

*The Jim Hamilton*

# Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter **64**

Autumn 2021



*Wallace's Cave*



## Peter's Remarks

I regret to announce that due to my health I have intimated my resignation to the Heritage Society Committee.

Having been involved with the Society from the inception in 2004 it wasn't an easy decision to make.

I had accompanied Jim Hamilton to several displays about mining prior to that and he made it clear that on his demise it was his wish that his collection of photos and the accumulated facts about Coalburn and items handed down from his father and uncle John should return to the village. When the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn was formed, Jim's wife Maureen contacted myself and John Zawadzki, who was taken on as session worker, to say we should call at her home in Hamilton and bring Jim's collection to Coalburn. We were amazed when we viewed the range of items he had amassed over the years as can be seen in the Heritage Centre. John worked tirelessly over the years and was an asset, particularly working with his computer and photography skills.

Jim Hamilton's passion for the village knew no bounds as is confirmed by the number of Coalburn Chronicles he produced, not to mention the interviews he recorded as well as videos. He was a regular attender at events in the community such as the Gala Day and the Flower Show among others. The legacy he left to the district is such that there must be few comparable sized areas which have been as well documented as Coalburn.

I feel privileged to have been part of the Heritage Society and am sure that the committee will continue the work required in the future.

Finally, I would like to convey my sincere thanks to all who have given their support to group thus far, may it continue to prosper.

My thanks once again to Helen for her work in producing the Newsletter and to Betty for distributing it.

Peter McLeish, August 2021

# *In deepest sympathy - Coalburn related deaths*

David Gibson

Donald Mathieson

Edith McGowan (Watson)

Kenneth Michie

Mary Neilson

Margaret (Madge) Shaw (McNay)

Sophie Steel (Scott)



# Meet the Minister

A warm welcome to the Rev. Morag Garrett, the new Minister at Coalburn and Lesmahagow Parish Churches, and our thanks to Morag for sharing her story with us.

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It's nice to have been asked to introduce myself to you all at the Historic Society in Coalburn. I am Morag Garrett, the new Minister at Coalburn and Lesmahagow Parish Church, and it has been a pleasure to have been made welcome by everyone in the congregations and those I've met so far in the villages.

I haven't yet moved into the area, but will soon be moving into the manse in Lesmahagow. So, for the time being I travel back and forward which means I won't be around as much as I would like, but if you see me and Roy out walking the dogs, please be sure to say hello.

I became a Church of Scotland Minister in 2011 following over 5 years of



training and assessments.

God has been a major part of my life since growing up in the Church of Scotland, and attending the village church where I grew up. God has enriched my life as I gained an understanding of how important my relationship with Him is. Our Coalburn and Lesmahagow Church website at <https://candle.church> has lots of resources to find out more.

Training for ministry meant giving up my full time job and going to Glasgow University to study for a Theology Degree, while being involved in local church placements for practical experience.

I love working with and meeting people and spending time with family and good friends. My happiest times are walking the dogs and being in the fresh country air enjoying God's creation.

I have been trying to learn guitar for a few years now, but unfortunately, I get busy and forget to practice, so end up at the beginning again a few weeks later. But, one day I might surprise everyone in the church, although I promise not to sing as that would perhaps be more of a shock than a pleasure. I do look forward to meeting you all at some point over the coming months and visiting the Historic Society to find out more about your lovely village.

In the meantime, God bless,

Morag



# Gala Day September 2021

Coalburn Gala Day 2021 was held on the 11th of September, a great opportunity for the village to come together and celebrate. Some regular features were absent due to the pandemic - no decorated lorries, no 'shows' at the park, and no indoor exhibition by the Heritage Society (we did get the green light to put on an exhibition, but this came very close to the day and it wasn't feasible to put something together in time). However the heart of the Gala was very much in evidence, with pipe and silver bands on fine form, children and adults (and dogs) in a variety of fancy dress, and a very high standard of house decoration - this year's judges must have had a particularly hard job deciding on prize winners. And - of course - there was the procession and crowning of the Gala Queen.

The organising committee are to be congratulated on pulling off such a successful Gala despite many obstacles.

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The collection of photographs here are informal shots, which hopefully reflect some of the spirit of the day. You'll find more Gala Day pictures at David Halls' website:

[www.djhweb.co.uk/2021CoalburnGala.php](http://www.djhweb.co.uk/2021CoalburnGala.php)

and the website of the Heritage Society: [www.coalburnheritage.org.uk](http://www.coalburnheritage.org.uk)



**A cat called Zoë**





**The IoR Pipe Band in School Road**



**Gala Queen Mya and her court**





***Top Left  
Manse View  
(joint 1st Prize)***

***Bottom Left &  
Top Right  
Dunn Crescent***

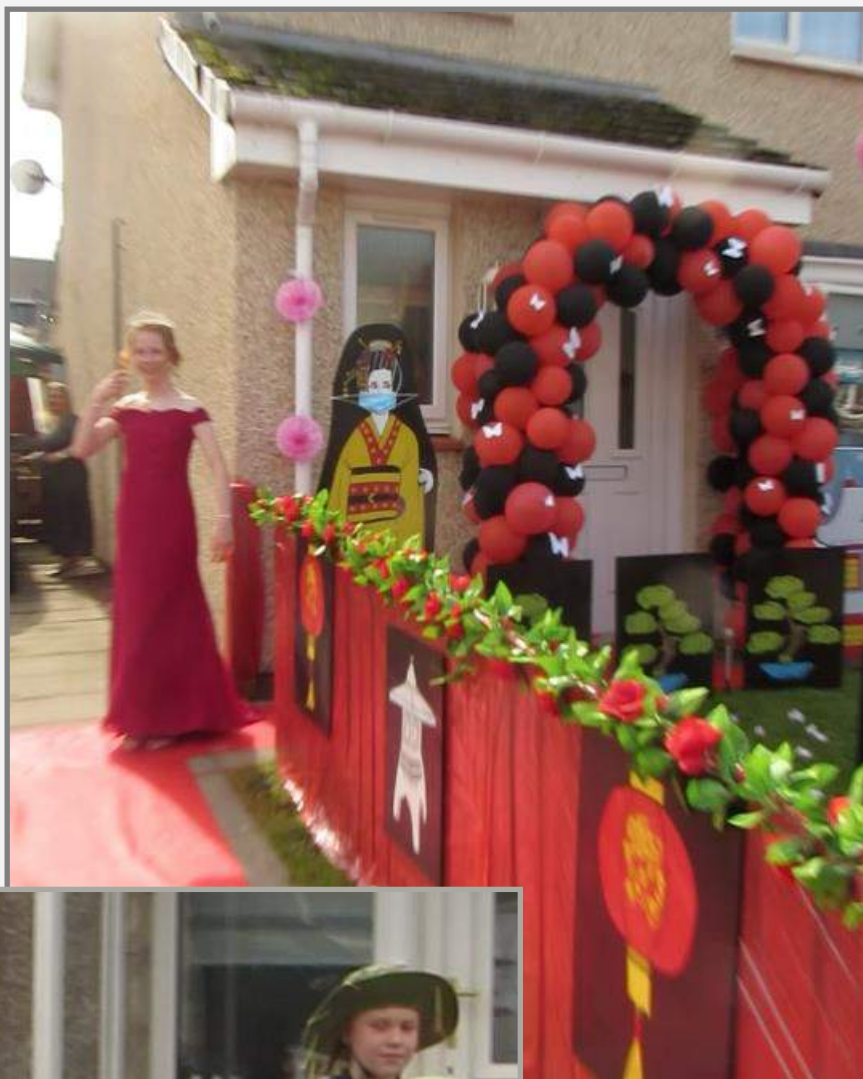
***Bottom Right  
Midfield Road***













*Above*  
**Attendants Billy and  
 Harley prepare to lead the  
 procession**

*Right*  
**The littlest train bearer**



*Opposite Page*

*Top Left*  
**Page Boy Hunter**

*Top Right*  
**Manse View (joint 1st Prize)**

*Bottom Left*  
**Fancy Dress, School Road**

*Bottom Right*  
**Crowning Lady  
 Ann Burnside, née MacLean,  
 with train bearers**



# Coalburn: 1924 and 1974 (Part III)

This is the third and final instalment of an article from Jim Hamilton in 1974. He was reflecting on the present while looking back to the village of fifty years before.

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There was of course no golf course, tennis court or bowling green enhancing the village then, so the youth of to-day are better provided for. There were no reports of vandalism in 1924 and yet the local newspapers have been reporting throughout 1974 the outrageous attacks being perpetrated on the village, especially the windows and fabric of the church and church hall. Why in the affluent seventies do youth need to desecrate with aerosol cans and impregnate graffiti on walls?

The minister in 1924 was the Rev Peter Walker and in 1974, another bachelor, the Rev. Brian Cross holds the charge.

The advertisements in the Hamilton Advertiser make for interesting reading when comparing the prices of then and now - but in doing so, the vast difference in wages and purchasing power must be borne in mind. Here is an advertisement by the now defunct Coalburn District Cooperative Society:-

The celebration of pancake day on Saturday last was well demonstrated. No less than 4026 pancakes and crumpets were baked and sold and yet we could not supply the demand. We have taken on additional staff and a plentiful supply of pancakes, crumpets, scones and doughnuts as well as potato scones can be looked for in the near future.

**Coalburn District Cooperative Society, February 1924**

This seems to destroy an illusion I had held of the housewives of fifty years ago. Contrary to what I thought, they did not all do their own home-baking.

Two couples who have reason to remember the two years I am writing about are Mr. and Mrs. John Scott of Midfield Road and Mr. and Mrs. David Davidson of Burnside Place. Both couples were married in 1924 and held their golden wedding celebrations in 1974.

One tradition mentioned in 1924 has been maintained throughout the years and that is that Lesmahagow village invariably sends in the first toma-

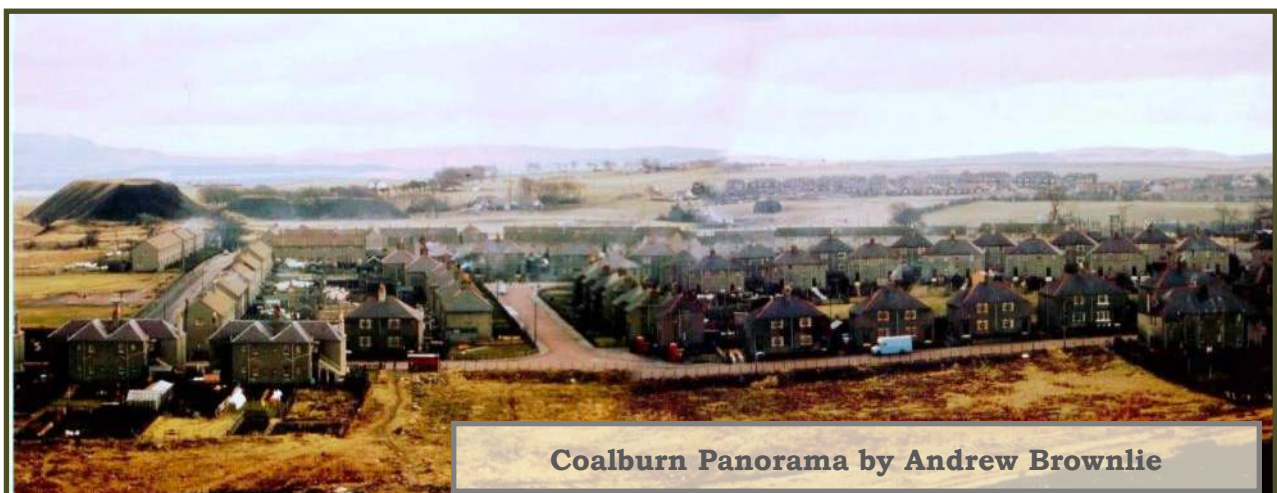
atoes of the season to be sold in the Glasgow Fruit Market. In 1924 the honour fell to Messrs. Scott Bros, Ellenbank Nurseries and the tomatoes were sold for 5/- the lb. These same nurseries introduced a new strain of tomato that year called 'The Ellenbank'. Over the intervening years Steve Turley of Turfholm often gained the honour of producing the first tomatoes of the season.

Coalburn, as its name implies, was founded on coal. Who would have thought back in 1924 that fifty years hence no coal is being mined. The National Coal Board, the hopes of the miners in 1924, came into being in 1946 and this year have been undertaking some exploratory work to see if coal can be mined by the open-cast system.

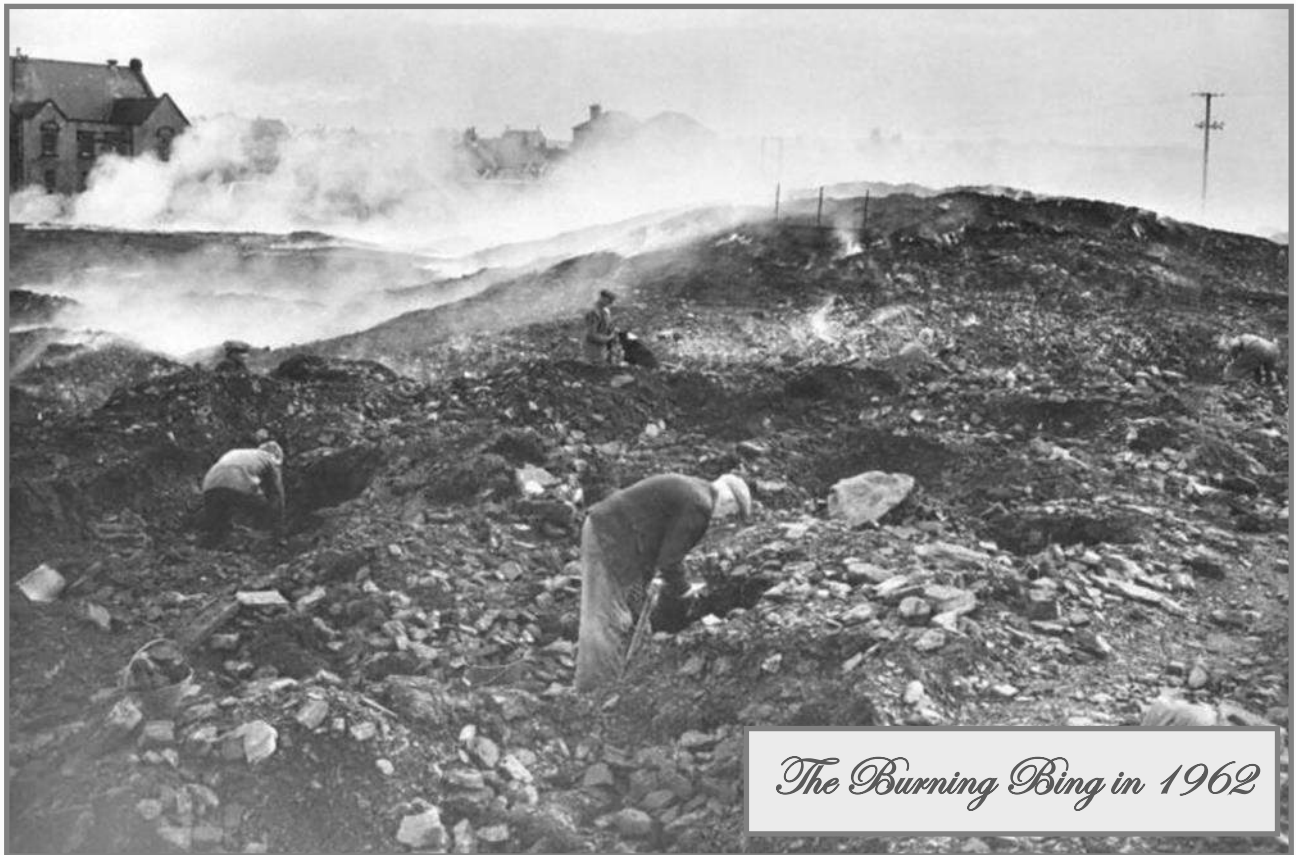
The greatest change in the fifty years separating 1924 and 1974 has been brought about by the closure of the coalmines which has brought about a tremendous alteration in the jobs being followed by householders as this table illustrates:-

|                               | <u>1924</u> | <u>1974</u> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Coalminers                    | 313         | 13          |
| Colliery Managers             | 12          | -           |
| Other Occupations and Retired | 168         | 457         |
| Female householders           | 35          | 86          |
| Total Households              | 528         | 556         |

I have no doubt that many readers will be trying to recall the twelve colliery managers in Coalburn in 1924: this list of names might prove of interest: James Taylor, Kelso Park, Hawthorn Agnew, William Kirkwood, David Todd, William Smart, John Pollock, James Middleton, William Muir, Robert Birrell, David Baxter and Robert Prentice.



Unfortunately, although there are no pits being worked locally, the legacy of the last two hundred years of mining are still evident with seven bings de-spoiling and scarifying the landscape, and worse still, occasionally igniting and pouring an obnoxious odour throughout the village.



Alas, 1974, just like any of its predecessors, took its toll of inhabitants and many likeable persons died this year including Thomas Paterson (85), Bob Smith (68), Willie Overend (55) and Willie Knox (70).

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It is interesting to conjure up what some historian fifty years hence in 2024 will write when looking at Coalburn in 1974 and comparing it with that year which seems so far in the future but in retrospect, it seems that 1924 was only yesterday. Let us hope that no catastrophic world war with the modern weapons will prevent some writer from undertaking such a pleasurable task.

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**The Burning Bing** was indeed “obnoxious”. Protracted debate over who was responsible for the land on which it sat - and thereby liable for resolving the problem - meant that villagers had to put up with the “dreaded smoke” for quite some time. This unfortunate situation prompted Peter McLeish to write his January 1961 poem ‘Coalburn’s Burning Bing’, re-published in the Summer 2019 Newsletter (Issue 55).



## *Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn*

### **Annual General Meeting**

**27th October 2021**

Due to the coronavirus pandemic it has not been possible to hold our regular meetings for some time. For the same reason, the recent meeting where our long serving Chairman Peter McLeish tendered his resignation to committee was the first in a while that committee had been able to get together. To say that Peter has been a mainstay of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn would be putting it mildly. It is hard to do justice to the magnitude of his contribution over the years and we owe him a massive vote of thanks. We wish Peter well, and very much hope that his health will improve and that we continue to see him at Heritage Society meetings.

In these unprecedented circumstances, an Annual General Meeting will be held on October 27th. A note about this meeting is enclosed for members.

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New members will, as always, be most welcome. Should you wish to join the Heritage Society but are unable to get along to the AGM, please contact Marion McBain on 01555 820234.

### **Membership**

Membership fees will be discussed at the AGM - in the meantime there is some information about this in the enclosed note

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As notified by Peter in the spring newsletter, the Heritage Centre has reopened, albeit under considerable restrictions. At present it can be visited on a Tuesday morning from about 10-12 but the number of people permitted to be present at any one time remains limited. Hopefully a more extended and stable pattern of operation will emerge before too long.

### **Heritage Centre**

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Contributions to the next issue are welcome - such as seasonal photographs, poems, or any other items of local interest.

Please send e-copy to [hm.brownlie@virginmedia.com](mailto:hm.brownlie@virginmedia.com). Items on good old fashioned pen and paper may be posted or handed in to Geoff Brown at 42 Dunn Crescent, Coalburn ML11 0LR.

### **Newsletter**

*Thank You*

*The Jim Hamilton*

## Heritage Society of Coalburn

[www.coalburnheritage.org.uk](http://www.coalburnheritage.org.uk)

***Gala Day***  
***Saturday 11th September***  
***2021***

**Manse View**  
**Lord-in-Waiting Cameron**  
**and Car Attendant**  
**Harley present a motor-**  
**sport-themed display**

