

The Jim Hamilton

**Heritage Society
of Coalburn**

Newsletter 68

Autumn 2022



BRAEHEAD AND U.F. CHURCH, COALBURN



Well, here we are in the 2022-23 season, with meetings restarted and welcoming speakers from near and far.

The first meeting of autumn 2022 was our AGM on September 7th, held over from April. For those of you who weren't there on the night there's a copy of the annual report for 2021-22 enclosed, summing up Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn activity over this past year.

On September 21st we had a most interesting presentation on the history of the Scotland's canals with Tommy Lawton of the Forth and Clyde Canal Society and last month we heard from Geoff Brown with a selection of his photographs. At time of writing our most recent meeting was November 2nd, when Adam Smith took us through the Cumbernauld area from early history to the farmlands of his family's living memory and on to the founding of the new town and the present day. This was Adam's first visit to Coalburn and it was a really foul night, terribly wet, so we're grateful to him for making the trip - and he's willing to come back, to speak on his other topic, the old Glasgow postcard collection. Thank you Adam.

In this newsletter we have a tribute to the late Jim Hamilton, whose death in June was announced in Issue 66. A founder member of the Heritage Society, Jim attended meetings faithfully and he is much missed.

Other items commemorate the opening of the present Coalburn Church and the founding of the Girl Guides - both 100 years ago, in 1922.

There's also a roundup of Heritage Society news with some recent pictures.

This summer saw the 18th anniversary of the founding of the Society - so in modern day terms that's us come of age - and it's 15 years since the Heritage Centre opened on 24th November 2007. We are planning a photo retrospective for the next issue, which should be with you before the end of the year. Also looking forward, with a bit of luck local members will be able to get together for Christmas Dinner sometime next month (to be planned at our next meeting).

The cover pictures show the original and the present Church buildings

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The mystery woman on the back page of the last issue is Heritage Society member  
Mary McSkimming (Kirk)

Helen Brownlie  
November 2022

## *In deepest sympathy - Coalburn related deaths*

Billy Bryson

Diane Hamilton

Sarah Hogg (Stitt)

Ernest Ravizza

Keith Riddell

John Walls



# 100 Years Ago

## 1922

### Coalburn's New Church

This year is the 100th anniversary of the opening of the present church in Coalburn. The building cost £3,960 in 1922 (around £175,000 today).

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Originally a Mission Station attached to Abbeygreen Church, plans for the first church building were authorised in 1893.

From The Glasgow Herald of November 10th 1893

COALBURN MISSION

Mr Matthewson, Convenor of the Home Mission Committee reported that the Committee had passed a grant of £75 10s for the new Church building, on condition that a piece of ground alongside the present Mission be secured for a sufficient site for the permanent Church when it comes to be built.

It was decided that presbytery should be trustees rather than local gentlemen.

It was also reported that Mr Walker, presently in charge at the Mission, had been led to believe that when it was a regular Church there was a possibility of him being the minister.

Records of the meeting of the Kirk Session of Coalburn Free Church Mission Station held the following month inform us that James Wilson, who had been acting as Church Officer, was to be paid the sum of £4 per annum at the rate of £1 per quarter

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# The Church Bell

One of my abiding memories as a youngster was hearing the church bells ring in the New Year as did the pit horns and the shipyard sirens as well. Nowadays that tradition appears to be all but dead. Mind you there are no longer any pits in this area and Coalburn Church Bell has long since ceased to ring.



Made by Mears and Stainbank, 34, Whitechapel Road, London at a cost of nineteen pounds ten shillings, the bell was erected in 1905 though not paid for until 4<sup>th</sup> December 1906. It bore the inscription "Come ye to the House of God". Whether it was part of the original Church, I do not know. The fire in January 1918 which totally destroyed the building may have been a factor in it being sited at the corner of the adjoining wall of the Silver Band Hall where it sat on a structure of bricks for many years until it was taken down for safety reasons due to the framework becoming unstable.

There it remained until on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1989, when Jimmy Stewart of 35, Bellfield Road reported it as missing to the local constable. The loss was intimated to the Co-operative Insurance Company the following month who disclaimed any responsibility to replace it as it was a separate structure from the Church. Commercial Union were contacted as well and that company similarly responded.

The Bell was 23% tin and 77% copper with an approximate scrap value of £200 while the replacement cost was quoted as £2,000 in 1990. It was never replaced.

It has been said that it was removed because it was disturbing neighbours on a Sunday morning and is buried under a motorway in the area. Of course the scrap value may have been an attraction. Who knows?

With this in mind I penned the following lines in 2004:

*I wonder where the bell went,  
so many years ago,  
Could it now be far away,  
I guess we'll never know,  
There must be someone somewhere,  
who can surely tell,  
What happened all those years ago?  
To Coalburn's old kirk bell,*

*It wasn't worth a fortune,  
so the story goes,  
Has it found a resting place,  
someone out there knows,  
So if you know its whereabouts, was it  
melted down and sold,  
Please tell the congregation,  
Because the bell, it can't be tolled.*

*Peter McLeish, 2008*

# Jim Hamilton

16th March 1934 - 21st June 2022

When Jim Hamilton died on 21st June this year the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn lost a longstanding and highly valued member.

Born on March 16th, 1934, Jim was the second child of John and Elizabeth Hamilton and a cousin of our founder, his namesake Jim Hamilton.

The Hamilton family lived at Lucerne Cottage, 165 Bellfield Road, so it was a short trip for five year old Jim when he started at Bellfield Primary school in 1939. From there Jim went on to Lesmahagow High and Larkhall Academy.

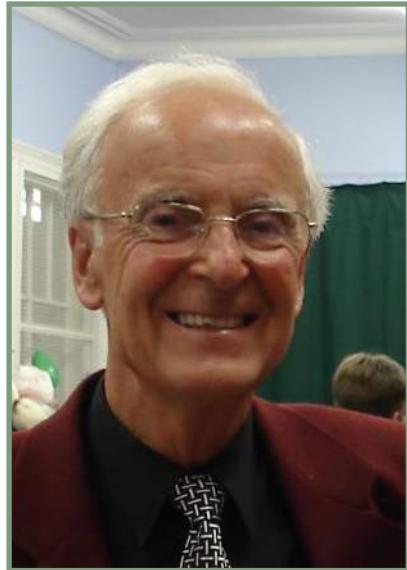
As a young man in the late 1950s Jim did National Service in the RAF. This took him to Berkshire and it was here that he met Diane Beasley. Romance blossomed and they were married in March 1960. Jim and Diane set up home at Braefoot and had a family of three boys.

Jim's working life was spent in environmental health at Clydesdale District Council, where he rose to be head of department. Local people always found him helpful - if anyone had a problem concerning the Council he would try to assist, providing a steer to the right place if it wasn't an issue where his department was involved.

However Jim's greatest mark on local life was undoubtedly as the person who helped establish, design and build Hollandbush Golf Club. Jim Hamilton had over 50 years of service there, including in committee roles as secretary and as captain. His death leaves John Kerr the only survivor of four close friends - Jim, John, Geordie Clark and Harry Simpson - who spent many happy hours together at Hollandbush over the years.

When the decision to form a Heritage Society for Coalburn was taken in July 2004 Jim was there. He was voted onto the newly formed committee where he took up the position of vice chairman.

Jim remained a faithful attender at our meetings, always making the effort to be there, even as he grew frail in later years, right up until our meetings stopped due to Covid in spring of 2020. By this time Jim's wife Diane had become quite unwell and



was living at Clinton House care home at Shawsburn. Later, as Jim's own health deteriorated, he joined her there.

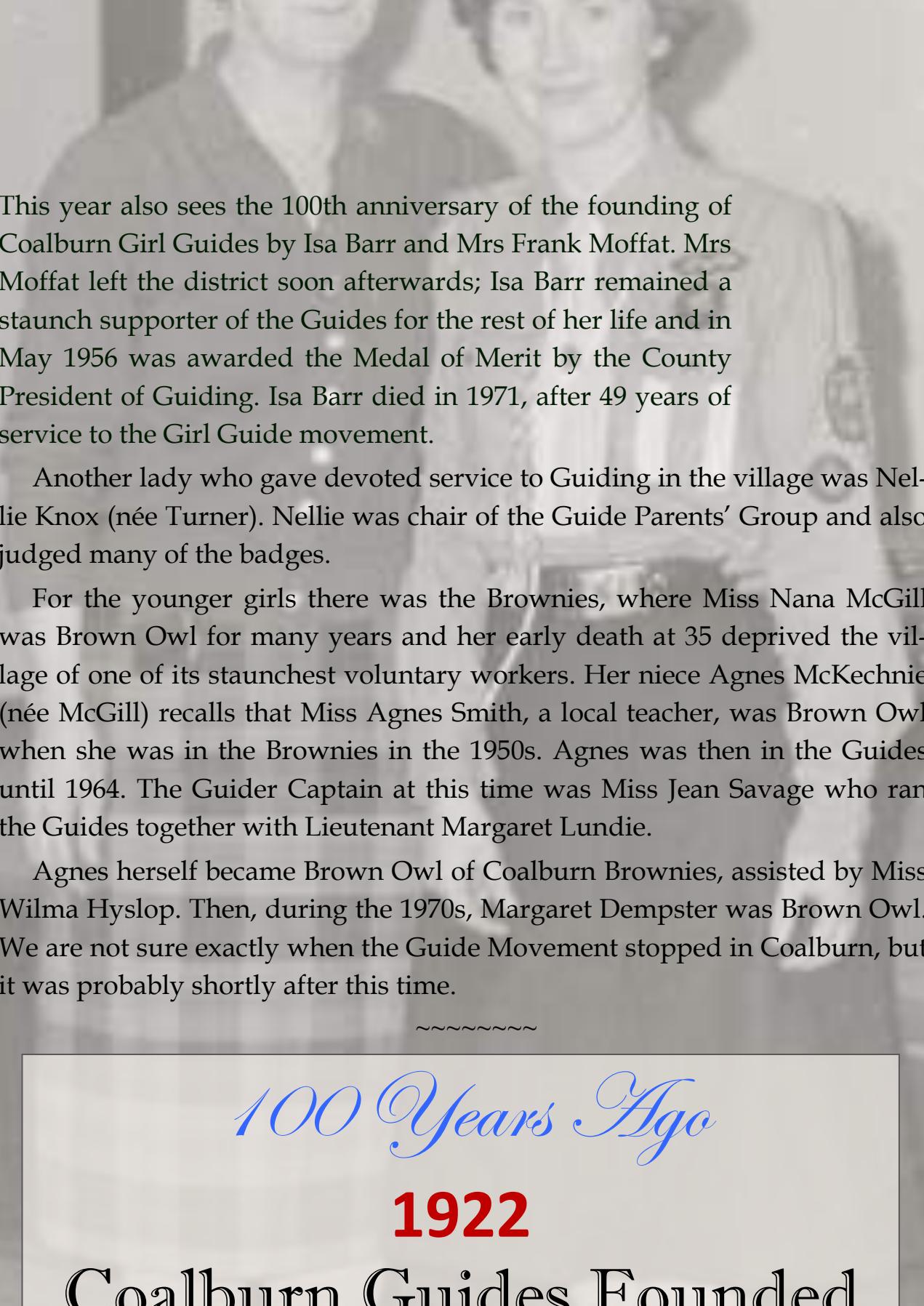
Jim died on 21st June, 2022. His beloved wife Diane lived only a few weeks longer. Jim is survived by his sister and fellow member of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society, Helen (Walker); his sons John and Jeph; grandchildren Alana, Natalie, Jack, Chloe, Dylan, Finlay and Lisa; and great-grandchildren, Jacob and Daisy.

Jim took a great photograph and his cheery smile beams out from many pictures of Heritage Society activities taken over the years. We do miss him.

**Jim with his cousin Jim Hamilton's widow Maureen (Hampson) at the Heritage Centre in 2005**



**'First Golf Outing'**  
**Jim Hamilton 2nd right, front**



This year also sees the 100th anniversary of the founding of Coalburn Girl Guides by Isa Barr and Mrs Frank Moffat. Mrs Moffat left the district soon afterwards; Isa Barr remained a staunch supporter of the Guides for the rest of her life and in May 1956 was awarded the Medal of Merit by the County President of Guiding. Isa Barr died in 1971, after 49 years of service to the Girl Guide movement.

Another lady who gave devoted service to Guiding in the village was Nellie Knox (née Turner). Nellie was chair of the Guide Parents' Group and also judged many of the badges.

For the younger girls there was the Brownies, where Miss Nana McGill was Brown Owl for many years and her early death at 35 deprived the village of one of its staunchest voluntary workers. Her niece Agnes McKechnie (née McGill) recalls that Miss Agnes Smith, a local teacher, was Brown Owl when she was in the Brownies in the 1950s. Agnes was then in the Guides until 1964. The Guider Captain at this time was Miss Jean Savage who ran the Guides together with Lieutenant Margaret Lundie.

Agnes herself became Brown Owl of Coalburn Brownies, assisted by Miss Wilma Hyslop. Then, during the 1970s, Margaret Dempster was Brown Owl. We are not sure exactly when the Guide Movement stopped in Coalburn, but it was probably shortly after this time.

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100 Years Ago
1922
Coalburn Guides Founded

Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn News

Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre is normally open on Tuesday afternoons and on Thursday afternoons. Please feel free to drop in. If you would like to arrange in advance you can call Geoff Brown re Tuesdays (01555 820379) and Billy Struthers re Thursdays (01555 820765). If those times don't suit then we will try to accommodate you at another time. You can call Geoff or Billy about this, or Helen on 0141 630 1480.

If you would like to drop into the Heritage Centre on the spur of the moment and want to be sure that it is open you can check with the One Stop Shop: 01555 820060

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We respond to enquiries about all aspects of local heritage, drawing on the extensive documentation held in the Heritage Centre. You can make an enquiry by e-mail - [coalburn.heritage@virginmedia.com](mailto:coalburn.heritage@virginmedia.com), phone Helen on 0141 630 1480, or write to us at: Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn, One Stop Shop, Coalburn Road ML 11 0LH. Alternatively you can contact us on Facebook.

## **Enquiries**

## **Facebook**

After a gap of several years we have a presence on Facebook once again. Thanks to Fiona McLeish for her work on transferring all of our historical material onto a new page and getting that launched ready for new posts, and to Marion McBain who, together with Fiona, has taken on admin duties. You'll find the page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/287186251435102> or put 'Coalburn Heritage' into the search box and it should be the first on the results list. (Full name is: Coalburn Heritage Group OFFICIAL PAGE of The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn.)

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We welcome Alan Court of Coalburn Silver Band on November 16th, with one more meeting before the end of the year, December 7th, when Donald Williams - who has been doing a great deal of research on the history of Coalburn and surrounding hamlets - will speak on the subject of the McCowan family of Auchenbegg.

Meetings

We are giving some thought to holding one of our monthly meetings on an afternoon in the New Year, which might suit some people better than a Wednesday night. Please do get in touch and let us know your thoughts. We also have some speakers pencilled in and will hopefully be able to say more in the Winter Issue which is not far away.

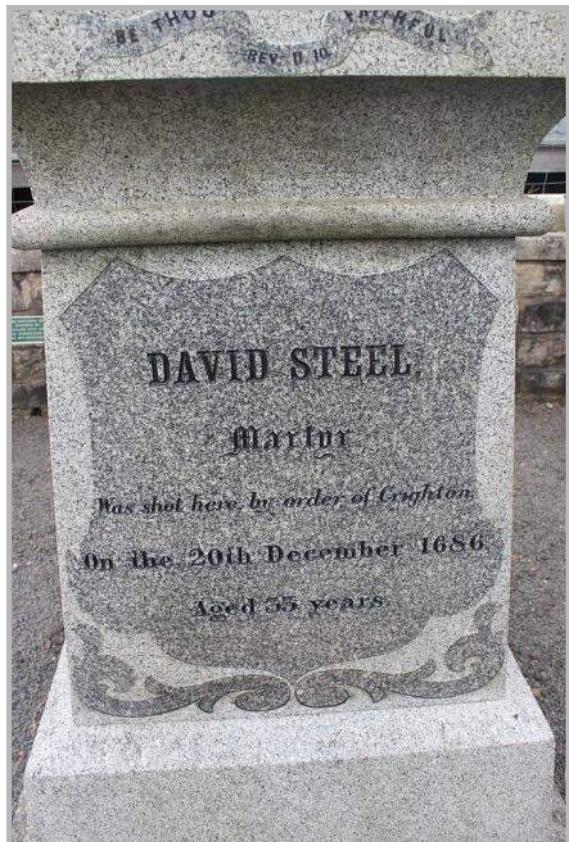
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## Website

Thanks as ever to David Halls for his excellent work on our website:  
[www.coalburnheritage.org.uk](http://www.coalburnheritage.org.uk).

Latest additions to the website include:

- Photos of the monument to David Steel next to Nether Skellyhill Farm taken by Geoff Brown in August, showing all the inscriptions and plaques associated with this monument.
- Recent photos of Coalburn and surrounding area taken by David himself. These include the coal hutch memorial in Shoulderigg Road on the site of the former No. 6 Colliery where there have been a number of recent changes. The hutch has been spruced up and the wheels are now shiny. New on this site are the bench seat, the brand new Coalburn planter and a matching litter bin.
- Gala Day 2022 photographs, including from the Leisure Centre where we held an exhibition.



David does a great job with the website but he would welcome assistance and to take someone under his wing who might just take over our website in due course. If you think you might be interested please don't be shy - get in touch with us to find out more.





Committee with Billy Clelland's painting of Aucholochan No. 9

(gifted to the Heritage Society)

Gala Day 2nd July 2022

*L to R: Marion McBain, Jim McBain, Geoff Brown, Helen Brownlie,  
Howard Johnstone and Billy Struthers.*

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Commonwealth War Graves Enquiry

Can You Help?

We have received an enquiry from a volunteer with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission who monitors the condition of CWGC commemorations in Lesmahagow Cemetery.

He is also a guide and is intending to offer tours of the Cemetery on behalf of the Commission. With this in mind, he is interested to have quality photographs of the twenty three men of the Parish commemorated by the CWGC. The four Coalburn men are:

Alexander Coats, who died on 27th March 1918 aged 18

David Hart Provan, who died on 27th December 1918 aged 21 (we featured Lieutenant Provan's story in Issue 59)

Thomas Goldie, who died on 7th December 1940, aged 19

Robert Smith, who died on 9th January 1944, aged 25

The names of other soldiers are: James Adamson, Hugh Baird, William Cairncross, Peter Callan, Private Dempster, John Elliot, Colour Sergeant Glen, Gavin Harvie, Private Kirk, William Lang, Charles Law, Sapper Liddell, John Maitland, John and Thomas Muir, James and Robert Pringle, Lance Corporal Scott and Private Symington.

Geoff is trawling through the archives at the Heritage Centre, however if you have photographs or memorabilia or any information relating to these men please do get in touch.

The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

Membership

We're pleased to report that members old and new have joined up for the 2022 -23 season. If you've not yet paid your membership fee, details are:

£15 for a single adult

£20 joint membership (two persons in the same household)

£2 for under 16s

Payment may be made by post to our Treasurer, Marion McBain, at 14 Bellfield Road, Coalburn ML11 0LA. Please make cheques payable to: **Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn**.

Should you wish to pay by on-line transfer, the details are: sort code 83-24-38; account number 00205430; account name **Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn**. Please provide your name in the box for 'reference' so that when our bank statement comes in we can identify whose subscription is being paid.

For anyone wishing to join, please telephone membership secretary Mrs Betty Nicol on 01555 820647 or e-mail coalburn.heritage@virginmedia.com.

