

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter 52

Autumn 2018



Chairman's Remarks



First of all may I convey on the members' behalf sincere condolences to Gillian Farrell whose mother, Mrs. Susan Crawford, sadly passed away after a prolonged illness.

As in previous years the Leisure Centre provided the opportunity to hold our annual display which was principally on two entirely different themes.

1. The fallen in World War 1 who had a connection to Coalburn.
2. The 125th Anniversary of Coalburn Church.

You will recall that we actually had a spell of really excellent summer weather this year, more or less from May until the beginning of August and I think that may have been the reason why the number of visitors to the display was down from previous years. Folks were taking advantage of the good weather with many barbeques being brought into use.

In June we had visitors from Canada, Sandy Bell and his wife, Susan. His grandparents had lived at various addresses in the village, Bankend Rows, Garden Street and Braehead Farm. While at the latter his grandmother, Margaret Bell, had a newsagents shop situated opposite the Coalburn Inn where the toilets used to be. One of Sandy's uncles, Alexander Bell, whom he was named after, lost his life in the WW1 and Sandy brought with him many items from his uncle's war service which he wished to lodge with us. He was particularly pleased to learn that a relative, George Greenshields, lived in the village, the connection being through the Fotheringham family. On his return to Hamilton, Canada Sandy sent an email thanking us for the help given. (It can be seen elsewhere).

We look forward to another session of speakers. Most will be visiting for the first time; again details elsewhere.

Peter McLeish

12th August 2018

In deepest sympathy Coalburn related deaths:

David Finlay

Ann Menzies

Laura Jane Seker (McLay)

Tom Gray

Alan Dyet



Email from Sandy Bell

Hello PeterSusan and I have made it home safely, comforted and cushioned by our wonderful experiences in the land of heather.

I really was relieved to give my pictures to a man I felt would sincerely utilize them for the best. I hope that my Grandfather's apron made it back to the Lodge of origin. My time with you, Betty and Hamish was an experience that I am still reliving. Meeting George Greenshields, a relative, that I did not know I had. WOW. What a splendid way to start an ancestral adventure.

My gravesite visits were successful. I located my Grandfather / Grandmother Bell's place of rest, along with the resting place of my Great-grandfather/mother's lair. Larkhall cemetery gave location of many of my Douglas / Fotheringham relatives places of internment. I gave my respects and thanks for giving me a life and a history.

To walk on the streets that my Father and Mother travelled brought me closer to their lives. Visiting the old site of my father's birth, though modernized, I seen it in the way my father would have, back in the 1920s. Walking the streets of Larkhall, Coalburn and Lesmahagow struck up memories of stories and songs that my family related to in my youth. I visited the Falls of the Clyde as my father cherished. I have pictures of Loch Lomond, Alloway, Burns Cottage, Brig o' Doon, Bell's heather and some good whisky to warm up my spirits to recollect upon my visit to Scotland.

Once again, Peter, I thank you and Betty and Hamish. I am a better Scotsman having spent time with true people and sincere ambassadors for Scottish heritage which I have for so long envisioned, but never truly experienced. As my father was often heard to say upon his parting the company of good people....."lang my your lum reek"

Sandy and Susan Bell



George Greenshields and Sandy Bell meet each other for the first time at the heritage centre.

Looking to do family research? Why not pop along to the centre and check out the vast archive of Coalburn related documents.

We are open on Tuesday's and the staff will only be to glad to help or if you are interested in history see our syllabus on the back page.

Billy Dempster looks back.
1937 Adverts-*Hamilton Advertiser*

Before deciding on your new radio set get particulars of the 1937 Pye range. Come and hear the new Five-Valve All Mains Receiver at 8 Guineas.

Hire Purchase can be arranged.

Repairs to any make of receiver.

Sam Park, Craighead, Lesmahagow.

Mr. Adam Somerville (Member of the Pharmaceutical Society)

Begs to intimate that he has opened business as a Chemist and Druggist at Coalburn where by personal attention to all Private and National Health Prescriptions he hopes to merit a share of the local patronage. A full range of popular Toilet Sickroom and Proprietary articles will be stocked.

See *Magnificent Obsession* at the Glebe Cinema, Lesmahagow.

Travel down by train leaving at 5.35 and 8.05pm

Returning from Lesmahagow at 9.05 and 11pm

Billy Dempster looks back.

1937 Local News-Hamilton Advertiser

Dancers Success

At an open competition held in Glasgow, Miss Grace Lightbody added to her numerous prizes by gaining First in Highland Fling, Second in Irish Jig and Third in the Championship for Sailors Hornpipe.

WRI

An air of holy calm pervaded Coalburn on Saturday 3rd inst. The voice of the turtle was heard in the land. No tongues uttered words of admonition or rebuke. All was peace perfect peace. The men buddies walked about with an air of freedom, sprightliness and vivacity. They were well off the chains and the reason was not far to seek.

At nine o'clock in the morning two luxurious motor coaches filled with members of the Rural Institute all agog to dash through thick and thin, left the Masonic Hall for the famous town of Girvan.

Bellfield and Coalburn School News

On 10th May, to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, the children from both village schools marched in procession through the village to the Welfare Institute where a meal was served. They marched to the recreation field where a tree was planted by Mrs. Miller (wife of the Coalburn Headmaster).

Sports concluded the celebrations.

From the Chronicles..... JOHN SORBIE

A steward on the Athenia, on Tuesday, young John Sorbie arrived back in the village of Coalburn. His many friends will be glad to know, that, apart from a severe cold and several cuts that are rapidly healing.



John is remarkably well after his terrifying experience. Seen at his home in Hillview Place, John gave a very clear account of much that happened when tragedy struck that ill fated liner

About mid-day on Sunday, notices were posted that Britain was at war with Germany. The passengers were not unduly alarmed, and about half past seven in the evening, the dining rooms were crowded. It was at this time that the liner was struck. The lights immediately went out but there was no panic in the room John was serving and getting them together he led them to the lifeboat station on the top deck. He then went downstairs again for lifebelts and carried them to the top deck. After assisting in the lowering of one boat, a second one was filled with women and children. It was then the mishap occurred and the occupants were flung into the sea. The boat was eventually successfully lowered and those in the water picked up. There were over ten women and children and five men including John in the lifeboat. They pulled away from the ship's side and then began an eleven hours struggle of alternating hope and despair.

The lifeboat was shipping water as a result of the accident in lowering it and all its occupants were soaked to the skin. Continuous baling was necessary and this was undertaken by the womenfolk with their shoes.

The flares had been rendered useless and the only means of attracting attention of the other ships coming to the rescue of those onboard the Athenia, was by flashing a small electric torch when the lifeboat breast-ed the waves.

Every now and then a searchlight of a rescuing destroyer would sweep the waters but it always passed over their inadequately illuminated craft. Eventually they gave up rowing and concentrated on bailing until the dawn broke and they were seen and picked up by a destroyer. The children were hoisted aboard in buckets, the weak were pulled up by ropes and those who were able, climbed aboard by means of ladders.



From the deck of the destroyer, John saw the Athenia disappear and about noon on Monday, when the destroyer set off for home, all that was left to mark the scene of the hideous crime, was the abandoned lifeboats floating, now without purpose on the ever changing face of the Atlantic ocean. The fortitude of the womenfolk in their frightful ordeal, is John's most vivid impression of the tragic affair. He paid high tribute to stewardess Miss Johnstone, who throughout the night, half immersed in water, holding two children in an effort to keep them dry: and also AB Angus McKinnon, although he had a broken arm and a broken leg remained at his oar practically all the time.

From the Chronicles..... NICKY KNOX

Nobody meeting Willie Knox (better known as Nicky) still a fine up-standing figure in his sixties, would ever imagine that at the age 15 years, he had been crushed by a roof-fall in an underground pit accident, at Douglas Water, and received multiple injuries, including forty stitches in his head, two broken jaws, a broken arm and wrist, fractures to his legs as well as double fractures to his back. Two painful years of hospital attention and a deep seated desire for fitness proved eventually that the first prognostication by the doctors that, if he lived, would never walk again, was false. He said “unknown to my mother, I slipped out of the house some evenings and hobbled with the aid of sticks to the Health and Strength Club in the Vic Hall for chest expansion and other exercises to help me regain fitness”

As to walking again, Nicky did more than that. He took up running and became a redoubtable athlete. Footballing was in his blood—he actually played for Coalburn Juniors when he was fourteen years old, the age he started on nightshift at Douglas Water colliery—and he returned to the game in the 1930’s to be the dominating centre half of Coalburn Juniors (except for two short periods at Kirkmuirhill Juniors) winning two Hozier Cup finals with his village team.

As I have said footballing was in his blood. In the parishes of Muirkirk, Lesmahagow and Douglas there was no better known name than Knox at the beginning of the century. His father Tom played for Hamilton Accies and Glasgow Rangers, his uncle Hugh for Sunderland. Even the Glenbuck Cherrypickers had a sprinkling of Knoxes playing for them. Of the five Knox brothers who left Glenbuck Sannie, Wull and Pete settled in Douglas Water, Hugh and Tom came to Coalburn.



Lime Row

The families of Hugh and settled in Lime Row, now a disappearing memory but it was situated near the top of the slope facing Coalburn church.

Nicky recalled “Father was happy there. He had a huge garden by present day standards and this, like all the gardens that went from the service road to the houses, right down to the main road to Bellfield, were dug and well tended, growing mainly vegetables for the dinner table for the big families staying there.

My father’s hobby was the outdoor, mainly fishing and poaching rabbits. He always kept a Bedlington grey, a sort of cross between a whippet and a Bedlington, these clever dogs were adept at catching rabbits and hares.

I can assure you I had wholesome food when I was young—plenty of hare soup and rabbit flesh with loads of vegetables and unending teas of trout. I still relish the excellent taste of his garden grown tatties.

**The Jim Hamilton
Heritage Society of Coalburn
Syllabus**



5th September **Geoff Brown**
Gala Day Photos

and Presentation of Annual School Award.

19th September **Ken Liddell** **Lost houses of the Clyde Valley**

3rd October **Ethyl Smith** **Covenanter – James Renwick**

17th October **Ellen Paterson** **Bellfield Schooldays**

7th November **Jim Reid** **The Boys Brigade**

21st November **Dane Love** **Disappearing villages of Scotland**

5th December **Jim Murdoch** **Cameronians**

14th December **Christmas Dinner** **Venue to be confirmed**

Meetings are held in Coalburn Bowling Club at 7.30pm.

Why not come along.

Admission is Free