

The Jim Hamilton
HERITAGE SOCIETY
of **COALBURN**



10th Anniversary
NEWSLETTER
September 2014

The Jim Hamilton
HERITAGE SOCIETY
Of COALBURN
Est. 2004

Office Bearers & Committee Members 2014 / 2015

Chairman – Peter McLeish

Vice-Chairman – John Zawadzki

Secretary – Betty Bell

Treasurer – Jean Savage

Committee Members – Geoff Brown, Gilbert Dobbie,
Hamish Gilchrist, Howard Johnstone, Jim MacLean,
Anna McLachlan, Kathleen Purdie and Billy Struthers.

Society Meetings

Meetings are held on the FIRST and THIRD Wednesdays from September until April at 7.30pm in Coalburn Bowling Club and feature guest speakers. Tea/Coffee and biscuits at 8.45pm.

Non-members are always welcome to attend.

See website www.coalburnheritage.org.uk for syllabus details.

Society Newsletter

Back issues can be viewed on our website.

Coalburn Heritage Centre

Managed by volunteers from

The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn.

One Stop Shop, 42 Coalburn Rd, ML11 OHL.

Free Admission. Opening times:

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS, 10am – 3pm.



Foreword

By

Peter McLeish, Chairman,

The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

Each year has its own particular event to commemorate and 2014 is no exception. 100 years ago The Great War commenced and, throughout the land, this will be the focus for many groups similar to our own.

In addition, it is 75 years since the start of the Second World War and, this too, may be brought to mind by those who were involved in the hostilities at that time.

Another encounter attracting attention presently is the Battle of Bannockburn which, as every Scottish school pupil will know, took place some 700 years ago. September of this year will also be an important time in Scotia's history, no matter which way the electorate throughout the country decides.

In addition to all of the above, our Society celebrates its 10th Anniversary. Earlier in the year we staged a month-long Exhibition at New Lanark to promote Coalburn's rich social history.

The loss of coalmining has seen the demise of such as our village. However, community spirit has been a feature of this district which, thanks to many of the current residents, continues to prevail, and no one has epitomised this more than the late Jim Hamilton.

Thanks to his dedication to his birthplace our group has been able to flourish and thus continue to keep Coalburn in the minds of all ages and provide for future generations words and pictures he produced of the rich mining heritage which spawned this village.

Jim Hamilton



JIM HAMILTON was born in Coalburn in 1922, the elder son of two boys (the other was Alex) born to Jimmie Hamilton (1894 – 1981) and Nan Reid (1897 – 1973). Both parents lived their long lives in Coalburn and the Hamilton and Reid families have been associated with the village for, now, over 150 years. Jim's father, grandfather & uncle all worked down the pits.

Educated at Bellfield School, Lesmahagow Higher Grade and Larkhall Academy, Jim started as a clerk in the public assistance office in Lesmahagow and worked continuously in some branch of welfare work since before retiring as the district social work manager for Motherwell district of the then Strathclyde Regional Council.

His interests through life were varied – sport (football, athletics and badminton), music (he played violin in Coalburn Amateur Orchestra), gardening (he was Honorary President of Coalburn Horticultural Society), photography (both cine and still), and, not least, local history.

For over 30 years Jim recorded a social history of Coalburn, amassing a vast collection of photographs and documents, many of which were reproduced in his **COALBURN CHRONICLES**. Eighty volumes (or 'Parts' as Jim preferred to call them) were issued between 1973 & 1998.

“My AIM is to make the books readable to all...My HOPE is that they will still be read in the years ahead. It has been suggested to me that Coalburn now has possibly the best documented set of family histories for any village in Britain. The source of stories about the village and its inhabitants seems boundless.” – Jim Hamilton

Jim also produced 80 videos, many featuring interviews with local folk. He also compiled similar booklets and videos for surrounding villages – Lesmahagow, Blackwood, Rigside, Douglas, etc.

In 2002 Jim received an award from the British Association of Local History for major contribution to local history. He was later awarded Lottery funding to publish his acclaimed book **‘Lanarkshire Coalminers and Their Wives’**.

After a brief illness Jim died in Hairmyres Hospital, East Kilbride, from heart failure, on 9th April 2004. He was 82.

Jim’s intention was that his unique collection should eventually rest in Coalburn. His wishes were carried out by his widow Maureen who arranged for his archive to be passed into the keeping of the people of COALBURN.

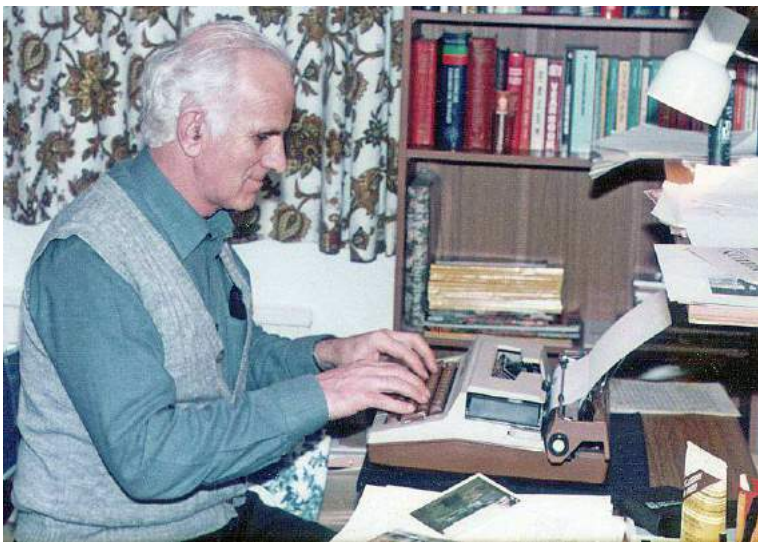
A Public Meeting was held in July of 2004 and **The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn** was formally established in an endeavour to continue and build on the remarkable work which Jim so willingly carried out in his lifetime. It was only proper therefore, that his name should be carried on so that future generations might appreciate his labours.

Ten years on, the Society hope you enjoy a flavour of the legacy of Jim’s unique collection at this, our first, major public exhibition outside the village of Coalburn.

John ZAWADZKI, Vice –Chairman

The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

Article from Coalburn Chronicles, Part 1
*Written & published in 1982 by **Jim Hamilton** (1922 – 2004)*



THE VILLAGE of COALBURN cannot claim a recorded history stretching back for around 800 years like Douglas and Lesmahagow, the two nearest villages to it. The development and growth of the village must be understood in conjunction with the Parish of Lesmahagow of which it forms a part.

The Parish, extending to about 67 square miles, is bounded on the north, south, east and west by the Cander Water, **Poniel Burn**, River Clyde and Kype Water respectively.

The most important hills of the Parish are the Cumberhead Hills, Nutberry, Warlaw, Todlaw, Birkenhead and Greystonehill on the west, with Blackhill, Dillars and Boreland towards the Clyde on the east. It is on the west part of the Upperward of Lanarkshire and the centre of the Lowlands of Scotland.

Research into the origins of the Parish suggests that the first inhabited areas were on the banks of the Nethan and Clyde and in the valley of the **Poniel Burn**.

Possibly some small pagan settlements existed prior to the birth of Christ and positive proof is available that the Romans, who colonised Britain from **43** to **410 AD**, built in the Parish and the discovery of the **Roman flagon** at Saddlerhead in **Coalburn** in **1810** is confirmation of their contact with the district.



This bronze Roman flagon, discovered near Coalburn in 1810, can be found at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.

Synonymous with the name of **Coalburn** is the **Poniel Burn** and the first mention of **Poniel** in recorded history is in **1147** when the Superiors of Kelso granted a portion of land to various vassals of the abbey.

The most comprehensive record of families and habitations in earlier times is in the Poll Tax record for Scotland of **1695** and the entries for the parish of Lesmahagow prove that the three areas around Birkhill, Bankend and Auchlochan had many farms and cottages.

There was even the suggestion that **Coalburn** had aristocracy in **1695** as Jean Bruce, Lady Birkhill, is listed but it may have been merely an honorary title.

When the First statistical Account was prepared in **1791**, it is stated that coal was being worked at **Coalburn**, Gunsgreen, Westoun and Stockbriggs.



Lime Row c 1940.

The census records of **1861** gives details of the families in the houses at Brockley, Bellfield, Lime Row and **Coalburn**. This is sure proof that the area, now regarded as **Coalburn** village, was forming by **1861**, initially as a series of hamlets. The rows mentioned would be erected by the coal owners to house their workers near the developing pits and mines

Life in Coalburn in the 1800s and the first 60 years of the 20th Century centred around the tremendous output from the mines.

The **railway** was transporting away millions of tons of coal. Miners' trains came from Larkhall East through Dalserf, Netherburn, Tillietudlem, Auchenheath and Brocketsbrae, with yet another starting from Lanark, all full of men in working garb – there were no pit baths to change at until around **1930** – and they got off the train at Forkins, Bellfield pit and **Coalburn** station.



Final train service at Coalburn Station, 4th October 1965.

Wilson SCOTT Photo

As the decline in output began after the **1914-18** war, with less need for as much manpower, the travelling to work by train gave way to the 'bus.

The rich seams gave out and, with the mechanisation of mines introduced by the National Coal Board and the closing of non-remunerative pits, mining in the **Coalburn** district stopped completely in the **1960s**.

Parish Councils, which had been introduced in **1894**, gave way to County Councils and District Councils in **1930** and services of water, sanitation, lighting, health, welfare, education, public parks, etc., became accepted by the populace and were provided. Council houses began to be erected in the **1920s** and slowly the old rows and terraces started to disappear.



Coalburn today, pictured from summit of Auchlochan Bing No.9

JZ Photo

No one would try to describe **Coalburn** as a model village. The main residential part is on the road which straggles between Muirburn and Braefoot with some bulges where council houses have been built.

It is an exposed village and sadly lacks trees to beautify and shelter. The surrounds have been scarified by mining, leaving unfilled quarries and bings of refuse which neither the maligned coalmasters nor the N.C.B. did anything to conceal or reduce their ugliness by flattening or tree-planting.

But there is beauty around and, when you find it, the sharp contrast in the course of a few miles of walking can astonish the beholder.

Take the district which lies towards Douglas. The open moors apparently rolling skywards to merge with the horizon on the Haxie Hills – the ravine and deep valley through which the Poniel burn flows – the near Canadian-type scenery of rocks and firs round **Wallace's Caves**.



Wallace's Caves

Peter McLEISH Photo

In sylvan comparison are the Nethan and Logan valleys where the burns meander through trim meadows and stately trees. The area around the foot of Todlaw and Nutberry can be an oasis of peace for persons seeking some hours of solitude.



River Nethan at Water Meetings, Waterside, near Coalburn.

JZ Photo

The villagers are the most important component of Coalburn. As the community increased in size around the pits, the close proximity in which the family had to live in their own homes in the rows might have brought strife. The reverse happened.



Miners on strike in 1921, pictured at Railway Terrace.

Adversity, strikes, deaths, and injuries from the dangerous work of the men folk built **a close-knit community** with a happy social life.

The families of the village became, of themselves, a large family, interested in each other, **enjoying the births and marriages, suffering when death came to a house.**

The village was fortunate to have only one Protestant **church**, so religion bound them together, instead of dividing as it happens in neighbouring villages where more than one church building can split a community as each congregation shows interest only in their church and its activities.



Princess Ann meets members of Coalburn Silver Band during a visit to Coalburn in 2011 to officially re-open the refurbished band hall. JZ Photo

A friendly village established itself, showing common interest in **drama, choirs, bands** (the only village left in the Upperward of Lanarkshire with a silver and pipe band) and **sport**.



Coalburn IOR Pipe Band in 1988

The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn
www.coalburnheritage.org.uk

THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945

POLISH SOLDIERS 1940

DURING the blitz on Glasgow and Clydebank, Coalburnite LILY GOLDIE of Cairnhouse was a nurse at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

She remembers being on duty when the injured in the bombing raids were being brought into the casualty wards. Before the broken limbs and other injuries could be treated, the nurses had to clean them as they had dirt and plaster adhering to their bodies and clothes from the bomb blasts.

Lily also talked about the effect that the Polish soldiers living in Douglas Castle grounds had on the community. Many came about her parents' house at Cairnhouse and they showed their obvious enjoyment at being invited into homes and having tea.

They were very appreciative and would bring carved wooden ornaments as presents in an attempt to repay the hospitality given. One of them regularly came and cut her father's hair.

The conversation then turned to what seems an amazing fact now, but was then unquestionably accepted—that a community could absorb thousands of men and yet there was no trouble between the incomers and the villagers.

The Polish soldiers attended the dances, by then being held thrice weekly in Coalburn and yet there was a complete absence of strife. I attended as many dances as my pocket money would allow and can vouchsafe that I never once saw a fight or even a commotion.

Jim HAMILTON

COALBURN CHRONICLES Part 52, Page 2595, Published **October 198**

Coalburn Railway Memories

by
John Hamilton



Staff at Coalburn Station, c mid 1920s.

Standing, l to r – Tommy Burnside, Peter Hunter and Willie Brown.

Seated, l to r – Jimmy Fulton, Bob Anderson and article author John Hamilton.

When I joined the Caledonian Railway Company at the age of 14 in September 1916 I was attached to the clerical grade with good prospects of promotion. I became an adult 18 years of age and was the second highest paid employee at the station at Coalburn, being next to the Station master.

Unfortunately for me, the amalgamation of railways took place when I was between 18 and 21 years old and the London, Midland and Scottish Railway came into being. The adult age was raised from 18 to 21 years, causing me to become a junior, my wage being reduced from approximately £4 -£5 weekly to £1.18/- (£1.90.)

After negotiations between official side and Union, persons who were unfortunate to be in the same position as myself had their rate increased to 45/- (£2.25). Until I severed my connection with railways in 1936, £2. 14/- (£2.70) was the limit of my earnings.

Another result of the amalgamation was the establishment of two grades, clerical and wages. I was adjudged as belonging to the latter, and thus went all hope of worthwhile promotion. I spent 6 ½ years at Coalburn Station.

Uniforms were, of course provided, and I was entitled to a pilot suit which was really smart with a double-breasted jacket and trousers in navy blue and a peaked cap with a round steel ring like that of a policemen, only not diced, plus a blue waterproof coat. There was a long delay in mine being delivered, and Mr Hunter, the Stationmaster, got me a corduroy suit, as issued to porters, until it arrived.

There were three workmen's trains arriving every morning bringing miners to the pits, one starting from Larkhall East station and travelling up what was known as the old line, uplifting passengers at Netherburn, Tillietudlem, Auchenheth and Brockettsbrae; one from Blackwood uplifting at Lesmahagow; and one from Lanark via Poniel Junction.

There were halts at Auchlochan signal box and Bellfield pit. The carriages stood all day in a loop line opposite Dalquhandy Colliery and at the end of the shift as one train (21 carriages) to Alton Heights where it was split up again to three trains for their various destinations. Total coal production at this period from Auchlochan Nos 6, 7, 9, and 10, Bellfield Nos 3 and 4, Dalquhandy, Auchenberg and the "Doosie" (Bankend) would be approximately 3,500 tons daily.

The first train to Glasgow stood all night at Bankend and during the dark winter mornings it had to be lit - by gas - when it came down to the station. The manner of so doing was to turn the tap at the end of the carriage, then climb on to the roof with a torch, which was a hollow tube 9" long by 1 ½ " diameter packed with wick which was soaked with methylated spirits and protruded from one end.

When lit it could hardly be blown out and I would walk along the top of the carriages opening the covers which protected the mantles, ignite them and replace the covers. This train passed the first one from Glasgow at Alton Heights and when it arrived at the station the lights had to be turned off.

All very dangerous, as it meant stepping from carriage roof to carriage roof, or stepping between the carriages on the buffers and couplings. It was a relief when trains fitted completely for electric lighting were put on the Coalburn run.

When the Galawhistle Colliery was re-opened during the 1914-18 war, it was in my district for checking and I had to accompany the mineral train which delivered the empty wagons and brought back the loaded ones.

We occasionally took up unofficial passengers who were visiting friends in Glenbuck, regular ones being the Misses Clark, who lived in the shepherd's house at Todlaw. They were picked up at Cumberhead Siding one night and brought back to the same point the following night.

When the grouse season was on we sometimes brought down a party of shooters from Spireslack and let them off at the nearest point to Cumberhead, about Burnside or Stockhill. Passengers were always welcomed by the brakemen as a “tip” was a certainty.

There was a water-tank just about opposite the point where Poniel Burn has its source and there generally was a stop there to take water and clean the fire-box. In good weather the brakeman would go to the burn to guddle trout.

One day, I sat entranced in a brake van listening to an account of a mineral train, many years previously, getting out of control after leaving the Moss Lie which was the highest point between Galawhistle and Auchlochan signal box. The weight of the train was too much for the engine, whose brakes plus the brake vans were unable to curb or check its increasing speed downhill.

After passing Cumberhead Siding the driver kept blowing the whistle to intimate to the signalman at Bankend that he had a runaway train to deal with. It must have been a tremendous relief to go round the bend at Dalquhandy Colliery and find the signal off, thus giving him access to the next section which terminated at Auchlochan signal box.

The Bankend signalman was able to contact Coalburn Station, which didn't have the tablet system but controlled the gates at the level crossing. The runaway points were closed and the gates opened. Had this not been done, the engine and wagons would have piled up in the garden of the Coalburn Inn and possibly spilled on to the roadway.

The signalman at Auchlochan was able to give the driver a clear road again and he soon got the train under control, on the rising gradient between there and Alton Height Junction.

I reckon from Moss Lie to Auchlochan will be all of five miles downhill, and that would be the distance the skidding engine was pushed, the original cause probably being a wet rail.



Staff at Coalburn Station

Perhaps the most alarming derailment was when a section of the colliers' train arrived as usual at Bankend in the early morning. It had to stand in a loop line until it was due to return in the afternoon, and as the gradient was pretty steep the driver had to keep the engine travelling fast to get the carriages to their waiting point.

There was a set of hand operated points which controlled access to the loop and sidings behind Bankend "screes", which were normally set for the loop.

It was thought that after shunting operations the previous night, they had not been returned to the loop access position, and when the colliers' train came thundering up the track, it went into the siding instead of the loop and the road just spread under the tremendous surge and weight, causing the derailed engine to plunge into the "screes" and among the wagons standing there.

The superstructure of the screening plant fell on top of the engine but no one was injured, the cab roof saving the driver and fireman. The pit was idle for a good few weeks until repairs were affected. I can remember watching the wrecked engine going through the station on its way to the locomotive shops and I can remember its number – 713.

During my period of service at Coalburn, the 8-hour day was introduced and this meant a great increase in staff, especially among drivers, firemen, guards, brakesmen and signalmen. At Brocketsbrae Station there was an engine shed and quite a staff of mineral train men, all of whom were closely connected with the working coal traffic at the local collieries.

I was transferred from Coalburn to Douglas West as Goods Porter and Number Taker, and worked there from the spring of 1923 until May 1926. I went into lodgings, but ultimately went back home and travelled the moors night and morning, experiencing, in the winter time, what the Douglas miners endured when they travelled to Coalburn for work.

May 1926 was the turning point in my railway life. I came out on strike with the railwaymen in support of the miners, little dreaming that it would be January 1927 before I would be reinstated, starting again at Rothesay Dock, Clydebank, for a month, before moving to St. Rollox, Glasgow.

Early in 1930 I applied for and got a transfer to Glenboig, which was promotion and an increase of 4/- (20p) in wages, bringing them to 54/- (£2.70) weekly.

I married in December 1930 and, about two years later, was reduced in status and pay to 50/- (£2.50). After 19 ½ years service I left the railway in March 1936 to return to Coalburn and took up work as an Insurance Agent.

END

Joe McGill's Shop

JOSEPH MCGILL (pictured in doorway) had a grocer's shop at Burnside Cottage at Coalburn brig. The building had earlier been a shop run by the Mackenzie family and later taken over by the Auchenheath Provident Co-op Society before it built more commodious premises opposite. McGill's shop was demolished in mid 1980s.

Joe was born in Glespin, coming from that small village to work with the Coalburn & District Co-operative Society when he was in his early twenties. For a time he cycled between his home and work, a distance of 18 miles daily.

On marriage to Nettie Mackenzie he took over the shop at Burnside which had formerly the name of 'Ritchie' and 'Mackenzie' above the door. This thrived and later he was in partnership with his son Walter, working regularly until a few days before his short but fatal illness. Joe was only 66 years of age when he died.



During the 1939-45 war, Joe was chief warden for Air Raid Precautions. Until 1951 he was also Coalburn's registrar for births, deaths and marriages. At the time of his death he was treasurer of Coalburn Royal Arch Chapter and was a Past Master of the local Masonic Lodge. [Jim Hamilton](#), [COALBURN CHRONICLES](#), Part 48, Page 2239.

Donald Mathieson

MATHIESON, a name that is still in the village. The Mathieson family was associated with Gunsgreen croft, which was situated on the Middlemuir Road just before where the Scottish Coal offices were erected and also where Jimmy Brodie's sawmill was situated.



COALBURN CHRONICLES, Part 44, Page 1946 —

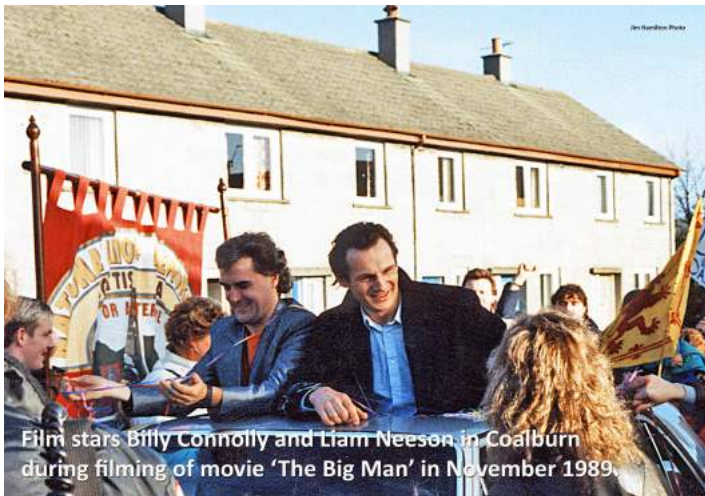
“ Perhaps it might be of interest to record how the surname of Mathieson came to the village of Coalburn. It was just around 1890 when Murdo Mathieson, the grandfather of Donald Mathieson (who married Helen Steele) came to work in Coalburn as a railway signalman. His early life had been spent in Gaelic-speaking Dunvegan in Skye. ”

Donald Mathieson served in the Scottish Horse regiment during the First World War, returning to work in the local pits when demobilised. He also worked as a crofter in Gunsgreen. With a large family to provide for, he also kept a few animals in order to augment his miner's wage. One of many pipers in Coalburn, he was also a Board member with Auchenheath Provident Co-operative Society. He died in 1962, aged 67 years.

Filming In Coalburn

‘THE BIG MAN’

Coalburn was chosen as the location for a film to be made called ‘The Big Man’, based on a book by Scots author William McIlvanney. It starred Billy Connolly, Liam Neeson, Joanne Whalley, Pat Roach and Phil McColl. Coalburn residents, Coalburn IOR Pipe Band and the Cub Troop were engaged as film extras during filming in the village during the month of November 1989. Several buildings in Coalburn were taken over for the filming. Photographs and a report by Jim Hamilton were published in his **COALBURN CHRONICLES, Part 55, Issued March 1990.**



‘TAGGART’

Coalburn was also selected as a filming location for an episode in Series 25 of the television programme Taggart, a popular Scottish detective drama created by Glenn Chandler and produced by STV Productions for the ITV network. The episode, titled Crossing The Line, attracted an audience of 5.9 million when first aired on 15th December 2008.

The McLean Family

There is no doubt in my mind as to the family who have done most to record the history of Coalburn over the past 100 years.

They are the McLeans—a family who can be traced back for the past two hundred years in South Lanarkshire, and most of the time in the parish of Lesmahagow.

It all started with Archie McLean (1844 - 1906) in the 1880s who took up the then new hobby of photography and this has been carried on by his two sons, Dickie and Jimmy.

I have had the pleasure, through the kindness of Dickie, to be shown the entire collection of slides prepared by the McLean family, portraying the pictorial history of Coalburn over a period of nearly one hundred years.

What a treasure trove it proves to be of the social history of the working people of the village of Coalburn.

Nearly every aspect of life in Coalburn is brought before us pictorially beautiful and all credit to the discerning eyes of the photographers.

There are slides of coronation festivities in the village, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, Sunday school outings, the various pits now silent, miners, cabs, horses, early motor cars, miners' rows long since demolished, family groups of local inhabitants and scenery along the burns and of the hills.

The collection of slides numbers above 300.

Jim HAMILTON

COALBURN CHRONICLES Part 6, Page 139, Published 1983

Catching the flavour of an evening's entertainment that villagers enjoyed at the end of the 19th Century....

Hamilton Advertiser 5 January 1895

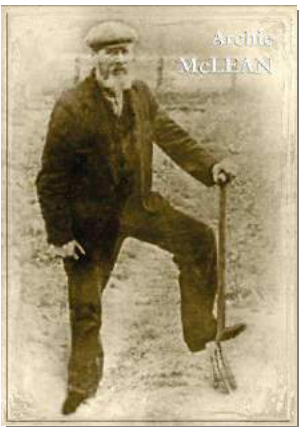
COALBURN MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

The business on the programme of the association for 31 December 1894 was the magic lantern entertainment. For this purpose, Mr Weir, Headmaster of Bellfield school, had secured the use of The People's Friend slides 'Bonnie Scotland No. 1' and Mr Archie McLean, Coalburn, kindly provided lantern and managed same.

The meeting, being open to all and young folk especially invited, was held in the church and it was completely filled.

The Rev. Mr Walker opened the proceedings and the views were beautifully exhibited by Mr McLean while Mr Weir read the descriptive matter.

To enliven the proceedings, a choir of children from Bellfield School rendered a number of pieces suitable to the pictures.



*Only known
photograph of
Coalburn
photographer
Archie McLean
(1844 - 1906).*

What *The People's Friend* said about Dickie McLean in 1938

WHEN the folk of Coalburn in Lanarkshire turn out to the pictures, it is almost certain they will see themselves, or someone in their families, starring on the screen ! For Coalburn has one of the most perfect pictorial records of itself and its people of any village in the country.

Many years ago, in 1880 to be exact, Mr McLean, a native of the village and a keen amateur photographer, began to put Coalburn on the screen. Now his son, Mr Richard McLean, of Dunn Crescent, Coalburn, has, in his possession a large collection of lantern slides showing every phase in the village's life and growth during the last seventy years.

That the Coalburn folk appreciate the time and trouble the McLeans have taken with their living "history book" is proved by the fact that at the last public showing of the slides, there wasn't a vacant seat in the hall ! Mr McLean is still using the lantern used by his father 80 years when his lantern was the only entertainment the village had.

"The real fun, of course, lies in the making of the slides," Mr McLean declares. "They range from the gay and comic to the natural beauties of the surrounding countryside. Some of the earliest slides were hand-coloured before the coloured photo was even thought of. The original colour slides as bright and colourful to-day as they were when first shown many years ago."

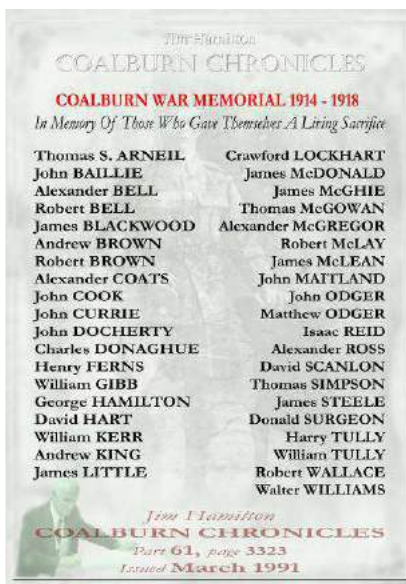
Every phase of village life is captured by the camera—if the folk of Coalburn want to know who played in the village band twenty years ago, who was captain of the football team in 1922, where the Sunday school picnic was held the year before the war—the answer can be found somewhere in Mr McLean's slide box.

The whole series, entitled **Coalburn 1880 to 1950**, shows the rise of the village from two small rows of simple houses to the thriving community of just under 3000—which it is today.

The picture story of a village is in demand by surrounding schools, for it is a grand—and very painless—way of learning history and geography. The womenfolk of the village can watch a pageant of changing fashions — and even the gentlemen are surprised to find how much their appearance has changed from the days of mutton-chop whiskers and ribboned straw "bashers".

We congratulate the McLeans on providing for Coalburn a ***Scrapbook of the Passing Years*** which every other town and village up and down the country must envy ! The local headmaster put into words that appreciation by referring to the 300 lantern slides as ***"a pictorial record of incalculable worth in the history of our village."***

The Great War 1914 - 1918



My father (Sgt. John Odger) was killed by a sniper in Flanders, France, on 15th April 1915. I remember the day we got word father had been killed. I ran to meet Jessie Garrett the post woman to see if she had a letter from my father in France. She had two—one was from father and the other was from the War Office to say he had been killed in action.

JEANNIE BUCHANAN

COALBURN CHRONICLES Part 61, Page 3321, Issued **March 1991**



Two of the WW1 items on display at Coalburn Heritage Centre.

Article from the Hamilton Advertiser in 1953

MODERN METHODS SAVE LANARKSHIRE MINING COMMUNITY

Higher Output and Steady Work

The Coalburn district of Lanarkshire, whose miners, a short time ago, feared that the area was approaching the state of mineral exhaustion which is afflicting other parts of the country, has entered a new era of productivity since the National Coal Board decided that the district is suitable for consolidation into a compact group of small but efficient units.

At present Coalburn has four working units, with a further new drift mine in preparation. The village has become the headquarters under Mr Archibald Clark, the agent, of the N.C.B. Douglas Group of collieries, one of the five groups comprising East Ayrshire Area, and in conjunction with the parent Douglas Colliery, a few miles to the east, its miners have a weekly output of roughly 10,000 tons-adding 500,000 tons to the annual Scottish output.

£250,000 SCHEMES

The winning of coal to-day in Coalburn characterises the care being taken by the N.C.B. that throughout Britain no potential coal yield of reasonable dimension should be ignored. Developments costing about £250,000 are proceeding in and around Coalburn, a straggling village of 1600 inhabitants, 800 feet high in the south-eastern uplands of Lanarkshire and a village, which by chance of geology, lies athwart seams that are part of Ayrshire and not, as might be expected, the Lanarkshire coalfield.

The district may never be a major operational sector of the Scottish coal industry, but it has the potential of 1500 tons per day from five small collieries, two of them new surface drift mines from which coal can be taken quickly and economically.

To-day's output is about 1500 tons daily, but the driving of new mines, the modernisation of the old, and the streamlining of local administration has enabled the 1080 miners working in the area to look forward to continuous employment, as well as increased productivity. Developments already undertaken, allied with those in progress, have allayed fears that the industry locally was finished.

INDUSTRIAL COAL

Coalburn miners mostly dig coal for the Lanarkshire steelworks, for generating stations and gas works, and for locomotive fuelling. Some domestic coal is also mined, but the district's future, as was its past, lies in the industrial fuel market.

It is fitting that there should be a future for a place with a long mining history, and for that reason the assurance given by Mr William Prentice, area production manager for the East Ayrshire area, that the N.C.B. developments can weld the district into a fairly highly productive and efficient colliery unit has been doubly welcomed locally.

The Coalburn seams are an extension of the Douglas field of limestone coals, the Douglas field itself being an extension of the outcropping Ayrshire limestone coal measures, which run into Lanarkshire through the southern uplands fault by way of Muirkirk and Glenbuck, both just over the hills to the west.

The current output of about 1050 tons daily comes from the four collieries-Auchlochan (600 men), Auchmeddan (90), Westoun (150) and Bankend (150). A new drift mine, Auldtoun, is only now being driven, and while the N.C.B. hope to increase the output soon to 1500 tons daily that will be done without increasing the surface and underground labour above its present level of 1080 men.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945

COALBURN COMMANDO SAVES DUTCH BOY (14)

IN the Sunday Post newspaper in 1956 appeared a story featuring Coalburn's Geordie Scanlon and describing an exploit involving him with the Commandos on the Dutch Island of Walcheren in 1942.

A fourteen year old boy had fallen down an embankment into a minefield set by the Germans before they left the Island. The boy was out of reach of rescuers fearful of some mines exploding should they try to approach him. The commandos were asked to help and they put a long ladder out above the minefield from the embankment.

Along this ladder, Geordie crawled, rung by rung, until he could be lowered to reach the boy who was then lifted and inched to safety. The surgeons had to amputate the leg of the boy which had been shattered by an exploding mine but thanks to their skill, and the bravery of Geordie Scanlon, his life was saved.

The story featured in the newspaper in 1956 re-told the details of the incident involving Geordie and stated that they boy, by 1956, a man of 27 years, was in regular work as a meter reader.

Geordie Scanlon, who ended the war with the rank of sergeant, was awarded the Military Medal for his wartime services.

A grocer with Abbeygreen Co-operative Society prior to his call-up to the army, he also wrote occasional articles for newspapers and was a leader of the Scout movement in Coalburn. Geordie died in Troon in 1969 at the age of 58 years.

Jim HAMILTON

COALBURN CHRONICLES Part 53, Page 269, Published **November 1989**

Coalburn Today Organisations

Passing Centenary milestones are not uncommon in Coalburn, with the **Church**, the **Horticultural Society**, the **Masonic Lodge Newlands 949**, **Coalburn Homing Club**, the **Coalburn IOR Pipe Band** and the **Coalburn Silver Band** having already reached that milestone.

Joining that elite group is the local **school** which opened its doors to pupils on 1st September 1908. The old school was recently demolished and a modern new building opened in January 2014.

Like many other villages in the district the older members are catered for as well with the **Old Folks Committee** and the **Darby and Joan Club**.

The main event in many people's eyes is, of course the annual **Gala Day**, held on the first Saturday of July, when the streets are bedecked with bunting, vehicles are decorated as are the majority of the homes. Exiles return from many parts for the yearly blether with old friends and the Heritage Society holds its annual heritage exhibition at the Leisure Complex.



Coalburn Miners Welfare Club
— the hub of the village ever since it first opened back in 1925

JZ Photo

Coalburn Today *Sport & Recreation*

Sport has played an important part in the village over the years with the main sport being football. Probably the heyday was in the late 1920's and early 30's.

*Twenty years later a number of bowling enthusiasts set out to have their own bowling green in the village – **Coalburn Miners Welfare Bowling Club** - and, here too, over the period, many distinguished players have been produced. The club is also available for private hire.*

***Hollandbush Golf Course** has just recently celebrated 50 years as well and has flourished thanks to the hard work and commitment by many over that time. Originally a 9 hole course, it was enlarged to 18 holes a number of years ago.*

See website www.hollandbushgolfclub.co.uk

*Others sports which have featured are cricket, quoiting and, of course, two favourites among the mining fraternity, greyhounds and pigeon racing. The **Coalburn Homing Club** is still active and celebrated its Centenary in 2005.*



***Coalburn Miners Welfare** caters not only for functions and conferences but incorporates the village post office, the One Stop Shop, a charity shop, Cruets Diner/Cafeteria and Coalburn Heritage Centre.*

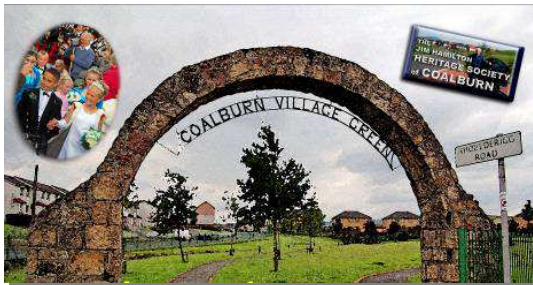
See website for more info: www.coalburnmw.org.uk

Coalburn Today *Mining Heritage*

Overlooked by the Hagshaw Hill Windfarm, Coalburn evolved principally due to the rich seams of coal which lay deep beneath the surface and which created work on a regular basis from about 1840 until the closure of the last deep mine in July 1968.

With the closure, many of the local miners moved from the area, some to nearby Ayrshire while others crossed to the other side of the country and found work in the Lothian coalfields.

Those who decided to remain in the industry nearer to home travelled to Cardowan and Bedlay Collieries until they too were exhausted. For many it meant a change in occupation. Ravenscraig was at its height and opportunities were taken up there.



*Twenty years after the last coal was transported from Coalburn's **Auchlochan Number 9**, work commenced on the extraction of more coal in the area when the then largest opencast operation in Western Europe, at **Dalquhandy**, finally began the task of revealing still more precious fuel, only this time from closer to the earth's surface thanks to the modern machinery now available.*

The proposal to introduce the opencast operation met with resistance from many in the area with concerns being expressed with regard to noise, air pollution and the like.

*Concessions were made and it was agreed that a payment on the basis of so much per ton of coal extracted be set aside for the benefit of the community. The result of that decision brought about the completion of a **Leisure Complex**, opened in October 1998. Despite many reservations, no doubt its introduction has enhanced the profile of Coalburn.*

Turn Back The Clock To Old Coalburn

Final Poem by **Alex Hay** (1913-1983)

If I could only hear those voices again
And see the faces I knew as a boy,
To meet once again the villagers
Who shared all our sorrow and joy.
To picnic at Nethan or bathe in Poniel
Or sit in the quiet of Clay Brae,
Or watch children play around Wallace's Cave
Was our fun on a warm Summer day.

Chorus

**Turn back the clock, oh turn back the clock
When a youth ower the moors I did roam;
Turn back the clock, yes turn back the clock
To those days in my old village home.**



The old Victoria Hall held the Rechabite ball
And weddings took place there galore.
Boxing and dramatics, 'Health and Strength' gymnastics
Made up our life in my salad days of yore.
We all took pride when the Welfare Hall rose
With a games room and a library of our own,
Prosperity did ring, with the mines in full swing,
We were happy in my old village home.

At Bankend and Bellfield, they each had a team,
'The Rangers' and 'Violet' by name.
'The Thistle' and 'Star', at football, by far,
Were our pride till the Juniors came.
Supporters then appeared,
They surged to the field like a flood
Whatever the score, they'll call out for more
With the shout 'Come on the Blood'.

The Thistle and Star and Blood are no more
And the mines all so derelict they stand,
Those prosperous days have all passed away,
But the scenery at the burns is still grand.
They can never return, to our OLD COALBURN,
It's like a page in history, torn,
Those days that used to be, are now a memory
In the village where I was born.

Jim HAMILTON's

COALBURN CHRONICLES Part 17, Page 458B, Published June 1983

Deaths 2014

Rhoda McDonald (Spanton)

Kinloch Tweedlie

Mary Gray (Law)

William Cook

Janis Hamilton (Dickson)

Andrew Hamilton

Alexander McLean

Fred Dempster

John Wilson

Myra McRae (Graham)

George Douglas

Alexander Adam

Daniel Smart

Sarah McCann

Charles Thomson

The Jim Hamilton **HERITAGE SOCIETY Of COALBURN**

SYLLABUS

2014

MEETINGS are held on the FIRST and THIRD WEDNESDAYS
from September until April at 7.30pm in COALBURN BOWLING CLUB
and feature GUEST SPEAKERS. Tea/Coffee and biscuits at 8.45pm.

Non-members are always welcome to attend.

3rd SEPTEMBER

Robert McLEISH: Local People From The Past

17th SEPTEMBER

Pamela McINTYRE: Pits, Ponies, People & Stories

1st OCTOBER

Dr Sinclair SCOTT MBE: Slideshow of St Petersburg

15th OCTOBER

Paul ARCHIBALD: History of Lanark Library

5th NOVEMBER

David HALLS: Images of Coalburn and Lesmahagow

19th NOVEMBER

Joe O'RAW: World War One

3rd DECEMBER

Fred FARRELL: Vintage Car Items

19th DECEMBER

ANNUAL XMAS DINNER

COALBURN HERITAGE CENTRE

www.coalburnheritage.org.uk



Coalburn Heritage