

# The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn



## NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2015

The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

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

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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

7.30pm start. Access from 7pm.

VENUE

## Coalburn Bowling Club

### SYLLABUS 2015

#### SEPTEMBER

**16th** – James **CLARKSON**, Douglas

#### OCTOBER

**7th** – Martin **STEPEK**: The Life of Jan Stepek

**21st** – Rev Dr. Nikki **MacDONALD**, Minister for the Upper Clyde Parish

Subject: John Knox

#### NOVEMBER

**4th** – Campbell **THOMSON**: Lanarkshire Yoemanry

**18st** – Kate **COWAN**: Walking the route of the River Clyde

#### DECEMBER

**2nd** – Jim **BROWN**: Old Rigside and Douglas Water

**NB** Friday 18th December, Annual Christmas Dinner, 7pm. Miners' Welfare.

## Chairman's Remarks

***Sadly, I have to let you know that our former Treasurer, Jean Savage, has passed away. Elsewhere in this edition there is a tribute to her.***

As a result of the AGM we welcome Gillian Farrell who has taken over the Treasurer's position. I have known her for many years and look forward to her input for the Society.

Once again we had a presence at the Leisure Centre as part of the Gala Day celebrations with a photographic display, principally of class photos of Bellfield and Coalburn schools which proved to be very popular. Despite the poor weather in the morning there was a good attendance at the crowning of this year's Queen. Close to 200 persons visited the display with visitors from many parts of the UK. Thanks go to all the volunteers who assisted and were on hand to help with enquiries.

As you will see the first meeting of the new session on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, will be held in the school and in addition we have managed to fix one or two new speakers during the coming months. We intend having 2016 calendars available for the first meeting.

This is the time of year when we usually get visitors from overseas and this year will be no different as we know of visitors coming from Canada in August.

Since the last issue we have welcomed another volunteer to the Centre on a Tuesday, Billy Dempster, and his local knowledge has been put to good use. If anyone else would like to come in on a Tuesday or Thursday, particularly the latter, they will be made very welcome. The hours are variable.

While we are delighted with the attendances at our meetings, why not bring a friend now and again, as non members have been turning up simply because the speaker or topic was of particular interest to them.

**Peter McLeish,**

10<sup>th</sup> July 2015.



## COALBURN WORTHIES

Chronicle No. 40 contains an article on the above and on Page 1599 a story relating to two such characters is recorded as follows:

*Greegie Murray and Jimmy Mochrie were neighbours at Bellfield Rows in the 1920's, the latter had borrowed some lumps of coal from Greegie he promised to pay it back. This he did a few evenings later but in circumstances remembered over sixty years.*

*Jimmy and Greegie had gone, in the darkness of the late evening, down past Merchanthall Farm to the lye at Auchlochan Colliery where coal lay stacked, ready for dispatch. I can see the two men go down Merchanthall brae, skirt the farm to make sure no dogs started barking, cross the railway line by the two wooden stepped erections to help pedestrians over the fences. No doubt the two men as they walked furtively, with empty sacks under their arms, would be thinking of the long haul back to Bellfield with bags of coal on their back.*

*As they were filling the sacks with coal from the lye, Jimmy said Greegie, "Ye mind these lumps o' coal I borrowed frae ye?" Greegie muttered in assent. "I'll pey ye back noo," added Jimmy and handed some lumps to Greegie. I should imagine that Jimmy, a well known humorist and joker, would be laughing inwardly at the thought of Greegie carrying the borrowed lumps of coal, now repaid, back to Bellfield.*

**Footnote:** Jimmy Mochrie had previously lived at Bankend and while there he wrote one of the finest poems produced in the community, "The Perils of Strong Drink", before moving to the rows at Bellfield and, later still, the family resided in "Douglasdale". Meanwhile Greegie was said to be the last person to dwell in Bellfield Rows prior to their demolition, apparently, he was unwilling to vacate his home and he had to be forcibly evicted. This in the early 1930's. **PM**

" As I climbed the stairs at his (Eddie Cairney's) home at 153A Coalburn Road, I looked over at Auchlochan Number Six bing to wonder if it would ever be landscaped as so often promised over the last decade. When I reflect on the thousands of pounds spent annually in places like East Kilbride on spring bulbs and azaleas and rhododendrons and so little has been spent on villages like Coalburn or Forth or Shotts to take away the scars of their years of industry when millions of pounds worth of coal was brought to the surface and the debris left throughout the villages, I often wonder why the inhabitants of these villages do not become more militant and demand immediate action to beautify the ghastly bings and other mess left after coal production stopped."

"Eddie (Cairney) paid great tribute to his mother ,known in the village as Tilda. 'Ma faither was killed in 1924 in Auchlochan Number Nine. He was a machineman, wurkin' wi' Jimmy Spence who was later killed in the same pit..... She used to catch the first 'bus leavin' Coalburn every mornin' to go and char in Glasgow. For years she worked at the Station Hotel in Coalburn. She was a guid mither to us.'

### Brother Joe Cairney

"Joe or Josie was the member of the family who gained fame as a fly-weight boxer and who, but for the war years 1939-1945, might have risen to greater heights than merely being known as a Scottish Champion. My earliest recollections of Joe was as a fellow-member of the Coalburn Physical Culture Club."

"Joe had many fights which were well reported in the newspapers as he was a leading contender for the title of professional flyweight champion of Scotland.... he died at an early age..."



## Jean Sandilands Savage

Jean was born in Boghead on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1937. Both parents came from that area. Her mother died at a young age and her father re-married some time later. The family moved to the long gone hamlet of Shoulderigg, near Coalburn as her father worked in the local collieries. Jean often related the story that for years she walked over the moor from Shoulderigg, to Coalburn school, in all weathers. Within weeks of her leaving school the family moved into Coalburn, to what became her home for the rest of her life, and where was it? Immediately across the road from the school.

She worked for some time in Glasgow, travelling by train as many locals did at that time as Coalburn had a direct link into the middle of the city. Later she took up employment as a civilian with what was then Lanarkshire Constabulary working in Hamilton. Eventually she was based in Motherwell with what became Strathclyde Police as the Head Cashier for that particular Division. She was a popular figure in her service there where she called everyone, male or female, "flower".

Jean was an avid reader and a regular attendee in the church and in time joined what was then the Womens' Guild and was a faithful member throughout her life, whether it be on a decorated lorry taking part in the Gala Day over many years or when her financial acumen was put to use in the Guild as well, as she was the Treasurer. Indeed she filled every post in the Guild. Other church organisations benefitted from having her in their midst, whether it was the Sunday School, Choir or Guides. When the Guide company ceased in the village she went to assist the Girls' Brigade in Kirkmuirhill Church. Another of the tasks she carried out in the Church was that of Flower Secretary, a role she undertook for many years.

It will therefore come as no surprise to learn that she contributed to the local Flower Show and was successful in many occasions with her handiwork in the Industrial Section.

Always finding something to take up her time she was an ardent supporter of Coalburn WRI and the Darby and Joan Club and both of these organisations gave her great pleasure. In both of these too she held office. Yet another interest was the Heritage Society where she was a valuable volunteer and Tuesdays and Thursdays will not be the same without her.

Much sought after to examine books for several treasurers of groups here in Coalburn thanks to her book-keeping experience, Jean was always willing to help when needed.

Though of a strong independent mind, an individual who called a spade a spade, she was blessed with a keen sense of humour which was well used and appreciated by all who knew her as our members will testify too.

Her passing came as a great shock to many, her living will long be well remembered by all who had the pleasure of knowing her. **PM**

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*The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn*

### Jean Sandilands Savage



People of the village were stunned on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July to learn that one of our members, Jean Savage, had died, none more so than those of us who have worked with her during her long association with the Society. She was a hard working treasurer for many years, only recently relinquishing the post due to failing health.

Jean was an independent person and aired her views on many things with gusto. She also possessed a very well used sense of humour as those of us who spent many hours in her company at the Heritage Centre on a weekly basis, can testify too. In addition to her role as treasurer she dealt with the issuing of the Newsletters to members as well as looking after the supply of tea, coffee and biscuits on our meeting nights.

It has to be said that though her health has been a concern for some time, her sudden demise shocked all who knew her. She will be sorely missed by us all. **Thanks for the memories, Jean.**



The late Jim Hamilton,  
extract from Part 29, Coalburn Chronicles, Page 851  
Issued May 1986

" It was a fine October day in 1985 when I called on Bobby Callan and his wife Chrissie, and, as I walked along the path of their front garden at 8 Beechmount Avenue, Coalburn, I admired the Michaelmas Daisies showing their various hues in the crisp autumnal air. I must have expressed my appreciation of the flowers for, as I left at the end of a two hours visit, Chrissie gave me two fine roots to plant in my own garden..

I got a warm welcome from Bobby and Chrissie, and handed over the video tape they had ordered of the evening I spent making a film of the ladies attending a meeting of the Coalburn Women's Rural Institute. Chrissie had been the 'star' of the film, arriving dressed as a fading film star and acting the part to perfection.

My memories of Chrissie are of her annual appearance in the gala day processions and she could always be relied on to be dressed in original apparel. She often teamed up with Bobby McInnes, equally willing to don strange and exotic garb and their contribution to the jollity and fun of the procession as it wends its way through Coalburn has often been remarked upon. "

I had enjoyed the morning in Coalburn, taking the car up to the bend in the road where Middlemuir Rows once stood, and after a walk with my dog, Becky, I was joined by Wull Johnstone out airing his two Labrador dogs.

Not many persons are blessed in life to follow an occupation whereby a hobby can be mixed with paid remuneration as a reward for work. Wull Johnstone has achieved that happy paradise. He has always been a dog lover and now he is employed by a security firm to look after their guard dogs



# COALBURN'S SPORTING PERSONALITIES

## Number One



Netherfauldhouse Athletic Club was one of the earliest in the area, while the Health and Strength Club run by the late John Shaw was popular for many years and provided an outlet for the energies of the youth of the village. These organisations may well have been the stepping stones into any particular sport prevalent at the time. Football was the principal game played though there were others where individual ability was required.

One such activity was on the athletics field and in the 1920s a former resident of Bellfield, Tam Smart, left, then living in Fife, was in that category. Two of his brothers, Jim and Bill were in the aforementioned Netherfauldhouse club and this may have encouraged him to become involved in the running side of athletics.

In 1929 he entered the renowned Powderhall Sports in Edinburgh which were held over the New Year period for many years. Most people when thinking of Powderhall will recall in particular the sprinters. Powderhall was, unlike the Olympics of the day, for professional competitors and a great deal of money was wagered on the combatants.

This was the arena in which Tam Smart took part, not as a sprinter but as a long distance performer. Having trained for many weeks to achieve his goal, he was confident of success. As the event unfolded he strode to the front of the group, in the process even lapping one of the other entrants before crossing the winning line in first place.

Naturally delighted in having been successful in his quest, he retired to the dressing rooms to rest and restore himself to his outdoor attire before one of his supporters came running in to tell him the judges had given the race to the runner he had lapped due to an obvious mix up in the lap counting. Tam then rushed back to the finishing line to protest to be told that he was too late as any protest would only be considered within ten minutes of the race finishing and, as the time had elapsed, the result would therefore stand.

Needless to say, Tam and his supporters were extremely unhappy about the situation as they had bet on him and as a result of the mix-up all of them had lost all winnings due to them which at that time would have been a financial boost to many of their family members. Not forgetting of course the prize money which Tam himself should have received for winning.

A most unsatisfactory outcome to what should have been a wonderful day for Tam after all the sacrifices entailed by himself and his family in the periods of training over the weeks and months leading up to the race. **PM**

*The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn*

*Office Society Bearers 2015/16*

Chairman Peter McLEISH, Tel. 01555 820287

Vice-Chairman John ZAWADZKI

Secretary Geoff BROWN

Treasurer Mrs Gillian FARRELL

Archivist / Newsletter John ZAWADZKI

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*FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH*

*Leading the parade along Coalburn Road, Coalburn Gala 2015, JZ*

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**DEATHS 2015**

Wull Aikman

Susie Brown (Muir)

William Brockie

Shirley Hamilton (Shaw)

Ian McConnell

Peter Menzies

Robert Morton

Jean Savage

Andrew Shaw

Archie Smith

Drew Sommerville

Grace Wilson (Brash)

Margaret McLean (McLaren)



2016  
COALBURN  
CALENDAR  
ON SALE

from

Wednesday 2nd September

At

Slideshow Evening, Coalburn School

and at COALBURN HERITAGE CENTRE  
& on HERITAGE NIGHTS at the BOWLING CLUB

Price: £5 each

ALL PROCEEDS TO  
**THE JIM HAMILTON HERITAGE SOCIETY of COALBURN**

THE JIM HAMILTON HERITAGE SOCIETY OF COALBURN

# SLIDESHOW EVENING

+ DISPLAY

Admission is FREE - *Non Members Welcome*

**ALL WELCOME** – BRING A FRIEND

7.30pm start. Access from 7pm.

VENUE

## Coalburn School

Wednesday

## 2nd September 2015

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