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# NEWSLETTER

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## CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS



Yet again, I am pleased to say that Bothwell Historical Society is in good heart. Membership levels remain high but we would still ask you to encourage your friends and family to join. As you know, we give good value for money and membership fees for families are still only £10 with under eighteens free.

Despite bad winter weather, you turned out in full strength to support our guest speakers. Preparations for next session's meetings are well underway and I am confident you will find the programme interesting and informative.

We have agreed to contribute another exhibition to the 2016 Scarecrow Festival and we hope to involve local schools in this venture. I remain grateful to members of the committee and to you our stalwart membership for all that you do for the Society. Liz and Eric Denton continue to impress with their work for the newsletter and the website and we owe them a great deal.

Best wishes, Jack Gallacher

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## An Extraordinary Meeting

Since it was first established in 1887 in the halcyon days of empire, "Raffles Hotel" in Singapore has epitomised romance, history and luxury for travellers to the island state. Its "Long Bar", once the favourite watering hole of Ernest Hemingway and Somerset Maugham was where the national drink, the Singapore Sling was created.

With all this history and romance in mind, Bothwell Historical Society committee member, Jean Hardman and her husband Roger visited Singapore on the way back from a trip to Australia. For them a must was a visit to Raffles' Long Bar for Singapore Slings. To their astonishment in the bar they bumped into former next door neighbours and Historical Society members, Beverly and Andy Dennis in town following a trip to India.

Thanks to this extraordinary coincidence, a meeting of Bothwell Historical Society members was held far from the usual venue in Fallside Road. No report is as yet forthcoming on the efficacy of the Singapore Slings

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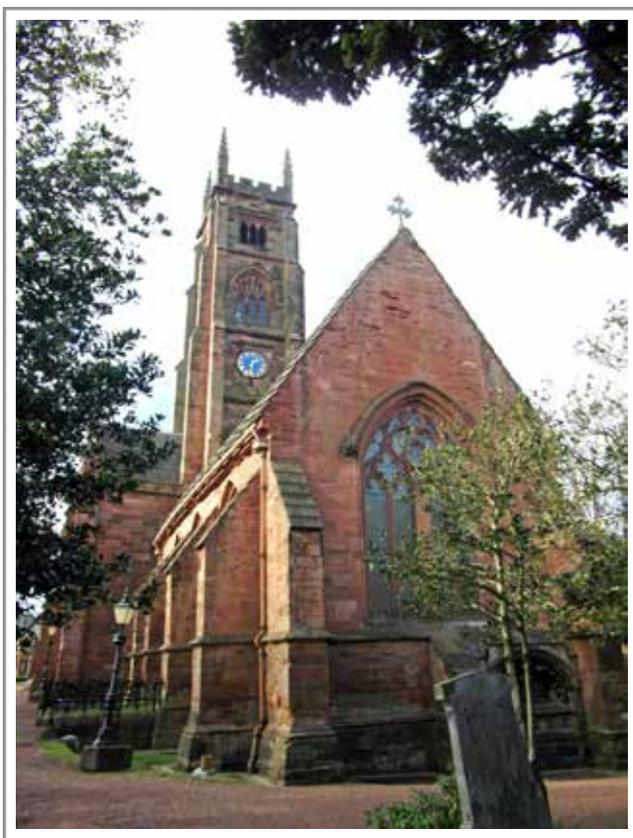
## Professor Sir Tom Devine

The latest publication from the pen of our Honorary President, Sir Tom Devine is now on sale. The book, "Independence or Union; Scotland's past and Scotland's present," has been published by Allen Lane and costs £20. It has been reviewed by Rab Houston, Professor of Modern History at St Andrew's University in the latest edition of the BBC History magazine



## RESTORATION OF THE PARISH CHURCH

The 2-year restoration of the older part of Bothwell's magnificent Parish Church is thankfully moving towards a successful conclusion. The foundations have been



strengthened, the walls secured and the huge heavy stone tiles renovated and replaced. Soon the unique and beautiful interior of interesting memorials and monuments - and the wonderful Burne-Jones stained glass window - will be again revealed. The last time such a massive renovation took place was in the two years before 1899.

When the present church, designed by the famous Glasgow architect, David Hamilton, had been completed in 1833, his ambitious plan to link the adjoining medieval foundation with the modern church was unfulfilled. Thereafter, the old one was left for years sadly falling into disrepair and ruin.

In fact, its condition, some years later, drew Hugh MacDonald in his *Rambles Round Glasgow*, first published in 1854, to comment somewhat bitterly:

*"We are sorry to observe that this time-worn edifice is at present in a shamefully neglected condition. The glass is out of the windows, permitting a free passage not only to the sparrows, which are flying thickly about the nave, but also to the winds and the rain, which have already wrought sad dilapidation on the mouldering walls. The heavy tiles, too, are beginning to manifest a tendency to obey the law of gravitation by tumbling inward. There has of late been little care taken of this interesting relic of the past. It is to be hoped, however, for the credit of the neighbouring gentry, that measures may speedily be adopted for its preservation from utter ruin which now seems impending over it."*

'Speedily' is hardly apposite since it took nearly forty years for the Rev Dr John Pagan to convince his congregation and regular worshippers that the old church was worth restoring; indeed it was one of his cherished ambitions throughout his long ministry (1865 - 1909) in Bothwell .

What a shame it had it taken our Victorian ancestors so long to value their local heritage!

However, by the 1890s, a good number of the well-to-do church-goers, coalmasters, steel works owners, manufacturers and farmers mostly residing in the village and parish and no doubt others not so well off, had agreed to fund the project. Pagan is quoted in the *Hamilton Advertiser* in January 1899 saying:

*"When plans for the restoration of the old church had been prepared, two friends at once came forward and offered £550 between them. The Baird Trust next gave a substantial grant, making their sum not far from £1000, which,*

*with the contributions of heritors added, was raised to between £1200 and £1300... Another warm friend, unsolicited would give an organ for the new church, and they had now as beautiful... "an organ and case as one could desire..."*

Thus the local worthies of Bothwell Parish rallied round!

The Edinburgh-based architect, Sir Robert Rowland Anderson, famed for his restoration work at Dunblane Cathedral and throughout Scotland, was appointed to oversee the Bothwell work which began in earnest in 1897.

Two years later, at the time of the project's completion and celebrated in the Church, the *Hamilton Advertiser* (Jan 1899) carried a short report devoted to it:

*"The movement for restoration was begun two years ago. The first work was to clear away from two to three feet of earth, which, from the*

*interments of centuries had accumulated around the walls. The floor also, to nearly the same depth, had been filled up to make it correspond with the exterior. It was lowered to its original level. When this work was completed, it was found that the foundations and walls had a solidity and mouldings that had not been known for several generations. The stone mullions of the windows which had disappeared were renewed. The carvings above the doorway, the sedilia and the piscine were restored. The stone roof has always been a special feature of the church. This has been carefully preserved and put into good order".*

Does history really repeat itself? We certainly hope the last sentence applies to the 21<sup>st</sup> century restoration work. Above all we look forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century restoration work and we look forward to seeing the old church of Bothwell restored to all its glory!

Ian McKellar



South facade of the old church.  
Restored in 1898



North facade of the old church.  
Looking a bit shabby prior to present work.

## ”BOTHWELL RAILWAY VIADUCT - a first”

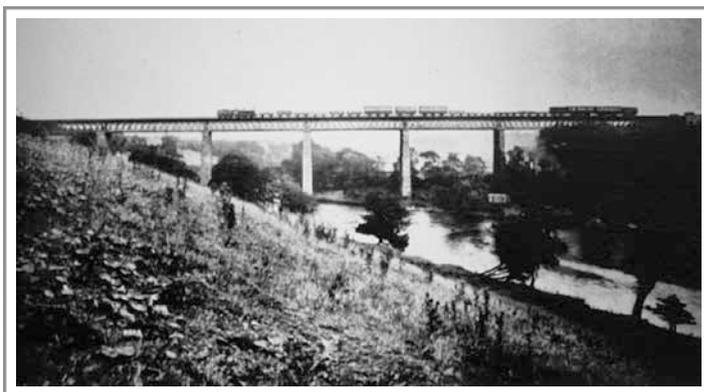
Originally crossing the Clyde at the southern extension of the present nature walk, the Bothwell Railway Bridge (or Viaduct) was built by William Arrol & Company Ltd. in 1875 at the same time that the company was building the Caledonian Railway Bridge which leads into Glasgow Central Station. Arrol took on the contract to build the Bothwell Viaduct (also sometimes referred to as the Craighead Viaduct) for the Hamilton & Bothwell Branch of the North British Railway Company. This was shortly after completing a series of railway bridges between Edinburgh and Balerno over the Water of Leith and setting up his new works at Dalmarnock in Glasgow. The Bothwell Viaduct was one of the first important bridge constructions in the Company's long history. According to the personal reminiscence of a friend, in an obituary for Sir William Arrol, he was ambitious and determined to get the contract for the iron work of the Bothwell Viaduct. He had submitted his tender to Messrs. Charles Brand and Son, the principal contractor, and then went to Mr Brand's Office and literally declined to leave until he got the order.

Sir Robert Purvis writes this about building the bridge in his biography of Sir William Arrol:

*“The object was to bridge the River Clyde at a level of 120 feet above the water. The structure was to be of 7 spans and the great height made it desirable to dispense with scaffolding if it were possible. Accordingly it was here he [Arrol] began to put in use his idea of building the continuous girders of a bridge on land and then rolling them out above the water from pier to pier, instead of riveting piece by piece each in the place it was to occupy over the stream. The girders were moved out across the river from the shore on rollers operated by ratchet bars and the total length of the bridge was 727 feet.”*

This method was completely new at the time and required great courage and engineering foresight. William Arrol & Co went on to construct many famous bridges such as Forth Rail Bridge, Tower Bridge in London and the second Tay Rail Bridge.

*(Information gratefully received from “The Friends of Seafield House” in Ayr who are trying to establish a museum celebrating the life and work of Sir William Arrol.)*



The viaduct in use. Photo taken from Bothwell side of river



The bridge piers in 2005 before demolition, with Grieve Croft houses behind. The actual bridge was dismantled about the late 60s or early 60s.

*(Picture copyright of Lairich Rig and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons Licence)*



The remains in January 2016

Nicol Rennie

## ELMWOOD

Thanks to the generosity of former student, Maureen Mc Gurk (m.s. Breen) the Society's archive has been gifted a number of magazines from Elmwood School, dating from the fifties and sixties. Many in Bothwell will remember the brown uniforms of the young Elmwood ladies bringing life and colour to the village streets.

The magazines provide a veritable time capsule of the school in the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here is a record of the life of a vigorous educational community, detailing academic and sporting achievement as well as many lively and cheerful social events. Almost as fascinating are the advertisements of local businesses, many long gone, who helped to sponsor the magazines - firms such as Winnings, Main Street; A Morris, grocer at 49 Main Street; C&A McNaughton, fruit merchants, 17 Main Street; James Keith, grocer at 87 Main Street and Battleaxe toffees.

Founded in 1878 by the Franciscan Sisters in the Elmwood mansion house as a school for Catholic girls, it gave distinguished service to education in Lanarkshire until the building of new comprehensive mixed sex Catholic schools in Bellshill and Hamilton. The school closed on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1977. The mansion house, originally built in 1819 as a country home for a Glasgow ironmonger called Shaw, remains one of Bothwell's architectural gems. The grounds which once echoed to the lively sounds of teenage girls, now provide quiet residences for the older generation. Many ladies of a certain age in the village and beyond look back with pride and affection as former pupils of Elmwood School.

If you have any memories of the school, we would very much like to hear from you. We would be pleased to record these in our oral history project for the benefit of future generations. The magazines will be placed in our archive in Bothwell Library

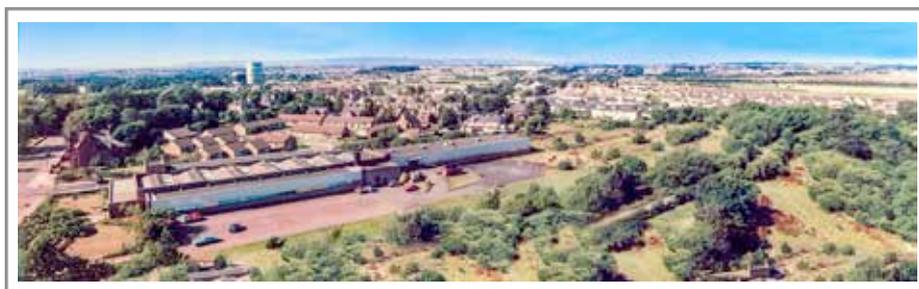


Elmwood House today

## PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE OF BOTHWELL

The Society is building up a photographic archive of Bothwell. Recently we have received two additions to it. One is a collection of 22 photographs in digital format, taken from the top of the Church tower. The photographs were taken rotating round 360 degrees and provide good views of the Edgumbe Peebles factory. The second set of photos were from the 1960s and are general views of Bothwell including two of a Conventicle in the Covenanters Field. These photographs were taken by Eric Napier and handed over to the Society by his son Alan following the death of his father.

If anyone has any old photographs of Bothwell the Society would welcome them. We can arrange for them to be copied and promptly returned to you. If you have any old photos, please get in touch with Bill Gow at [bill.gow44@gmail.com](mailto:bill.gow44@gmail.com) or phone 01698 858505.



View from the Steeple

## SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



Since the establishment of the Historical Society in 2011, we have been privileged to attend the Remembrance Day service and to lay a wreath at the War Memorial. In 2014, Lewis Heaney, a relative of Bothwell man, Lieutenant John Mitchell of the RAF (killed 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1918), and a pupil of St Bride's Primary laid the Society's wreath. In 2015, four pupils of Bothwell Primary, Cameron MackIntosh, Katie Collins, Matthew Stanton and Finlay Barclay laid a wreath on behalf of the Society following the service in the Parish Church. Later in December, Eric Denton, Bill Gow and Jack Gallacher attended a special assembly at Bothwell Primary when pupils from all sections of the school who had been studying World War One gave an interesting and exciting performance reflecting their project.

In December, the Chairman was invited to spend the afternoon with Primary 3 at St Bride's to discuss castles and knights in shining armour. Thanks to the kind cooperation of Chris Timmins, Custodian at the Castle, Jack was able to borrow artefacts from the castle's collection to show to the children. The young people, who had been studying Bothwell Castle as a project, had great fun trying on the armour and holding the sword and shield as well as enthusiastically discussing their project. The following is an extract from a letter to the Chairman from primary 3:

*"Thank you very much for visiting us and telling us all about the history of Bothwell Castle. We really enjoyed learning about all the families who have lived in the castle. It was very interesting to hear about the knights and we liked pretending to be a knight by trying on the helmet, sword chainmail and shield. Your visit helped our learning come alive and we now look at Bothwell Castle differently. In the New Year we will visit the castle and we hope you can join us."*

The Chairman looks forward to sharing the visit to the castle with Primary 3 and class teacher Miss Slater

Jack was also pleased to attend a hilarious and well produced pantomime as well as a touching traditional Nativity play at St Bride's in December.

The Society takes great delight in being involved with staff and pupils in both our excellent schools. where all pupils are honorary members. We would like to thank Mrs Denise Pacitti and her staff at St Bride's, Miss Paula Slater, class teacher Primary 3 at the school, Mrs Paula Ross and her staff at Bothwell Primary and Mr Chris Timmins at Bothwell Castle for their support in promoting links with the Society. Plans for 2016 are already being discussed with the schools



## GENEALOGY - RAYMOND CAMERON



Tracing your family tree has become a popular hobby nowadays aided by the advent of the internet. It was therefore of great interest for the Society's November talk by Raymond Cameron to be about that subject.

Raymond spoke firstly about the details available from the birth, death and marriage certificates which were first introduced in Scotland in 1855. These certificates give details of parentage thus allowing previous generations to be traced. Prior to 1855 births, deaths and marriages were recorded in the Old Parish Records but these prove to be sparse in detail and completeness. The decennial census records started in 1841 and those 100 years or more old are available for the public to view. These records not only give household members and their address but also occupations.

Raymond then went on to speak about how the public can access these records. The office of the Registrar General for Scotland is in Edinburgh has computer work stations from which you can search birth, death, marriage and census records for a fee of about £17 a day. The Mitchell Library hosts a similar facility which is an offshoot of the Edinburgh office.

The talk was well received by the audience who were very appreciative of the span and depth of knowledge Raymond demonstrated of how to trace your family tree.

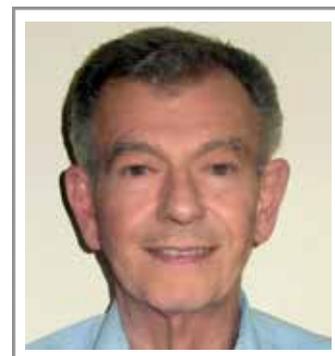
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## ELECTRICITY & ITS SUPPLY TO BOTHWELL - ERIC DENTON

The February talk to the Society was about the Story of Electricity and with particular reference to the local supply. Eric Denton was the speaker and his talk started by describing the early days of electricity. He then talked about the first power stations in the west of Scotland, at Motherwell and Yoker and how the electric supply came to Bothwell in 1906. Other local power stations were located at Quarry Street, Hamilton, Motherwell and two River Clyde hydro power stations at Bonnington and Stonebyres. Following nationalisation the local Clyde Valley Electrical Power Company then became part of what was to become the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Eric then described the power stations at Kincardine, Hunterston, Cockenzie, Longannet and Inverkip before ending his talk by discussing the current sources of power which are nuclear, coal, wind and hydro.

It was an interesting talk much enjoyed by the appreciative audience.



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## DIGITAL INFORMATION SCREEN

Your Society plans to install a digital information screen in the Library. A meeting has been held with Gerry Campbell, General Manager of South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture and he is very supportive of the installation of the screen in the Library.

The screen will have two "zones". The main zone will show pictures of Bothwell while a side zone will have information about the Historical Society rotating with information about other societies or events in the village. The information on the screen can be easily updated according to current events. For example the main zone can show pictures of scarecrows during the Scarecrow Festival week.

Funding is currently being sought and if any member wishes to donate specifically for this project, the donation will be gratefully received. If you would like to donate please contact Bill Gow, 2 St Andrew Avenue, G71 8DL. Telephone 01698 858505, e-mail [bill.gow44@gmail.com](mailto:bill.gow44@gmail.com).

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