
NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



The year 2012/2013 has been both busy and successful for Bothwell Historical Society. Attendances at our Speakers' meetings were very encouraging and the range of topics covered by our guests was greatly appreciated. We were particularly pleased to welcome our

Honorary President, Professor Tom Devine OBE on March 22nd. Tom Devine is an active contributor to the work of our society and he strongly opposed the application by Cala Homes to build houses on the Covenanters' Field calling it a "desecration." Later Professor Devine attended a meeting of the Community Council to express his opposition to Cala's plans.

A great deal of effort on the part of the Committee and of the members together with other organisations in the village went into raising opposition to the proposed development of the last remaining part of the 1679 battlefield. We await the outcome.

The project to research the lives of those men who fought and died in World War 1 and who are recorded on our village memorial is well on the way to completion thanks to the sterling efforts of Bill Gow and his team. We hope to publish this work in time for the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the war.

Our website, carefully supervised by Liz and Eric Denton has received a great deal of attention and is constantly upgraded by our intrepid husband and wife team. We also have to thank Liz and Eric for their work on our newsletters.

For the third year in a row we presented an exhibition as a contribution to the Scarecrow Festival. Although smaller than previous years and held in the Library, attendances were high. Thanks are due to Eric Denton for the excellent photographs matching scenes in contemporary Bothwell to those depicted in historic postcards of yesteryear. This poster attracted a great deal of attention at the exhibition.

Our AGM was held on September 17th when the accounts were presented by Bill Gow and passed by members who also re-elected the office bearers for a further year. Mrs Jean Hardman has joined the committee as the member with responsibility for fund raising. Following the formal part of the meeting a quiz was held in which the members were questioned on their knowledge of both Bothwell and Scottish history. A vote of thanks was proposed by Vice Chairman, George Maxwell

As Chairman I would like to express my warmest thanks to the members of the Committee, to the members and all who have helped to progress the work of Bothwell Historical Society. We would welcome input from members to any aspect of the Society's work. Thank you.

Jack Gallacher

THE BATTLE OF FLODDEN SEPTEMBER 9th 1513

Solemn ceremonies to remember those of both nations who died at Flodden were held on the battlefield and at the High Kirk of Edinburgh St Giles, on Monday September 9th this year. 500 years ago James IV had led the greatest Scottish host ever gathered to cross the Border into England. He did so under the terms of the “Auld Alliance” with France to come to the aid of the French King Louis XII against Henry VIII of England who had invaded France.

In more peaceful times, King James had been a frequent visitor to Bothwell to spend time with his mistress Janet Kennedy then residing in Bothwell Castle. These would be happy times for the King and the assembled nobility. The records show that Janet Kennedy employed musicians at the castle. The Stewart monarchs were the early progenitors of the royal walkabout and doubtless James IV would be a familiar figure to many Bothwell folk of the time.

The Battle of Flodden was a monumental defeat for Scotland and yet paradoxically it wasn't a great victory for England as no English invasion of Scotland took place after the battle. Within two weeks following the disaster, the government of Scotland was operating again. The country faced a long royal minority until James V came of age to govern in his own right. Scotland however, had a great deal of experience of this kind of situation. The nation survived the great defeat of 1513 and even began to flourish with the passing of time.

Because of his defeat at Flodden and despite the fact that Flodden apart, he was a very successful king. James IV has no monument in his kingdom except perhaps that Queen Elizabeth II is descended from this outstanding Scottish monarch and not from Henry VIII

THE ANNUAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY SHOW



Last August our Chairman Jack Gallacher was invited to open Bothwell's Annual Flower Show organised by the Horticultural Society. In his speech he made mention of the history of the Bothwell Horticultural Society, founded in 1842 and how it was considerably older than our own Historical Society. He went on to talk about the importance of preserving our heritage in Bothwell and sought support for the campaign against the development of the Covenanters Field. As ever the Show was well supported by exhibitors and those attending.

DELTIOLOGY

What on earth is deltiology? It simply means collecting postcards. Books of old postcards are very popular with the public and our own exhibition of *“Bothwell Then and Now”* when we took post card views of old Bothwell and matched them alongside contemporary pictures of the same places, was very popular during the Scarecrow Festival this year.

Former music teacher and graduate of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) Julia MacLeod is an enthusiastic deltiologist. She has been a member of Bothwell Historical Society since its inception and has kindly given us access to her postcard collection of old Bothwell views.

Pride of place in Julia’s archive must go to her postcards of St Kilda. The story of this remote island archipelago is well known. Abandoned in 1930 by the original inhabitants who were no longer able to survive the harsh conditions, the islands with their spectacular seascapes are now owned by the National Trust for Scotland.

Her great grandfather, Captain Campbell, was responsible for transporting the Factor to the islands to collect the rents (often in kind) due to the then owner MacLeod of MacLeod of Dunvegan Castle in Skye. Captain Campbell was drowned in 1883 off the Irish island of Rathlin when his ship “Jane” foundered. He left a widow and four children in penury.

His eldest child, Julia, speaking only Gaelic, was sent to service in Pollokshields, Glasgow. Julia MacLeod records that her grandmother was well treated particularly by the cook who was also a Gaelic speaker. Grandmother Julia married the butler’s son in a wedding provided by the master and mistress of the house.

Our thanks are due to Julia MacLeod of Bothwell for this fascinating family story. If you are interested in deltiology or if you have an interesting hobby or a family story, please let us know.



BOTHWELL SPEEDWAY

The sport of speedway riding started way back in the 1920s and went through boom times and bust times. The riders were, in the main, usually in their twenties and thirties and rode their motorbikes just for the joy of racing. The tracks they used were sometimes in large stadia such as White City in Glasgow but some were located in more out of the way places. One local one was "*The Bothwell Speedway Track*". It was not actually in Bothwell but in an area between the main railway line to Edinburgh and one of the pit bings created by the Bothwellpark Colliery. The colliery had closed many years before but the bings remained until their materials were used for road construction.

The Bothwell track was roughly an oval shape about 150 metres long and about 30 metres wide with unequal bends at the ends. The tighter of the two bends became known as "The Devil's Elbow" because of the number of falls there. The track had been constructed using some material from the bings and some blaes brought in from elsewhere. The track did not however last very long for racing, the first race meeting being held around November of 1949 and the last one during February of 1951. The races did have quite a following and some of the riders went on to make a name for themselves at other venues.



The organisers had gone quite some way to have the racetrack equipped with safety barriers and a proper starting grid with tape gate and a spring loaded starting mechanism. There was even a "grandstand" although that consisted of an area of the bing levelled a little. Music was provided and drinks and food were available too. I doubt if

royalties were paid for the music!

Some things common to all speedway tracks were: the noise of the bikes, the smell of the "dope" used in the fuel to give a huge boost to the octane rating of petrol and of course the mud and flying gravel

as the bikes tried to keep upright at the bends.

There was another speedway track near Bothwell just over the river in Blantyre and that one survived into the 1980s. That track was built on the grounds where the miners' rows of Stonefield had been (Craighead Rows). Today that ground is used as a parking area for Parks of Hamilton's coaches.

Eric Denton

HOLLYWOOD COMES TO BOTHWELL

Glasgow actor, *Peter Capaldi*, has had a distinguished career to date. Recently it was announced that he has been give the role of the latest incarnation of the most famous doctor in television *Dr WHO*. Previously he was best known for his role as the foul mouthed Malcolm Tucker in the BBC comedy hit *“The Thick of It.”*

Back in 1995 he became famous as a Hollywood Oscar winner for his short film Franz Kafka’s *“It’s a Wonderful Life”*. Later that year he came to Bothwell with his wife, the actress and writer Elaine Collins and daughter Cecily, together with his father-in-law Bill Collins, for lunch with my family.



My wife and I had known the Collins family for many years. Here I am in the picture standing on my front doorstep with Oscar on his visit to Bothwell. Peter is the one with the curly hair!

If you have any interesting mementos or photographs hidden away, please share them with us.

OUR WEBSITE: www.bothwellhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Our website continues to be well visited and has had hits from many countries including China, Romania, Canada, Italy, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

August showed a massive increase in website traffic largely due to people wishing to access the link to the SLC website where opposition to the proposal to build houses on the Covenanters’ Field could be accessed.

If you have not yet lodged your objection, or you know of others who haven’t yet done so, please visit our website, click on the links page and select SLC. This will take you to the appropriate page where your opinion can be lodged. New submissions are still being added despite the original deadline having passed. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of two people, none of those in favour of the Cala proposal lives in Bothwell.

Webmaster

WW1 RESEARCH PROJECT

Last November the Society embarked on a project to commemorate the men of Bothwell who fell in the Great War. The intention is to produce a book of "Bothwell's Roll of Honour" by 2014 to mark the start of WW1 and to acknowledge the sacrifice made by those men.

Initially the intention was to investigate the 71 men on the Bothwell War Memorial. However we soon discovered that there were others with Bothwell connections who died in the war. Bothwell Parish Church Roll of Honour and Wooddean/Kirkfield Church Roll of Honour (now in the Parish Church) provided additional names as did some of the gravestones in the Kirkyard.

Because there was no war memorial at Bothwellhaugh it was decided to include those men from Bothwellhaugh who died in the War. With these additional names the total number of men we are now researching has risen to 95. To date we have completed about half of them and are progressing well with the rest. If anyone has any connection with someone from Bothwell who died in WW1, we would be delighted if you got in touch.

Bill Gow



Before the Cenotaph By Macormack Thompson

Two minutes silence....

How still the people stood – as carved from wood.
So still – the papers said – that even a pin let fall
Might have been heard by that mute multitude
There met, to own a debt they could not pay, nor yet forget.

Two minutes silence....

God! What tumult rent my ears as I stood there:
The shriek of shells, the groans of mangled men,
The screams of horses maddened with their pain:
The air around them seemed splitting with the sound
Of bursting bombs that tore the breast of earth
And shred the very crosses of the soldiers dead.

Two minutes solemn silence!

My smothered sob – half laugh,
Was heard by none before the Cenotaph.

Published in the Hamilton Advertiser

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A NEW PROJECT

When I was approached to join the Society, it was on the basis that my knowledge of the history of mining in Lanarkshire would be helpful to the committee. Limiting my contribution to the history of the Castle Colliery was never in my mind.

I have always been intrigued with the connection between the Roman fort at Bothwellhaugh and the Roman road uncovered at both Birkenshaw and Bellziehill. Again some years ago, when studying the mining situation of the area south of the Monkland Canal, I wondered if centuries before there had been trade between the monks at Drumpellier, who were famed for their agricultural produce and the aristocracy at Bothwell Castle.

If so, a track for pack-horses would have been created. Could this track have determined the present road from Bargeddie to Tannochside and from Tannochside to Uddingston? I thought that when I retired perhaps that both would make a good research topic. So I am having a go at it!

I have written to the Bellshill Speaker inviting interested readers to join in a research team. So far there are seven of us. We shall meet in the Uddingston Bowling Club on a Thursday night during the coming winter months. Hopefully we will give the Society an account of our findings with a talk at some future winter programme. Wish us luck.

George Maxwell



1899 - Courtesy of the National Library