

SPRING
2009

18

newsletter

THE JIM HAMILTON HERITAGE SOCIETY OF COALBURN

www.coalburnheritage.org.uk

Message from the Chairman

Peter McLeish

It has been encouraging to see so many people taking the time to come along to our meetings since the beginning of the year. I am sure that one of the reasons for that is the variety of speakers we have been able to bring to Coalburn.

Our Coffee Morning in January was a success and as a result we will be looking at holding another similar function in the next few months.

We have been working along with Primary 7 and their teacher from the school, Mrs Angela McKay, as they are having a display of Second World War items and we are looking forward to continuing projects such as this with the pupils in the future. On Tuesday 24th February they visited the Heritage Centre.

Again we intend to have a presence at the Leisure Centre during Gala Day which falls on Saturday 4th July.

John has had a busy spell with his usual high quality PowerPoint presentations away from the Centre, having visited Coalburn Church Guild, Lesmahagow and Lintfieldbank WRI's. These requests help to publicise the Society and underline John's ability. Those who were able to be present at our meeting on 21st January will testify to that.

We are, even now, looking at guests for September onwards and also themes for our next calendars. Let us know what you think. **PM**

www.coalburnheritage.org.uk



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The Jim Hamilton
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In the past few weeks and months much has been said and written about the fountain at Lesmahagow or at least the work that has been going on. It was said that a smaller version of the original feature would be erected; however, as yet nothing has happened. The following article is taken from the Coalburn Chronicle No 50.

“A meeting of the villagers in Lesmahagow in June 1873 agreed to float a joint-stock company to establish and inaugurate a water supply. From a spring in Greenburn hill, water was brought by an open ‘sheugh’ made with tiles to Lesmahagow village.

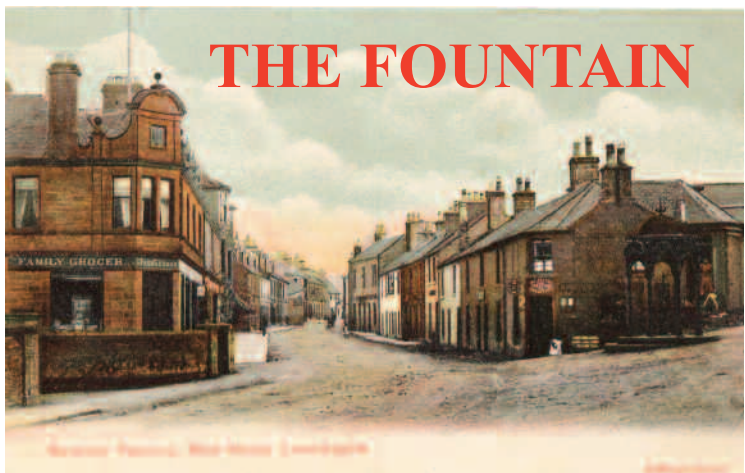
Later one and a half inch pipes brought the water to be stored in a tank near the junction of New Road and Garnsour Road.

J.S. Mackirdy offered the handsome sum of £100 for the purpose of helping to supply a proper water supply to the village.

The ‘Mackirdy’ tank – part of the agreement was that Birkwood House would benefit from the Lesmahagow water supply – was near Sandknowe bridge, in a wood opposite the lodge gate cottage.

A condition of the gift was that a fountain had to be erected which was duly done and it stood at the junction of New Trows Road and Abbeygreen. The fountain was demolished in the mid 1920’s (possibly early 1926) but to this day, the area of Lesmahagow where it stood, which also happens to be the main bus terminus is known as ‘The Fountain’.

It may be that the reason for the removal of the fountain was that traffic at the junction of New Trows Road and Abbeygreen would have increased considerably after the start of a regular ‘bus service between Glasgow and Coalburn on 29th June 1925.”



Nowadays the buses are longer, not to mention the number of agricultural and articulated vehicles which are on the roads; the wisdom of the new traffic arrangements have been questioned by many in Lesmahagow and it will be interesting to see what happens in the future. Will the fountain be replaced? Only time will tell. **PM**

news in brief

Community service award

Congratulations to Thomas Williams, a volunteer with Coalburn Miners Welfare Charitable Society for 30 years, 26 as secretary. Tom has been officially recognised for his sterling work for the Coalburn community. In January Provost Russell Clearie presented Tom, a prolific fund-raiser for many local projects over many years, with a community service award.

Letter

Dear John Zawadzki

Thank you so much for that interesting slide show yesterday. I really enjoyed it and to see all of those people from Coalburn who went into the war. I would really like to come back and watch it again and see all of the gas masks, hats and medals. I would recommend it to the village to come and see it. I would love if you would want to come to the school for our Remembrance day of World War II and show the rest of the school what it was like in the war. I really think they would enjoy it.

Yours sincerely

Jamie Mason, Coalburn Primary

PS WWII Commemoration and Remembrance Day is Monday 30th March 1pm.
Casual clothing,

Principal teacher retires

After 19 years service, Coalburn Primary School principal teacher Mrs Barbara Smith has retired. Headteacher Bill Scott said: "Barbara has been a mainstay of this school for many years, playing so many important roles. The whole community will miss her, not just the kids in the school. The staff are also particularly sorry to see her go. Barbara was a Primary 1 teacher for a long time and gave every child who came into Coalburn Primary a really positive start to their school career. The enthusiasm, committment and dedication she has shown has been fantastic. She was one of the principal architects of the school's centenary commemorations".

Barbara's official retiral was marked by a Teddy Bears picnic celebration at the school.

Carnwath resident Barbara is a talented artist who hopes to enjoy some European culture in her retirement. We wish her well.

Deaths

Robert MAIN

Frances IRVING

Tom MUNRO

Kenny CAMPBELL

Ina STEVENSON (Menzie)

Bill MUIR

Jim MILLAR

Jenny SCANLON (Tweedie)

Jen BOND (Sinclair)

Grace WEIR (Mitchell)

Sadie MILLER (Law)

Angus ANDREWS

Dan STEWART

25 September 2008

Message from Debbie Odell

Hi I am a New Zealander living in England and am planning on visiting Coalburn in October 2008. My Grandfather was born in Coalburn and I am hoping to find the home where he lived. I believe it was a terraced house possibly on a hill. My Grandfather (John Harvie Docherty) was born on 13/02/1920 at Coalburn Bows. His parents names were Thomas Docherty and Janet Docherty (nee White). Thomas Docherty was a coal miner. I think they left Coalburn for New Zealand around 1926. I plan to visit Coalburn even if I don't find out the address of where they lived, however, this information would make it all the more special. Also, any information on the best way to travel to Coalburn from Edinburgh would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

email: debbiedoorday@hotmail.com

A selection of email requests via our website

3 October 2008

Message from Gordon Donaldson

Do you have anymore old pictures of miners/workers from the pits in the area. My father, a blacksmith, worked at Bankend (doozy) and Auchlochlan. I have an odd picture myself.

Gordon

email: gordonaldson@aol.com

13 December 2008

Message from Martin

Hi I am a junior football enthusiast, and was wondering where did the old Coalburn Juniors football team play in Coalburn? Does the ground still stand. Thanks.

Martin

email: marbain1@aol.com

3 January 2009

Message from Lorna Kane

Hello I am a mature student at the GCNS studying professional writing skills. As part of my course I am writing a novella about the early life of my grandmother Jean Currie (nee Thomson) who was born and brought up in Coalburn. She was born in 1908 and her father owned Thomson's shop. I would be very grateful indeed if you could direct me to someone who has a knowledge of Coalburn in the early part of the the last century. Thank you for any help you can give me. Yours sincerely

Lorna Kane

email: lkane35@yahoo.co.uk

2 February 2009

Message from Helen Kerr

I'm currently involved in Family Research. This has now lead me to the Strang family who lived in Coalburn / Lesmahagow & surrounding area(s). Joseph Strang & his wife Mary Greenshields in particular. Joseph was my grandfather's nephew. I'm hoping to trace some relatives who may still be in the area - or know of other relatives still living. I believe Joseph & Mary had a large family, including Mary, Robert & Janet Strang. Any other information that you may be able to provide would be very much appreciated. I notice the two books published by Jim Hamilton & I shall try to access these at the Library. Many thanks.

Helen Kerr (nee Strang) Edinburgh

email: honeykerr412@aol.com

2 February 2009

Message from Sandra Unwin (nee Naismith)

My cousin, Mr Alan Aikman recently visited the Heritage Centre, and saw photographs of my father, Mr Alexander Naismith. He said he saw a photo of him as the captain of the Coalburn football team. I was unaware of this, and have never seen the picture. Is there any way you can scan it and email me a copy? I would be most grateful.

Sandra Unwin

email: sandraunwin@googlemail.com

THE TWO ALISDAIRS

January 10th brought the close of an art display under the above title in the Mackintosh Gallery of the Glasgow Art School. The display had been running from 22nd November 2008 and featured the work of Alisdair Gray and his late friend, Alisdair Taylor.

The latter Alisdair resided in Coalburn for a number of years. His father was the Station Master and his mother taught at the local school and also played the organ at the church. His sister, Margo married Donald Black, his father being mine host at Coalburn Inn. Donald and Margo currently live in East Kilbride and in recent years have made visits to the village.

Alisdair was born in Ross-shire in 1934. The family came to Coalburn when his father, Hugh became Station Master in the 1940's. Alisdair proved to be a very able student at Lesmahagow Higher Grade, not only academically but also on the sports field as he was School Sports Champion. He graduated and trained as an artist at Glasgow School of Art, and it was while there that he met his future wife, Annelise. In 1959 he was in Denmark where he studied the work of Asger Jorn which influenced him greatly for the rest of his life. His wife was Danish and encouraged him throughout his life. Her father was a High Court judge in Denmark.

by Peter McLEISH

He used many types of tools to promote his skill. He made abstract oil paintings with brush, palette knife, spray can and other techniques. Sculptures were also created using driftwood he had collected from the beach which he then carved and partly

Painted or varnished. Planks of wood and even old discarded baker's breadboards were put to use



imaginatively. Stones were used in a similar fashion. His many notebooks were filled with sketches in pen or watercolour. Ink drawings were made in art books he had been given. Photographs and newspaper cuttings were the basis in the collages he had made up. A versatile artist without a doubt.

Following the death of Annelise in 1994 he continued to live and work at North Bank until 2004 when he suffered a debilitating stroke. His daughters looked after him until 1st January 2007 when he died in a nursing home in Largs. He was interred beside his wife in West Kilbride cemetery under a circular, red granite headstone which he designed himself.

In 1986 it was written of him, “Alisdair Taylor is a mainstream European artist living in a geographical backwater”. This was the opinion of nearly every artist who knew his work yet no recent histories of Scottish art mention it.

Over the years he exhibited in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Irvine. Two of his best known portraits are “John the Barman” and “Self-Portrait as a Dustman”.

Alisdair’s many unsold paintings and sculptures passed into the safe keeping of his daughter, Jean in Lochwinnoch. The Scottish Arts Council gave a grant to Streetlevel Photoworks, of 48, King Street, Glasgow to digitally scan and catalogue the above items.

No doubt he was a gifted artist and it is sad that he did not achieve greater publicity; somehow I don’t think that he would be unduly concerned about that as he was a unique individual whose philosophical views about life were reflected in his own way of living and in the work he produced during his lifetime. I am sure that those in Coalburn who remember him as I do will agree.

Following a spell of living in Glasgow from 1961, where Alisdair and Annelise worked as wardens at the Glasgow University Chaplaincy Centre; he moved to Portencross on the Ayrshire coast in 1965 with his wife and daughters, Anna and Jean; there he remained for the rest of his life. They lived at North Bank Cottage where there was no electricity, hot water or telephone until the early 1990’s.



Alisdair Taylor

Despite the frugal life style Alisdair was very busy. He taught evening classes in art at Glasgow University Extra-Mural Department and reviewed art exhibitions for BBC Scotland. After his wife became a Community Education Worker he worked full time at his art.

Thanks to society members, John Munro and Jim Kirk who supplied most of the information for this article.

Guest speakers 2009

Wednesday 7th January

The proposed speaker was unable to attend and **BOB CURRIE** from Strathaven stepped in at short notice and gave an overview of his newly produced DVD. The DVD was shown to members. It consisted of old and new photographs of Strathaven.

Wednesday 28th January

Another excellent attendance of members and friends witnessed a varied programme presented by **JOHN ZAWADZKI**. The main theme of the evening was Robert Burns. Another presentation depicted Polish soldiers at Happendon during the Second World War, followed by a tribute to Scottish legend Sir Harry Lauder who performed in Coalburn at the Miners Welfare Club in 1942. Betty Bell gave a well deserved vote of thanks.

Wednesday 11th February

JIM COOK from Lesmahagow Parish Historical Association was given a warm welcome by the large number of members and friends present. Jim's talk was based on the coming of the railway to the Nethan Valley and the need for it because of the many new coal mines which were being worked in the district. He illustrated his theme by introducing photos and maps of the time from Motherwell to Bankend via Brocketsbrae. Particular reference was made to the construction of the bridge spanning the Nethan prior to the building of Lesmahagow Station. Vice-chairman Jim Hamilton gave a well deserved vote of thanks to the visitor and those in attendance responded accordingly.

Saturday 31st January

A most successful coffee morning was held by the Society in the One Stop Shop with up to 60 folk attending. A family history theme was presented in the Heritage Centre with slideshows by John Zawadzki. The winner of the quiz was Mrs Mary Aitken of Coalburn.

Wednesday 18th February

AGNES DOUGAN and **CAMPBELL THOMSON** from the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group were the guests. Between them they gave an excellent presentation on the history of this not so well documented regiment. Agnes's father, **John McEwan**, joined the regiment during WWII and he was one of the many who suffered as a POW after the fall of Singapore at the hands of their Japanese captors. Jean Savage eloquently thanked the two speakers.

A selection of email requests via our website

17 May 2009

Message from **John Whiteford**

I am looking for any information on a family named Law who lived at Bankend, Coalburn. My late grandmother I think was born there, July, appx 1918. Her name at that time would have been Helen Law. Any help would be appreciated as I am just starting to put my family tree together and finding it quite difficult! Yours **John Whiteford**
email: fishin4luckies@hotmail.com

20 July 2008

Message from **Ian Mitchell**

I wonder if you can help, i've started researching my family tree and wonder if you can help. My family back to the early 1800's are linked to the area around Lesmahagow, Coalburn, Burnfoot. Do you know of any resources that could assist in particular my great-great-grandfather John Wylie, killed 4/1/1900 at Auchlocan No. 6 pit. Also I'm looking into the village of Gateside but can find no trace. I see you have on your web site a listing of Lesmahagow new cemetery, how do I get a copy. Many thanks **Ian Mitchell**, Adelaide
email: mitch-1@hotmail.com

20 September 2008

Message from **David Roy**

I stumbled upon your well presented website while searching for my ancestors and I wonder if you could pass this message to Peter McLeish (I assume it is he who married Jean Steele Smart). My name is David Roy and I am trying to piece together my family tree. I am descended from John Smart 1723 and I live in Australia. I thought Peter might be able to help me with names and dates, particularly the current generations. Much of the information I have is from a well copied extract of Jim Hamilton's Coalburn Chronicles, which my wife and I found fascinating. Actually I would like to read the full set of the Chronicles. Would you kindly pass this message on to Peter asking him to email me at davidianeroy@hotmail.com Many thanks **David Roy**
email: davidianeroy@hotmail.com

17 September 2008

Message from **Katrina Dunbar**

My great grandfather, John Dykes, came from Coalburn/Lesmahagow and I spoke to Jim Hamilton many years ago when visiting the lovely lady registrar in Lesmahagow. Jim sent me a copy of a Coalburn Chronicle and was most helpful. I have just found your site and would love to visit the Heritage and would appreciate if you could confirm when you will be open over the next few weeks - I come from Clackmannan, quite a distance and would be very disappointed if the Heritage was closed when I arrived! You have a right to be proud of Jim. Thank you, and looking forward to hearing from you.

Katrina Dunbar

email: katrina.dunbar@nhs.net

20 September 2008

Message from **Ian Steele**

Please let me know how I can become a member of the Society. My connection to Coalburn is through my father (Tom Steele) and grandfather (James Steele), both friends of the late Jim Hamilton. Thanks.

Ian James Steele Colchester, Essex.

email: ian.j.steele@bopenworld.com

New publication

Out of the Depths of Hell

A Soldier's Story of Life & Death in Japanese Hands

by **John McEwan**

Poems of the Coalburn District

Compiled by Jim Hamilton, 1979

THE NETHAN

Oh sweet lovely Nethan, oh where are there seen
Such beauty and grandeur and meadows so green
Where larks sweetest song greets your ear in the morn
And blackbirds sit piping their notes in the thorn.
In springtime your banks are a' covered wi' flowers,
In summer how cool are your green shady bowers,
Oh nature hath decked you with beauty most rare,
Oh where is your equal, oh where, tell me where.

You roll in your splendour through moorland and fens,
You dash on your course through the deep winding glens
To burst forth mid sunshine all nature aglow,
For beauty still haunts you as onward you flow.
Ye lovers of nature, oh why do you roam
In lands that are far, far away from your home
In quest of the beauties that nature displays,
While here they live scattered aroon Nethan's braes.

Stockbriggs, lovely mansion, so stately and grand,
Auchlochan's fair woodlands unrivalled they stand
With fair Birkwood Castle there's few can compare,
Through auld Auchtyfardle I'd roam evermair.
Along the green pastures of Kerse you do glide,
And doon by Craignethan and on to the Clyde,
Thro' scenes that 're enchanting, your clear waters flow,
Where sun's rays reflect their bright shadows below.

Lyrics by **JAMES PIRRIE** (1847 - 1915)

Music composed by **DAVID SMITH** (1873 - 1942)

Poems of the Coalburn District

Compiled by Jim Hamilton, 1979

The song published in this issue and entitled **THE NETHAN** was the joint effort of **James PIRRIE** and **David SMITH**.

JAMES PIRRIE 1847 - 1915

The Divity, where Jimmy Pirrie lived, is a clachan near Waterside and overlooks the River Nethan. A famous son of this beautiful countryside was Alexander Muir who emigrated to Canada where he found immortal fame as the writer of the words of '**The Maple Leaf**'. Jimmy Pirrie was a lover of the open-air life and wrote the words for the song in which he paid tribute to a local burn.

DAVID SMITH 1873 - 1942

The music for the song was composed by Davie Smith who lived his long life in the village of Coalburn. A man of excellent intelligence, he studied and was awarded a mine manager's certificate and was in charge of Auchlochan Nos. Nine and Ten pits in the village. He was a lover of nature, a keen horticulturist and a knowledgeable herbalist. He lived with his wife Isabella Hamilton at Braehead and of his family of three, two sons died young within days of each other (in 1914) with fever, while his daughter Jenny Bernard is one of the oldest residents in the village. His competence and mastery of his many interests made him without peer in his day. (During the preparation of this booklet, Jenny Bernard died in December 1979). **Jim Hamilton**



Syllabus 2009

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

MARCH

- 4** Douglas **LOCKHART** of Carluke - COALBURN MEMORIES
- 18** Helen **MOIR** - Author & Member of LARKHALL HERITAGE SOCIETY

APRIL

- 1** Sandy **GILCHRIST**, Biggar - SCHOOLS in Upperward
- 15** Dr **FLOWERDEW**, Douglas

MAY

- 6** Dan **SMART** - COALBURN DURING THE WAR YEARS
- 20** **AGM** + Jess **GRAHAM**, Family History + **JZ Slideshow**

Saturday 4th JULY 2009 HERITAGE DISPLAY

COALBURN GALA DAY

Coalburn Leisure Centre

11am - 3pm

Admission Free

*Also featuring photographic display by
Lesmahagow Photographic Society*

Front Cover Photo: Our secretary Betty Bell and her late husband Tom in Australia at 1953 Adelaide Governor's Ball.