

# The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

# Newsletter 47

June 2017





## CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Thanks to the glorious weather of the last few days, Jean and I have often gone for evening runs in the car and I have just realised that we have passed through places such as Douglas, Lesmahagow, Stonehouse and Crawfordjohn, all of which have heritage organisations such as our own. Surely so many in an area not vastly populated and in such close proximity is worth recording.

Dare I say it, but we are working on the 2018 calendar, the reason being that many of our visitors from outside the district at the display on the Gala Day last year purchased this year's.

In addition this is the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Gala Queen and we are hoping to put an appropriate display on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. We hope to be able to put some items on display which have not been seen by the members.

Finally I have managed to get "The History of Coalburn School" published and copies will be available for sale on that day as well.

I have paid John Zawadzki several visits at Lower Johnshill; while I was there yesterday his wife Shona, was there also and she is pleased with his progress.

Speakers for the new session will be sought as soon as possible.

We have one or two names to follow up. Geoff has promised to take the first meeting with slides from the Gala Day.

*Peter McLeish*

*5th May 2017*

In deepest sympathy Coalburn related deaths:

Charlotte Guilfoyle (Donald)

Billy Davidson

Matt Sneddon

Guy Whitefield

Jim Tait

Ann Frame





## *15 July 1865 Annual excursions of Sabbath Schools*

The Turfholm Sabbath joined with Coalburn and accompanied by the then respective teachers paid a visit to Stonebyres, Falls of Clyde.

On arrival the little ones were presented to a splendid supply of Rolls. They were then led to all the points of interest and shown the stupendous waterfall in all its different aspects by Mr Whitefield, the regular guide.

## *9 February 1939*

Sir—"Time marches on" and the cairn that was supposed to be erected by the Lesmahagow folks in memory of Alexander Muir, author of "The Maple Leaf Forever" at Water-side schoolhouse is still found wanting. To wake up to the memory of those who were contemplating paying such a tribute I forward one of Muir's earliest poems trusting its appearance in print will stir up interest. I will recall the happy times I used to spend in Lesmahagow and surroundings and though a great majority of my old friends have crossed the great divide, I am happy to state there are still a few still write to me from Coalburn, Brocketsbrae, Bellfield and Douglas which I appreciate very much.

Knowetap Laddie

Toronto

## *1946 Christmas Party*

Mr and Mrs Robert Reid and a village company of assistants provided a grand Christmas for the children of Timbertown in the Victoria Hall. There was a company of 200. Although the din assumed considerable proportions at times even the grown ups enjoyed themselves.

The purvey was late in arriving but was despatched with cebrity when it did come. Besides prizes for games and dancing each child received sixpence and an orange at close

Mr John Dykes supplied the music and Mr Walter Dyet acted as traffic cop! A word of thanks is due to Mrs Black of Coalburn Inn who sent across two cases of lemonade which had a short life after opening.



## Jim Hamilton at The Box and Fiddle

The older I become the more I seem to suffer from the alleged disease of the senile nostalgia. Fortunately it is relatively painless, if truth be told, this sentimental yearning for the past is a balm against the ravages that time takes from the body and I like to immerse myself in visions of bygone recollections, a sort of reverie of yesteryear. But what made me start writing in this vein?

Coalburn Amateur Orchestra



When I saw that Coalburn had started one of the spreading phenomena of the 1980's, a box and fiddle club in the summer of 1982 and were arranging monthly Concerts, I paid my subscription but found I could not spare the time to attend the first concerts of the 1982-83 season

(one of the drawbacks of preparing the Coalburn Chronicles is that I have to spend part of every evening in my study either researching, drafting or typing, so it severely cuts down my social activities) I was determined to attend one of these concerts so I chose to be present when the November musical evening was being held.

As I drove south from my home in Hamilton, swirling snow, sleet and hail alternately swished across the headlights of my car, the windscreen wipers toiling furiously to clear it away.

I climbed the stairs to the main hall, just as I have done hundreds of times to the "Pictures" or to concerts or in early manhood to the late night dances.

Upstairs I got a warm welcome from Hugh and May Conneghan Hugh looked spruce in his Daks check jacket and May had more embonpoint than when I first knew her when she and Hugh were courting. I paid a modest charge of 75p to Charlie Thomson. Looking around the sea of faces I first spoke to John Mowat and his wife and noticed Willie McKenzie walking around the tables and giving everyone a warm welcome.

I found an empty seat beside Bobby McLean and Robert Nicol. As I talked to the two of them I had time to look round the welfare Hall as it had been known for over fifty years to distinguish it from the other halls in the village such as the "Victoria" or "Masonic" or "Shepherds"

The old domed ceiling was no longer visible as a false ceiling, artistically constructed, covered what was part of the glory of the Welfare Institute when the building was opened. The dance floor had been reduced in size with tables around three sides placed on an attractive shade of carpet.

Now another change of the times as men and woman attending dances sit in couples or in groups at tables. Fifty years ago there was segregation of the sexes with the ladies traditionally sitting facing the stage and opposite the men. When the MC announced and the music started the more confident males would strut or run across the floor to chose their favourite girls as dance partners.

The Astorians Dance Band





## The Georgian dance band



In succession we had artistes playing reels, waltzes and strathspeys and haunting tunes of old Scotia. We had button key accordions, piano key accordions and even some electric models.

At the interval I had moved nearer the stage to join my brother Alex, his pal Jimmy Weir and that familiar figure of the Coalburn Dance Band scene some years back, Jock Gardiner. Like me they were appreciative of the committee who had arranged a fine programme of concerts during the winter months.

I also had a chat with Bruce Shaw in between his appearances on stage as he proved to be an expert on the drums when any of the soloists wanted a steady dependable beat. Even Alex McArthur called for his services and was in praise of Bruce's drumming



## COALBURN ATHLETIC GAMES

These popular games took place in a field adjoining the village (kindly granted for the occasion by W. C. S. Cunningham esq. of Auchlochan). The weather was fine, and the day being regarded as a holiday in the district, there was a good turnout of spectators. It is unfortunate that the Railway Company have not seen fit to open a passenger station here. The want of a service of passenger trains is greatly felt by the inhabitants and still more perhaps by visitors to the annual games. Notwithstanding the inconvenience felt in this respect, large numbers came in on foot and in brakes from Quarter, Larkhall, Stonehouse and other districts. Travelling showmen were well represented, and the "Fly-boats", "Aunt Sally's", photographic saloons etc., came in for a fair amount of patronage. A staff of police was present under Sergeant Gordon. The quoiting handicap excited a great deal of interest, no fewer than 46 players having entered for it, among whom were most of the "crack" shots in the county. A new and very popular item on the programme was the dancing-so popular indeed that the Committee had to ask Messrs Anderson, McLeod and Whitelaw to dance a hornpipe after the competitions were over, to which they responded to the satisfaction of the onlookers. Mr H. D. Burns acted as judge of the games and Mr Wilson as starter, Mr John Summers, Hamilton, assisted by Mr James Muir was handicapper and judge of the quoiting; Mr Garrett, Douglas, judge of the dancing, and Mr William Brown supplied the dance music. The Quarter Brass Band was present (its first public appearance in the district) and played at intervals during the day in a manner creditable to both leader and members. Mr Munro (president) and Mr James Frew (vice-president) took a lively interest in the proceedings, while Mr A. B. Ritchie proved himself an able and efficient secretary.

*Report from the Hamilton Advertiser*

## What kind of place was the Brockley?

A happy place with a lot of laughter and families helping other families in bad times. If the breadwinner was ill or injured in the pit which was a common occurrence, there would be a collection to help the good woman in the family.

The first trace of the hamlet is in the census of 1861 which dates its erection to between 1851 (the previous census when it is not mentioned) and 1861. Bankend had four rows and life centered round the area known as "The Square" where there was a general store combined with a pub called "Smiths Vaults". The barmen were Frank McKinnell and Georgie Scanlon.

In 1919, the houses at Bankend were owned by "The Marriage Contract Trustees of Robert Erskine Wade Copeland Crawford and his wife and the tenants were in "tied houses" because of their employment with the Arden Coal Company.

Wull Thomson lived in the Tap Raw, for the last fourteen years of his life after he broke his back in a pit accident, he was bedridden except for the occasional outings in an invalid bed on wheels.

Joe Feeney pushed him about in his mobile-bed for miles, once propelling Wull from Bankend to visit the Clelland family at Burnfoot, a total distance of nearly twenty miles and that over rough roads with some of the steepest hills around.

Just think of pushing a grown man's weight up Bankend Brae's.

Joe Feeney did all these journeys in his bare feet!

In the Smiddy Raw lived Toff Gray, Many a plump rabbit was caught and handed in to neighbours by Toff the man renowned for catching hares wi' snares fully earned his title.

I min' wan nicht, Hugh Wallace got aff the late train, fell in front of it and had a leg amputated when the train ran over it. He was taken on the same train to Glasgow and hence to the Royal Infirmary.

The house in the rows were stone built, the kitchens had ceilings but in the bedrooms, the rafters were visible as they had no ceiling

At one time, in the "Sawdust Raw" nearer the pit than Bankend rows, lived Bill Howell, Jimmy French and Tam Harvie. These houses were made of wood and sawdust was packed under them and within the walls for insulation, hence the name by which they were universally known.

The main recreation for all the young lads in Bankend was football and they played under the names of "Westoun Rangers" and "Halley's Comet" Westoun Rangers played on Bog Park which was appropriately named, being invariably saturated with moisture.

The Arden Coal Company gave the team a hut for a pavilion and the assessment roll for 1919 shows that the hut was being used on a rental of three pound per year.



# A History of Coalburn School



**Peter McLeish**

The Definitive History

Now On Sale

