

The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

Newsletter **76** Autumn-Winter 2024-25





Chairperson's Remarks

Autumn-Winter 2024-25

The 2024-25 season so far has been a busy time, so here we are just about into spring and this is the first newsletter of this period. Meanwhile we've been endeavouring to keep members in the picture with 'Information & Updates' from time to time, shared by email and circulated at meetings. We also share minutes in this way. However, this isn't reaching members who don't get to meetings and aren't on email, so this newsletter will have a bit of repetition for some of you, as we look at the first half of the 2024-25 season (September – January).

Sadly there have been quite a number of deaths of Coalburn people during this time. Here at the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society we are particularly sorry to report the death of David Halls, a stalwart member who contributed greatly over the years. We have a tribute to David and his work for us here.

One of the positive changes occurring over the last few months is building stronger ties with members at a distance. Now that the world has gone digital it's much easier to keep in touch and share items for mutual interest. For example, you'll find have an article by Ann Thomas (née Scanlon) in tribute to her great uncle David, who emigrated to Canada and was killed in WWI.

Finally, as this will be the last newsletter before our 2025 AGM, please do come forward and let us know if you would like to join our committee for the 2025-26 season, including if you might consider an office bearer position.

Helen Brownlie, March 2025

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## Jim Hamilton Heritage Society News

### *Meetings, Autumn 2024 & Winter 2025*

**Alex Watson, former miner** The new season got off to a great start on September 11th with a talk by Alex Watson. Alex gave a fantastic insight to his life as a miner, from his first experience in the pits straight out of school to being a well-respected colleague to all who worked with him.

Alex spoke of a number of local men who have travelled with him on his jour-

ney through life, both above and underground as a miner. The talk was peppered with anecdotes and funny stories and of course the unpleasant duties of a miner also.



This was one of our best attended meetings of all time, with a great atmosphere and reminiscences that continued as we mingled afterwards.

As well as being a great speaker, Alex is a talented artist. We were delighted to receive one of his paintings, a portrait of a miner. We are also pleased to report that Alex has since joined the JHHS of Coalburn – welcome, Alex.

September 15th saw *Donald Williams* take centre stage, with a virtual tour through the first *Coalburn Route at the Eco-Museum of Mining Landscapes* (see page 11, further information can also be found in Issues 74 & 75).

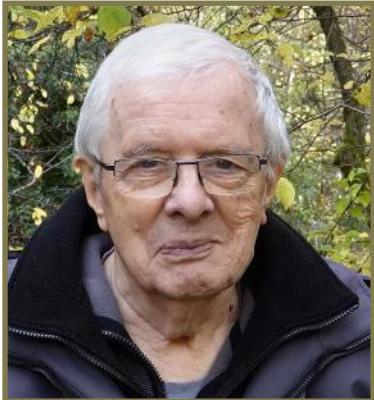
Together with Billy Struthers and George Callan, Donald later visited the National Mining Museum at Newtongrange for a follow up meeting with University of Stirling staff and to find out more about the range of resources available there. Our representatives were overwhelmed with the amount of information available in the Museum Library.

*Terence Wise* was our guest on October 9th, with a presentation on the *History of Blackwood Estate*. This was an altogether intriguing and enlightening talk. Terry is a member of Lesmahagow Parish Historical Association and lives at the former Blackwood estate. He described the history of the Hope Vere family and went on to cover the demise of their estate, which had been one of the largest in Scotland. He then outlined how the old estate has developed with new high-end housing being built, in many instances combining the old with the new.

*100 years in Coalburn* “As we approach the end of each year, our thoughts turn nostalgically to days of yore. I began to wonder what Coalburn was like fifty years ago, not long after I was born.” This was Jim Hamilton's introduction to a 1974 article comparing Coalburn with 50 years previously. Topics covered included the population of the village, transport, politics and local amenities. ... *contd. on page 9*

# In Remembrance - David Halls

2nd November 1942 – 22nd December 2024



Born in Ipswich in 1942, David Halls came north with his wife Rózsa when work took him to Glasgow. It was fortunate for us in many a way that David and Rózsa later decided to move to Lesmahagow. Arriving late 1994 they soon got to know local people, including Robert McLeish of Lesmahagow Parish Historical Association who lived nearby. David was an active member of Lesmahagow Photographic Society (LPS) and he first came to Coalburn when the LPS President Jim Forsyth was our guest speaker in January 2008. Thereafter David and Rózsa joined the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society and were regular attenders for many years, until meetings stopped in spring 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Unfortunately, by the time we restarted in autumn the following year David's health was not good and we saw him only twice: when he visited our Gala Day exhibition in July 2022, and at our AGM that September, which must have taken a great deal of effort to attend. Sadly David never regained his health, and he died on 22nd December, 2024, at the age of 82.

David Halls was a very able man, who trained as an analytical chemist and achieved great things in his chosen profession. He worked for the NHS at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and taught himself computer programming to assist with his workflow at the Trace Element and Micronutrient Unit there. David then went on to develop a website for the Unit. On retiring he continued to produce websites for other organisations, including other NHS laboratories.

David also excelled in his leisure interests, notably photography. Over the years he gave several talks for us, showcasing his photographs, including pictures of his travels with Rózsa to her native Hungary. However, without a doubt his most significant contribution to the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn was our website, which he set about developing almost immediately on joining. David both constructed and maintained this singlehandedly, hosting some pages on his own site when our storage space became insufficient, with a vast wealth of material.

A truly remarkable gentleman, David had a modest demeanour, belying his considerable talents. He is sadly missed.

David's own website showcases his work, with many wonderful photographs of our area:  
<http://www.djhweb.co.uk/>

# *In deepest sympathy - Coalburn related deaths*

William Adams

William Allan

Rita Bennett

Janet Britton

Dougie Donaghue

Jimmy Donaghue

Jean Haddow (Harrison)

David Halls

Billy Kirkpatrick

Elizabeth McCluckie (Stevenson)

Cathy Stainthorpe (McGaffney)

Jim McNeil

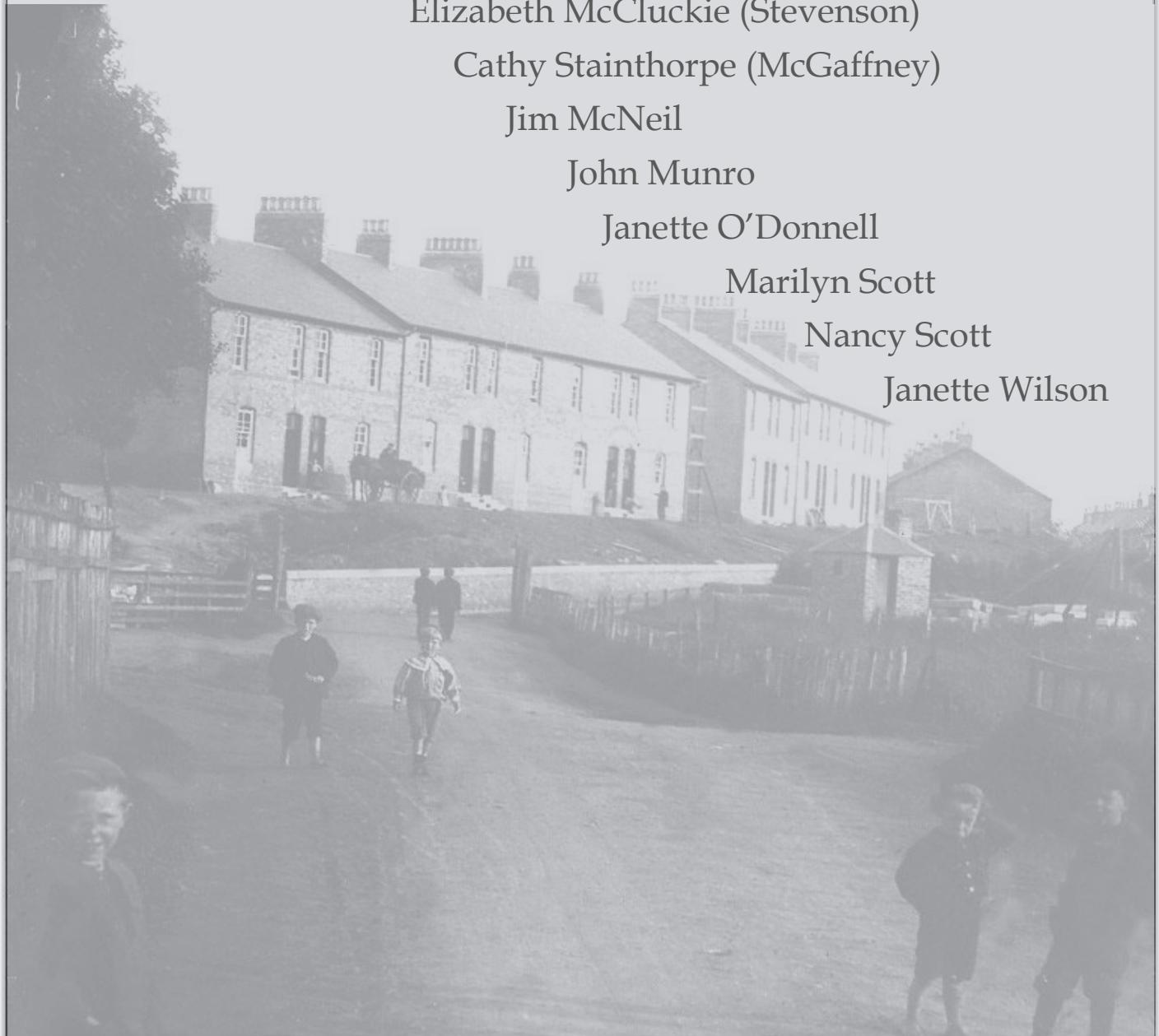
John Munro

Janette O'Donnell

Marilyn Scott

Nancy Scott

Janette Wilson



# Tribute to a Coalburn Soldier

*David Scanlon 1883-1917*

≈ ≈ ≈ by Ann Thomas ≈ ≈ ≈

If you are passing the stairway to the upper hall at Coalburn Miners' Welfare, pause and look closely at the names of our local heroes who gave their lives for world peace in the great wars. Many of our local families will recognise the names on the War Memorial there, and can be proud of their ancestors.

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The name 'David Scanlon' on the Coalburn War Memorial has intrigued me since childhood, as I was born Ann Scanlon and brought up in Coalburn. I emigrated to Canada in the 60s but returned to England in the 70s. In retirement I have been honoured and privileged to have had the support of another émigré – William (Billy) Clelland, a legend of the Heritage Society, living in Australia, who has helped me in researching my Scanlon ancestry. Billy's work on family trees and history of Lesmaghan and Coalburn is phenomenal. The following information opened a wider insight into the courage and fortitude of our forebears.

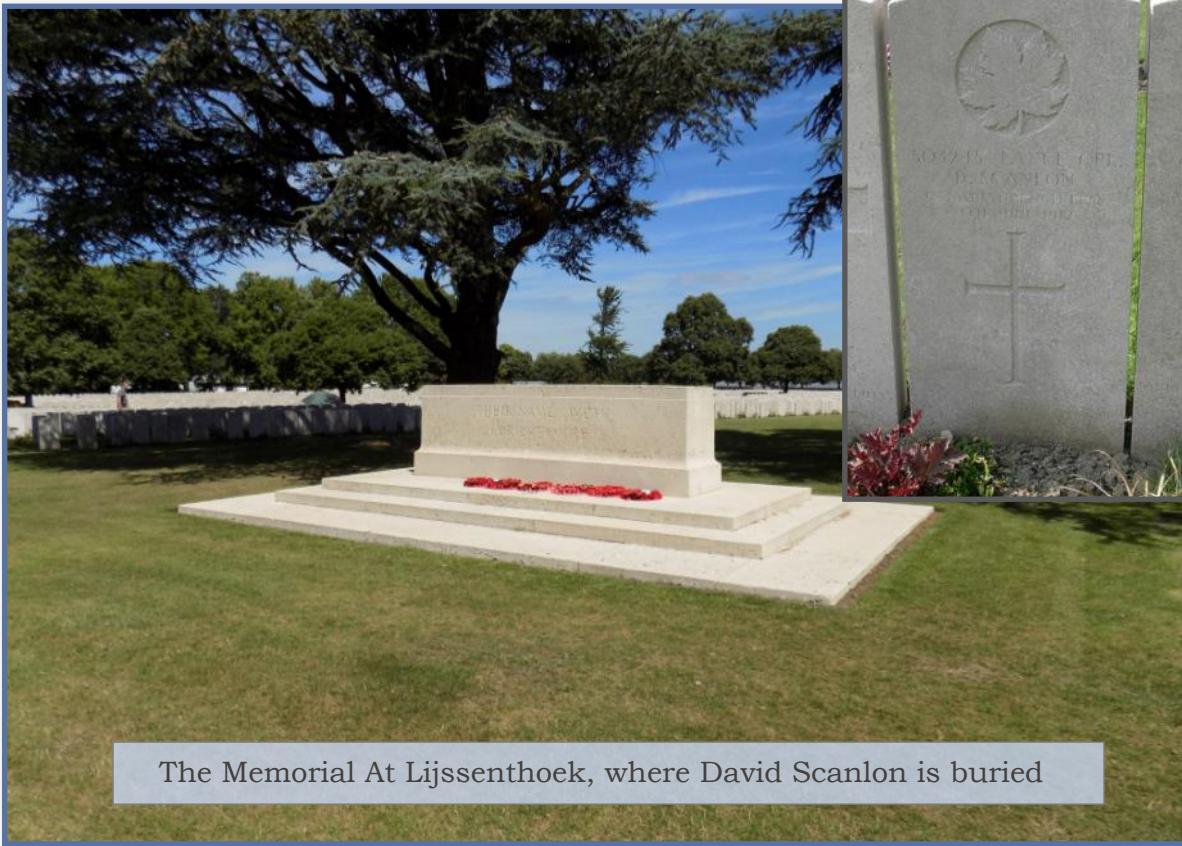
David Scanlon was my great uncle, brother of my 'papa' Robert Scanlon (born in 1876) and uncle of my dad Willie Scanlon (born in 1906). I knew of many relatives who emigrated to North America, New Zealand and Australia, and discovered that Dave, as he was known, left Coalburn in January 1906 at the age of 22 for Halifax, Nova Scotia. His onward destination was the town of 'Sydney Mines' in Cape Breton, where the coal industry had become a major part of Canada's new prosperity since becoming a British Dominion in 1867.

Sydney Mines played a key role in North America's coal mining and industrial history. The town was named after Viscount Sydney (1733-1800), British Home Secretary in the Pitt Government. He felt it was important to keep Canada as part of the commonwealth and negotiated the US-Canadian border, so that loyalists would have a safe place to go to after the American War of Independence. If a stand had not been taken then, the Canadian border would have been



much further north than today. (Viscount Sydney also gave his name to Sydney, New South Wales, and was responsible for the 'export' of British convicts there.)

Dave Scanlon began his new life in this mining area, but later moved out west and settled in Alberta, choosing to make a living from the land rather than continuing his working life down the pit. He settled in Eunice, a hamlet in the county of Westlock north of Edmonton, and here he applied for a homestead. Early in 1915 he was granted a patent for the land he was farming, but Dave did not remain long on his own patch of Canadian soil. On June 5th he was in Calgary, enlisting in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force to fight in WWI. On 22nd January, 1916 – ten years to the day after setting sail for Canada – David began the journey back to the UK, this time by army ship, then on to Belgium. Here he was part of the 2nd Tunneling Company Canadian Engineers Canadian Corps, First Army. On June 4th 1917, three days after his 34th birthday, Lance Corporal David Scanlon was in action at the Battle of Mt Sorrel. Here, he suffered gunshot wounds and gas poisoning. Taken to a casualty clearing station David Scanlon made the final sacrifice as he passed away of his injuries that same day. He was laid to rest in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.



'The Fallen of Lesmahagow Parish in the Great War 1914-1918' has information about every local soldier who lost his life in WWI.

It was published by the Lanarkshire Family History Society in 2018.

Copies are available at the Heritage Centre

The Scanlon family originated in Dreghorn, Ayrshire,

... where David Ferguson Scanlon was born on June 1st, 1883. Like their father Robert before them, David and his many brothers began work as coalminers at a young age. Robert was killed in a mining accident in July 1898, aged 51, and later that year his mother Margaret died, aged 50. Dave Scanlon, 15 years old, had lost both parents.

The eldest of the family, George, had married Mary Lindsay in Dreghorn in 1890. With no children of their own, George and Mary were able to offer their younger siblings a home. Work as a miner took George to Coalburn and the 1901 Census finds 17-year-old Dave and two younger brothers living with them in Middlemuir: all four were coalminers.

The following year saw another family tragedy when Dave's sister Elizabeth died, leaving two young daughters, Agnes and Helen Lindsay. They too came to live in George's household, as did their father.

At some point the family moved from Middlemuir to Bankend, where in 1905 David was commended for prompt action in responding to a fire that broke out in the store. (Hamilton Advertiser, February 18th)

The next-door neighbours but one in Bankend were the Garrett family, and when Dave left for Canada in January 1906 his companion on the voyage was another young Coalburn miner, Charlie Garrett.

Enlisting in the army in 1915, David named his next of kin as J Feltman of Eunice, Alberta, a fellow farmer who had supported his application for a homestead in 1911. However in his military will he remembered his two nieces, the little girls who had lived with him and to whom he'd bade farewell back in January 1906:

In the event of my Death I leave all my personal property to my nieces Miss Agnes Lindsay and Miss Nellie Scanlon c/o Mr George Scanlon, Maryvale Cottage, Coalburn, Lanarkshire.

Lance Corporal David Scanlon's military service medals were duly dispatched to Coalburn in 1922. But how sad that he had travelled all that way to begin a new life which was tragically cut short by war.

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Ann has sent us a lovely thank you message for publishing her article with information about David Scanlon's life and the information she found, together with Billy Clelland, about the mining areas of Nova Scotia and the 'other' Coalburn. But really, it's what we're here for.

So, do you perhaps have a family story that you'd like to share? If so, please get in touch. We can help to produce the final article and also carry out further research on your story, possibly discovering more about the people and events.

### *The Scanlon School*

Ten years after his death, a school in David's home village in Canada was named in his honour.

"In 1927, the need for a school in the district became quite evident as more settlers moved in with their families. The wheels were put in motion and a board was formed to construct a building on two acres of land. Dave Scanlon, who had a homestead in the area, served in the Canadian Army and was killed overseas in the First World War. It was decided to name the school after him.

...(The) Scanlon School kept its doors open until 1947, when many of the schools were centralized. Pupils were bussed to Jarvie and Dapp school. The school itself was moved to Westlock where it is used as a residence."

extract from 'Wheels of Progress - A History of Dapp' by History Book Committee  
(the hamlet of 'Eunice' was renamed 'Dapp' in 1917)

## **The Other Coalburn** *Nova Scotia, Canada*

One of the first pit hamlets in Canada was in Pictou County, Nova Scotia. And the name? ...  
...Coalburn

The first mine there—the Marsh Mine—was operated by the Nova Scotia Steel & Coal company and opened in 1900. Like Coalburn here in Scotland, you wouldn't know of this by looking at it today. The area was reclaimed in 2005 and now it is beautiful rolling fields with a pond and a lot of wildlife. It is recognised as a great example of reclamation mining – cleaning up historical mines by completing extraction and returning the land to nature or preparing it for other uses.

You will find more information about Coalburn Nova Scotia here:

<https://pictoucounty.net/coalburn.php>

<https://notyourgrandfathersmining.ca/coalburn>

### *Jim Hamilton Heritage Society News contd.*

Jim concluded his article with: "*It is interesting to conjure up what some historian fifty years hence in 2024 will write when looking at Coalburn in 1974 and comparing it with that year which seems so far in the future but in retrospect, it seems that 1924 was only yesterday*". We may not qualify as historians, but we thought it would be interesting to compare the present day with information about Coalburn in 1974 and 100 years ago, in 1924. This formed the basis of our meetings on November 6th, December 4th and the first of 2025, on January 8th.

....contd. overleaf

*Ensuring the Heritage of Coal Mining* is a project dear to the hearts of **Bob McDonald and Colin Findlay of Rutherglen Heritage Society**, our guests on November 20th, who were instrumental in bringing about a Mining Memorial on Rutherglen Main Street. The picture shows Bob (centre) and Colin (on the right), together with Joe Cunningham at the unveiling ceremony in September 2023. Together these three authored the book – ‘*A History of Coal Mining in Rutherglen and Cambuslang*’, published via the ‘*Pits, Ponies, People and Stories*’ Project, which they were heavily involved in. (You may recall that Bob and Colin visited to tell us about this, back in September 2016.) During his visit last November, Bob made the point that more and more of our young people don’t know what coal is. He is concerned that mining heritage is will be lost for ever unless we do something to ensure that there is more focus on mining and mining communities for generations to come. To this end he was speaking to people at the National Mining Museum and others. Suggestions being considered include schoolchildren exploring their family tree to determine if ancestors were involved in coal mining. A recent update from Bob advises that he now has interest in this initiative from a Cambuslang Primary School headteacher and that he will be contacting Friends of the National Mining Museum at Newtongrange to encourage the idea of holding area conferences to help keep our mining heritage to the fore.

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Peter McLeish Memorial –

Jim Hamilton Heritage Society and Coalburn Darby and Joan Club

On December 11th we got together with Coalburn Darby & Joan Club for a special event in memory of Peter McLeish. No surprise that there was a very good turnout. We were particularly pleased that Peter’s daughters, Barbara and Fiona, were able to join us. Photographs of Peter were on display and clips from the film ‘*There’s Light at the End of the Tunnel*’, which Peter and Gilbert Dobbie participated in, were shown. Peter came across as a natural storyteller, just one of the many qualities that endeared him to all who knew him.



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**On January 22nd Ethyl Smith** gave an illustrated talk about *covenanter Richard Cameron* after whom the Cameronian Regiment was named, all the while filling in the background of his life and times with great clarity. As ever, this was a completely absorbing presentation by Ethyl, who was also generous with her time in chatting with folks afterwards, sharing more of her extensive knowledge. Typically, very little was said that afternoon about her remarkable authorship. It so happens that her 6th book – 'Uncertain Times' – has since been published and is available direct from the publisher, Thunderpoint (<https://tinyurl.com/bdkmef8b>).

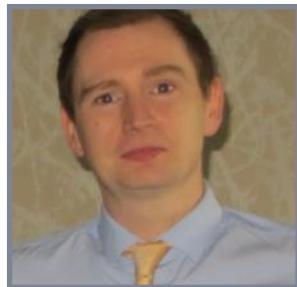
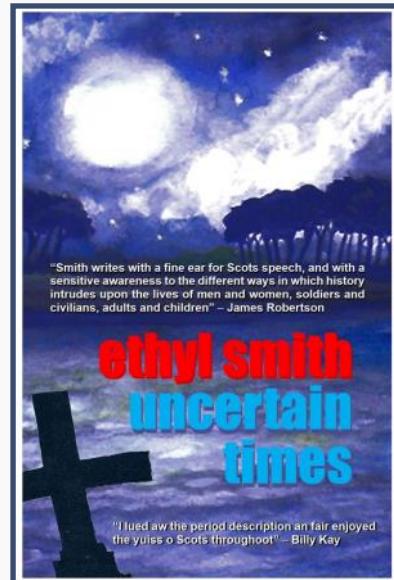


Well done, Ethyl.

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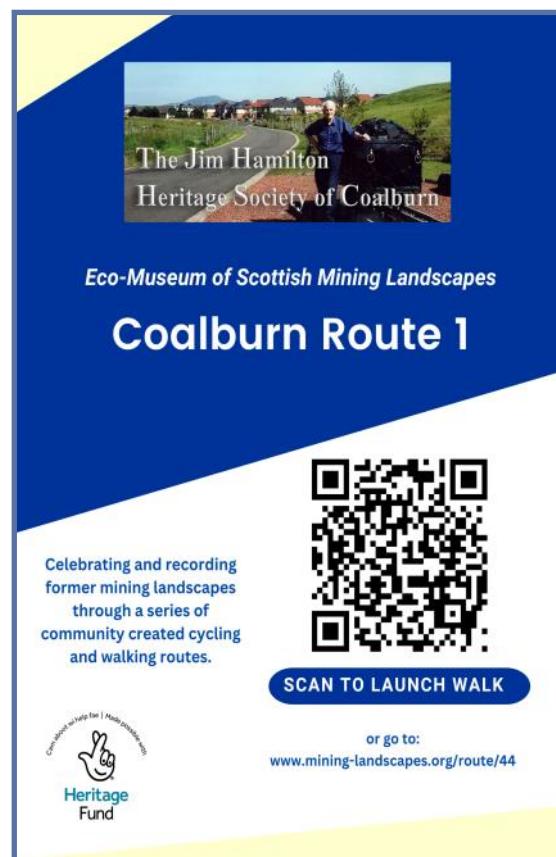
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When Donald (Williams) presented on the Coalburn Mining Landscape last September we were joined by Andrew Watson. A relative newcomer to Coalburn, Andy has a digital business (Watson Digital) and has kindly come forward to assist us with the difficulties we've been having in keeping our website up to date.

After hearing about the Eco-Museum project he put together this promotional flyer for us.

We are pleased to award Andrew an Honorary membership of the JHHS of Coalburn, in recognition of his help.



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

*Meetings April 2025*

**Wednesday 2nd April 7 for 7.15pm**

**Presentation: Donald Williams of the Jim Hamilton Heritage Society**

**Old Coalburn—from the Inns Brig to Bankend**

**Wednesday 30th April 7 for 7.15pm**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Venue: Coalburn Bowling Club**

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Forthcoming Events

New Lanark Spring Heritage Festival

Saturday 19th April

open from 10am to 4pm

Musicians' Gallery (School Building)

Featuring Local Museums, Archives and Community Heritage Groups

- An opportunity to find out about other local heritage organisations -

There will also be short talks throughout the day and heritage related activities

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**Saturday June 7th—Symposium on the Archaeology of the Clyde Valley**

**Lanark Memorial Hall (details to follow)**

**Monday June 7th—Talk on Curling History, Bruce McCowan of Auchenbeg**

**7.30 pm, The Fountain, 11 Abbeygreen, Lesmahagow**

**R.S.V.P. [info@lpha.org.uk](mailto:info@lpha.org.uk)**