

# The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

## Newsletter 45



December 2016

## CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS



This is our last Newsletter of 2016 and again may I thank Billy Rough for taking on the task of producing it. Thanks too, to Gilbert Dobbie, Billy Dempster and Hamish Gilchrist for their support in collating the calendars this year, also to Betty Nicol for holding the fort on a Thursday.

Over the past few months several members have been hospitalised Betty Bell, Jim Hamilton have returned home, however John Zawiadzki is still in care at Lower Johnshill. Since his move there I have been able to visit him on several occasions and I keep him up to date with the happenings concerning the Society. In addition may I say that I would like to record that our thoughts are also with Billy Struthers following the recent passing of his wife, Mary.

As will be seen elsewhere the syllabus from January has been completed and with that in mind can I say thank to members for the attendances thus far, very encouraging.

We have had a surprising number of visitors in the last three months which is normally a quiet period, not that I'm complaining, as I've said so often, that's one of reasons we're here.

I look forward to another Christmas Dinner yet again, these events have been popular over the years and I do not see this changing on this occasion.

As we near 2017 may I wish you and your families all the best in the coming year.

Peter McLeish  
18<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

In deepest sympathy Coalburn related deaths:

Zena Donaghue ( Noble )

Mary Dickson ( Birch )

Elizabeth Findlay ( Cowan )

Matt Gray ( was evacuee )

Eleanor Weir

Ewan Grierson

Andrew Hillan

Mary Struthers ( McCormick )

Ellen Shore ( Hendry )

Margaret McKay ( McLean )

The Brick Raw



## Billy Dempster Looks Back

### 1933 Coalburn Allotment Holders Association

In connection with the board of agriculture scheme the above local association has been formed. The secretary is Mr James McLaren. Suitable ground has been secured and already ten members have had their portions allocated to them. Part of the ground, six and a half acres is measured off in the field adjoining the football field whilst the remaining six acres is the piece of ground behind Dunn Crescent near the railway.

### 1933-34 Sunset Song

Sunset Song regarded as one of the most important Scottish novels of the 20th century and has been studied by generations of school pupils James Leslie Mitchell who wrote under the pseudonym Lewis Grassie Gibbon was from Auchterless, Aberdeenshire and tells the story in Doric dialect.

It gives a rich description of Scotland's Mearns area and speaks of a lost agricultural era in Scottish history. He also wrote "Cloud Howe", "Grey Granite" to form a Scots Quair a fictional analysis of modern Scotland. He died in 1935 aged 34.

# Billy Dempster Looks Back

## Coalburn 1933 Vital Statistics

The following are the figures for that year;

Births 52 Marriages 11 Deaths 19 with the population of fully 2,300 this gives the very low death rate of 8.2 per 1000.

Mr Robert Scott M.A. Headmaster Belvidere Primary School, Bellshill died January 31st 1963 aged 55.

He came from Lesmahagow and went to the High School and Hamilton Academy. He began his career at Coalburn Junior Secondary School and taught there for seventeen years. Thereafter he was Headmaster at Stablestone primary school, Glespin for seven and a half years before being promoted in 1954 to Bellshill Primary but chose to transfer to Belvidere.



## *The Jim Hamilton Interview*

### *Joe Strang at Auchenbegg*

*Joe describes his home* " The typical miner's but and ben. There wis a ladder to the attic and the hole had a cover wi' a hinge. There wis a big faimily o' us—three dochters and eight laddies so the flair in the attic wis strewn wi' beds for the boys tae sleep on. The coal for the fire wis kept outside.

There wis a water pump between the twa sets o' hooses. We had barrels at the side o' the hooses to catch rainwater for washing the claes. There wur two dry closets, one for each raw o' fower hooses. The bucket had twa haunles for easy lifting and emptyin' The men and boys usually went o'er the mair to relieve themsels. Despite these limited services, folk did not want to leave Auchenbegg fur the rent and rates wur 3/6d per week, and the new council hooses at Coalburn- well you had tae pay 12/6d per week for them.

Imagine no wantin' tae leave hooses where tin lids had to be nailed tae the flair and the skirtin' tae keep oot the rats, there was aye another hole in the mornin' tae be covered ower.

The social life was mainly at the quoiting green in the quarry and it had twa heids. Men liked tae sit in the sun and watch the games, sometimes guzzling some bottles of beer, Card schools were common wi' heavy gambling at the toss o' coins wi' some men comin' tae play frae as faur as Douglas. Pitch the penny wis also popular.

## *The Jim Hamilton Interview*

### *Donald Cameron the "Postie"*

I got my morning mail and set off for Middlemuir and Bankend, then the farms at South Bankend, Stockhill, South Cumberhead, North Cumberhead, Eglinside, North Bankend, Todlaw, Craighead, Dalquandy, Stockbriggs and across the moor back to Coalburn. Some of the farmers ordered a daily paper from the post office and they got it delivered to them for the cost of a penny stamp.

That was just half of my shift, at three o'clock I was back at the post office and then delivered the afternoon mail as far down Coalburn as Muirburn, then across to the two terraces, Railway and Tinto View and the houses in Bellfield Road to the last house in which Ronald Lynch lived.



I served as a postman in the village till I was of pension age and I am delighted to say that I have both my old age pension and superannuation for the past twenty five years.

## *The Jim Hamilton Interview*

### *Davie Bradford Remembers*

Cleanliness being next to Godliness meant that religiously we were scrubbed from head to toe every Friday evening. The bine was placed in front of the fire and filled with water from the kettle, and then cold water from the well was added.

Inner cleanliness was equally important and this was achieved by castor oil. Even now the mere thought of that purgative makes me boak. If there is a more vile concoction than castor oil, I have never tasted it. It was given by means of a tablespoon which was always rubbed in the ashes at the fireplace after it had been used because mere washing would not cleanse it.

Each Friday my dad showed me how to take my medicine, "take it like a man" he would counsel me as he tipped the bottle upwards to his mouth and let the castor oil flow down his throat. To this day I do not know how he did it, I used to hope there would be none left for me but there was always enough to fill the spoon and get the horrid medicine into my mouth

My mouth would be clamped shut and a scunner ran through my body as I became cross eyed looking at the evil smelling and evil tasting oil on the spoon as it was brought nearer my mouth with the encouraging words "it is good fur yer bowels"





My hands gripped the side of the bine as I clenched my teeth determined to resist to the bitter end. But I had to breathe and, as my nose was being firmly pinched, it was only a matter of less than a minute before I opened my mouth and the spoon was thrust in.

Out came the spoon and my chin was held up to make sure I did not spit out the horrid oil. When it had found its way down my gullet, I was rewarded with a spoonful of jam.



After my hair was washed and partly dried, I had to kneel in front of my dad and lean my head forward towards his lap on which was a large silver coloured tray. I can remember that tray with its intricate design and the rim which ran round its circumference .

He then took the bone comb, sometimes called the fine tooth comb, and ran it from the back of my head to the front through my still-wettish hair, down over my eyes. After each stroke he would bang the tray with the comb and look to see what had been caught in its teeth. He was looking for, as he called them "wee beasties" If he found one—and he was adept at this job—he would show me it before he cracked it with his nails.

This weekly ritual of making sure there were no nits in my hair avoided the shame of shame at school. The school nurse checked heads for nits and lice and those with heads found to be badly infested, had to have their heads shaven like Tibetan monks.

# The Douglas Mair

By Wull Cowan



Have you ever walked the Douglas mair  
Wi' the snaw up tae yur knees  
Then start and dae an eight hour shift,  
Dirt pickin' at the screes  
Have you ever left the hoose a five o'clock  
On a cauld dark winters morn?  
If ye hav'na tackled ocht like this  
Ye don't ken ye've been born

Have ye ever got up in the mornin'  
At half past faur o'clock  
Put six slices in yur piece box  
And faur slices in a poke  
Too tired tae eat when you left the hoose  
Starvin' when ye got there  
After that tiresome, eerie walk  
Across the Douglas mair

Have ye ever startled at the grouse  
That shout "come back, come back  
How many wintery mornings  
I could hae done just that  
But o' oor siller was gey scarce  
So on ye had to go  
For less than two and three a shift  
Tae face the blinding snow

Have ye ever went tae start a shift  
Near greetin' wi' the cauld?  
For we were only ladies then  
Just turned fourteen years auld  
The gaffer cared na' how ye felt  
Ye had tae dae yur work  
So frozen dumb, wi hands near numb  
Ye had tae pick the dirt

Have ye ever sworn tae dae a thing  
Then feared ye couldna' dae it  
Well, I swore then, nae son o' mine  
Would ever need to come through it  
And tae this day I've kept ma word  
Though I've been tried gey sair  
They can keep their work, and pick the  
dirt  
And stuff the Douglas mair

# Syllabus 2017



4th January .....Annual Quiz

18th January..... Billy Rough

My Auntie Babs

1st February.....Jim Cook

Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill

15th February.....Peter McLeish

The Story of Coalburn

1st March.....Ethyl Smith

The Covenanters part 2

15 March..... Mary Duckett

Memories of Coalburn

5th April.....Terry Wise

The Caledonian Pottery

19th April.....AGM and Gavin Forrest

Scottish Scenes