

*The Jim Hamilton*  
**Heritage Society of Coalburn**  
**Newsletter 72**  
**Autumn 2023**





## Chairperson's Remarks and Heritage News

### *Autumn 2023*

*In this newsletter* we have an entertaining account from David Halls of his experience as photographer at the opening of Coalburn's new primary school building in November 2015, together with some of the great photographs that David took on that day. We also feature the Flower Show, following the 2023 Coalburn Horticultural

Society Show on Saturday August 26th, where the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society was present (see picture) with a display of photographs and information from flower shows in years gone by.

Sadly, we pay tribute to three people close to the Heritage Society who have recently died. Longstanding member Guy Scott lived far from Coalburn for most of his adult life, but never forgot his roots and made many trips north over the years. Mr Scott contributed several articles to the Coalburn Chronicles and also wrote an account of his mother's life in Coalburn, which we have at the Heritage Centre. We also mark the deaths of former member Rena Winning and of Jean Smart, beloved wife of our late chairman Peter McLeish.

The planned feature on donations to our collection is being held over to the first suitable opportunity. Meanwhile, if you are among those who have kindly donated items in recent months - thank you.

### *Heritage Society News - Meetings and Visits*

**Scottish National Mining Museum, 29th August** We welcomed Bill Welsh, who volunteers at the Scottish National Mining Museum at Newtongrange and is currently putting together information about mines in Lesmahagow, Douglas and Carmichael Parishes. Mr Welsh had begun by looking at his native Larkhall and was amazed to find over 100 mines within about a three-mile radius of the town. However, he is particularly interested in our area as one of his grandfathers was a miner at Douglas Water. One of the things that we've been helping with is putting colloquial names to the various pits, to avoid double counting i.e. listing twice, by the 'official' name and the local name - 'The Maid', The Doosie' etc. Donald Williams took the lead in hosting this visit, when Mr Welsh kindly shared the result of his research so far.

**AGM, 6th September** Following our AGM we are in business for another year.

**Jim Hamilton Heritage Society Committee 2023-24**

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Chair: Helen Brownlie Vice Chair: Geoffrey Brown  
Secretary: Donald Williams Treasurer: Marion McBain  
Other Members: Billy Struthers, James McBain

In addition, Marion McBain is taking on the role of membership secretary (not a committee position). Many thanks to our previous membership secretary.

Following AGM business we began to browse a presentation on 'Coalburn Then and Now' - 'now' being around 2014. This prompted so much discussion about how things used to be and what has changed that we viewed only the first ten slides. To be continued ...

**Heritage Walk and Display Board Project** Donald Williams has been working on this for some time and on 14th September he and I met with Amanda Davis, Development Worker at the One Stop Shop. Amanda suggested putting together an impression of how we would want this to look. She also suggested that we divide the project into sections and create a PowerPoint presentation for each section. Donald has since completed a presentation on 'The Inns Brig' area, which was the focus of the *meeting of the Heritage Society on 4th October*. He is currently working on a second presentation which is scheduled for our meeting on 6th December.

Following Amanda's suggestion we plan to mock up an information board for one of the locations. Decisions need to be taken as to the design of these information boards and how they will look. Other options will be considered to support the information boards *e.g.* QR codes, phone apps and leaflets.

Bill Welsh was put in the picture regarding the Heritage Walk project in the course of his visit in August, prompting him to put Donald in touch with Dr Catherine Mills, a senior lecturer in Modern British Environmental History at Stirling University. *Dr Mills visited the Heritage Centre to meet with Donald on October 5th.* She is involved in '[Landscape Legacies of Coal](https://tinyurl.com/29544hxw)' <https://tinyurl.com/29544hxw>. (As well as this webpage, this project has a Facebook page, a presence on Twitter, and a blog - <http://thecoalbunker.stir.ac.uk> which you might find interesting). She and her team are working on a funding application for an app which will tell the story of various places of interest with a history of coalmining. Dr Mills is willing to discuss options for a similar app to help promote the proposed heritage historical walks and has agreed to attend one of our meetings in spring of next year.

*continued inside back cover*

# Photographing the Opening of Coalburn Primary School in November 2015



The Headmaster of Coalburn Primary School, Mr William Scott, had suggested to Peter McLeish that he might like to send a photographer from the Heritage Society to photograph the official opening of the new school on 19th November 2015 by Councillor George Greenshields. Peter invited me to do it; quite a responsibility but I accepted the challenge.

This article is not really about the photography. It was a very memorable event and I encountered several things that I was not prepared for.

I arrived early and parked in the Miners Welfare car park because I was not sure of the parking at the school and walked the rest of the way. It was then raining hard so that I arrived looking like a drowned rat. I eventually met the Headmaster and introduced myself. He suggested that I might like to bring in my equipment. I said I did not need to as I had two cameras about my person; I could see that he was not impressed. Several years earlier I had given up working with digital SLR cameras with heavy lenses in favour of compact Panasonic Travel Zoom cameras which fit in a pocket. Carrying a heavy camera I found exhausting.

You try to be prepared but this was not a type of event I had experienced before. I chose to sit in a seat close to the central aisle so I could take photos seated without

disturbing the audience. However, there were aspects I had not expected.....

This was a posh event. The ladies were in their best frocks and the gentlemen in dark suits with white shirts and ties. I was not a scruff but wearing more casual clothes and I must have stood out like a sore thumb.

The lighting in the hall was so uneven with pools of shadow. I spoke to a senior teacher afterwards and she explained that they had tried to get it sorted but no one could come in time. She and the headmaster had spent time earlier with a stepladder to try to improve the situation themselves.

This was a full performance by the pupils relating the story of the school and its objectives. The quality of the singing and acting was outstanding and I got very emotionally affected. I had to bite my lip and remind myself that I was there to take photos.

I was not the only one recording the event. Apart from people using smartphones, one of the teachers was videoing proceedings from the back of the hall. And the council had sent a professional photographer, using a proper camera with a big lens. He crept around the edges of the audience taking shots from a low angle.



Prior to the cutting of the ribbon across the plaque, George Greenshields gave an encouraging speech to the pupils. At this point, I realised I would not be able to photograph him speaking and then the ribbon-cutting as it was on the far side near the window. I left my seat, moved to the back of the hall and down the far aisle to take a photograph of George giving his speech.

When it came to the ribbon-cutting, the professional photographer took charge and rearranged the pupils and the easel with the plaque to get the photo that he

wanted. I realised I was now even less likely to get a photo myself and so returned to my seat and just before I sat down, I was able to get a shot of the three after the ribbon had been cut.



Councillor George Greenshields with School Captains, Mason Shankley and Rachel Struthers, cutting the ribbon

I was interested to see what the photographer had achieved after all that fuss. The only photo I have seen was in the Council's free newspaper that was widely circulated. It was obviously taken after the ceremony and showed the School Captains, Mason Shankley and Rachel Struthers, holding aloft the plaque. There was no George! What had he done to deserve such treatment from the Council? To show that he was there at the opening, we have my photo as proof.

You can find the rest of my photos from that day on the Society's website at :

<http://www.coalburnheritage.org.uk/2015PrimarySchoolOpening.php>

I would like to thank the headmaster and his staff but particularly the pupils at the School in 2015 for putting on a superb performance that I will never forget.

David Halls

May 2023

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# Coalburn Horticultural Society

## Flower Show 2023



# In Remembrance - Guy Scott

24th October 1930 - 30th September 2023

Born Gavin Barrie Scott on 24th October 1930, Guy spent his childhood and teenage years in Coalburn, where his father John, who had fought in the first world war, was a miner all of his working days. Growing up, Guy had a brother John and sisters Helen, Sophie and Martha. Another sister, Nettie, died in infancy.

Guy recalled life in the Scott family home as poor but happy. He particularly remembered his mother - Helen Hamilton Barrie Scott - singing and her ability to always have a meal on the table, even during hard times.

During his late teens Guy joined the local cycling club, the Nethanvale Wheelers. Here he met and courted Jean Donaldson, and together they cycled all over Scotland with the Wheelers. Guy and Jean married in February 1953 in Blackwood.

Guy's first job was as a car mechanic and he combined this with attendance at night school to gain further qualifications. He and Jean moved to Scunthorpe in Lincolnshire in the year they were married, as Guy was offered a job at Scunthorpe Technical College as a lecturer in automotive engineering. Their children, Anne and John, were born there. The family moved to Sunderland in county Durham in 1960 when Guy was offered a job as a senior lecturer at Sunderland Technical College.

In 1965 the family moved again, this time to Colchester where Guy gained a further teaching post, eventually becoming Head of Automotive Engineering at Colchester Institute.

Their home there became the family hub, with frequent family visits and parties a regular feature. Guy and Jean's four grandchildren were all born in Colchester; much to Guy and Jean's delight.

Guy and Jean and their family made the journey to Coalburn at least two or



1993 - Guy and Jean were celebrating their 40th Wedding Anniversary with a ceilidh at Coalburn Miners' Welfare

three times each year to see family, including for New Year parties which are fondly remembered by all. Back home in Colchester, Guy continued to stay in close contact with his roots and family via phone calls and frequent letters. He was an avid reader of the 'Coalburn Chronicles' and contributed several articles.

After Jean's death in 2017 Guy managed for a while on his own before moving in with son John in Frinton, Essex. When John had a heart attack, while the Covid pandemic was at its height, Guy moved up to Middleton in Northamptonshire to live with daughter Anne and son in law Mak. Here the New Year celebrations continued and Guy was able to see more of his family, now including four great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren. Guy and Jean were proud of their family and Guy relished seeing them at every available opportunity.

Latterly Guy was a resident at Priors Hall Care Home in Corby. He was very happy there, joining in entertainments, singalongs of old songs and joining trips and other activities. Singing though was a favourite, a passion he had throughout his life.

On September 30th, 2023, Guy died at the age of 92, surrounded by his much loved, and much loving, children and grandchildren and he has left them all with a great legacy and many, many happy memories.

He is survived by his sister Helen, who lives in England, and sister Martha, in Douglas.

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We are grateful to Guy's daughter and son in law who shared their heartfelt family eulogy to form the bedrock of this tribute to Guy's life.

Guy Scott was indeed a stalwart of Coalburn Heritage, keeping up his membership of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society to the end.

He contributed several articles to 'Coalburn Chronicles', possibly more than any other person, with the exception of Jim Hamilton himself:

The Nethanvale Wheelers - Issue 17

Coalburn Schooldays and the story of the Scott family - Issue 24

Memories of Coalburn During WWII - Issue 52

Guy also wrote up the story of his mother's life.

A retrospective of Guy Scott's working life, penned by Jim Hamilton on Guy's retirement in 1990, is in Issue 65

*We hold copies of all of these at the Coalburn Heritage Centre and hope they will be a lasting tribute, read for years to come.*

# In Remembrance - Jean Smart

Died 12th September 2023

Jean Smart, widow of Peter McLeish, died on September 12th after a long illness. Jean's health had begun to deteriorate further over summer and her daughters Barbara and Fiona remained by her side at Beechgrove Care Home much of the time over her last weeks and months. Barbara and Fiona tell us that their dear mother retained her spirit into her last days, had good end of life care and passed away peacefully on Tuesday, September 12th.

We send our condolences and kindest regards to Barbara, Fiona and all who knew and loved Jean. Thanks to Barbara and Fiona for kind permission to share these photographs of their mother with her beloved husband, Peter.



# In Remembrance - Rena Winning

Died 7th August 2023



Rena Winning, neé Whitelaw, died on 7th August in Bankhouse Care Home.

A former member of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn, Rena was born, brought up and lived in Boghead all her days until she went into the Care Home.

Fellow member Margaret Allan has sent us this lovely picture, taken together with Rena at Boghead Christmas lunch last year.

Margaret also shared this tribute to her neighbour of many years:

*Rena and her late husband Harry were our neighbours from 1979 when we moved to the village from Argyll. They were the best people and loved our kids and what they were up to as they had no children of their own.*

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# Coalburn Flower Show - 1983

Our record of the 1983 Flower Show is unique because Jim Hamilton arranged for the event to be filmed on video and he also wrote about it in detail .....



The summer of 1983 will be remembered for its long hours of sunshine, high temperatures bringing hitherto unknown periods of humidity and weeks passing without rain. I wondered if the droughty conditions in the gardens and a sun which caused blooms to appear quickly and burn themselves out within a few

days might reduce the number and quality of entries but I need not have worried because when I entered the Scout Hall, I was relieved and pleased to see the blooms and other exhibits laid out and the entries in no way diminished from the previous year.

As I stood and looked round the hall, I felt a warming pride that our village had again managed to keep the flower show alive.

The judges were Dave Smith from Lesmahagow and Jimmy Henderson from Rigside. Lest anyone think that winning firsts at Coalburn Horticultural Society means earning huge prizes, the best exhibit in the show carries a remuneration of £3 with several prizes of £2 and £1.



John Weir and John Arthur joined with me on a tour of the exhibits. At the appointed time, the doors were opened and upwards of one hundred persons crowded into the hall.

It was my privilege to introduce George Reid from Douglas, who presented the cups to the winners of the various sections.



The afternoon sped quickly onward and many villagers were kind enough to visit the show and pass favourable comment on the quality of the entries. Soon the clock was moving on to 4.30pm and after the prize draw, the stalls began to be cleared and dismantled. Villagers who had bought

cut flowers at the show, appeared again to collect their purchases, carrying them off with obvious delight and appreciation.



## Photographs

1. Mary and Jimmy Hamilton of the post office, viewing the display.
2. Young Jim Simpson with his prize winning entry.
3. Jessie Greenshields with the McLean Trophy for best exhibit in the 'industrial section'. Awarding the prize, Jim Hamilton remarks "this is where I see Jessie every year". On this occasion Jessie's winning entry was a "fancy tea apron".
4. Kate Blair (Johnstone), Ann Burnside (McLean), Margaret McLean, James McLean.



1983: John Arthur, then President of Coalburn Horticultural Society, in his greenhouse

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## *In deepest sympathy - Coalburn related deaths*

Betty Bulloch (Donaghue)

Grace Donaghue

Jean McLeish (Smart)

Faye Richardson (Mackenzie)

Guy Scott

Rena Winning (Whitelaw)

## *Heritage Society News: Meetings, continued.....*

### ***Joint meeting with Coalburn Men's Shed, 19th September***

For our second meeting of the season we got together with Coalburn Men's Shed, in memory of our late and sadly missed chairman Peter McLeish. Gordon Ritchie gave an excellent presentation on the Men's Shed movement and developments to date at Coalburn Men's Shed.



**Gordon Ritchie with Billy Struthers (on the left)  
and Geoff Brown (right)**

This was followed by refreshments provided by Poppy's café and kindly funded by Coalburn Miners' Welfare Charitable Society. Members of Peter's family attended, as did representatives of the Darby and Joan Club, where Peter was an active member.

There was interest in holding a meeting to celebrate Peter's life in Coalburn, so this is something that we hope to arrange for sometime in 2024.

***Meeting, 4th October featured the 'Inns Brig' presentation by Donald Williams*** - see 'Heritage Walk and Display Board Project', above.

***Meeting, 26th October, the work of Jim Hamilton and the early days of The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn*** - included a newly discovered PowerPoint presentation, previously prepared by John Zawadski. This was another afternoon meeting in the Welfare Lounge and again we enjoyed our tea and biscuits courtesy of Poppy's café and the Miners' Welfare Charitable Society.

Finally, the proposal to show another of Jim Hamilton's interviews has not yet materialised, largely due to poor sound quality obtained in trials. The sound system in the Miners' Welfare lounge is excellent but the interface with the old technology of the DVDs has proved a problem. We do hope to resolve the issue and in any case are able to show DVD interviews when meeting at the Bowling Club.

***Helen and team,  
November 2023***

*The Jim Hamilton*  
**Heritage Society of Coalburn**  
[www.coalburnheritage.org.uk](http://www.coalburnheritage.org.uk)

*Further Meetings for the Autumn Season*

**Coalburn Heritage and the Community Action Plan, with guest  
Amanda Davis, Development Worker**

**Thursday 23rd November**

**Coalburn Miners' Welfare Lounge, 2pm**

**Coalburn Heritage, Presentation II by Donald Williams**

**Wed 6th December**

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

*Christmas Dinner*

**Sunday 10th December**

**Evening Meal - venue to be confirmed**

*Membership*

Members 'old' and new have joined up for the 2023-24 season. If you've not yet paid your membership, here are the details you need.

Fees remain as before:

£15 for a single adult

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

£2 for under 16s

To pay by on-line transfer, 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.

Payment may also 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**.

Marion is also the person to contact should you wish to join. Please phone 01555 820234 or e-mail [coalburn.heritage@gmail.com](mailto:coalburn.heritage@gmail.com).

**Cover Picture by Guy Scott, 1984**