

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter 66

Spring 2022

JOSEPH MCGILL





Chairperson's Remarks

This is my first time providing opening remarks to the newsletter and the first thing I'd like to say is 'thank you' to the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society for entrusting me with the role of chairperson and for the able support I've had in undertaking this new role, particularly from vice chair Geoff Brown, treasurer Marion McBain, and other members of committee.

I'm sorry to report the deaths of founding members of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn, John Munro and Betty Bell. Both will be sorely missed in the village. There is a tribute to John here. As Betty passed away just as this issue was going to press we will feature a tribute to her in the summer issue.

There are two features in this newsletter. As you may recall, the winter issue featured part of a 1973 article by Jim Hamilton, where he talked about the drama group and other entertainments, as well as Giavarini's café. A second, and final, instalment is published here, which is about Isabella (Belle) and John (Boxer) Millar. The other item concerns Nethanvale Wheelers Cycling Club, which thrived in 1952 and 1953. My uncle, Andrew Brownlie, shares some cherished memories which are razor sharp, despite this being 50 years ago now.

Please do share memories. They are precious. You can contact any of us on committee for help with this and information about how to share, whichever way is best for you i.e. speaking, writing, typing.

The middle pages are devoted to Heritage Society news. The coronavirus pandemic has continued to have an impact on what we can safely organise. Hopefully that will change as time goes on but at time of writing incidence is higher than ever and some legal restrictions remain in place. The main positive change is that the Heritage Room is now open regularly, thanks to Geoff Brown, Billy Rough and Billy Struthers.

Helen Brownlie

3rd April 2022

In deepest sympathy - Coalburn related deaths

Betty Bell

Violet Black

Jim Dyet

Noreen McGill (Muncie)

Marlene Miller [of Netherfield]

Wull Mitchell

John Munro



Some people make a lasting impression on a village ...

The story of Boxer and Belle Millar, from an article by Jim Hamilton in The Stonehouse and Larkhall Gazette, Tuesday 4th September 1973.

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Some people make a lasting impression on a village which continues long after they are dead merely by their personality. A couple who come into that category are Boxer and Belle Millar who lived in Braehead Cottage.

Boxer was born in 1861 in the Monkland district and his wife Belle Burnside at Auchtykirnel, Lesmahagow, in 1864.

Boxer, whose real name was John Millar, was a coalminer for most of his working life and I have paid tribute to the arduous toil undertaken by miners. What is often forgotten is that similar recognition should be given to the wives of the miners at the turn of the century.

There was a big family born of the marriage and two sons still live in Scotland, Jock in Lanark, and Alex in Oban, the others having emigrated to Australia.

Jock and Alex have recollections of life when they lived at Pretoria Terrace, a two storey tenement. Their house was on the upper flat reached by an outside stair and they remember the long working hours of their mother, starting with an early rise in the morning to put her husband out, and as they reached working age her sons, out for the seven o'clock start in the pits.

After they left for work, she had to prepare her younger children for school, and as they supped their porridge, she would be getting the boiler fire ready for a washing, a strenuous job in these pre-nylon and drip-dry days and washing-machine-you-must-have era.

When the men came home from work they were begrimed and had to wash in turn in the big zinc bath laboriously filled with hot water from kettle heating on the range. (Would any modern miss like to

clean a range now?) All the water for washing, cooking and drinking, had to be carried upstairs from the pump at the rear of the building and all waste water emptied into the jawbox [sink] on the stairhead.

When Belle had a moment to sit down, and few she had, her hands were busy knitting semmits and drawers and socks for her family of ten.

She was the unofficial midwife for the district and had to go when she was 'sent for'. She also helped with nursing at terminal illnesses and the laying out of the deceased, and at farms at haymaking and harvest times.

Belle was in farm service prior to her marriage, and, after working at Autchtygemmel, Lesmahagow, was in Crawfordjohn. She liked to tell her sons in later years how, on her half-day on a Sunday, she used to walk from Crawfordjohn to Lesmahagow and back, a total distance of at least twenty miles.

Her nature was sunny, her voice was always cheery and she seemed to enjoy life by the way she was always laughing.

She married a man in sharp contrast to her. Boxer, who is thought to have earned the nickname from his boxing Prowess and interest in the sport - he trained in a shed at Coalburn Farm - was not given to smiling much, and was as quiet during the week as he was noisy on Fridays and Saturdays. These were the days he met his cronies in the Station hotel - my grandfather Fermer Hamilton,



Pretoria Terrace

Erchie Hay and others. The noise I am referring to was a form of singing without words [mouth music], which his family refer to as 'doodling', and he interspersed this with some dance steps.

About twice a year, Boxer took his family on outings when he hired a two horse brake from Jake Millar of Bellfield Farm. The route was usually through Clydeside to Lanark to see the flourish in the spring and the fruit on the trees in autumn.

Meticulous to the end on money matters, he abhorred the thought of debt. It is even recalled that when his wife Belle died and was buried at 1 pm at Lesmahagow cemetery, by 3 pm on the same day he had paid Jock Arneil, the funeral undertaker, for the cost of the burial. Rather appropriately Boxer died on Boxing Day, 1939, at Braehead.

### *John Millar & Isabella Burnside*

John Millar was a great uncle of Jim Hamilton, being the brother of his paternal grandmother, Agnes Millar.

John married Isabella Burnside in 1890 and they had ten of a family, the first born later that year and the youngest in 1909. There were three girls and seven boys. A baby son, born in 1897, died in infancy. Seven years later there was further heart-ache when Belle had a premature baby, who did not survive.

Isabella lived to the age of 72. She died in on 3rd September 1937 at Braehead Cottage. Her husband 'Boxer' outlived her by just over two years; he was 78 when he died.

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The COALBURN CHRONICLES give an alternative explanation for John Miller's nickname:

"Uncle John Millar, a brother of my grandmother and a half-brother of Erchie Hay, was always referred to as 'The Boxer'. The origin of the name was either because of some prowess when young at fisticuffs or more likely, because as a boy, he tended a pit pony who had the name of 'Boxer'."

Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn News

Resource Centre

The Heritage Resource Room at the Miners' Welfare One Stop Shop is now open regularly on Tuesdays and on Thursday afternoons. As the number who can safely be accommodated at any one time is limited it is best to call in advance to make sure that the time slot when you hope to visit is available. Depending on when you intend to visit, please contact -

for Tuesday mornings - Billy Rough bravaal3@gmail.com

for Tuesday afternoons - Geoff Brown 01555 820379

for Thursday afternoons - Billy Struthers 01555 820765 billy.struthers@yahoo.co.uk

If you would like to drop into the Heritage Centre at short notice at these times but unsure if it is available then you can check with the One Stop Shop: 01555 820060

To arrange a visit at another time please contact Geoff (820379) or Helen (0141 630 1480) and we will see who might be available. The building is normally open from 9am until 4.30pm Monday to Friday. It is closed at weekends.

The Heritage Resource Room is a community asset and one that we are keen should be accessible and well used, so please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to visit.

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We remain available for responding to enquiries about all aspects of local heritage, drawing on the extensive documentation held in the Heritage Resource Centre and from other sources. You can e-mail us at: [coalburn.heritage@virginmedia.com](mailto:coalburn.heritage@virginmedia.com) or phone Helen on 0141 630 1480.

### Enquiries

On a happy note, long time member Kathleen Purdie celebrated her 90th birthday last month. Congratulations Kathleen, from all of us.



On 6th March we had our first meeting of 2022 and took stock on various fronts.

### Meetings

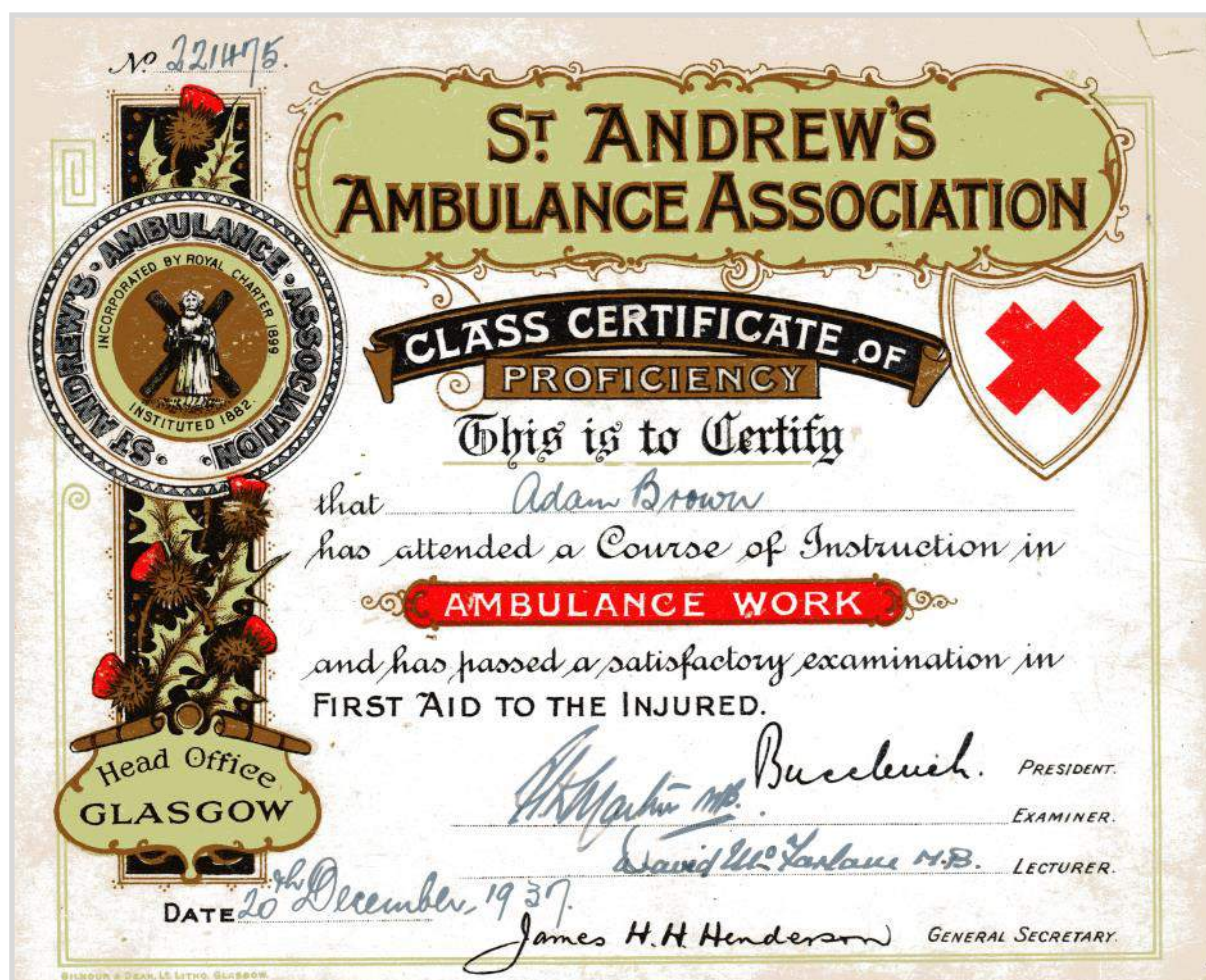
We also heard from Donald Williams about a local heritage project he is initiating which has a lot of potential - *more on this below*.

A further meeting was held on 16th March. Further to his 'three minutes of fame' in the last Issue, vice-chair Geoff Brown gave a most interesting talk about his family history in Coalburn, with photographs and other memorabilia, such as his father Adam's certificate of proficiency in 'Ambulance Work', from December 1937. Geoff tells us that his father had to be proficient in these skills, including first aid, as he would be called upon as first responder in the event of injury to any of the miners at his place of work, Auchlochan No. 9.

Sadly both April meetings have been cancelled due to the coronavirus situation once again getting out of hand. The 20th April meeting would have been our AGM and work is underway by our trusty treasurer, Marion McBain, to finalise accounts for the current financial year. An AGM will be held in due course and a chairperson's report will also be prepared.

Meanwhile Ethyl Smith had agreed to give a talk on the subject of Covenanter James Cameron. Ethyl has visited twice before and is a really excellent speaker.

At time of writing the intention is to hold a committee meeting as soon as practicable and try to identify best way forward in the short to medium term.





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Website
new articles on shops

A series of three articles on shops in Coalburn have recently been published on our website, courtesy of David Halls.

David's starting point was a presentation that Peter McLeish had put together in 2010, which he has now augmented with further information from other sources and new information to bring the story up to date.

One article concerns the former colliery shop in Coalburn Road, near to where Coalburn Green currently starts. This shop went through several changes of owner, finally being demolished around 2000. Another - the longest - article is about shops in Coalburn Road near the Miners' Welfare building and includes the One Stop Shop. Finally there is an article about Joe McGill and his shop at Coalburn Brig. This was first published in the 10th Anniversary Newsletter (Issue 37, September 2014), but was not previously available on line.

Related to David's initiative, Geoff Brown has been out and about with his camera, photographing local shopkeepers and their shops - Grace McMahon working in her hairdressing salon, the staff at the Coalburn Pharmacy, and Akram Shazad, who has been storekeeper at Coalburn Store for many years now. At time of writing these are on the home page of our website.

Mystery Shop

Also on subject of shops, there was an intriguing call to radio Scotland in April last year from a woman called Ann, who was trying to find out about a brooch that had come down to her from a relative. Ann was pretty sure that the brooch had belonged to her great grandmother, and that she had run a shop in Coalburn.

The brooch was in the suffragette colours, green and purple, and the expert view was that the brooch was of a type made to permit ladies to quietly show support women's suffrage.

Ann wasn't asked anything about the shop, nor the name of her relative.

Can anyone shed any light on this? A shop that was run by a woman, probably back in the earlier years of the last century? What shop might this be - and who ran it?

Heritage Walk Project

At our 6th March meeting we were pleased to hear from Pipe Major Donald Williams about a project he is developing for a historical walk through the village. Donald has since met with the Coalburn Community Action Group and the proposal was well received there also.

The basic plan is to identify a potential walking route which takes in points of interest, then carry out research to obtain relevant information and photographs. The outcome would be a documented walk, with related noticeboard and / or information map.

Donald has made a promising start, finding an abundance of possibilities and places of interest - it seems that there will be scope for several such walks. His next step will be to put together a discussion paper to help stimulate further ideas and involvement.

Meanwhile, practical support from members of The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society would be welcome. This could include identifying local points of interest for themed walks and the information that is available about them, to help build a library of possibilities that can then be whittled down / prioritised. Also, and importantly, fact gathering and checking - Donald intends to be scrupulous in ensuring that the information presented in association with this project is 100% accurate.

This is a great opportunity to raise the profile of local heritage and the resources available at the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society, so if you think you may be interested please do get in touch. Donald suggests filtering participation through Helen so there is a single point of contact at the Heritage Society:

coalburn.heritage@virginmedia.com

or phone 0141 630 1480

However, he is also open to hearing from anyone who wants to contact him directly to discuss where the project is 'at' and how they may be able to help:

donaldwilliams@hotmail.co.uk

or phone 01555 820629

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We are pleased - but not at all surprised - to report that the fund set up by Peter's daughters Barbara and Fiona in memory of their father has proved highly successful, exceeding their expectations. We'll be able to say more about this and possible uses of the fund in the summer newsletter.

**Peter McLeish Memorial Fund**

# John Brodie Munro

John Brodie Munro, known to his friends as Johnny, was born in Coalburn in 1937 and lived in the village all his life.

On leaving school John began work at Auchlochan No. 9 colliery. He was a miner all his working days, though after No. 9 closed in 1968 he had to travel further afield for work, to Bedlay colliery, between Airdrie and Cumbernauld in the Monklands coalfield. John was only in his mid-forties when Bedlay closed in 1981.



John Munro was very much a family man. He married Mary, a Lanark lass, and they set up home at Braehead Road. John and Mary had a son and a daughter, Scott and Ailsa, and three granddaughters. John also leaves a brother, William.

John was very interested in local heritage and nature. He was a founder member of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society and used to enjoy meetings. In recent times, as his health failed, he was unable to attend but he did manage some rare days out and we last enjoyed his company at the 2019 Gala Day event. His other interests included golf, for which he won prizes, and his motorbike. John was also a talented dancer - light on his feet, he could bring the best out in any partner.

John was a strong man, as he had to be for his employment, but gentle and good natured. He had a lovely quiet manner and was well liked by all.

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John Munro died on 12th March 2022,
his 85th birthday.

He will be sadly missed

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# Memories of Nethanvale Wheelers

*By Andy Brownlie*

I have been persuaded by your editor, my niece Helen, to pen some of my memories of my time with the Nethanvale Wheelers in the 1950s.



It was sometime in 1952 that I become aware of the formation of a local cycling club and thought - this is something I could join.

The first thing required was to visit Ernie Worrell's shop in Hamilton and get a wheelers cycling jersey: maroon with yellow and light blue hoops with the club name, and pockets on the back. I still have a replica sweater knitted for me which I used in the garden for years and

is now very tatty but I refuse to throw it out.

My first outing was to join in the weekend club run to the Scottish Youth Hostel Cormiston near Biggar where I joined the Scottish Youth Hostels Association. This was a great introduction to hostelling, with self catering and an evening dance. Next morning we cycled to Edinburgh and returned via the Lang Whang. Whew! That's further than I normally drive today.

At that time the club events were a summertime midweek meeting on the Carlisle Road at the foot of Nethanvale Terrace, Lesmahagow, then on to a local run like to Strathaven via Kirkmuirhill and returning via Waterside, with other variations. And of course the weekend hostel visits which were great.

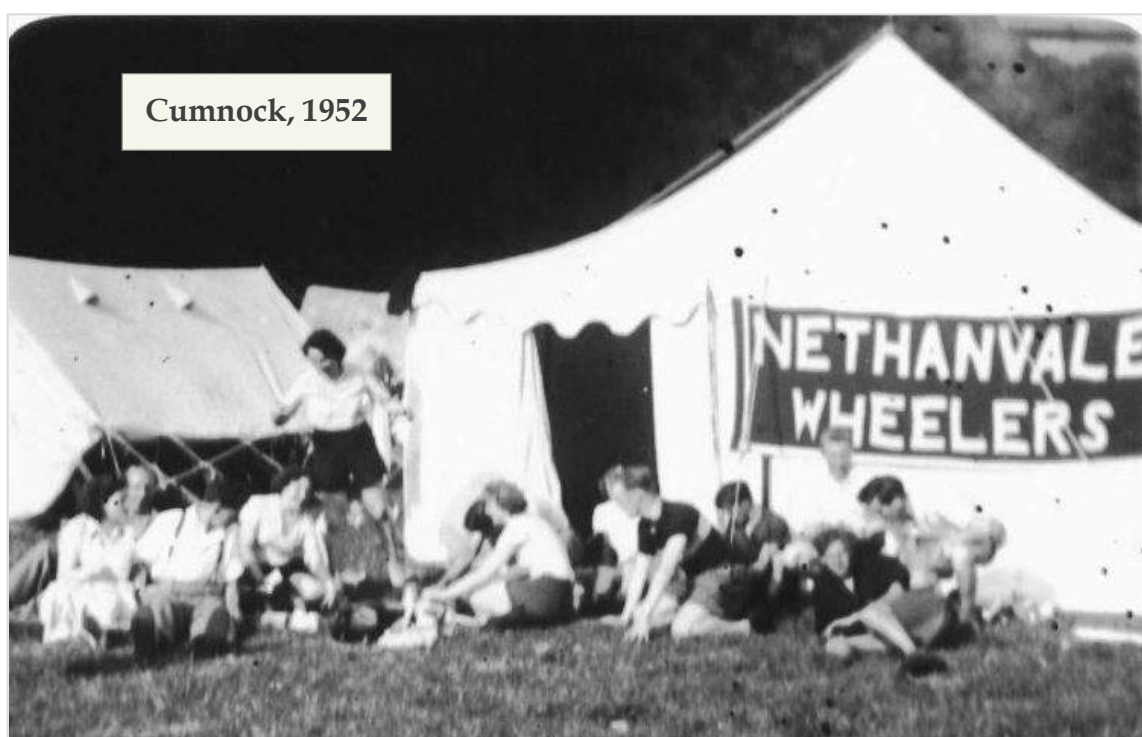
Some names from that time were, Guy Scott, Jean Donaldson (who later became Guy's wife), Kerr Scott, Bert Scott, Alex Smith, Willie Donaldson,

Jackie Cook, Ian Edmiston, Tam Lightbody, Willie McCormick, Guy Kirk, and Kathleen Purdie. I apologise to anyone who reads this and sees their name missing. Other joiners later in my time at the club included Davie Watson and Davie Mathieson. Davie Mathieson is still to the fore in Lesmahagow. I was saddened to hear that Davie Watson recently died.

The weekend hostel visits met on Saturday lunchtime at Cairnhouse when going south and at Nethanvale Terrace when going north. I remember that I was notorious for turning up late and sometimes got left behind to teach me a lesson. One feature of our runs was to sing to Jean when she struggled to keep up on the hills, everything and anything done for a laugh. Mid afternoons & mornings would likely include a stop for a brew, usually when a clear stream or roadside fountain or trough was available for water supply boiled on our collapsible primus stoves (I still have mine). Hard to imagine that happening today.

In 1952 at what I think would be Glasgow Fair week, we went on a tour organised by Guy Scott with hostel night stops at Perth, Auchmithie, Banchory, Fochabers, Inverness, Fort William, Glencoe and Inverbeg. Probably the happiest week of my life so far.

An annual event which was a must on our calendar was the Cumnock rally, a weekend tented gathering of all the Lanarkshire and Ayrshire clubs with dances on the Saturday evening and a 10 mile time trial in the morning - which I entered once and had to give up, being so tired after the previous evening activities.







The competitive side of cycling for us was time trialling over 10 or 25 miles. The first club event was I think in 1953, 25 miles over the Pettinain course, from near Pettinain to Abington and back. To my surprise I won - in the time of 1 hour 4 minutes and 40 seconds, only seconds faster than the second and third.

Some of us then joined in the Mid Scotland 10 and 25 mile races, which took place all over the place on Sunday mornings.

In 1954 Kerr Scott and I entered the Larkhall Cycling Club Australian Pursuit race. We failed to finish and never tried that style of racing again. However I still have the programme.

One benefit of our multi club meetings at hostels and races was to make friends with members from all the other clubs. We then received invitations to join in winter social events at Law, Carluke, Biggar and Larkhall, among others. These were great events, warmly remembered. While we were non smoking and non drinking throughout the racing season we resumed the habits in the winter.

|     |                                          |   |
|-----|------------------------------------------|---|
| rd  | Nethanvale Wheelers C.C. — Last          |   |
| IE  | week-end's run was to Cormiston          | T |
| te. | Y.H., near Biggar. On the Sunday         |   |
| th  | the club held its first confined "25"    | M |
| co  | time trial over the Pettinain course.    |   |
| es  | Results were as follows: 1, A. M.        | W |
| et  | Brownlie, 1.4.40; 2, G. B. Scott,        |   |
| in  | 1.4.42; 3, J. K. Scott, 1.4.54. Handicap | F |
| hn  | —T. Lightbody (1.45), 1.4.41.            |   |
| so  |                                          |   |





In June 1954 the Queen required me to join the RAF to protect her which rather interfered with my cycling with the club but I remember while based at Edinburgh, Davie Watson and Tam Lightbody cycled to join me at Turnhouse Airport on the Saturday and we then went on to Coldingham near Eyemouth on the east coast, returning via Peebles on the Sunday where we parted, me to Edinburgh and the others to home.

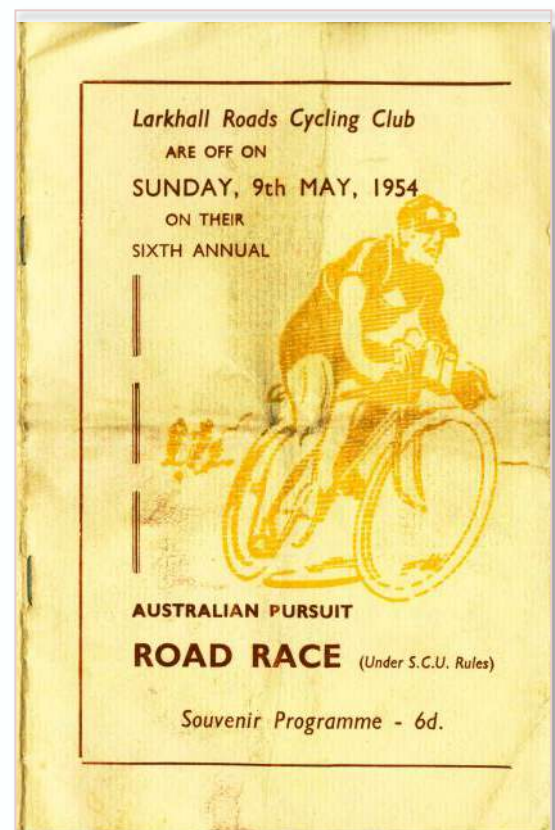
That outing was the last I remember being involved with the club. On demob from the RAF I emigrated south to find work. I have kept in touch with

many of my club friends to this day but sadly some others are no longer with us.

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GROUP I—Starting at 2.9 p.m.	
70. W. Watson, Glenesk R.C.	74. A. M. Brownlie, Nethanvale Whs.
71. P. Wollacott, Velo Club Stella	75. R. A. Johnstone, Tweedside C.&A.C.
72. A. Forsyth, Glas. Thistle C.C.	76. D. E. Cochrane, Tweedside C.&A.C.
73. J. K. Scott, Nethanvale Whs.	77. G. Watson, Carluke C.C.
GROUP J—Starting at 2.10½ p.m.	
78. R. Carr, Tweedside C.&A.C.	82. R. McColl, W. of Scot. Clarion C.C.
79. J. Kerr, Glas. Nightingale C.C.	83. S. McLatchie, St. Chris. R.C.
80. J. E. Robinson, Glas. Nightingale	84. J. Meade, St. Chris. R.C.
81. A. Walker, Shotts Miner's W.C.C.	85. A. Fitzgerald, Velo Club Stella
PREVIOUS WINNERS:	
1949—W. Macdonald, Carluke C.C.	1950—C. Welch, St. Chris. R.C.
1951—J. Griffiths, Gilbertfield Wh.	1952—D. Houghton, Red Lion Couriers 2 hrs. 24 mins.
1953—S. McLatchie, St. Chris. R.C.	2 hrs. 12 mins.

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*The Jim Hamilton*

## Heritage Society of Coalburn

### Contact Details

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### Telephone

- **Membership enquiries: Marion McBain 01555 820234**
- **General enquiries: Helen Brownlie 0141 630 1480**
- **Heritage Centre visiting enquiries: Geoff Brown 01555 820379**

