

# newsletter



Summer 2013

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## Chairman's Report

**W**hat a difference the sun makes! The reason for this statement is due to the lovely day we had on the Gala Day this year compared to twelve months ago. There may not have been as many decorated floats as in the past, nevertheless the streets were busy with onlookers as the procession made the journey through the village. The Gala Day again provided us with a showcase of photographs in the Leisure Centre, though the number of visitors was slightly down on the previous year. As a result of the good weather and the resultant barbeques ?

We look forward to another busy season of speakers and we will be able bring some new faces to Coalburn over the next few months, which I am sure those of you who are present at our meetings will appreciate. As has been the case since we started the Society, visitors from overseas continue to be attracted to the Centre and have been pleased to find items of interest regarding relatives who were born or worked in the village. One of our members, Archie Cameron, was recently involved in a car accident resulting in a suspected broken arm. Also in the car was his brother Joe, who as I write this is still in hospital in Wishaw. We wish them both a speedy recovery. Once again my thanks to all those who faithfully attend the Centre on Tuesdays and Thursdays and give so freely of their time and humour. **Peter McLeish, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2013.**

**COALBURN HERITAGE CENTRE**, Coalburn One Stop Shop, 42 Coalburn Road.

Tel. 01555 820060. **OPEN TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS, 10am – 3pm**

*Always Wanted...Items, documents, books, etc relating to the history of coalmining, and social history of Coalburn in general, required for display at Coalburn Heritage Centre. If you have a suitable item you would like to donate to the Heritage Centre, please call in any Tuesday or Thursday, 10am – 3pm.*

### Deaths

Moira RALSTON

Elsie McNAY

Robert McINNES

Margaret DEMPSTER (McMurdo)

Janet TENNANT (Kerr)

John HENDERSON

Graham MATHIE

*Front Cover: 2013 Coalburn Gala Day. John Morrison of Coalburn IOR Pipe Band.*

*Photo by John Zawadzki.*

# Lesmahagow: Past & Present

THREE **MAJOR NEW EXHIBITIONS** THIS AUTUMN

**T**he Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn will have a promotional stand and display at a series of major exhibitions being staged by Lesmahagow's Clydesdale Camera Club, during the Autumn months, at The Fountain, Abbeygreen, Lesmahagow.

The exhibitions, titled **Lesmahagow: Past & Present**, will feature over 150 quality prints, including, for the first time, a set of 18 A4-size colour prints of photographs, taken by the late Jim Hamilton in 1993, of Lesmahagow shop fronts and 22 A4-size colour prints of Lesmahagow village views taken from the top of the church steeple by John Zawadzki, also in 1993. **Admission is FREE.** Lesmahagow Parish Historical Association will also be supporting the event with a display.

*Local souvenirs & copies of many of the prints will also be available for purchase.*

**Lesmahagow: Past & Present** EXHIBITION dates:

Saturday **14th** September. 10am – 3pm.

Saturday **12th** October. 10am – 3pm.

Saturday **23rd** November. 10am - 3pm.

**NB** In addition to the above print exhibition dates, and taking place the night before each date, from 7pm - 9pm, a series of **Audio-Visual Evenings**, featuring hundreds of projected digital images of Lesmahagow Parish Scenes, Yesterday & Today, presented in slideshow form by **John Zawadzki**, are scheduled at The Fountain. Due to limited seating capacity in the main hall, these Friday evening performances are restricted to ticket admission only. Free tickets, on a *first come, first serve* basis, will be available from **Clydesdale Camera Club**. For further details visit CCC's website [www.clydesdalecameraclub.co.uk](http://www.clydesdalecameraclub.co.uk)

## BANKEND

There were four rows comprising of 4 houses, plus Middlemuir Row in this colliery village on the bleak moors above Coalburn, with which it was connected by a wagonway. At various times the pits were under the ownership of Arden Coal Co., Monkland Iron & Coal Co. (1800s), Bankend Coal Co. (1890s, and Lesmahagow Coal Co. (late 1890s), who worked Dalquahandy, Westtown and Bankend Collieries, (under James Strang as manager).

The village was built about 1840 and had a licensed grocer. In the 1861 census the population had reached 321. Employment was also provided by J. Williamson who ran a limeworks from about 1859-1895, and the village was eventually linked (*but never used - Ed*) with Glenbuck on the Caledonian Railway. By 1950, there were still about 180 men working in the declining pits, but the rows and the famous chimney were in ruins, the villagers having resettled in Coalburn. The village was sometimes known as Brockley.

**NORMAN H.C. DRUMMOND** 1986, from an unpublished thesis, "Ghost Towns of Scotland".

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**AND**  
**SPLINT COALS.**

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*The following article was compiled by Fred Landery and appeared in "The True Line". The date of the article would appear to be 1996. The source of the information was a Ministry of Transport report dated April 1920.*

## The Bankend Accident of 1920

Although a relatively minor accident, the result of the Ministry of Transport Inquiry gave official sanction to the daily working of passenger trains over a section of freight only line as a special case.

The accident happened at about 6.40am on the morning of 27<sup>th</sup> February 1920, when the combined 5.35am Larkhall East to Coalburn and the 6.00am Blackwood to Coalburn workmen's trains – joined at Alton Heights Junction – ran into wagons on a siding at Bankend Colliery, due to a set of hand operated points being incorrectly set. Officially, there should have been no passengers on the train at the place of the accident. The train was on its way from Coalburn to leave the 15 six wheeled coaches – of what officially should have been empty stock – at Bankend yard, where they remained until the return working in the evening. The line climbed from Coalburn to Bankend at 1 in 66, increasing to 1 in 53 beyond Bankend box.

The driver in the lead engine, working hard with the 15 coaches on the steep gradient, passed Bankend box and noticed nothing abnormal until he realised that he was taking the turnout to the sidings. He immediately shut off steam and made a full emergency application of the brake, but failed to stop short of the wagons in the siding. Visibility was poor, as the day was just breaking and there were no other lights in the yard. As a result of the collision, three miners on the train and the guard were slightly injured, two wagons were destroyed, four others were damaged as was the permanent way. No 713, the lead engine also sustained some damage.

Bankend was a single line branch from Alton Heights to Galawhistle (beyond to Muirkirk was built but never opened), the block posts after Alton Heights being Auchlochan and Bankend, traffic beyond Bankend being worked as one engine in steam. Bankend had been opened to freight traffic as early as 1856 and passenger service had been introduced as far as Coalburn, ½ mile short of

Bankend, in 1891. The line beyond Coalburn was not equipped for passengers, nor had passenger services been authorised. However, it had become common practice for workmen employed at the collieries at Bankend to remain on the train beyond Coalburn, rather than walk the ½ mile before and after a tiring shift in the pit.

The Ministry of Transport Inquiry into the accident was chaired by Major G. L. Hall. The brakesman gave evidence and said that on the evening before the collision he had been on the last working of the day to Bankend Colliery, a train of empty wagons from Hamilton. He found the points unlocked. He set the points and propelled the wagons into the siding. He reset the points, but did not lock it, leaving it as he found it. Caledonian stated that it was the job of the brakesman to ensure that after shunting operations, all hand operated points were set for a straight run and padlocked. It later transpired that the particular padlock was found to be out of order for some time.

The Enquiry heard that the Foreman Platelayer had several days earlier reported the fault to Caledonian's Traffic Department, who stated that they were having difficulty obtaining new padlocks from the Company's Stores Department because of overdue deliveries and it had been several months since any spares had arrived. It became clear in evidence that there was confusion among employees about which Department of the Caledonian was responsible for the repair of faulty padlocks.

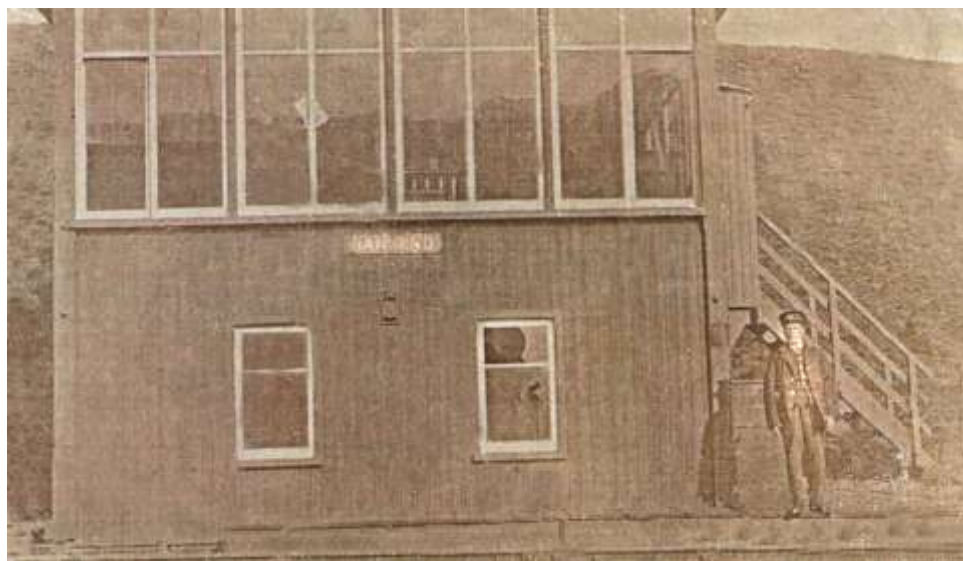
What did cause the Ministry some concern was the running of a passenger service over a line that was not equipped for such a service and for which there was no official authority. The report does not say what the deliberations of the Ministry were on this point, but a recommendation was made that this particular workmen' service may be permitted to continue as a special case, subject to the following condition:-

- The trains are for workmen only
- The trains are not allowed to travel over hand worked points in a facing direction
- That a speed limit of 10 mph is imposed on such trains travelling over facing points not finished with bolt holes

- Adequate arrangements are made to safeguard a workmen's train from danger of collision with any other train approaching the line from Galawhistle.

I am not aware that a platform was ever provided at Bankend. Workmen's platforms at collieries were commonplace, such as at Bellfield and Auchlochan and did not appear in public timetables. If none was provided at Bankend, did the workmen simply jump off the trains? That situation may have been quite acceptable 76 years ago, but would give the present day Health and Safety Executive apoplexy! In 1920 a broken ankle sustained by jumping off a train would no doubt be regarded as a peril of the job, whereas today any Train Operator allowing such a thing to happen would be sued for disregard to public safety.

Bankend signal box was closed on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1942, but the sidings were used for rounding empty passenger stock until the Coalburn line became completely DMU (?) operated in the early 1960's.



Signal Cabin at Bankend where Archie Millar worked. Pictured is Bobby French.



# THE JIM HAMILTON HERITAGE SOCIETY OF COALBURN

**MEETINGS HELD TWICE MONTHLY** *Featuring Guest Speakers*

1st & 3rd Wednesdays, SEPTEMBER – APRIL

Admission is FREE. Non Members Welcome.

ALL WELCOME – BRING A FRIEND – Tea/Coffee at 8.45pm

Wednesday, 7.30pm start. Access from 7pm. Coalburn Bowling Club.

## SYLLABUS 2013

### SEPTEMBER

**4th** – Jim Percival, Motherwell. *Subject:* St. Kilda

**18th** – Marean Johnstone, Coalburn. *Subject:* Life As A Shepherd's Daughter, Part 2.

### OCTOBER

**2nd** – Campbell Thomson, Law. *Subject:* Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

**16th** – tbc.

### NOVEMBER

**6th** – Ed Archer, Lanark Historian/Archaeologist.

**20th** – Max Flemmich, Darvel Telephone Museum.

### DECEMBER

**4th** – Jimmy Clarkson, Douglas Museum.

*Office Bearers 2013/14*

Chairman Peter McLEISH, Tel. 01555 820287

Vice-Chairman John ZAWADZKI

Secretary Betty BELL, Tel. 01555 820276

Treasurer Jean SAVAGE

Archivist / Newsletter John ZAWADZKI

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[www.coalburnheritage.org.uk](http://www.coalburnheritage.org.uk)