

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter 69

Winter 2022-23



Special Issue

Heritage Society Retrospective:

The Early Days



Chairperson's Remarks

This is a very late winter 2022-23 edition, with spring almost upon us. The newsletter is also a little different this time because the focus is the Heritage Society and its history, illustrated with photographs from the first few years.

Almost 19 years have passed since the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn was formed and it's over 15 years now since the Heritage Centre opened.

There have been several major changes over this period.

Firstly, the advance of technology and social media. When the Heritage Society began we didn't have a website and e-mail was just one of many ways that people could get in touch with enquiries. Now e-mail is the dominant means of communication and we have the interest of over 200 people *via* our Facebook page, while the website has gone from strength to strength under the able stewardship of David Halls. So it is timely to think about the best way to involve a wider range of people. We also need to review web operations in terms of storage space and running of the site as we have outstripped what our current package provides and, at the same time, David now needs to stand back from web duties.

Secondly, the Heritage Centre today is barely recognisable from the cover picture, taken around time of opening in 2007. We have more of everything. Even with a fairly extensive storage area in addition to the resource room, we are bursting at the seams. Looking ahead, it would be good to display our collection more extensively and to share the wide range of documents, reports and photographs more widely. This could link with the advance of technology, for example by providing more on-line access and creating e-documents from hard copy *etc.*

Thirdly, those great photographs of Heritage Society events taken over the years illustrate all too clearly just how many people who were pillars of the Society we have lost. Few of our original members are still with us. Those of us who are involved at present are very much aware of this and hope that as the years go by we keep the history of Coalburn very much alive, and can pass on the baton to a younger generation over the coming years. This means raising awareness, including via social media, and keeping the collection accessible. I also hope that we might continue the process that Jim Hamilton began, laying down further layers of history for generations to come.

In keeping with the retrospective theme, this newsletter includes the introduction to Jim Hamilton's first 'Coalburn Chronicle', where Jim shares his thinking as he set out on this task all of 50 years ago.

Looking forward, Heritage is emerging as something that local people are interested in, having come up in the course of the current consultation towards producing a Community Action Plan, and through consultations held by Bodinglee Wind Farm concerning funds that will be available from this source in future. There is to be a drop in update event at **Poppy's Tea Room on Saturday March 18th**, giving local people a chance to hear about and discuss ideas that have come up so far regarding the Community Action Plan. Please consider dropping by to help share and progress plans involving Coalburn's Heritage. We hope to have a presence to there and be able to provide information about the Heritage Society to anyone who might be interested in joining us.

Helen Brownlie, February 2023

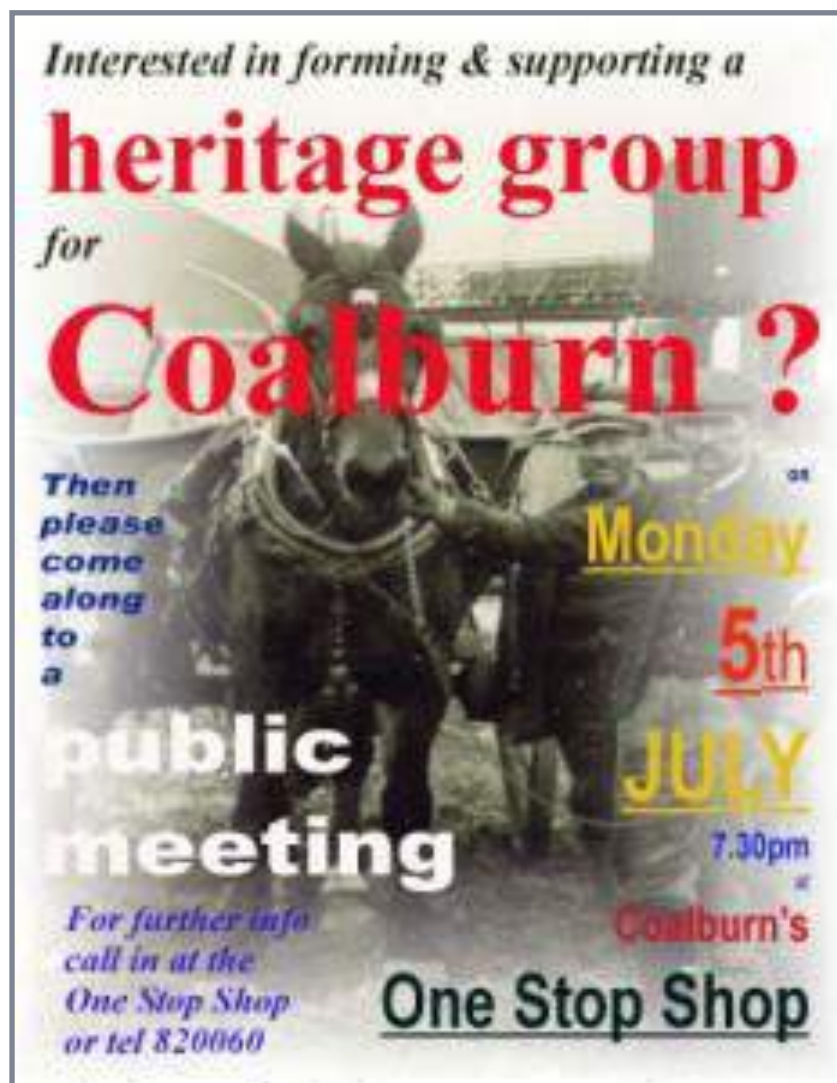


Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn Committee
Kathleen Purdie, Billy Struthers, Jim McLean, Betty Bell, Peter McLeish, Jim
Hamilton and Anna McLachlan
18th August 2004

Taken in Cruet's café (now Poppy's), this photograph shows the original committee members except for Gilbert Dobbie, who may have taken the photo. It is possibly the earliest photograph of a Heritage Society gathering.

The Jim Hamilton
Heritage Society of Coalburn
- The Early Years -

The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn was set up following the death of local historian Jim Hamilton in April 2004. Jim left a rich archive of his work including articles, photographs and video interviews and it was with a view to preserving this archive for the people of Coalburn that a public meeting was held that July with a view to forming a heritage group.



FIRST MEETING Following the decision to form the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn, our first ever meeting of took place on September 1st, 2004. Pictured on that occasion, (left to right) in the back row are Anna McLachlan, Kathleen Purdie, Gilbert Dobbie, Billy Struthers and John Munro; John Young, Peter McLeish, Betty Bell and John Zawadski - who had been employed by the One Stop Shop as heritage support worker that June - are in front. Also present was Jim McLean, who took the photograph. There were fifteen founder members in all. Others included Jim Hamilton, Billy Rough, Jean Savage and Zena Young.



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**SECOND MEETING** Our first guest was Robert McLeish, who visited on October 6th, 2004. Robert told us of his work for the Lesmahagow Parish Historical Association, which he had founded. He also gifted a transcript of the 1901 Census for the Parish - 1901 being the most recent Census then available. Robert is shown here with his brother Peter.



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It was at our third meeting, 6th November 2004, that a formal constitution was adopted which, among other things, set out the Heritage Society's aims.

Our current constitution sets out three purposes:

AIMS and OBJECTIVES of the JIM HAMILTON HERITAGE SOCIETY of COALBURN

- A) To build on and continue the work of the late Jim Hamilton in recording and making available to the public items of interest within the local community.
- B) To encourage the use of the archive, particularly by the young of the district and other local groups, and also by any other organisations of similar interests outwith the district.
- C) To provide a forum for people from the local area and beyond to come together and share a common interest in the history of Coalburn and the wider vicinity.

A) and B) are as per the original constitution of November 2004. The third item was added in 2021 when the Society came together after the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It replaces a section that specified holding physical meetings and when these should take place in favour of setting out a purpose for us coming together. This purpose - providing a forum for sharing interest in the history of Coalburn - can be fulfilled flexibly, according to circumstances.

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2004 closed with a meeting on December 1st, when Paul Archibald of Lanark Library gave the first presentation to the Heritage Society. This was on the apt subject of Archie McLean's glass lantern slides.

Hitherto meetings had been held monthly. At the first meeting of 2005, February 9th, it was decided to extend this to twice per month: the Society would meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month to discuss Society business and assist with the archives, while the 1st Wednesday would be reserved for guest speakers and topics of special interest.

The picture opposite shows the audience enjoying a talk by guest speaker Wilma Bolton (pictured), author and historian, on the subject of Lanarkshire Mining, in October 2005. Back row: Jack Weir, Jim Hamilton, Callum Smith, Billy Struthers; 2nd back row: ?, ?, John Young, Zena Young, Joe Cameron; 3rd row: Archie Cameron, Jean Savage, Anna McLachlan, Kathleen Purdie; front: ?, Betty Bell.



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By the summer of 2004 the Heritage Society had been up and running for a year and it was clear that steps were required to obtain specific premises to house Jim Hamilton's archive. In his first annual report, from around that time, heritage support worker John Zawadski recorded:

"When the archive of the late Jim Hamilton was collected and brought to the One Stop Shop it became very apparent that there was a considerable amount more than what was originally expected. Indeed, it was to take until the end of the year to organise the thousands of photographs, a great many of them duplicates. With new material being collected and handed in there is a need for more storage space."

Two years later, in mid-2006, John was able to report that plans were in place and work about to begin:

"The archive based at Coalburn's One Stop Shop is expanding. Adequate storage space remains a problem ... work on a new extension at the One Stop Shop is to start in the near future and work space and storage will be made available for heritage-based activities."

The Coalburn Heritage Centre at the One Stop Shop opened the following November.



Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn

19th October 2005

with guest speaker Wilma Bolton

(see page opposite for details)



Coalburn Heritage Centre *Officially Opened* November 2007

Members and guests of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn met on Saturday 24th November in the One Stop Shop at noon. The chairman, Peter McLeish, welcomed all present and invited them to partake of an excellent buffet provided by Cruets Catering.

Thereafter a short presentation was made by John Zawadzki about the late Jim Hamilton and the work done by him for the village.

Thereafter the chairman thanked all who had helped over the three years the Society has been running. He then asked Mrs Maureen Hamilton to officially open the Coalburn Heritage Centre, the purpose of the gathering. This she did in a neat speech and Betty Bell then presented her with a lovely bunch of flowers.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent browsing through the many items on display throughout the building.

As usual John's presentations were very popular and greatly appreciated. Thanks to everyone for their assistance in making this event such a memorable occasion.



The Coalburn Chronicles

- 50th Anniversary -

It was on 3rd February 1973 that James Hamilton sat down at home at 44 Meadows Avenue, Larkhall, and wrote a preface for the first of what was to become an 80 volume set of 'Coalburn Chronicles'. To mark the 50th anniversary we are reprinting that preface from Issue 1, a publication for which Jim charged the princely sum of 20p to cover costs (this sounds like very little to us in 2023, but chances are that some folks might be saying to themselves - "four shillings!").

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In the book, 'Country Walks in Scotland' by Tom S. Hall, there is the following statement in a chapter, 'Across the Hills to Douglas'.



'Douglas will afford a pleasant contrast to the wide hills we have left and, after a meal, we can continue to Douglas West Station. If we are too late for the last train from there, we can walk over to Coalburn, where there is a later service, as well as a 'bus service (unless it has been taken off recently). I don't want to go to Coalburn. Perhaps you have never been to this last place on earth. If you have not, I advise you to go at once so that you may know how horrid it is!'

*(published by the Wayfarers' Association in the 1940s)*

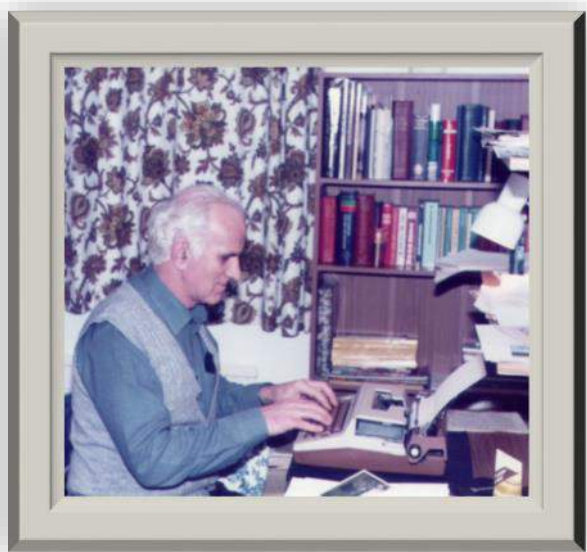
It is therefore rather a daunting prospect for me to start writing the story of Coalburn when another has described it in such devastating and pungent terms. Nevertheless it has been my desire to record some details about the people in the village of Coalburn, my own birthplace. It must be of little comfort to some of the people you will meet in this story, who have lived eighty or ninety years in Coalburn, to know that they have spent a lifetime in the last place on earth.

As an avid reader I have spent many endless but enjoyable hours delving into books (may I say better books than the one I have just quoted from) about towns and villages and I invariably find that more is written about buildings than people. Much as I admire the comprehensiveness of the An-

nals of the Parish of Lesmahagow by J.B. Greenshields, I regret that not more space was allocated to the inhabitants of the hamlets of the parish living under the upper strata of society, the gentry of that time. It would be of more interest to me to have read how my ancestors were living in Crossford, Abbeygreen and Brockley than to be told of the fine workmanship of the stained glass windows of Birkwood castle.

The time seems opportune to me to write down some impressions of the folk I have known or heard about who have lived in Coalburn and helped to shape it into the way it is to-day, and these reminiscences are interspersed with some of my personal feelings about village life in the times in which we dwell.

My parents, both born in Coalburn, are Jamie Hamilton and Nan Reid of Gall Cottage and they have helped and encouraged me in these endeavours and my thanks are due to both. I am also indebted to my uncle, John Hamilton of Lucerne Cottage for making freely available to me his cornucopia of antiquarian studies and research about the village. The very nature of this type of booklet, unless it were to run to thousands of pages, makes it inevitable that names of families prominent at times in the village, may have been omitted and no disrespect is intended to them. Perhaps the tapestry of family life in a village is too ambitious and too large to depict but if it is never started, it will never be finished. This can be considered to be a start. I hope no phrase in this booklet will give offence to any reader and I apologise if I inadvertently cause any annoyance. This has been the furthest from my intention.



In this booklet reference may be made to two other booklets I printed – the Hamilton Saga, dated Hogmanay 1971 and poems of Coalburn dated February 1972, both of which I handed out free of charge. As I was not able to supply all the demand for the Poems of Coalburn although 90 copies were prepared, on this occasion a charge of TWENTY PENCE is being made to cover the cost of the stencils and paper, and to allow more to be printed.

James Hamilton

*In deepest sympathy -  
Coalburn related deaths*

Jimmy Adams

Tom Duffy

Jenny Meikle (McIlmoyle)

Bobby Rowan

Annie Williams





# *The Jim Hamilton* Heritage Society of Coalburn

## MEETINGS SPRING 2023

**March 8th** Coalburn: Maps and other resources online

**March 22nd** Coalburn: topic to be confirmed

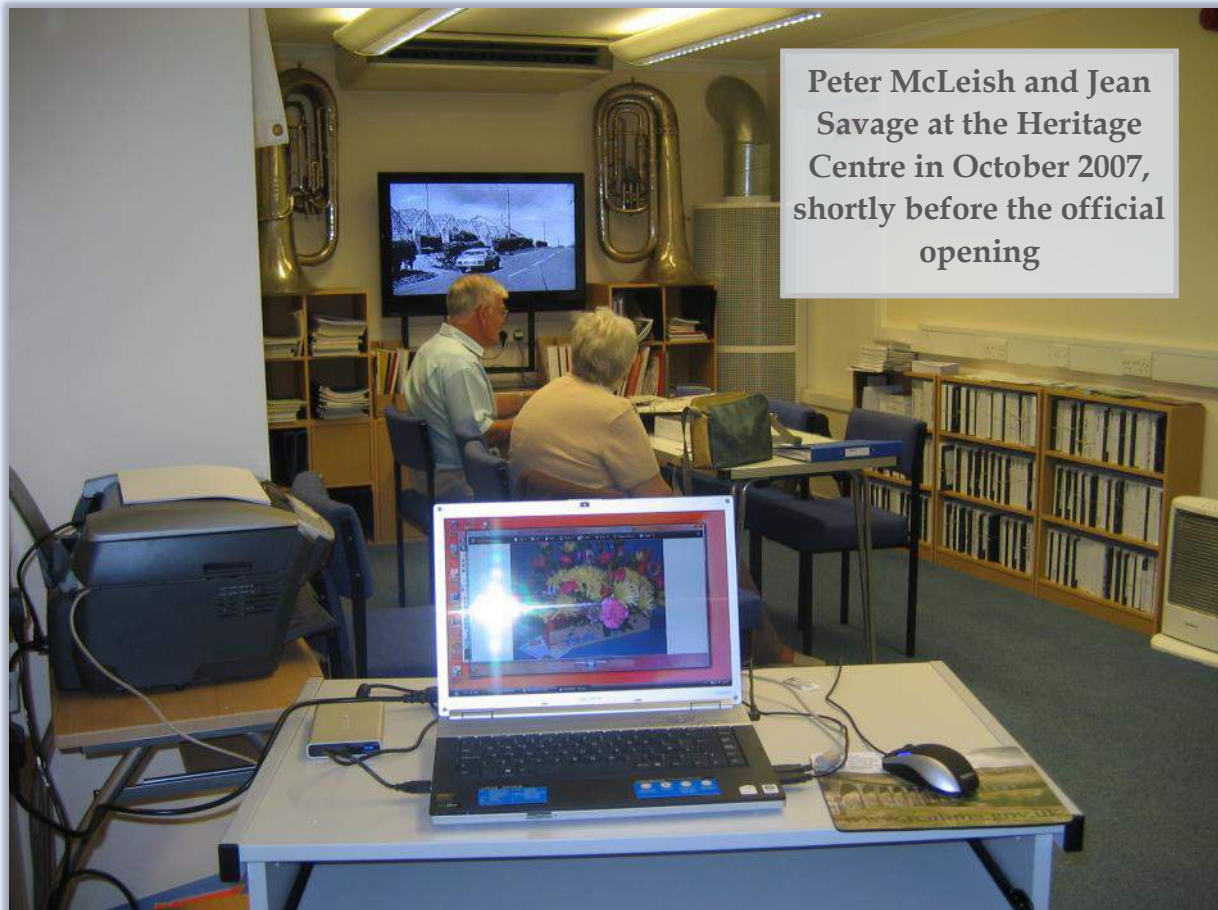
**April 5th** Carluke High Mill Project with guest speaker Christine Warren of Carluke Parish Historical Society

**April 19th** AGM: the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society & Coalburn's Heritage - past, present & future

**Coalburn Bowling Club, 7 for 7.15pm**

*To keep up with our news find us on Facebook:*

**Just put 'Coalburn' into the search box at [www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)**



Peter McLeish and Jean Savage at the Heritage Centre in October 2007, shortly before the official opening