

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter

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Spring 2019



Chairman's Remarks

Here we are again with the first Newsletter of the year; sadly I have to intimate that we have lost yet another of our members, Hamish Gilchrist who died on January 2nd. Further comments elsewhere.

As we approach the half way part of the current syllabus it means that thoughts turn to the next batch of speakers from September to December. Suggestions will be most welcome even now. Likewise with regard to the content of this year's Gala Day display which will be held on Saturday 6th July. Dare I mention calendars at this time also as we make them available that day as they have proved to be popular particularly with visitors from outwith the village.

We recently welcomed nineteen P6/7 pupils as well as two members of staff from the school seeking information about the effect of the Second World War in the village and also what went on locally during that period.

Due to the numbers involved and the lack of space in the Heritage Centre we used the middle floor and took items of interest there as well. Assisted by Gilbert Dobbie and Billy Rough the children were very interested in the artefacts available. Many notes were taken as well as photos.

Following the death of Hamish as mentioned above, Billy Struthers volunteered to come in to the Centre on a Tuesday as a replacement and it is very much appreciated.

Thanks to all who help out on meeting nights, moving chairs, making tea and coffee etc..

Peter McLeish,
15th February 2019.

In deepest sympathy Coalburn related deaths:

Mary Ann McCabe (Stewart)

Hamish Gilchrist

Reta Inch (Russel)

Danny Martyn

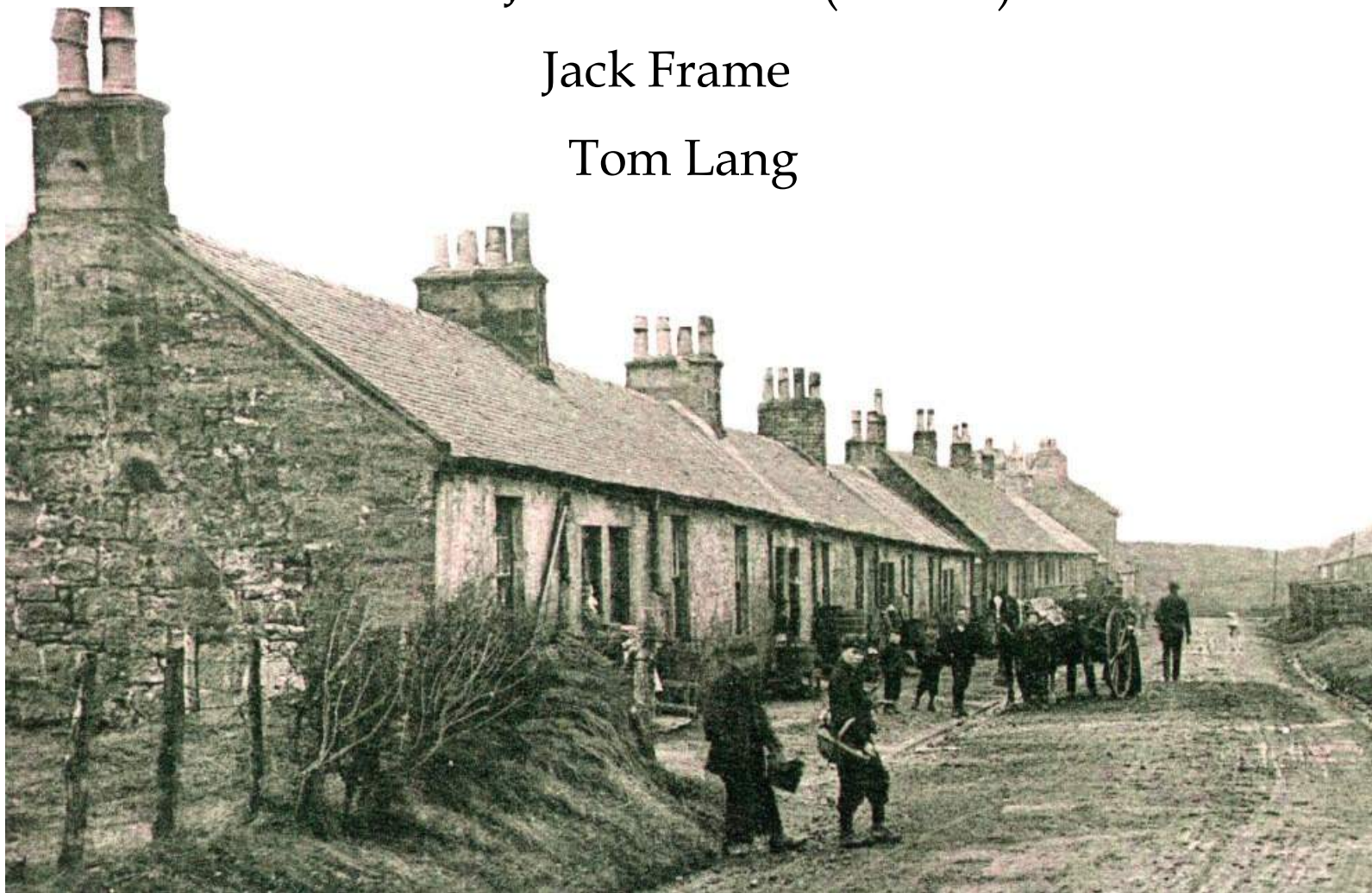
Andrew(Drew) Greenshie3lds

Margaret Scott (McLean)

Jean Paterson (Wilson)

Jack Frame

Tom Lang



Memories of the life of a Miner's Daughter

I was born at Middlemuir, Coalburn on 22nd August 1930 to Agnes Bryson nee Odger and James Bryson, miner. My younger sister Rachel was also born there in 1932.

I have no recollection of my life at Middlemuir as my parents were forced to leave there and rent a house in Glaikhead, which was the property of the mine owner, the pit in question being No 9 Auchlochan. My father was given the ultimatum to move to Glaikhead or lose your job. The Glaikhead house was an improvement in that there was an inside toilet. No electricity, light from oil lamps, cooking and warmth from coal fires.

There were 12 terraced houses plus a cottage for the pit's electrician (William Watt and family) and the manager's villa (Sanny Waddell and family). Neither of them in the splendid condition of today.

The terraced houses had two bedrooms, a living room and a scullery and an inside toilet. Originally there was only Mum, Dad, Rachel and I in the house, but when I was eight my mother's sister was widowed at the age of 32 and she and her daughter Elizabeth came to live with us.



We were a very close knit little community and I had a happy childhood there. My paternal grandparents, Rachel and William Bryson, lived next door to us. Like my dad, my grandparents lived in Dunn Crescent but were forced to rent a house at Glaikhead for the same reason as my parents. It was somewhat of a comedown for them however, as they used to have a bathroom in their house and three bedrooms. Now they had to accommodate four sons and three daughters in a smaller house. The sons also worked in No9.

Living close to the pit was not a problem, apart from the times the wind changed to the North and my mother's washing suffered from the output from the big lum. The wind ruled the days on which she could safely wash our clothes etc. The only time we were really aware of the pit was when it closed down for the holidays and it seemed so weird to have nothing but silence all around.

Glaikhead with No 9 bing in the background



From the Chronicles.....MARGARET SHAW

Margaret Shaw of Lilyvale Cottage and Garden Street remembers she was in domestic service at Rutherglen when the war started in 1939.

I left school at 14 years of age and equipped with the necessary clothes for domestic service, overalls, wrappers, white apron and black dress, I went to live-in with the Moffat family in Edinburgh. They formerly lived in Coalburn when he was colliery manager at one of the local pits. It was terrible to be separated from your family and friends at such a tender age of 14 years. When I look at my granddaughter who is just newly 14 years I cannot believe that I had to leave home to stay with strangers.

I was happy to be back living with my parents after 6 months as I found a job as a daily domestic with the McCulloch family who lived in Poniel cottage in Braehead Road. I then went to live and work for Mr McCulloch's mother in Irvine but returned to Coalburn within months as homesickness is an awful disease when young.

After a period at home, I went to work as a domestic in Rutherglen but when the war started and wanting away from possible bombing in Glasgow, I got another residential post in Larkhall. That's where I was working when I had to register for war service at the age of 19 years.

Margaret had happy memories of her "dancing years" That was my favourite recreation which happened to coincide with the period of the war from 1939 to 1945. Bobby Hay's band had a good sound and created a happy atmosphere.

Margaret continued to relate of her service during the war years.

I was directed to the Murex factory at Mossend where I was canteen supervisor on nights for a year followed by two years on day shift, I caught the 6.17 am bus to Hamilton where I got a bus for Mossend. The journey in reverse in the evening often found me part of a large queue at the bus stop in Hamilton. The bus for Coalburn would draw in and two passengers would get off, resulting in only two getting on and sometimes they were only travelling to Ferniegair or Larkhall. I often had to wait more than an hour at Hamilton before boarding a bus, for the frequency of the service to Coalburn was two per hour.

I have never known how it came about but I was called again to the Ministry of Labour and offered work in a munitions factory or to serve with the NAFFI. I chose service with the NAFFI and was sent to Donnibristle naval base at Rosyth. After two weeks there I was transferred to a small overflow camp at Dalgetty Bay and served about 18 month till the war ended.

While in the NAFFI, Margaret met Joe Bell, the man she was to marry in 1947. He had been sent to the naval base at Rosyth after serving with the Fleet Air Arm in Australia.



School photograph of Margaret and her brother Andrew

From the Chronicles.....MEG CALLAN

Meg told me that as a young lass, she went to Netherton of Poniel farm for milk, eggs and butter. To buy groceries involved walking to Douglas along the road past Westoun House to the Quarry Pool and after going under the railway between Poniel Junction and Douglas West, She would walk “doon the strip” to Douglas.

Mention of Westoun House brought a memory of Jenny Blackwood the owner, who regularly went from her home to Coalburn post office on horseback. She was talking of the days before motor cars became commonplace and the Greenshields family; the local landed gentry were transported about by horse and carriage. The other families in the area had to walk wherever they had to go.

Meg’s mother, the wife of Willie Callan, was Sarah Burns of Larkhall. Mrs Callan died when Meg was just a very young girl, and that was after she gave birth to fourteen children.

She was buried in common ground In Lesmahagow cemetery and the cost of interment was three shillings.

Buried earlier in the month was a female child, their daughter.

age 8 hours.



Sarah Burns

HAMISH GILCHRIST



Born in William Smellie Maternity Hospital in Lanark.

His family lived at Kaimend, nearby to Carnwath where his father was a policeman. Hamish talked often of the friends he knew from that period in his life. As was the custom over the years of the Lanarkshire Constabulary, officers were frequently moved within the old county to widen their experience and Hamish's dad was among that group, Hamish did not follow in his father's footsteps into the force though his brother George did.

A long standing member the Heritage Society, Hamish was quite happy to help out when and where necessary, whether it be on a Tuesday or at the Gala Day. Even when travelling from Strathaven while his home at Brocketsbrae was being renovated he was a regular at meetings.

He attended every Gala Day since he joined the society and his role was at the sales table principally with the calendars, in addition he was in charge of the stationery in the Heritage Centre.

A bachelor, he shall be missed.

Billy Dempster looks back.

1958 Finish of Coalfield

Someday this month will see the end of the Bankend coalfield after almost a century of production. The Lesmahagow gas coal, which is to be found in the Hagshaw Glen is mentioned in the "Annals of Lesmahagow" Many of the miners and residents will have fragrant memories of the old Bankend Rows, Sawdust Row and Middlemuir, all of which have now been demolished but which at one time went to the making of a considerable community.

An interesting book could be written about the places and the people of the "Doosie Pit" district.

1958

Upwards of 150 members of Coalburn Miners Welfare Society attended a meeting in the lesser hall, Mr. Hugh McLean presiding, at which it was decided by an overwhelming majority to form a social club and to make an application for a license to sell excisable liquor.

Similar clubs in Lesmahagow and Douglas Water had proved highly successful and had greatly relieved the financial commitments of the organizations concerned.

Billy Dempster looks back.

Band Hall

Coalburn Welfare Silver Band members have been working steadily for the past two years converting an old building into a rehearsal hall and committee quarters.

All the work has been done voluntarily, and the job is nearing completion

1959

Tonight will see the closure of Coalburn Miners Welfare Cinema because of poor patronage. The finish has come quicker than expected, but is all the better for the board of management, which has been deeply perturbed about the loss of revenue for some months past.

A prominent feature film will mark the end, it is hoped to show "Annie get your gun" but the programme depends on the choice of the film renters.

Many will recall the opening of the "Talkies" in the institute when Irving Berlin's film epic "This is the army" brought out the crowds. Television and other forms of entertainment have diverted the interest of the public and it is unfortunate that this source of income has dried up.



This information sign is between the B7078 (old A74) and the Route 74 cycleway, near to the turning for Coalburn. The board was designed by the pupils of Coalburn Primary School and is formed in the shape of a coal bing. This photo shows the board with the No. 9 Bing on the left.

Date: 10th February 2019. Photographer: David Halls