

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter 71

Summer 2023



Pretoria Court and Shoulderigg Road (2015)



Chairperson's Remarks and Heritage News

Summer 2023

Gala Day Coalburn Gala fell on Saturday July 1st this year and was the usual success, thanks to the organising committee of Lee Neil, Heather Rowan, Rachel Cornock, Hazel Stevenson, Elizabeth Cornock and Claire Robinson - pictured below at the head of the parade in Dunn Crescent .



We weren't able to host the usual display in the Leisure Centre this year - little opportunity to prepare and lack of person-power for the day worked against us. We very much hope that this will prove to have been a one-off and that we'll be back to 'normal service' next time. If you think you might like to help out for 2024 then it's never too early to get in touch.

Peter McLeish Memorial Fund Having raised a grand total of £1,500, Peter's daughters Barbara and Fiona posted this kind message for Gala Day:

A huge thank you to everyone who gave so generously to the Peter McLeish Memorial Fund, which was set up for our Dad on his passing on 1st October 2021. This fund has now closed.

Dad would have been humbled and proud to know that your donations totalling

£1,500 will be passed to some of the much-loved groups he was involved with in Coalburn. We have asked the Heritage Group to use some of this money for specific projects:

- Coalburn Primary School towards their annual prize-giving
- Coalburn Men's Shed for a historical project – e.g., maybe stories from the old Men's Shed that used to be in Timbertown. Our Uncle Dan Smart (of Bellfield) was a frequent visitor

Mum and Dad loved being involved in Coalburn Gala Day. Dad was extremely proud to be part of it through the Heritage Group. Well done to all of today's Gala Day contributors, and on behalf of Mum, Dad and the rest of our family, Happy Gala Day to all you beautiful folks of Coalburn!



Barbara (left) and Fiona (right) shared this great picture, taken with their dear mother Jean at Beechgrove Care Home and thanking staff there “for helping us take the photograph without Mum reading the cheque and realising Dad has passed – for he lives on in Mum's world”.

Coalburn Community Action Plan The work to produce a Community Action Plan for Coalburn (see Winter Newsletter 69) is now complete. Published in June, this is available on-line at <https://tinyurl.com/5exzbr6v> and on paper from the One Stop Shop. As anticipated, there is a strong role for heritage within the proposals, which include:

THEME 2 *Connection and cohesion* - Using heritage to create a sense of place:

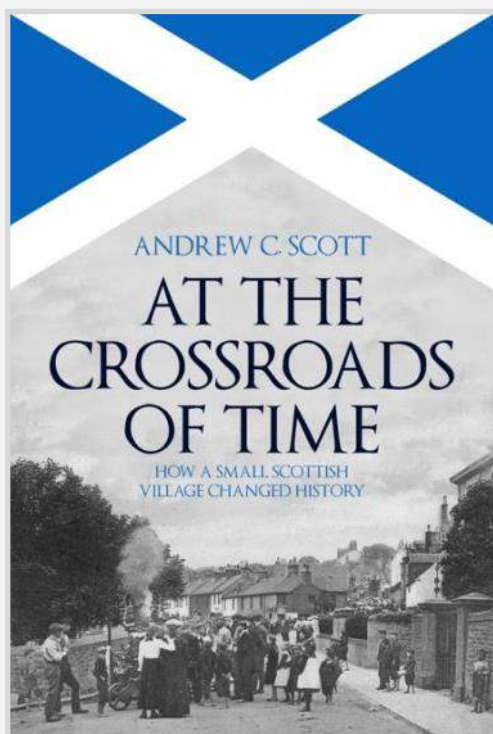
- ♦ Develop heritage assets in and around the village to tell the story of Coalburn
- ♦ Bring local people and groups together to develop interpretation displays and exhibitions and tell their own stories

THEME 5 *Putting Coalburn on the map* - Promoting our heritage:

- ♦ Develop natural and industrial heritage interpretation in and around Coalburn including well marked heritage trails, interpretive boards, and signed landmarks
- ♦ Explore the possibility of creating a memorial sculpture and a more visible ‘wee museum’ for visitors within the village
- ♦ Support volunteers to develop digital resources and online promotion.

Amanda Davis, Development Worker at the Miners’ Welfare One Stop Shop, will be at our 4th October meeting to tell us more about the Action Plan.

'At the Crossroads of Time - how a small Scottish village changed history'



This wide ranging book about Lesmahagow and environs was published in spring 2020 and the planned local launch event was stymied by the pandemic. Earlier this year author Andrew C. Scott - a distinguished geologist/geophysicist from Royal Holloway University of London whose family have deep roots in the parish, including in Coalburn - began contacting local organisations to see about setting up a replacement.

We were delighted when Lesmahagow Library took up the baton, the book having proved popular there, hosting a 'meet the author' event on Friday 9th June. Geoff Brown was able to attend and took this picture of Mr

Scott with his book. We now have our own signed copy, with is available on loan to Heritage Society members from the Heritage Centre.



Unlike many other small villages in the UK, Lesmahagow has many claims to fame, because of its location, its cultural contributions and the distinctive legacy many of its sometime residents have conferred on the history of the nation..... As Scott discusses, some of the inhabitants of the village achieved remarkable transformative and distinguished contributions to the wider world. Andrew Scott knows of what he speaks because his family lived in the village for more than 300 years. The legacy of these people has not commonly been traced to their one single connection - that they all grew up in the same village.

Given its extraordinary legacy in the arts, the sciences and in the world of politics, Lesmahagow may well claim to be a village that changed the world.

*from the Foreword
by Prof Justin Champion*

Coalburn Flower Show, Saturday 26th August Just as we were going to print we heard the welcome news that the Coalburn Horticultural Society will be holding their annual flower show on Saturday 26th August, the first such event since 2019. The flower show will be held at Coalburn Primary School and is open to the public from 2pm. With a favourable wind we might even manage to include a Coalburn heritage mini-display for visitors to the show.

Above is a newscutting of the flower show from days gone by. I would guess late 1970s and I do know one person (Helen Brownlie, on the right). Can you help place the year and any of the others in the photograph?



Committee members and judges admire a section of the colourful display at Coalburn Flower Show, which was held in the Scout Hall on Saturday.

Local and Family History Fair, Saturday 2nd September Lanarkshire Family History Society is arranging this event, to be held at Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life, Coatbridge. Open between 10am and 4pm, there will be stalls with information and advice on local and family history and books etc. available to purchase. Local organisations which will be there include:

- Lanarkshire Family History Society
- Lanarkshire Police Historical Society
- Lanarkshire Fallen Project
- Bothwellhaugh ex-Residents Group
- North Lanarkshire - Archives

Heritage News continued inside back cover.....

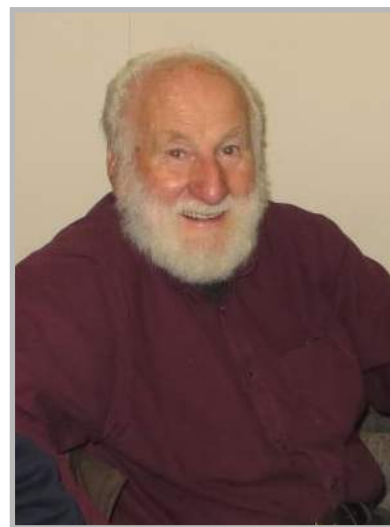
News of the passing of long-time members Howard Johnstone and Mary Duckett arrived just as our spring 2023 newsletter was about to print. We hope that these tributes do justice to two remarkable lives.

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## Howard Johnstone

23rd September 1940 - 31st May 2023

Robert Howard Johnstone was born in Lochmaben, near Dumfries, in 1940. He moved to Coalburn with his wife Marean and their children, Robert and Kate, in 1978: a blessing for which the village has a promotion which required Howard to work from Glasgow to thank.



Howard's father was a farm worker and Howard had spent his childhood at various locations in the south of Scotland, wherever work happened to take the family. Leaving school at 15, Howard soon realised that his interests lay in mechanics and he spent his working life in that field, retiring in 2005 after 33 years working for JCB. Howard also loved travel, particularly biking, and in his holidays he made trips to the USA, Amsterdam and Scandinavia as well as the north of Scotland.

In Coalburn he was widely known as 'the guy who fixes cars' and he could often be found in the garage at home, if not working on a motor vehicle then fixing a chain saw, strimmer, lawnmower or some other mechanical device. Typically Howard didn't keep such tools to himself, but used them in the service of the community - cutting grass, strimming and weeding to keep the village tidy.

Howard and Marean were also involved in various local organisations including the cubs and scouts, the horticultural society and, of course, the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society where Howard served on committee.

On retiring from paid employment Howard was by no means indolent. As well as continuing his many activities in the local community, he became involved with the Vine Trust, an international development charity which enables volunteers to provide medical, home-building and care support to communities living in severe poverty in Tanzania and Peru ([www.vinetrust.org](http://www.vinetrust.org)). One of the activities undertaken is "building individual family homes and

larger children's homes" and it was here that Howard came into his own. He travelled to Peru in 2009 and helped to build a school for deaf boys. In 2012 he made his first trip to Tanzania, as part of a work party which helped to build houses for children who had been orphaned by HIV. Typically, Howard went above and beyond - he also bought rope and taught the children and their carers how to skip, something they had never done before. Howard returned to Tanzania in 2013 and in 2014 but thereafter regulations relating to age prevented him from going back, which he would have dearly loved to have done. Instead Howard continued to support Vine Trust by fund raising.

We recognise the man we knew in this tribute from a fellow member of the Tanzanian work party: *"He was the kindest man with incredible strength. The locals called him Babu out of respect, those of us lucky enough to work alongside him will remember Babu as the leader of the gang"*.

Howard could always be relied on to help with Heritage Society activities, quietly and efficiently, with a no-nonsense approach. He radiated charm and good humour, as in our picture, taken at our Christmas dinner in December 2021. Things just won't be the same without him.

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Mary Duckett

31st August 1948 - 10th June 2023



Mary was the youngest of six children, born in 1948 to coal miner James Cullen and his wife Sally. The Cullen family lived in Midfield Road, Timbertown. In 1950, when Mary was two, her father was killed, aged 38, overcome by gas while working at Kittymuirhill Mine, Stonehouse. Her mother had to go out to work to support the family but the village rallied round - while Sally was working night shift at the canteen at Auchlochan No. 9, Grace Kearney would look after Mary and her brothers and sisters until she came home in the morning.

Mary married Richard Duckett in 1970 and they had two sons, Daniel and Dax. The Duckett family lived in Larkhall, where Mary was active in the community and became a proud recipient of the British Empire Medal.

Mary never forgot her Coalburn roots. In 1988 she made contact with Jim Hamilton, seeking a copy of the 'Coalburn Chronicles', then number-

ing 41. The outcome was that Jim visited to supply copies of those that were still available, he and Mary got talking, and her reminiscences made their way into a later issue (Part 46, issued October 1988).

Mary later became a member of The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn and in 2007 was a guest speaker, sharing the story of her early life in the village.

More recently, prompted by the enquiry from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) seeking information about Coalburn men interred in Lesmahagow cemetery who are commemorated by the CWGC (Newsletter 68, Autumn 2022), Mary got in touch to say that she visited the Somme Battlefields every second year and as she would be going this May: *"If anyone is aware of anyone buried in any of cemeteries or named on any of the memorials that I will be visiting I will be happy to take photos or lay a wreath on behalf of any family."* Several of us were glad to take up this kind offer and when we last heard from Mary she was looking forward to the trip.

We were shocked to hear that Mary died suddenly at home on June 10th.

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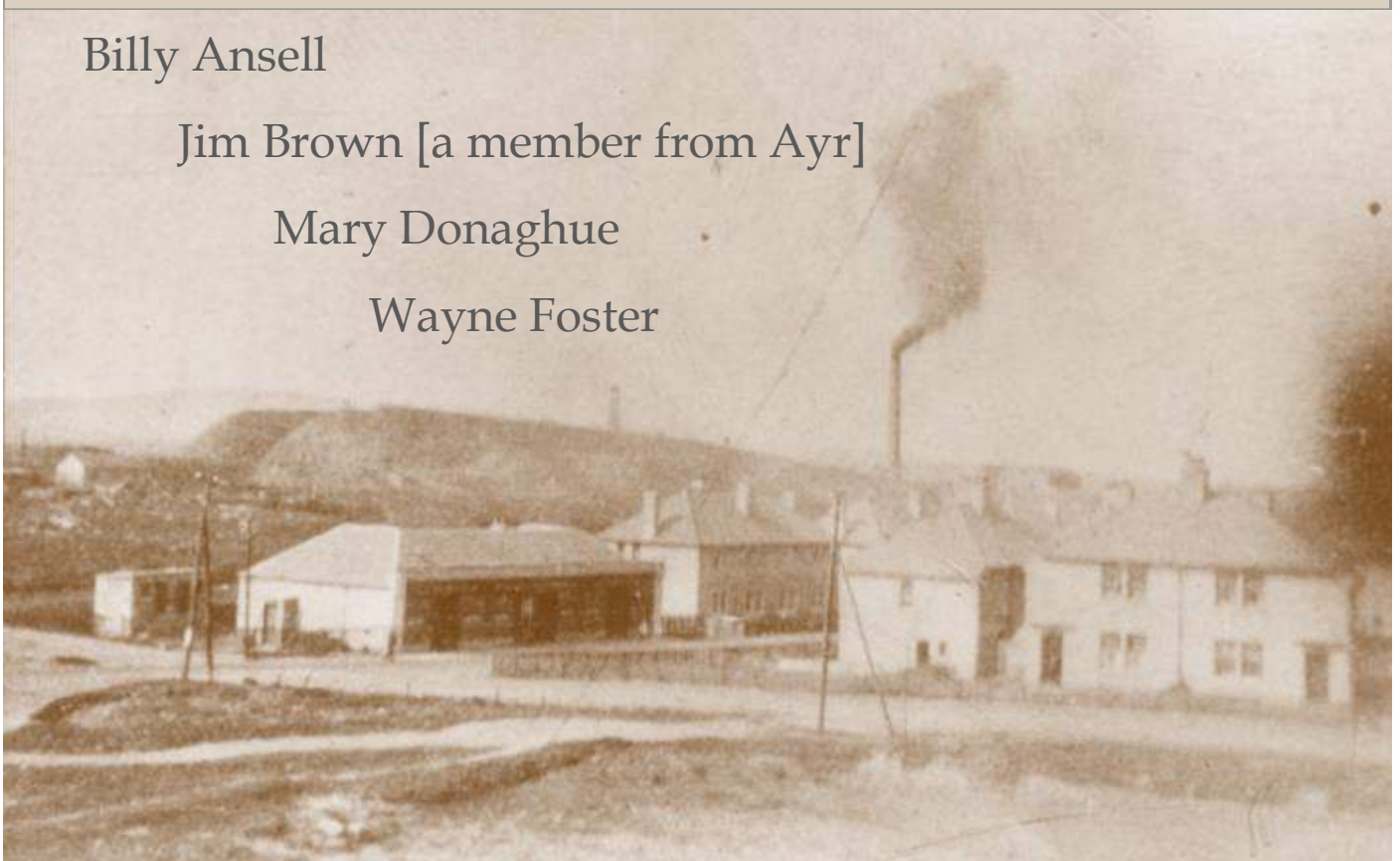
## *In deepest sympathy - Coalburn related deaths*

Billy Ansell

Jim Brown [a member from Ayr]

Mary Donaghue

Wayne Foster





## Coalburn IOR Pipe Band Success

It has been a great summer for Coalburn IOR Pipe Band, awarded first prize in their category at the Scottish Championships in Dumbarton on July 29th, having already come first at the European Championships in Aberdeen on June 24th.

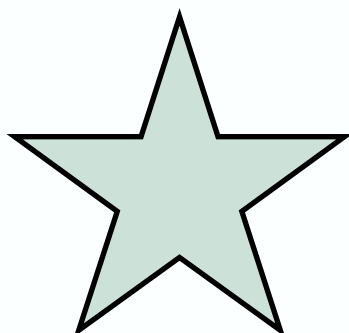


### Band members with their European Championship Trophy

*Standing, left to right:* Donald Williams, Murdo Muircroft, Jamie Brownlie, Shona McCall, Jay Wilson, John Brunton, Alison Hamilton, Lorna Cowan, Billy Denholm, Anthony Morrison, Franklyn Cowan, Ross Brown, Neil Cowan, Iain McFadyen, Archie Sandground, Hardie Crawford, Stevie Graham, Willie Kerr, Allison Lawson, Kera Anderson, Kracy Anderson.

*Front, left to right:* Cameron May, Steven McCall, Cameron O'Neil, Ethan Murray, Robbie May, Philip Duthie, David Lawson and Jamie Anderson.

(the photo doesn't show everyone as some band members had to leave before it was taken)



***Congratulations Billy .....*** Coalburn Gala was not the only reason why Saturday July 1st 2023 was a special day. This was also the 80th birthday of our own Billy Struthers, a founding member of the Heritage Society who is still very much involved. Congratulations Billy, and many thanks from all of us for your dedication to the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn.



Photographic evidence of Billy's long service: pictured December 2007 with Dr Iain Kane of Douglas Heritage Museum at the then recently opened Heritage Centre.







Geoff Brown, Marion & Jim McBain, Billy Struthers,  
Donald Williams - Jim Hamilton Heritage Society  
Committee at Heritage Centre, July 2023

.... We've been kept busy over summer, welcoming visitors to the Heritage Centre as well as responding to enquiries coming in by email and via our Facebook page - which now has almost 300 members. We've also received some very welcome donations for our small museum at the Heritage Centre, about which more in our next issue.

Also held over for the autumn newsletter is a great article by Heritage Society member David Halls, looking back to his experience as photographer at the opening of the new Coalburn Primary School building in November 2015.

*Meetings will recommence Wednesday 6th September.* This will be our AGM and we hope to welcome members old and new for the 2023-24 season. It's a chance to review the last year with the chairperson's annual report and perhaps start to plan for the future. We will have a presentation to show on 'Coalburn Then and Now' ('Now' being 2014) and, if time permits, it might be interesting to look at some of the Census records for Coalburn in 1921, which have recently become available.

For our second meeting in September we are hosting a get together with the Men's Shed, to enjoy one of the many interviews Jim Hamilton conducted with Coalburn gentlemen in times gone by, and perhaps start to plan a similar project in tribute to our late chairman Peter McLeish. This will be in the Miners' Welfare Lounge on the afternoon of Tuesday 19th September.

*Helen and team, August 2023*

*Front and Back Cover pictures courtesy of David Halls*



# *The Jim Hamilton* Heritage Society of Coalburn

Dates for your Diary .....

Coalburn Flower Show **Saturday 26th August**

**Coalburn Primary School Road, 2 - 4 pm**

Local & Family History Fair **Saturday 2nd September**

**Summerlee Museum, Heritage Way, Coatbridge, 10am - 4pm**

*Jim Hamilton Heritage Society Autumn Season*

AGM and Coalburn 'Then & Now' **Wed 6th September**

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

Get together with Coalburn Men's Shed **Tuesday 19th September**

**Coalburn Miners' Welfare Lounge, 42 Coalburn Road, from 2pm**

*Light Refreshments Served*

Coalburn Heritage and the Community Action Plan, with guest

Amanda Davis, Development Worker **Wed 4th October**

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



The Quarry Pool with Right of Way to Douglas (2018)