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# NEWSLETTER

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## CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS



Thanks to the hard work of the Office Bearers, the committee members and to you, our general membership, Bothwell Historical Society can look back on another successful year. Our speakers' programme was well received thanks to the varied topics on offer and to the

skills of our visiting speakers. Our newsletters too gained us praise locally and further afield. Our excellent website has been under review but flourishes still under the careful guidance of Liz Denton.

The main research programme for the session was "*Bothwell Parish Church Kirkyard*." This project, our largest to date, recorded the information, where possible, on the gravestones in the churchyard. Biographies and personal details of the deceased were researched by a team of volunteers led by Bill Gow. The monuments were photographed and then the information was published in book form at the cost of £45, later sold to interested parties for the subsidised price of £10. Much to the surprise of the committee members, this highly specialised book was quickly sold out. A specially bound copy of the book was presented to the Revd James Gibson for inclusion in the church archives. Since the publication, the information has been available to a wider audience and has been used in response to enquiries from home and abroad.

During the week of the Scarecrow Festival, the project was the subject of an exhibition in the Donald Institute and attracted much attention. Again in the Library, our large television screen recording the work of the Historical Society and other local organisations

remains popular and as always, is in the capable hands of Eric Denton. It needs constant updating and I would ask you to search your family archives for items of local interest which might be included in the programme.

Like many local organisations, we are an ageing group and we need younger fresher blood. I have written to the Head Teachers of our three local secondary schools to encourage younger people to join. As yet there has been no response

The library in the Donald Institute remains an essential service for the benefit of the people of Bothwell. We have plans to develop our Heritage Corner in the Library and we have been grateful for donations from the good people of Bothwell. Please keep us in mind if you have anything of local interest which you would like to donate. Much of what makes Bothwell a special place is under threat from greedy developers and we must be vigilant. Our main street which is a conservation area is becoming more and more like a branch of M and D's fairground with a multiplicity of garish and inappropriate developments. Recently I saw Bothwell described as "salubrious" in a newspaper. How much longer will this be an appropriate comment? If we care for our community and its environment, we must be vigilant. We welcome progress but not at any cost.

I would like to express my thanks to Roy Rennie for auditing our accounts, to the office bearers and committee members for their hard work and dedication and to you our loyal membership for your support and encouragement.

Jack Gallacher

## NEW VILLAGE SIGNAGE



Congratulations to Bill Jack and the Brighter Bothwell team for the new signs at the entrance to the Village. They are excellent.

We would also like to congratulate Brighter Bothwell for their Silver Gilt award in the Britain in Bloom competition. Two discretionary awards were also given to Bothwell, one for '*Gardening in a Changing Climate*' the other for their work '*Involving Children and Young Adults*.' This was a great achievement considering they were judged best overall out of around 80 candidates.

Well done Brighter Bothwell.

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## SIGNS OF PAST TIMES!



## BOTHWELL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



This year the Bothwell Horticultural Society celebrated its 175th anniversary. Instituted in 1842, its annual flower show was a highlight in the Village, with regular glowing reports in the Hamilton Advertiser. The show was initially held in the Parish Schoolroom but later moved to the Clyde Hotel (now the Bothwell Bridge Hotel). By the 1880s it appears that the Society was in abeyance, there being no news or reports about the Society.

In October 1923 a meeting was held in the Bothwell Public Hall. The chairman, Dr Walls, in his opening remarks stated that *"The records of the old Bothwell Horticultural Society, so long defunct, were carefully preserved by Mr McNab which clearly proved that Bothwell, 50 years ago, had a community with a love of gardening."* Unfortunately these records, so carefully preserved by Mr McNab (bank manager at the Clydesdale Bank) are now lost. The meeting agreed to resurrect the Society and a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer along with sixteen committee members were appointed.

The first Annual Show of the revived Society was held on Saturday 10 September 1924 in the Public Hall, with Lady Wilson of Airdrie opening the Show. In 1929 the Show was opened by the Earl of Home and there were a remarkable 769 entries, a record that still stands to this day. That year membership of the Society stood at 224.

The 1934 Show was opened by The Hon Lady Bridget Douglas Home. In his report that year the Show Secretary stated *"We have a new force which will make its presence felt in the way of increased entries and keener competition, that force being Colonel Vandeleur's deathless army stationed at Bothwell Castle."*

In his annual report of 29 September 1938 the Secretary stated *"In presenting the Annual Report for the current year it is with real regret that the outbreak of hostilities brought our activities to an end and in accordance with*

*the committee meeting of 31 August, the Flower Show stood cancelled."* And so with the outbreak of the Second World War the Bothwell Horticultural Society ceased to function.

However after the war, a desire was expressed by some of the old members to resurrect the Society and this was agreed at a meeting in the Public Hall on 28 October 1948.

In addition to organising a programme of talks and the annual show the Horti, as it was fondly known, ran social evenings and themed dinner dances. One such evening in 1970 was 'The Good Old Days' with a short play, musical items, Can-Can display and buffet supper followed by dancing. Tickets 22/6 each. In 1983 the Society hosted Gardener's Question Time, broadcast by the BBC.

The Society took an active interest in matters concerning the Village: in 1952 it organised a public meeting regarding the safety railing along the Main Street; in 1986 it led a delegation protesting about a proposal to close the library and in 2003, in conjunction with the Council, planted out the shrubs now forming the Jubilee Garden. In the 1950s the Society organised the establishment of a garden and memorial to Drs Walls and Denness at the corner of Hamilton Road and Hamilton Drive. The Garden gradually became overgrown and in 2014 the Society once again stepped in to form what is now known as the Sensory Garden.

From its inception 175 years ago, the Horti has become a well loved and respected institution in the Village. Its Annual Show, one of the last of many in the district, opened by the great and the good of the time and even in 2013 by our own Chairman, Jack Gallacher.



## MYSTERY SOLVED

Our gravestone survey proved to be “a superb help” help for local resident Alice Martin. While on holiday in Palm Springs, California she met an American friend who mentioned that his ancestor came from Bothwell and was buried in the graveyard at Bothwell Parish Church. He had been to Bothwell but was unable to find the grave. Alice took the details and when she got home saw the article about the survey in the Hamilton Advertiser. A visit to the Library gave her access to the book and very quickly she was able to find the gravestone of James Lindsay and Marion Davidson - astonishingly the first gravestone listed in the book! Details of the family as recorded in the book and a photo of the grave have now been sent to Palm Springs.



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## A BLAST FROM THE PAST

56 years ago I said goodbye to my childhood friend. She and her family were emigrating to Australia. Linda and I had been friends since we were about three years old, she was a year older than me. I can always remember how lost I felt when she started school and I was left at home without a friend to play with during school days. Linda and her two siblings always seemed to have the best toys so I used to enjoy playing at her house! I can remember being fascinated with Pearl, her mother! Pearl always seemed to me to be so glamorous, always wearing make-up and painting her toe nails! (in these days women living in a small Scottish village tended not to indulge in cosmetics as they couldn't afford them. I always remember my own mother keeping a pot of Ponds cream and a lipstick for the odd special occasion!)

At the age of eight Linda and her family left Scotland and sailed to Australia! I thought I would never see her again although we promised we would keep in touch! We did write to each other on and off for a number of years but the last letter I received from her was about thirty years ago. We were both starting a family and never seemed to have the time to write to each other after that!

Two years ago my husband and I decided to go to Australia for a special birthday. Just before setting out I came across Linda's last letter with her address! I took it with me and when we arrived in Sydney I sent her a postcard hoping that she might still be staying at the same address! I included my email address so that if she did receive my postcard she could contact me and we could arrange to meet!

Well, lo and behold, I received a reply from her a few days later. She was living near Adelaide which was one of our tour stops! We arranged to meet and have a meal. I recognised her straight away and we had a lovely day together!

She told me about their sail to Australia and how it just seemed like a wonderful long holiday. Linda's father was going to work on the new Australian railways and a house for the family was provided. When they arrived in Port Augusta in Australia in the early sixties it was blowing a sand storm. Their house wasn't ready so they were put up in an Aborigine hotel which Linda said was very basic and not very clean! Pearl, her mother, was all set to get back on the boat and come back home to Scotland! Anyway, they managed to get into their house despite it not being finished! To make them feel welcome the local Aborigines presented the family with a smoked Kangaroo tail! This was a very kind gesture but Pearl had no idea what to do with it and so they had to secretly dispose of it not wanting to seem ungrateful.

The family quickly settled in to life down under and have remained there ever since. Linda told me she's never needed a passport as she hasn't felt the need to go abroad as Australia is so big and so interesting. Her favourite holiday is visiting Tasmania. She has no desire to come back to Scotland even for a visit!

If you have a story about meeting someone from the past or going back to somewhere you haven't been to for many years please let us know about it. Send to [jeanahardman@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jeanahardman@hotmail.co.uk)

## THE BLANTYRE MINING DISASTER

The village of Blantyre, just across the river from Bothwell, suffered a major explosion in Dixon's Blantyre colliery resulting in many deaths.

The 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that terrible day was 22<sup>nd</sup> October this year, 2017. It was and still is to this day, Scotland's worst mining disaster. Two hundred and seven men and boys died that day, making widows of ninety two women and leaving two hundred and fifty children fatherless. Many young boys worked in the mines in those days, the youngest to die in that disaster was only eleven years of age. An explosion of gas and coal dust wrecked numbers 2 and 3 pits. The mine had five shafts, four of which were used to raise coal to the surface, the fifth was the main ventilation shaft used to extract foul air from the various underground workings.

It was a Monday morning and about 5:30 the miners descended to start work. The mine had been inspected by four firemen just after 4am and assurances that all was well had been passed to the miners. About 9am the noise of an explosion was heard on the surface and for a few minutes smoke and flames were seen belching from two of the mineshafts. Some of the miners working in a different part of the mine felt the blast of the explosion and began to ascend at once. The mine manager and some surface workers hurried to the pithead. The inspector of mines was informed and he and an assistant inspector arrived at the mine around mid-day to determine their course of action.

The number 3 shaft was badly damaged but descent was eventually made via number 2 shaft by the mines inspectors with some mine engineers. They could hear voices below and in fact found four survivors, all very badly injured. One of them, a boy, died shortly after but the other three were brought to the surface and

transferred to the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow. Sadly all three died within a month. The search for survivors continued but was hampered by gas and it was not until 1<sup>st</sup> of November that all the men who had been killed were brought to the surface.

The investigation into the cause of the explosion did not produce a firm conclusion but noted several possible causes including the type of safety lamps used in the mine, poor ventilation, the method of drawing air from one part of the mine to another and shot-firing by unauthorized workers.

It is sad to note that six months after the disaster, the mine owners evicted thirty four widows and their families from their tied houses and sent them to the poorhouse. Their husbands had been the responsible persons for paying rent to the company. The houses the miners lived in had been built and owned by the company.

It was not unusual in those days, that to help with domestic finances, many miners' families took in a lodger or two. If the husband lost his life in a mining accident, the widow sometimes would remarry to one of the lodgers if he worked in the mine. This would ensure keeping a roof over the family's head.



## THE BURGH OF BOTHWELL

From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the twentieth century, the burgh was the main form of municipal government in Scotland. The royal burghs founded by King David 1<sup>st</sup> and his successors, such as Rutherglen in 1124 and Lanark in 1153, were given trading rights and were allowed to hold market days. Bishops and other churchmen could also petition parliament to grant burgh status to towns like Glasgow. Landowners too could apply for burgh status for towns on their lands.

Early in the seventeenth century, William, Earl of Angus petitioned the king to have Bothwell created a burgh of barony. As a landowner holding his estates from the crown, Earl William was in a position to apply for burgh status for his town. This was duly conferred on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1602, a year before the Union of the Crowns. This should have granted Bothwell preferential trading and taxation privileges and the right to hold market days. The intention was

to improve local prosperity and to increase the earl's finances.

Between 1450 and 1707, over three hundred burghs of barony were authorised. Many did not survive and some became known as "parchment burghs." Almost certainly, Bothwell was one of these parchment burghs. It never really became a burgh. This means that sadly today, Bothwell lacks the outward symbols of civic pride such as a tollbooth or a town hall

Burghs continued to be created well into the twentieth century. In Lanarkshire, Motherwell and Wishaw became a burgh in 1920, East Kilbride in 1963 and Bishopbriggs (now in East Dunbartonshire) in 1964. All these disappeared as units of local government, together with the more historic burghs, in 1976. Truly the end of a long and distinguished era.

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## AGM TALK



Following the Annual General Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September, members were treated to a "tour de force" from George Maxwell in the form of an illustrated talk entitled "Bredisholm and Uddingston Oil Company".

The presentation started with a brief introduction to the history of Oil and Gas production over the centuries to the present day and ended with the rise of oil production in the United States.

With the aid of photographs and detailed maps, George plotted the history of oil and gas in the local

area and members were introduced, not only to its production but also to the use of by products in the form of agricultural fertilizers. He highlighted local landmarks and their significance to the process as well as singling out notable individuals who were instrumental in the development of oil and gas production both in Lanarkshire and throughout the rest of the world. He concluded with the demise of the local industry as a result of the advances to oil drilling in the United States of America.

Members came away, not only having had an enjoyable evening but also much better informed with the added bonus that, not once was the word fracking mentioned!

## GENTLEMEN MERCHANTS OR DRUG LORDS? SCOTS IN THE CHINA OPIUM TRADE



Tom Devine's talk to the Society's October meeting was enthusiastically received by a large turnout of members.

He introduced his talk by describing the imbalance of trade in the nineteenth century between the Chinese, selling highly

prized tea, and the British East India Company buying it with gold and silver. The Chinese did not wish to trade with the East India Company for any British goods but there was a market for opium. The opium was produced from poppies grown in India but the problem was that the importation of opium to China was illegal. The East India Company being a quasi British Government organisation could not be seen to act against Chinese legislation. To get round the problem they encouraged British trading companies to satisfy the Chinese appetite for opium. One of these firms was Jardine, Matheson and Co, founded in 1832 at Canton, China by two Scots,

William Jardine and James Matheson. The firm grew rapidly, trading in smuggled opium and tea. Huge profits were made from the trade in opium and when Jardine and Matheson retired to Scotland their wealth could be measured in billions of pounds at today's prices.

Tom Devine then posed the question 'In the climate of the day, was what they were doing wrong?' In the nineteenth century opium was freely available in Britain especially in the form of the patent medicine laudanum. A British government commission (albeit comprising carefully selected members) did not find against the trade in opium to the Chinese. In fact the Commission made favourable comparisons between the use of alcohol and the use of opium.

On their retirement to Britain both Jardine and Matheson were feted with James Matheson receiving a knighthood. Both went on to be Members of Parliament.

In concluding his talk Tom Devine pointed out that today's attitude to drugs is very different and that can colour how we, in the present day, look back on history.

## BOTHWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND LOCAL SCHOOLS

All children in Bothwell's primary schools are honorary members of Bothwell Historical Society and the Society has very close working relationships with the schools. 11 year old Nathan Lafferty, a primary 7 pupil at St Bride's Primary, has demonstrated a remarkable talent for and a love of history. He has attended several meetings of the Society and has contributed to our newsletters. It was felt that the Society should encourage his burgeoning talent and his contribution to our work.

The 19th century artist, C.M. Davies depicted a meeting between Robert Burns at the height of his powers and the young Walter Scott at a house in Edinburgh. The painting now hangs in Scott's home, Abbotsford.



Professor Sir Tom Devine, Scotland's most eminent historian and Honorary President of Bothwell Historical Society, visited the Society on Tuesday, 24th October and met Nathan Lafferty

who was delighted to accept from Sir Tom, a copy of one of his books. The meeting was recorded, not by an oil painting, but by a 21st century photograph