

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter 70

Spring 2023



The Brig and Coalburn Inns, 1990



Chairperson's Remarks

PHOTOGRAPHS Since compiling the retrospective for our last newsletter I've come across several more great photographs taken during our early years. Some are reproduced here - I hope you enjoy browsing. I've also been finding out a bit more about the trajectory of the Heritage Society and have highlighted some of this information alongside the photographs. I'm thinking that with our 20th Anniversary coming up next year it's a good time to be taking stock.

MEMORIAL FUND Grateful thanks to Barbara and Fiona, daughters of our late and dearly missed chairman Peter McLeish, who have raised £1,250 *via* a fund-raising drive in their father's name, to be used for heritage related activity. These funds are now in our bank account and we look forward to liaising with Barbara and Fiona - both of whom are members of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn - about suitable project(s).

MEETINGS There have been three Heritage Society meetings this spring:

- March 8th, workshop browsing on-line information about historic Coalburn, particularly from the mid 19th Century OS Name Books for Lanarkshire
- March 22nd, DVD of Jim Hamilton interviews with Chrissie Callan and her son Robert (Rab), from spring 2004 - we were pleased to have the company of Rab's brother Geordie at this meeting
- April 4th, visit of Christine Warren of Carluke Parish Historical Society who told us about a major project to restore Carluke Hill Mill.

Unfortunately I became unwell thereafter, resulting in cancellation of further spring meetings, including our AGM.

This has also meant a delay of several weeks to printing this newsletter, during which time we have had some dreadful news with the sudden deaths of two long time members, Howard Johnstone and Mary Duckett. There will be tributes to both in our next newsletter.

The summer newsletter will be produced as soon as possible.

Meanwhile an interim Annual Report for 2022-23 is enclosed. This will be added to over the summer and we can discuss at AGM in autumn. For now, please note that there are a couple of items highlighted in colour for your attention.

Helen Brownlie, June 2023

Updates 'Lesmahagow Courier'

An interesting package of historical papers was recently received, containing copies of the Lesmahagow Courier from 1951 and 1952. We were delighted to have this material from a little known source - can't seem to find anything on-line about the Lesmahagow Courier. As for the donor - the package was been sent by a J Nelson, but that's all the information that the sender provided. So, if you are J Nelson - or if you know who they might be - we would like to say 'thanks'.

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## *Coalburn Men's Shed - now open and going strong*

Saturday 21st January saw the opening of Coalburn's Men's Shed. Located adjacent to the Bowling Club and opened by our own Billy Struthers, the Men's Shed even has it's own Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/991743725132339/>

Any time I've been around at the Heritage Centre the Men's Shed been a hive of activity, crafting a range of impressive items such as beautiful bird tables. Bit of a contrast to the old Westoun, much frequented by my grandfather, which was more about gents of a similar vintage playing cards and dominoes while puffing a cigarette (or two). A bit worried that Billy might be tempted to neglect afternoons in the Heritage Centre in favour of the company and activity at the Men's Shed. On the plus side, it keeps him handy for unexpected visits, as when we recently heard - on the day - that a visitor from New Zealand was on their way.



Left to right: Gordon Ritchie, Geordie Callan, Drew Hazlett, David Aberluck, Graeme Struthers, Billy Struthers

*The Jim Hamilton*  
*Heritage Society of Coalburn*  
**- The Early Years, Part II -**

The last issue of our newsletter ([Issue 69](#)) featured the early days of the Heritage Society, culminating in the opening of the Heritage Centre in November 2007. Here we revisit those first years with a selection of photographs and some further information.

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FIRST MEETINGS When the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn launched in 2004 an extension had recently opened at the Miner' Welfare to house the One Stop Shop. Our meetings were held there, normally in the room that houses the café - which was then named Cruets, now Poppy's.

Some photographs from 2007 meetings



24th January 2007. Speaker Jim Kirk, retired policeman, pictured with Jean Savage, our then treasurer, who had spent her working life as a civilian in the Lanarkshire police force. Both were lifelong residents of Coalburn and stalwarts of the Heritage Society.



4th April 2007. Guest speaker Dr Sinclair Scott, retired Douglasdale GP, pictured with Heritage Society founding member Kathleen Purdie.

Dr Scott spoke of the history of Douglas Cottage Hospital - also known as Lady Home - and is shown with some of the historical items that he had brought along. Kathleen was on our committee at this time and remains a member to this day.



18th April 2007. Mary Ducket (née Cullen), originally of Coalburn and a member of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society, with fellow member Gilbert Dobbie. Mary was our speaker on this occasion, sharing reminiscences of her life in Coalburn.



2nd May 2007. Pipe major Donald Williams, who spoke on the history of Coalburn IOR Pipe Band, pictured with Margaret Findlay, widow of his predecessor. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of her highly respected husband Jim, aged 51. Donald has since joined the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society and is now on committee.

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We were fortunate that considerable resources came into play in these early years. Notably, we had the services Heritage Support Worker John Zawadski, who was employed for 15 hours a week by Coalburn Miners' Welfare Charitable Society (CMWCS) *via* a Heritage Lottery Grant. John came into post within two months of Jim Hamilton's death, shortly before the establishment of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society. However this process had taken several years to come to fruition, as John's annual report of spring 2005 advises:

"We are indebted, therefore, to Coalburn's late historian who spent a lifetime diligently collecting and recording material for future generations to enjoy, and, secondly, to chairman George Greenshields and members of the committee of the CMWCS for persevering in their successful application for a heritage lottery grant (a process that took almost four years to complete) to fund the preservation and enhancement of this unique archive."

Similarly, the extension for the Heritage Centre did not happen overnight. It had been apparent from the early days that premises would be required specifically to house the archive. This was achieved with the opening of the Heritage Centre in November 2007, as documented by Heritage Support Worker John Zawadski in his 2008 annual report:

"It may have taken over three years but the Society finally has an archive/study room to be proud of. The opening ceremony with special guest Maureen Hamilton was a memorable and well attended occasion. The Heritage Centre has many interesting visitors and it will, no doubt, get busier as time goes on. My only concern is that before too long it will not be large enough to accommodate the growing number of items regularly being donated and also provide sufficient workspace for interested parties."

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**Official opening of Heritage Centre,
afternoon of Saturday November 24th, 2007**

Chairman Peter McLeish applauds as
Maureen Hamilton cuts the ribbon



Founder member
Jim McLean signs in



Peter McLeish addresses the gathering

Left to right: standing - Anna McLachlan, Howard Johnson, Billy Rough, Jim McLean
back row - Shona Zawadski far left, the others unknown

2nd back row - Jean Savage, Kathleen Purdie, Millie Sommerville, Matt Sommerville, George Greenshields, Jim Hamilton;

2nd front row - unknown; Agnes Grey, Jim Grey, unknown

front row - Zena Young, John Young, X, X, Maureen Hamilton, Fiona McLeish, Robert McLeish, Marean Johnson.

Can you help put a name to any of the 'unknown' faces?

John's remarks proved prescient. Thanks to the considerable volume of additional items now in our possession - some donated over the years, others generated through Heritage Society activity - the Heritage Centre today is all but unrecognisable from when first opened.



Heritage Centre
2007 (left) and 2023 (below)

The current picture was taken on Saturday March 18th, 2023 and is fairly typical of the present day - apart from the infant's high chair. We welcome younger members but not so far this young! As it happens, Poppy's was hosting an event that day and needed to make space, while we were just dropping in.



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## *Margaret Mary Ann Smith of Birkhill*

There is an important and very interesting correction required to the article about Mrs Margaret Mary Ann Smith in Issue 57.

The piece was prompted by Peter McLeish's discovery from a 1922 publication that Mrs Smith had run a Sabbath School at Birkhill at that time. I had supplemented with a little research into Mrs Smith's life story, concluding that when she was widowed in 1903 she had no children. It transpires that this is incorrect. In fact, Mrs Smith had two infant boys at that time: John, born in 1901, and Andrew, who was just a baby when his father died.

We discovered this thanks to Mrs Smith's granddaughter Rosemary, daughter of John Smith, who got in touch via our Facebook page. Rosemary also posted a lovely picture of her granddaughter Isla Chalmers, born last December, the youngest great-great granddaughter of Margaret Mary Ann Smith.

Rosemary, who now lives in France, was kind enough to share some of her story, including memories of growing up at Birkhill in the 1950s:

*I still can't believe how much freedom we had growing up.... Out on our bikes; swimming in the 'Dooking Hole' going for long walks with the dogs; climbing trees - I once climbed over the arch where the mains electricity came into the house! I only did it once!*

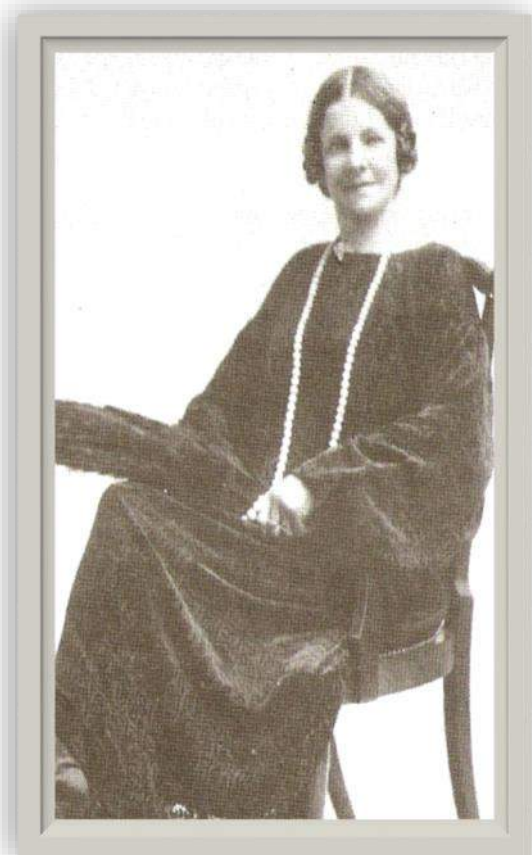
*I went to school at Lesmahagow Primary - because the bus from Douglas to Lesmahagow stopped at Cairnhouses at the top of the road.*

*I then spent 3 years at the Higher Grade before being sent to Burnbraes in Moffat.*

*When I left school, the summer before I was 18, I trained as a Nursery Nurse at the Princess College in Manchester - those prams in the TV series 'Call the Midwife' were exactly the same as the ones we used in Manchester!*

[Issue 57 has been corrected for our website](#)

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In deepest sympathy - Coalburn related deaths

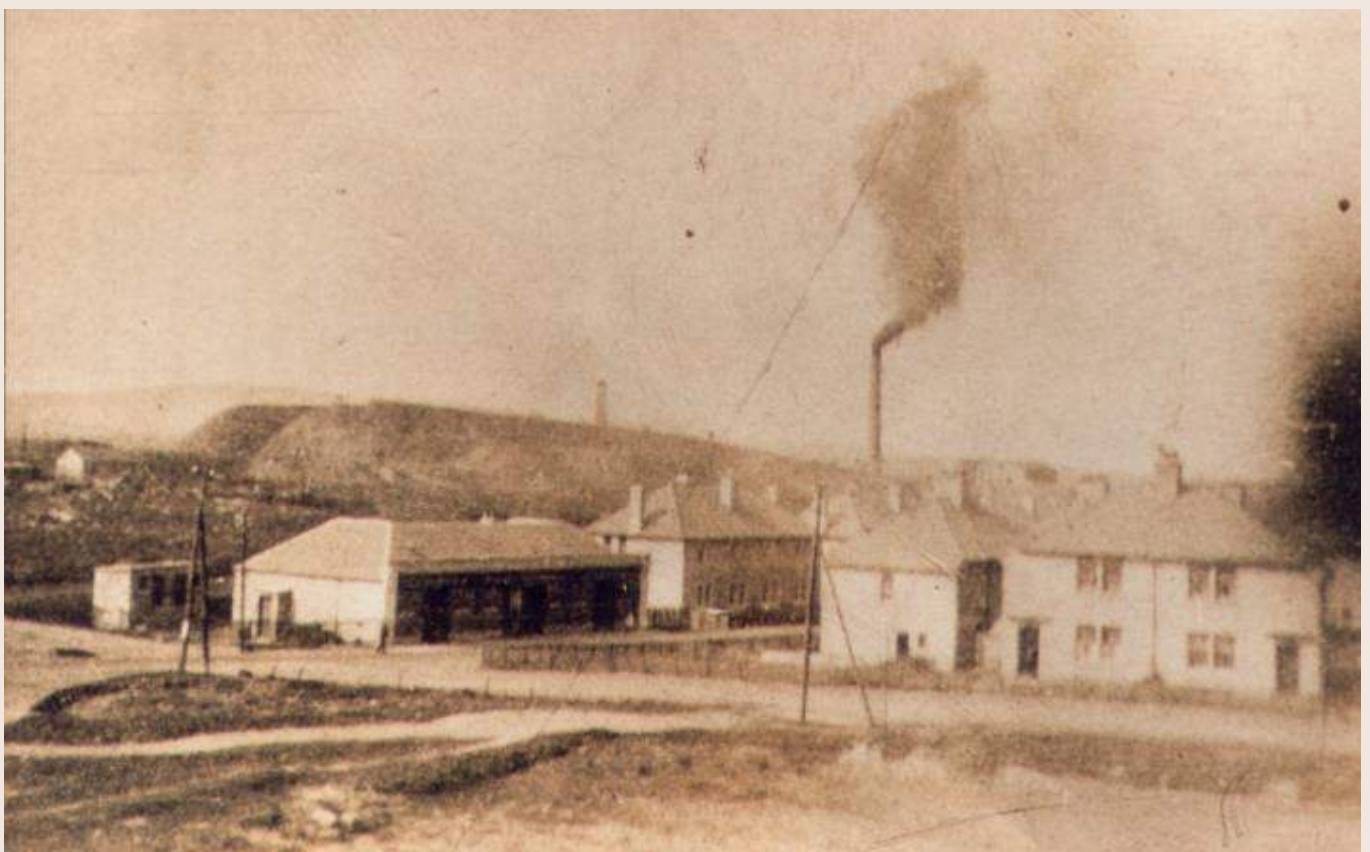
Moira Adams (Tate)

Brian Aitken

Mary Duckett (Cullen)

Howard Johnstone

Elma Ravizza



The Jim Hamilton
Heritage Society of Coalburn

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Find us on Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/
groups/287186251435102](https://www.facebook.com/groups/287186251435102)



'The Westoun', Bellfield Road

Forerunner of today's Men's Shed - there were a number of these gathering places throughout the district back in the 1960s