
NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



With 54 family members and a small but satisfactory balance in the bank, Bothwell Historical Society can look forward to a positive future. The AGM of the Society held in the Community Hall on October 17th unanimously re-elected the Office Bearers and the Members of the Committee who will continue to work in the best interests of the society and the community of Bothwell. At the same time, committee members and office bearers and indeed the Society as an organisation needs all the help it can get from members and friends with suggestions, new ideas and where appropriate critical comment. We still need volunteers to take part in the Oral History Project and contributions from members to the newsletter or to the website.

Our second Old Bothwell exhibition, part of the 2012 Scarecrow Festival, graciously opened by Mrs Liz Denton, was well received by members and visitors who commented positively not only on the beautifully presented posters but also on the audio tapes of the Oral History project, the pictures of the village taken by participants in the 2012 photography project and the playlet based on the work of ten year old Eilidh Strang of Bothwell Primary School. We look forward with anticipation to developing our links with local schools.

Following the AGM, a stimulating talk on Archibald the Grim was delivered by committee member and professional historian Ian Mc Kellar. Ian had thoroughly researched the life and times of the third Earl of Douglas presenting Bothwell's most famous historical figure in a new light. The society's recently purchased projector was used for the first time to illustrate Ian McKellar's excellent presentation. As one new member commented, "This is my first visit and I'm glad I came."

The next speaker's evening will be on Wednesday 28th November at 7.45pm in the Community Hall when Robert Wilson CBE will talk on the history of passports. Members will be interested to know that the magazine "History Scotland" has included a paragraph on Bothwell Historical Society in its Nov/Dec issue. Members are reminded to keep up to date with our acclaimed website www.bothwellhistoricalsociety.co.uk.

As Chairman I would like to express my sincere thanks to the office bearers, the committee members and to the general membership for their support in progressing the work of Bothwell Historical Society.

Photo Bothwell 2012

As we approach the end of the year, the project to photograph Bothwell in 2012 is nearing completion. Our 15 volunteers have photographed buildings and monuments of all kinds, parks, the Clyde, its banks and bridges, the Nature Trail, the Golf Course and even the sewage works! To date the images of a total of 134 streets have been captured and 1,500 photos taken.



These are stored digitally and can be made available if anyone wants to have a look at them although they will be of more interest to generations to come.

Work begins in the grounds of Silvertrees Hotel

Oral Interviews

We have been continuing to collect stories and memories from some of our “slightly older” generation to add to this project. We have recorded some lovely stories and memories and some very amusing ones too. We are still looking for more people to put down memories and stories for posterity and to help us and our younger generation to hear what life was like some years ago. When we record an interview, the recording is edited and then recorded onto a CD. A copy is given to the interviewee and at this stage we can make any changes that the subject requires. We then give them the updated copy along with any others they may want for family and friends.

One of our interviewees was so pleased with his copy that he asked if he could have some more. We assumed that they were for family or friends but to our surprise he was actually giving them out to his customers in the shop for a donation to the Historical Society! We could have titled this as *“A pound of mince and a CD please”*, (the man in question is one of our local butchers).

If you individually, or as part of a group, would like to join us in recording your memories, please let us know. The interviews take place in your own home and there is no script or agenda to be followed, it is all done at your own pace and is usually very relaxing and fun.

Recording memories as part of a group of four, five or six people gives lots of memories, as someone’s story often leads to another’s similar experience. It can be a very entertaining evening. Recordings usually last an hour or so which is in our experience about all the time it takes.

“Back in February of this year, when I was first approached and asked if I was willing to record some memories of the Bothwell of my childhood, my initial reaction was to refuse but Jack Gallacher doesn’t easily accept no for an answer. Thinking about it, I realised the village where I was born in 1939 was very different from the Bothwell of today and although some things have remained the same, others have changed beyond recognition.

The recording was made in a very relaxed atmosphere and Jack’s easy interviewing technique soon had me recalling all kinds of half forgotten things. Within two or three days, Eric Denton, the technical expert had the recording on CD and apart from sounding like Maisie Mc Flannel a record of my memories of growing up in Bothwell was ready for the archives of the Historical Society.”

Mary McWhinney

Mary McWhinnie (Mary Mitchell) was a worthy “first volunteer” as a member of the Historical Society for the oral history project. Sounding nothing like Maisie Mc Flannel (The McFlannels was a BBC Radio soap family from 1950/60’s Glasgow) Mary has given us a delightful series of reminiscences from her early years in Bothwell, of her father who knew TE Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia and of her years as a teacher in Bellshill.

Mary is also a talented baker and her excellent hospitality was much appreciated by the interviewing team.

The Oral History project still hopes for others to come forward and record their experiences for posterity. Contact *Jack Gallacher on 852324 or Eric Denton on 854171.*

War Memorial Project

Bothwell Historical Society



Needs You!

Countries and organisations around the world are preparing to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War in 2014. It is proposed that the Bothwell Historical Society commemorates not only the occasion, but more importantly, those who gave their lives in that war to end all wars.

The Society intends to research the lives of the 71 men who died in WW1 and whose names are inscribed on the Bothwell War Memorial.

There will be two main aspects to the research. Firstly we will study the families of the men, where they lived and what their occupation was before they signed up. Secondly we will try to find out where and when they died, and describe the battles in which they gave up their lives.

It is intended to involve local schools in the project but much of the work will require to be done by members of the Society. **We need your help.** It does not matter if you have not done such research before. The volunteers will be divided into small groups to do specific tasks and guidance will be given on how to tackle it.

It is intended that the work be completed by 28th July 2014, the centenary of the actual date of the outbreak of the War. The work will then be published as a record and a tribute to those men of Bothwell who sacrificed their lives for us.

If you want to get involved or if you know of anyone with a relative named on the Memorial please let our Secretary, Bill Gow know by email to bill.gow@talktalk.net or by phone on 858505.

The following verses are from a poem (*Letters of Gold*) by Mrs Jeannie Milligan, 5 Waverley Court, Bothwell on the occasion of the installation of the WW1 Memorial Shrine in Bothwell Parish Church.

*In letters of gold, so clear,
bright and plain,*

*On a sbrine of pure oak gleams
each honoured name.*

*Of the heroes who rose at their
country's call,*

*From lowly cottage and stately
Hall.*

*In the trenches deep, on the
bloody red sod,*

*They fought for liberty, truth
and God.*

*Ab! Surely our hearts should
love them well,*

*They brought glory and fame to
our fair Bothwell.*

*And oh, when our bodies lie in
the mould,*

*These names that are written in
letters of gold,*

*Will teach and inspire other
lives to be true,*

*To God and their country their
vows they'll renew.*

*May we prove worthy the
sacrifice made,*

*And feel as we linger by
woodland and glade.*

*How dearly they brought back
our liberty then,*

*That still we may glory in
mountain and glen.*

*None daring to fear us, we
wander at will,*

*Enjoying sweet freedom from
tyranny still.*

*Ab, base, base is the heart
that's ungrateful and cold,*

*Whose eyes ever gaze on these
letters of gold.*

From Martin Donnelly Holy Cross High School

I was delighted to receive an invitation to the Bothwell Historical Society's 'Old Bothwell' exhibition which took place during the town's now annual 'Scarecrow Festival'. Travelling through Bothwell on the way home from Holy Cross High was a bit like finding myself travelling through a Tim Burton movie set. I passed Postman Pat, Super Mario, Simon Cowell, a pirate, an air hostess (with a great personality I'm sure) and many more characters that I'm scared to guess at risk of offending some budding scarecrow artist. One day as I was sitting at the traffic lights I thought to myself 'This is the last straw- I will find out what this is all about!' (I couldn't help myself).

So, hearing from the Society was advantageous in a number of ways. The History Department at Holy Cross High has been keen to get involved with groups from the various 'feeder communities' to our school and we were therefore delighted when we received a letter from the Bothwell Historical Society asking if we would be interested in setting up links with them in the future. Jack Gallacher's invitation to the 'Old Bothwell' exhibition seemed like an ideal place to get a feel for the Society and to meet some of their members (as well as explaining to me why trips to and from school had become rather surreal). We agreed to meet at the exhibition on the Sunday.

I quickly realised that this community based initiative was a unique idea, in fact it was out standing in its field. (sorry, no more, I think). The event seemed to be a great success, with many families really entering into the spirit of the day by dressing up. The Community Hall, where the Historical Society's exhibition was based had been well organised into various themes. I think what struck me most about the exhibition was the extent to which it strived to cater for all aspects of the Bothwell Community. On show were excellent examples of a project by Bothwell Primary School pupils. There was also a recording of a genuinely impressive piece of work by a young pupil, Eilidh Strang, who had written an imaginative diary of a Covenanter's last hours before the Battle of Bothwell Bridge. Moreover, there was a table set aside for 'Old Bothwell' photos (who doesn't get a thrill out of seeing primary evidence of how the town they know so well has changed throughout time?).

Having met various members of the club that day, I was warmly welcomed by everyone and indeed was impressed by their passion for the History of the local area. I had no hesitation in taking out membership of the Society and will be looking forward to working closely with them in the months and years to come.

A Poem

The Bothwell Historical Society

Some old Bothwell "duffers" wanted to know
What Bothwell was like in days long ago

So they started the history club, with only a few
But as the word spread, the membership grew

They talked about history, water and springs
and mining disasters and all sorts of things

All kinds of material came to the fore
Maps, photographs, letters and memories galore

At Scarecrow Weekend lots of folk came to find out
What the History Society was all about

School projects from children amazing to see
And a playlet from Eilidh that was put on CD

So here's to the History Club, long may it last,
To make sense of our present we must know our
past

Anon

An Unusual Heirloom

24th June 1945. A young naval officer is writing a chatty letter to a fellow shipmate with whom he had served earlier in the war aboard “HMS Whelp, a destroyer” commissioned for the Royal navy in 1944.

The letter begins, “Dear Buster.” In informal naval circles “Buster” was the regular soubriquet accorded to personnel whose surname was Brown. I’m assuming the name was taken from the comic strip Buster Brown, created in 1902 but long since forgotten. The Buster here is Lieutenant Donald George Brown, my father. The writer of the letter is Lieutenant Prince Philip of Greece who will of course marry Princess Elizabeth (now the Queen) in 1947 and become the Duke of Edinburgh.

The letter is written on a so called AIR MAIL LETTER CARD, just 20cm x 25cm when fully opened. It states, “These cards are for the use of HM Forces only.” A small section has been cut away; censorship was still necessary for VJ day had yet to be won. “Passed by censor” is stamped in the addressee corner. By this time my father had been posted to another destroyer “HMS Racehorse; and Prince Philip?

“As regards the war we have seen a quite a lot but done very little. In fact the only offensive operation in which we were intimately connected was the landing in Australia and by no standards could we say that the natives were hostile. I might say that they are the very reverse.”...“Apart from brief snatches of civilisation in this crazy country (pubs close at 1800!!!) the Pacific has nothing to recommend it,”... “Reliefs are slowly arriving for all the people who put in the various things last year so I expect quite a party when we get away again.”

There are comments, not all complimentary, about various personnel, “Joe has left us for better or for worse.” “The ** has not improved and I have given up hope of his ever doing so.”

The whole tone of the letter is of man to man, shipmate to shipmate, “...you had to waste a hell of a lot of time farting about...” The writer signs off “Yours aye, PP”

I still have a group photo of the officers aboard “HMS Whelp. This same photo comes up in television documentaries on the life and times of Prince Philip. Just recently I found the photo on the internet. Log on to “HMS Whelp.” My father is the officer on the far left, considerably less tall than his distinguished shipmate!

Keith Brown

An enthusiastic member of Bothwell Historical Society. Keith Brown was born into a naval family in the home of the British navy, Portsmouth. He came to St Andrews University as an undergraduate in 1960 where he met his future wife (as did the grandson of his father’s old shipmate) graduating with an honours degree in French and German, Keith taught modern languages in Lanarkshire schools, latterly in Hamilton Grammar as Principal Teacher until his retirement.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

Wednesday 28th November 2012

“The Story of Passports,” Talk by Robert Wilson CBE
Community Hall, Fallside Road at 7.45pm

Thursday 21st March 2013

The “Death” and Reinvention of Scotland
Talk by our Honorary President Professor Tom Devine
Community Hall, Fallside Road at 7.00pm