

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter 51

Sunnybrae



Summer 2018

Chairman's Remark's



First of all I would like to congratulate one of our members, Mary Duckett, nee Cullen as she was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Mary lived in Midfield Road while at Coalburn School, nowadays she lives in Larkhall. Over the years she has been an active

volunteer in many organisations in the town, hence the reason for the well-deserved award.

The Gala Day will be soon upon us and we look forward to seeing many of our annual visitors at the display in the Leisure Centre.

As it is 100 years since the end of the First World War or as The Great War as it was named at the time, it was thought appropriate to mark it by adding some facts to the names of those from the district who gave their lives and for this purpose Lindsay Freeland's book, "The Fallen of Lesmahagow Parish" was an excellent reference and I would like to thank him for allowing this to be used. In addition a publication from 1982, "On Two Fronts" which was also about that period was another which provided information. The Heritage files re. the same subject were useful as well.

Coalburn Church is 125 years old this year and this too has been told in text and pictures as another feature of the display, while there is another lesser feature consisting of local poems to add something different.

The syllabus for the new session has still to be finalised and if it can be done prior to the Gala Day it will be available. Thanks to Billy Struthers who has agreed to act as a judge at the Gala Day on behalf the Society.

Let's hope the sun shines for everyone on the day.

Peter McLeish.

In deepest sympathy Coalburn related deaths:

Margaret Miller (Smith)

Joe Goulding

Janice Stewart

Agnes Petty (Hickie)

Christine Bryce (Forsyth)

Sandy Fleming

David Mochrie

Tom Gardiner

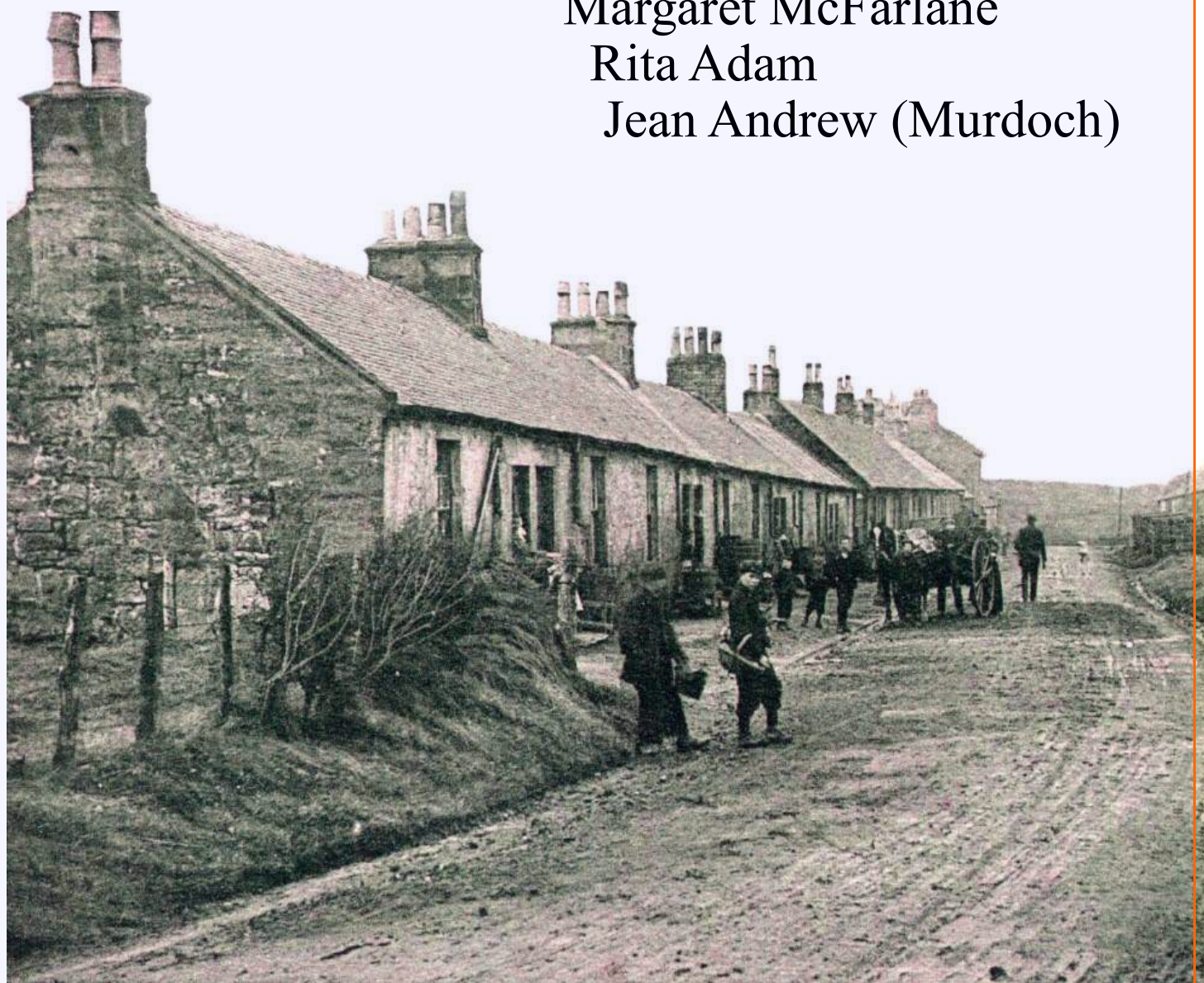
Drew Wylie

Ina Laughlan

Margaret McFarlane

Rita Adam

Jean Andrew (Murdoch)





Sunnybrae Cottage

It is around 100 years ago that the forebears of Wull Steele and his son, Jim who used to reside in Sunnybrae Cottage, first arrived in Coalburn. (A grandson still lives in the cottage today}

At the same address of Sunnybrae Cottage, lived Wull's paternal grandmother.

It should be explained that Sunnybrae Cottage was shared with each family having a downstairs and an upstairs room.

The birthplace in these entries, show the Steele family had been in Carnwath and Douglas before settling in Coalburn and Wull recounts some of the details of the early history of the family.

“Ma faither who was a coalminer from his earlist wurkin’ years emigrated to Australia around 1890. It had been his intention to send for his fiancée, Marion Hamilton when he got settled but he decided to return home. They got married and took up a hoose at Buchtknowes near Lintfieldbank”.

Wull continued “ Strange as it may seem, ma faither was never a robust man yet he lived till he was 83 years of age, dying at Sunnybrae in May 1948. Dr McFarlane diagnosed that he had diabetes, a disease that used to leave the sufferer listless and without energy but faither was the first person in Coalburn to be given insulin. He had injections for the last 30 years of his life.”

Little is known of Wull’s grandfather on his father’s side but a death entry in the “Hamilton Advertiser” gives this information:-At Buchhills 18 Oct 1895 James Steele, aged 57 years.

The cause of death was a very common one for persons engaged in the coalmining industry -miners asthma. That, of course, was long before the danger of coal dust in the lungs of miners was recognised and the death nowadays would be attributed to pneumoconiosis or silicosis.

His widow continued to live at Sunnybrae Cottage till March 1929, when she died at the age of 85 years.

Her son Tam, who lived with her, passed a remark concerning her death, still remembered by the Steele family.

“her death was a big relief to ma mither and me”

Tam was a gleeful character and despite suffering severe injuries to his legs in a pit accident, recovered sufficiently to go about on crutches for a long period, and later returned to work in a colliery on the pithead, moving about with the aid of a stick. He never married and died at Sunnybrae Cottage in January 1948 at the age of 80 years.

From the Chronicles..... MARY SYKES

When I left school at the age of 14 years, ma furst place wis wi' John Forrest at Sooth Bankend ferme. I got £7 every six months plus ma keep. That wis all I got for wurkin' practically every hour I wis awake.

Mary's working life was mainly at farms, she has not such happy memories of some of the other farm places as she has of her days at South Bankend.

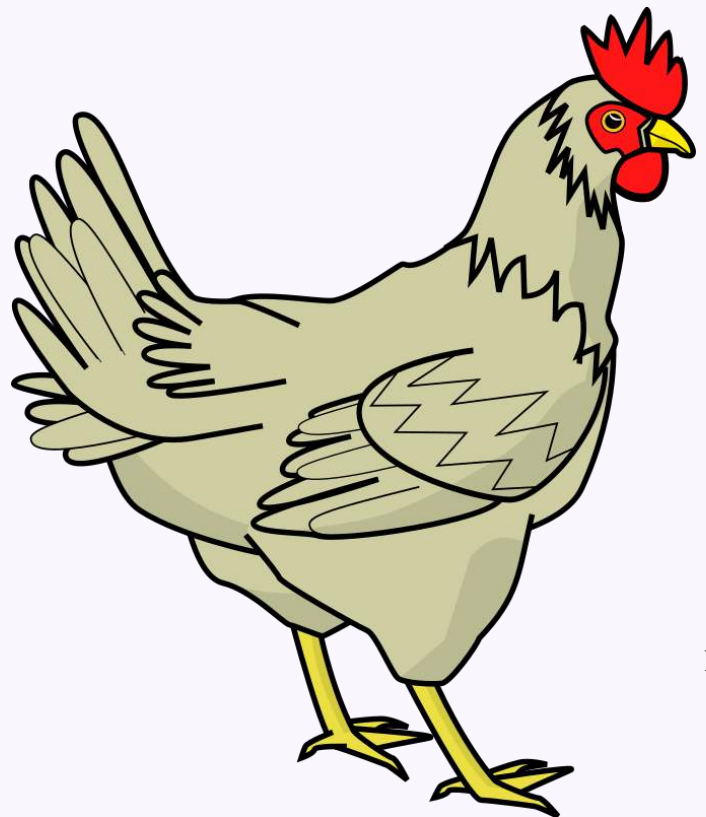
“Whit always surprised me was how some of ma employers could sit doon tae a meal wi' tasty bites and leave me to the less appetising pairts,

I ken it will be hard tae believe but one farmer's wife put doon tae me fur ma dinner a cock's heid complete wi' comb. I couldna eat it. It wis the maist revolting meal ever set before me in ma life!”

Mary laughed as she told me of another incident when she worked at the farm “Yae dae I got a richt dirty job tae dae. A White Leghorn hen landed in a barrel o' tar and I wis ordered tae try and clean the tar aff.

Hiv ye ever tried tae take tar aff a hen wi' margarine. While I wis doin' ma best, the hen died and I thocht tae throw it in the midden. The fermer's wife tellt me to open up is it micht hae an egg in it. So I had tae gut the hen and, shair enough, there wis a properly formed egg in it.

Talk aboot being mean. That egg wis jist put wi' the ithers tae be sellt.



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From the Chronicles..... **RETA CLARK**

George and Jean Clark my parents, lived at Shoulderrigg were they reared a family of eleven. The house had two apartments, the traditional size for mining families of a but-and-ben. The built in beds could hold half a dozen weans but we still needed a large fold down, double couch I remember it was plush green. There was the inevitable large cradle which was always on the rock.

Reta recalls “going the messages” We had to tramp to Russell’s at High Stockbriggs for our daily milk and eggs. At Easter we got a big pail of “curds and whey” from Russell’s and woe betide us if we broke the curd before reaching home.

On Saturdays, after the housework was done, two or three of us would walk to Cumberhead for the “soor dook” which was always rich with pats of butter floating in it.

Most evenings I had to go to Coalburn Co-op for a stane of flour to be carried in one arm and perhaps a 7lb tin of syrup and other goods in the other. Quite often I carried messages for neighbours as well.

Shoulderrigg was only a clachan of houses so could not support a proper shop. Essential goods had to be brought from Coalburn or purchased from the vans that called.

A character of these far off days remembered by many was Jessie Garrett, the postwoman, who trudged for miles in the summer heat of winter snows delivering the mail. She wore a black cape and leather boots. Mum always gave her a cup of soup or tea to Jessie to cheer her on her way.

As Reta reflects “nothing was a bother in those days. So vastly different is the attitude today. Shopkeepers and vanmen put themselves out to serve you.

Billy Dempster's items from 1939

“Granny Gold” of The Trows

Forty six years ago Mrs Gold started her shop at New Trows. Last week, Granny Gold, as this how she was known far and wide, took her farewell of it and now it is no more. Much water has flown down the Nethan since those distant days. In the early days her supplies came by horse van from James Dunlop of Hamilton.

Among her customers were many of the servant lads from surrounding farms and she recalls how, went they went “a wooing” it was an ounce of thick black at 3 1/2d for themselves 2d worth of tray toffee for the girl friends. Nowadays says Mrs Gold it's a fancy box of chocolates and cigarettes for two.

Back down through the years goes Granny Gold and the Trows of yesterday comes alive again. Old Willie Ritchie Superintendent of the Sunday School, James Findlay of Woodhead Farm, Mrs McGhie whose husband had a shop in Lesmahagow. Mrs Tudhope and her son Willie who entered the Church and her uncle Wm. Cowie who was Beadle of the Parish Church and the tolling the funeral knell at burials taking place in the kirkyard when he was not available.

Things are different now. Yet The Grand Old Lady of The Trows is still very much part of 1939.

“Ma Cairns”

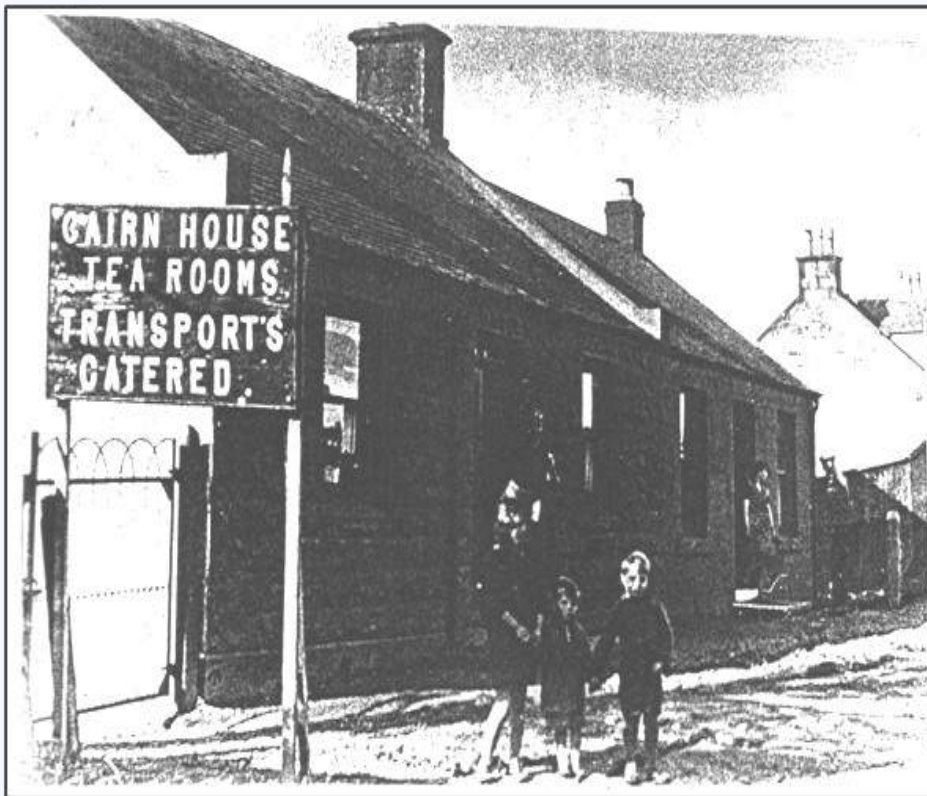
Cairnhouse is the port of call for hundreds of lorry drivers and motorists travelling the main Glasgow – London road. The house takes its name from the landlady, Mrs Cairns, or “Ma Cairns” as the drivers call her.

She first started catering for road users about twelve years ago. Then the traffic was light and usually it was boiling drums of tea. Now she has an average of twelve transports a day and sometimes has thirty meals to provide at one time. She likes to listen to the large family of Scots, Yorkshire men, Lancashire lads, Cockney and goodness knows what else as they gather round and swap tales of the Great North Road.

Titled people and stage celebrities too have sometime or other had tea from the same “masking” that served transport drivers. Three years ago she had a visit from the late Mr Lyons then the Premier of Australia.

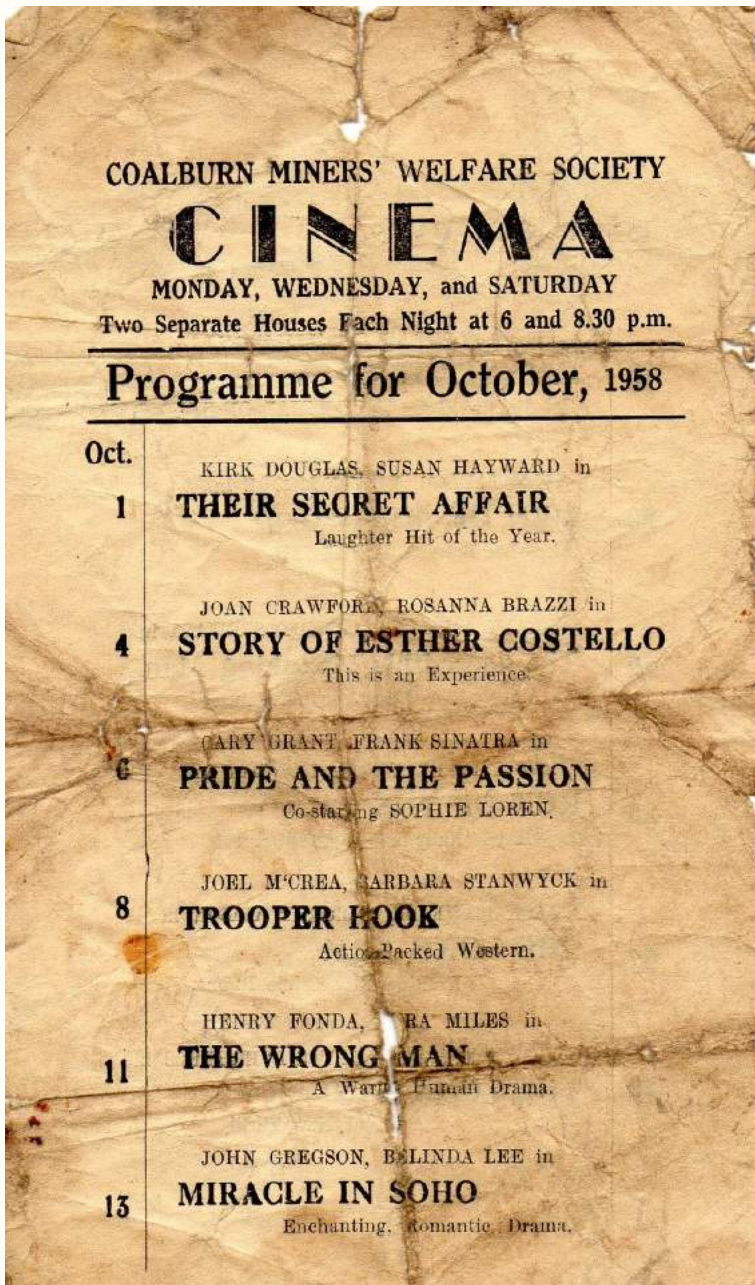
Motors! Don’t ask Ma Cairns anything about them. She

could scarcely tell a Leyland Lion from a Morris Minor. She is always too busy making tea!



Going to “The Pictures”

My first recollection of the pictures was when we stayed in Ferniegair, there the films were shown in the Miners’ Welfare, now the District Hall. As a family we went to the cinemas in Hamilton, such as the Odeon, Regal and La Scala but never, I recall the Roxy. My dad always said that I knew where all the toilets were in the aforementioned picture houses, and I could go by myself.



The first showing of films in Lesmahagow Parish was in 1910 when a gentleman by the name of Johnstone rented the Victoria Hall in Coalburn for that purpose. The first show in Lesmahagow was two years later when Freddie Palmer’s Travelling Cinema visited. It is recorded that his tent was situated on the area where the Masonic Hall now stands. His initial permanent venue was back in the Victoria Hall which he leased, and his films, silent at that period, were accompanied by a band or a pianist.

Several years later he built a stand alone cinema, “The Ritz”, situated at the Old Brae in Lesmahagow, while it had opposition from “The Glebe” owned by a Mrs Muir. It was where the car park is in Langdykeside.

Meanwhile, back in Coalburn, Mr James Shanks who came from Kirkmuirhill, showed films in a big black building in Belvedere Place up past what was Giavarini's Fish Restaurant, before he moved to the new Miners' Institute and there he continued for some time until the operation was taken over by the Miners' committee themselves.

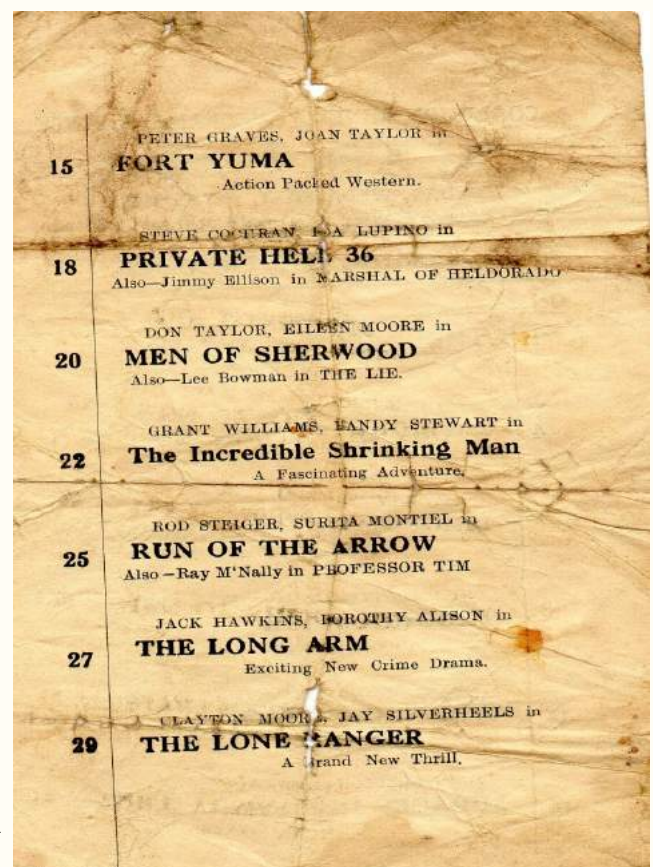
For the next thirty years or so this was the case. During that time among the projectionists remembered are Bill McGill and Jimmy Walker. Henry Paterson and Dodie Wilson were charged with keeping order especially if the film broke down, which it did on occasion. Films were shown on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturday, 6pm and 8.30pm.

It was also a means of communication as a notice would put up on the screen to say that there was a breakdown at Number Nine or elsewhere and could an engineer, such as Bill Watson, make his way there to deal with problem. The local Juvenile football team were doing well in the early 1950's when they had to travel the length and breadth of Scotland in the Scottish Cup and the score would be relayed similarly to the audience.

Featured is one of the programme of films.

Not long after it was decided to cease showing films as the television was becoming more and more popular and folk were more inclined to stay at home for their entertainment.

The drop in income also hastened the demise of "The Pictures" not only in Coalburn but this occurred in other villages as well, such as Douglas Water and Douglas. The two cinemas in Lesmahagow eventually shared the same fate.



The end of an era.

Peter McLeish.

Prettoria Terrace

