

newsletter

14

Spring
2008

Keir Hardie's
postcard to
John Dykes

THE JIM HAMILTON HERITAGE SOCIETY OF COALBURN

www.coalburnheritage.org.uk

Message from the Chairman

Peter McLeish

A S I COMPOSE this report for our Spring issue there are three inches of snow lying outside. In the last few weeks a variety of items have been kindly donated to us including a gas mask from the Second World War, a painting of the Doosie as well as many photographs from several individuals.

We now have our own web site up and running. This should make the Society even more accessible and hopefully widen our membership.

The purchase of our new printer has already attracted interest from the village and outwith Coalburn. John has completed a few orders. Similar to the last two years another calendar will be prepared and will be available at the **Gala Day** in July when we intend to have another display.

The numbers attending our meetings have been very encouraging as have the number of visitors to the Display Centre. Comments from those registering have been complementary and appreciated. Once again thanks must go to the volunteers who have so willingly come in to meet and greet them.

We have had an excellent variety of speakers, a number of whom are members, which bodes well for the future.

If anyone wishes to research any particular topic please come in and take advantage of the multitude of information we have available.

Thanks to you all for your support.

www.coalburnheritage.org.uk



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Profile *Compiled by John Zawadzki*

John DYKES

Born 1858

Died 16th December 1925, aged 67 years

Married Ann Hamilton (born 1859 - died 1919)

"WHEN working in the coalmines, John Dykes was black-listed by the coalmasters for his union activities. However, the miners chose him to be their checkweighman so this gave him regular employment and the coalmasters could not dispense with his services" - **Jim Hamilton**, **Coalburn Chronicle #40**, page 1608

"JOHN DYKES was keen enough to serve Coalburn village as parish councillor and to walk to and from committee meetings at Lesmahagow in the early 1900s. He lived at Gladstone Place and was keen on astrology and photography. A forthright man, he was well respected by his mining colleagues" - **Jim Hamilton**, **Coalburn Chronicle #12**, page 305

DURING the Miners Strike of 1894, Bob Smillie of Larkhall was the national hero of colliers and John Dykes was the local leader. *"To the local coalmasters he appeared to be a demagogue who could sway his mining colleagues to strike to improve their conditions"* - **Jim Hamilton**, **Coalburn Chronicle #65**, page 3543.

"JOHN DYKES was a stalwart fighter for the miners and one of the first socialists in the district. John was one of the persons encountered in life who seem to have an indefinable aura that picks them out for leadership in whatever circumstances, either elevated or humble, they live in. He was a success at whatever he tried, be it politics or music or photography because he brought his high intelligence into studying and mastering the subject. He espoused free education for all and I remember his daughter Meg telling me, in her last years, how she was strapped by the headmaster at Bellfield School as she did not produce the required school books which her father refused to buy, believing that the rate-borne books should be provided for all".- **Jim Hamilton**, **Coalburn Chronicle #65**, page 3542

"MY father told me of how John Dykes, when he lived at Gladstone Place, took photographs and developed these in his house, and as he had no running water in his home, he had to take the plates and prints to the pump in front of his home to clean off the developer" - **Jim Hamilton**, **Coalburn Chronicle #40**, page 1608

Evidence of Keir Hardie's visit to Coalburn

Postcard sent by Keir Hardie to John Dykes

Many thanks to our vice-chairman James Hamilton who has kindly presented a most interesting postcard to the Society. It was signed and posted in 1899 by the great socialist Keir Hardie, father of the Labour Party, to fellow socialist John Dykes of Gladstone Place, Bellfield Road, Coalburn.

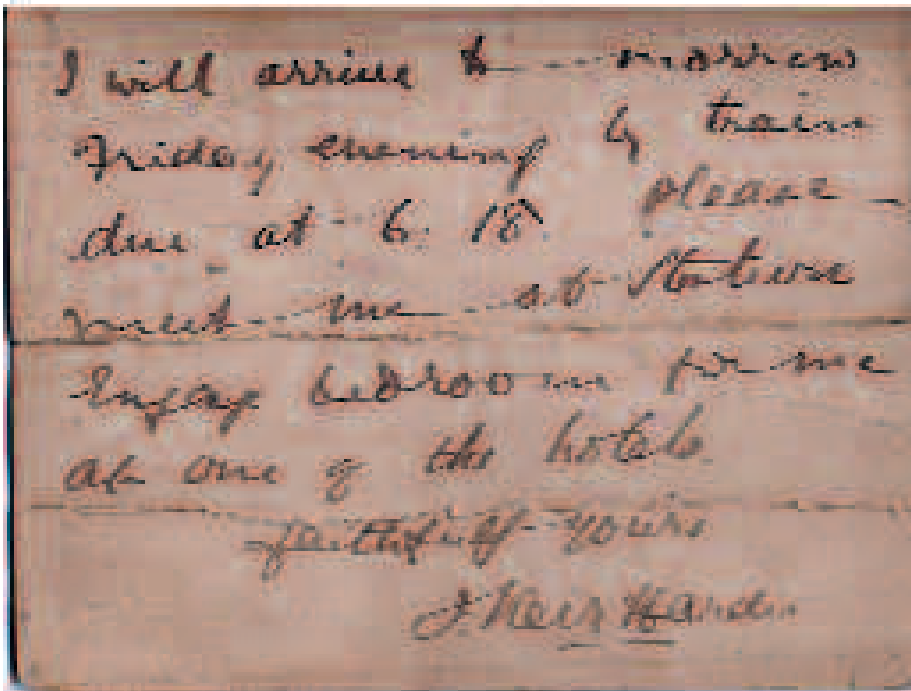


Postmark **CUMNOCK** Date **13 APRIL 1899** Time **9pm**

It is also believed that Keir Hardie was but one of many noted socialists of the period who frequented the home of the Clark family of Divity, Waterside. *“Ma mentors were Jimmy Maxton, John McLean and Bob Smillie. These leading socialists and many more visited ma grandparents regularly at **Divity**. It made me a bit of a rebel, and supportin’ the socialist cause resulted in ma losing jobs at times”* - **Dickie McLEAN**. Coalburn Chronicle #61, page 3288.

Evidence of Keir Hardie's visit to Coalburn

JAMES KEIR HARDIE rose from humble beginnings to become one of Britain's most notable politicians. A Scot, he was born near Newhouse, North Lanarkshire in 1856. He never attended school and grew up in extreme poverty. At the age of 11 he became a miner in Newarthill Colliery. By the age of 17 he taught himself to read and write. In 1881 he led the first ever strike of Lanarkshire miners for improved pay and conditions. In 1892 he became Britain's first Socialist MP (West Ham, London, 1892-1895). Between 1900 and 1915 he was MP for Merthyr Tydfil and in 1906 was the Labour Party's first leader in the House of Commons. Following a number of strokes, he died in a Glasgow hospital on 25th September 1915. **His principles left a lasting legacy.**



I will arrive tomorrow
Friday evening by train
due at 6.18 please
meet me at station
Engage bedroom for me
at one of the hotels
faithfully yours
J. Keir Hardie

“I will arrive tomorrow Friday evening by train due at 6.18. Please meet me at station. Engage bedroom for me at one of the hotels”.

**faithfully yours
J. Keir Hardie**

Bellfield coal bing to disappear

ONE of the last remaining signs of Lanarkshire's coalmining heritage is set to disappear.

The abandoned spoil tip, or bing, of the Bellfield Colliery at Coalburn - long a landmark in the area - looks set to go

Commodore Homes (Lanarkshire) Ltd have been given permission by Councillors to remove the bing and surrounding material and reclaim what minerals are there.

The firm will finally re-landscape the 14-acre site.

The company plan to re-work, regrade and treat 300,000 cubic metres of colliery spoil.

The reclamation process involves processing and removing brick shale to a local brick manufacturer, with the bulk of the remaining colliery spoil being treated and then used to landscape other parts of the large site.

Some material from the site will be used for civil engineering purposes in a linked housing development already approved for the area.

The project is a major undertaking and will involve the creation of bunds to cut down noise and measures aimed at preventing water pollution.

Once the bing has been removed, the eastern side of the site will be landscaped to provide planting, footpaths, playing fields and a viewing gallery.

Vehicular access to the site will be via Bellfield Farm steading and there is expected to be 14 HGV movements a day.

Traffic will head to the M74 via Bellfield Road. Working will be restricted to Monday to Friday from 8am until 5pm.

It is expected that the project will take just under two years to complete and employ between 18 and 22 people directly, plus others who will be working in an ancillary role.

South Lanarkshire Council's executive director of enterprise resources Iain Urquhart recommended the scheme be approved, saying its approval would act as the catalyst for a significant regeneration project which would remove a prominent feature of mining dereliction from the local landscape, as well as seeing the site redeveloped to a beneficial after-use.

Deaths

Allan MORROW

Danny THOMSON

Andrew RANKIN

George COOK

Cathie NEILSON (Twaddle)

Eilidh STEWART (McLaren)

Margaret SMITH (Thomson)

Joe CULLEN

Billy STEWART

Helen COOK (Lindsay)

Morag CHAMBERS (MacFarlane)

Ben STEWART

Isobel DICK (Graham)

John SMITH

Andrew CARMICHAEL

Annie McNALLY (Reilly)

Grace NAISMITH (Thomson)



January 2008 *Left to right* - James Hamilton, Betty Bell, guest speaker John Forsyth, President of Lesmahagow Photographic Society, and Peter McLeish.

February 2008
Member and guest speaker Marean Johnston of Coalburn



Members & Guest Speakers



March 2008 Member Jim Kirk, left, presents guest speaker Paul Archibald of Lanark Museum with former key to Lanark Jail



March 2008 Treasurer Jean Savage and guest speaker John Young of Stonehouse Heritage Society

Tuesday 12 February 2008
Visitors to Coalburn Heritage Centre

Secretary Betty Bell accepts a 1957 painting of the Doosie Pit presented by **artist Ian Stuart** of Aberdeen. Also pictured are Clark sisters May Stuart and Agnes Gray. (see also [Coalburn Chronicle#42](#), pages 1807-1810)



Syllabus 2008

Heritage Meetings held at **Coalburn One Stop Shop**

Doors open **7pm** for **7.30pm** start

ALL WELCOME Members, Guests & Non-Members

Tea / Coffee at end of evening

APRIL

Wed **2nd**

Jeff FREW - **Nepal**
Lesmahagow

Wed **16th**

James HAMILTON
Slideshow Talk - **History of**
Hollandbush Golf Club
Vice-Chairman, JHHS
of Coalburn & Secretary
of Hollandbush Golf Club

MAY

Wed **7th**

Betty BELL - Slideshow Talk
Coalburn Shops & Societies
Secretary, JHHS of Coalburn

Wed **21st - A.G.M**

Followed by slideshows by
John ZAWADZKI
Group from **Lanarkshire Family**
History Society to visit Heritage
Centre and attend slideshow.

Please visit our new website:

www.coalburnheritage.org.uk

Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

4th Annual

Gala Day **Heritage Exhibition**

Saturday 5th JULY 2008

Noon - 4pm

Coalburn Leisure Centre

ALL WELCOME - ADMISSION FREE

Also featuring Lesmahagow Photographic Society's DISPLAY