighted to see that work has start and the ugly sign at end of Ferry Road removed. Just a touch up of the paintwork now. Thanks to Graham Meacher for the photo.



## Herald 5<sup>th</sup> birthday

We have just woken up to the fact that we have been in existence for over 5 years. Doesn't time fly ? We thought it might be interesting to review our newspaper and see what issues were exercising our thoughts over these 5 years.

We started off initially as a newsheet to inform local residents of various things that were being considered and discussed by the Community Council . The idea was to try to stimulate interest in the affairs of the two villages and hope that more people might be interested in taking an active part. Our first edition in winter 2014 was a very modest affair created with MS word and giving very short items of interest. Feedback suggested that the idea may have been good but its implementation left a lot to be desired. We invested in a desktop publishing package and set about producing a more interesting publication - so we hoped. It was our first in colour (remember saying that when we had black and white TV). We were concerned about

the butterfly whose habitat at Kinraig point had been destroyed by pyromaniac vandalism. We were concerned about the beach erosion - controversially as it happened some taking the view that there was no erosion and others that it forecast serious problems for the future. We had noted the disappearance of the weathervane at the top of Earlsferry Town Hall it having been lost whilst notionally in the custody of Fife Council. At the time we thought that this was an old historic relic of days gone by - we later found out that it was first erected in the 1950s. However we got another one made and paid for by the Council.

May 2015 saw the forecast of a coffee shop refurbishment in the High Street. We did not realise how long it would take or for that matter how shorts its existence was to be...but that's another story. Summer 2015 saw us gripe about campervans at Ruby Bay and hoped to stimulate a debate about whether anything should be done and if so what.



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March 2016 brought Campervans again a problem and hoped for better broadband. July 2016 not a lot had changed on either of these fronts but the Deli fire was headline news. We turned our attention to the Town Hall as a community asset and opened up a debate as to whether it was worth saving and if so how. We had been promised a toilet in Earlsferry (we're still waiting). By October we were concerned about the beach parties during the summer and the detritus left (plus ca change), we made a suggestion that we could have a charette to gauge what people wanted in their community. There had been accidents at the chainwalk.



2017 saw us principally concerned about the Fife Development plan and what that could mean for the villages with increased development and pressure on the infrastructure. We had pushed for the erection of James Braid signs (we had to pay for them though). By April we were talking about beach detritus (see above) and a possible phone mast stuck in front of the church ! We had this bright idea of a community flag to fly proudly from the flag staff during holiday periods ( where is it now???) By April 2018 we had started what turned out to be at the time an acrimonious debate on the viability of the villages with so many holiday and second homes. Between then and the next edition in October 2018 we had parted company as the official mouth piece of the Community Council. So there was a distinct probability that this organ would shrivel and die. However we decided to give it another go. So our first independent edition contained problems with the chain walk, Earlsferry Town Hall plans, and suggestion again of a charette. 2019 saw the phone mast again, pushing the idea of a charette and the extensive plan for Chapel Green House. The charette occupied our attention



through much of 2019 and eventually produce a number of ideas and initiatives but significantly it's the usual problems of campervans, litter, beach parties and parking still surfacing. The Elie Herald welcomes feedback constructive or destructive and we can be contacted at [info@grahamjohnston.scot](mailto:info@grahamjohnston.scot) or if you want to look at this and previous editions visit: <http://www.elieandearlsferry.net>