

Bonnyseen

The magazine from Greenhill Historical Society



Bonnybridge Memorial Park: Mike Robinson

Welcome to the first edition of our free quarterly magazine

Exploring the effects of the
past on the present and
future of our community.



Inside this issue: About Us, Burke and Hare, Smith and Wellstood, Rollo's and the Stone of Destiny, A Greenhill Childhood, Brickmaking.

Issue 1: Winter 2011

A Note of Introduction from John Reid,

Falkirk Local History Society

It is always exciting to see the beginnings of any venture. However, while the launch of this particular endeavour might be perceived as a natural conclusion to the progress of Greenhill Historical Society, what we are actually witnessing should be perceived more as a step: one that certainly carries them forward while at the same time sending a signal of their confidence as a group.

In the relatively short time since their formation I have had the pleasure of watching them develop. A historian should be objective in observing the progress of any situation or circumstance, however, it would be less than honest of me not to admit I am unable to fulfil that obligation in this instance. The reason is simple: while I have witnessed their energy, drive and commitment, and I applaud that, it has been, above all, the sense of enjoyment and fun they bring to the task which has beguiled me to the point where I feel too involved to be dispassionate. This is an experience which I both cherish and relish.

Their study area is an interesting and exciting one. It is a corridor of history. Almost two thousand years ago it saw the Roman legions construct the Antonine Frontier. The Anglo-Norman influence is evident in the form of the Motte at Seabegs. At the time when Scotland stood against the weight of Edward's oppression, the area witnessed a muster at Castlecary. In the early nineteenth century one of the episodes in the struggle for social justice was played out on the bleak heath of Bonnymuir. And, of course, its geographical location meant that it was a natural route across Scotland. In the pre-industrial era huge herds of cattle were driven through it. In the eighteenth century the men who constructed the Forth & Clyde Canal used it to their advantage, as did those in the following century when they laid down the tracks of two major railway lines. These, in turn, encouraged the introduction of industrial manufacturing to the area.

Having witnessed the present day energy of the Greenhill Historical Society, I have no doubt that, through the vehicle of this new publication, they too will leave an indelible mark on this remarkable tract.

About Greenhill Historical Society

We formed the Society in the summer of 2008 and explore the effects that industry and associated events have caused for the area. We aim to encourage residents to explore Bonnybridge from different points in history as well as generating your own experiences and meanings that are relevant to you. **We started this magazine as a place for you to send in your stories, information and pictures for print so that you can share this information with others, as well as the beginning of a public conversation about Bonnybridge.** Greenhill has experienced a significant amount of upheaval and change over the last century. Most recently, hundreds of new and expensive houses have been built on vast tracts of greenbelt; mineral industry, predominantly mining, is all but gone. We're interested in what this means for the area now for everyone who lives here – **whether you moved here recently or have lived here for generations.** We hope that by exploring the derelict, the hidden, the new, the old, the stories of new and more established residents we can come up with a new definition for this amazing place. So you're always welcome to contribute anything you think is relevant to this magazine either by email at greenhillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or by coming along to a meeting in Bonnybridge Library on Fridays 2-4pm. Visit our web site at www.greenhillhistoricalsociety.org.uk for information on the Society and its past and present events. **This is your Society too!**



Past Project: The Pipers of Allandale

This project focused on a tragic event involving one family, the MacLachlans, living in Allandale. The MacLachlans, a very lively and musical piping family, helped fellow villagers learn to play and formed a band who eventually became world champions in 1938. Four of the nine MacLachlan sons joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders regiment. Three were sent to Egypt. Two sons were killed early in the battle of El Alamein, while a third son was wounded and suffered for the rest of his life. The fourth son was captured after the fall of Singapore and became a Japanese prisoner of war for three years, enduring severe brutality.

Local historian John Reid, had written an article on the Pipers for the journal Calatria and had been loaned a collection of family memorabilia including letters, newspaper clippings, poetry, war books, etc. **We decided to explore the family's story involving: a talk, a play, a walk, a tea and an exhibition.** From there the project became an exploration of this historic event, and the post-industrial landscapes of Allandale and Bonnybridge. We also wanted to encourage residents (whether new to the area or living here a long time) to think about what it is like to live here and what effect historical events have on our present and future, rather than to 'teach' history.

The exhibition and associated educational materials were focused around the themes of: (1) **Industry** (the family were heavily involved in the brickmaking of the area); (2) **Geography** (Allandale, the clay seam, the village itself and how it was formed, a general exploration of the physical aspects of Allandale and Bonnybridge); (3) **War** (the role that the area played in WWII); (4) **Community**

(the role of community during this time, to encourage reflection on where we are today). The exhibition was an active exploration of what it means to live in a place like Bonnybridge and to what extent local history can be experienced and felt today. The walk through the village of Allandale, led by Pipe Major Mark Sutherland of Denny and Dunipace Pipe Band, encouraged residents to explore the area now but also to feel and experience the place from the perspective of the past. The

series of events ended with a Daffodil Tea, bringing residents together over a cup of tea to discuss what they listened to, saw, experienced, and interpreted over the whole series. The project was covered widely in the Falkirk Herald as well as a plaque dedication to the MacLachlan family in Allandale.

The project engaged with around 200 residents as well as inspiring

several new projects for the area which you can contribute to and experience over the next few months. **For a copy of our information booklets on this project, contact us. Photo Credits:** Thanks to Eddie McEleney, Bonnybridge Camera Club. Plaque photo by Mike Robinson.

The project was funded by Falkirk Council Community Services.



Is There a Doctor in the House? By Phil Swierczek

Thirty-six years living in Bonnybridge and I'm still an incomer, a stranger. Whose fault is that? Well, mine actually. Bonnybridge was a place to live while I worked in Kirkintilloch, Glasgow and Cumbernauld, and latterly in Falkirk. That's what Bonnybridge was for me. A commuter town where we bought a house and raised a family, but it was not a community I participated in. For I came from a different town, one where my loyalties lay and which held childhood memories and a large part of my extended family. Where was this metropolis? Why, nearby Denny! The fact that my husband spent most of his childhood in Bonnybridge was incidental, as he also travelled to work in Clydebank and then in Cumbernauld. But in the last few years all this has changed. Why? Well, we retired and were able to step off the hamster's wheel and explore the world we were now actually living in, Bonnybridge!

Suddenly we had time to become interested in, and appreciate, the town and its environs. We joined various local groups including a metal detecting club, golf club, reading group and historical society. History has always been a passion and through the Greenhill Historical Society I began to piece together the significant part that Bonnybridge had played in Scotland's industrial heritage. I saw maps from two centuries ago which helped me to place the present-day town in its historical setting. From this discovery of Bonnybridge's past I came across a rather weird coincidence.

In the very short interval between paying off one mortgage and taking out another we were able to study the title deeds to the property we live in. A Mr William Grindlay was the first person to purchase the block of land our house now sits on. It was purchased in 1802 from a local



Doctor's Pend

farmer and extended to two-and-a-half acres. It would be great to have that much land now but it was parcelled up and sold for housing plots later in the 19th century. I hadn't realised that the whole area was called Barley Hill - no prizes for guessing what was grown on the land! The boundaries of the land were the edge of the sellers' own land to the south, the Forth and Clyde Canal to the west, the Pike road (now called Main Street) to the east and the public school to the north.

The weird connection is that this Mr William Grindlay farmed at Seabegs and, as far as I can tell, he also owned a grain mill where the Mill Garage now sits. He was obviously a successful and prosperous member of the community and was able to afford to send his son and heir, Charles, to university where he studied to become a doctor of medicine. Charles's name appears on our title deeds as heir to William Grindlay when the plot of land for our house was sold in 1867. HOWEVER, at some point Charles had been ignominiously 'sent down' from university because of his connection with Burke and Hare. These two rogues are often labelled as grave robbers but in fact their efforts to obtain cadavers for medical research and dissection by students was often much more macabre and sinister. They made a great deal of money by murdering vagrants, drunks, ladies of the night and the weaker and poorest members of 19th century society, then selling their bodies to the medical schools.

Although he never completed his studies, Charles was always referred to as 'Doctor'. Apparently many of the bodies procured by Burke and Hare were secreted in the 'Doctor's Wood' until they could be loaded on to barges on the canal, via the 'Doctor's Pend', in the dead of night, no pun intended. From there they were transported to the medical schools in Edinburgh and Glasgow where the good professors, we presume, were



Seabegs Wood

ignorant of the source of these bodies for some considerable time. When the scandal did come to light it resulted in the immediate dismissal of Charles for his involvement, which is not specified in any of the documents I have read. We have to presume that folklore has not erred and that by naming the areas of Bonnybridge connected to Burke and Hare after the 'Doctor', Charles Grindlay was indeed

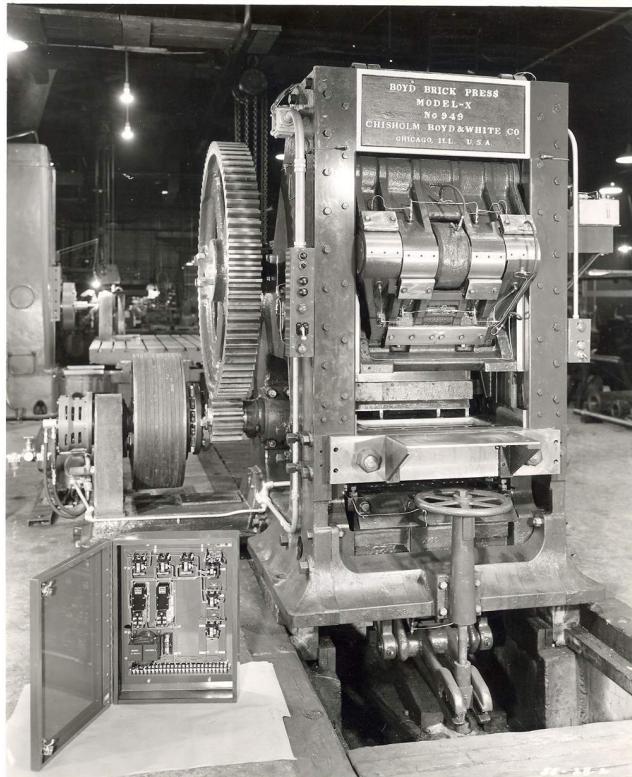
involved in some aspect of the movement of bodies from the woods at Seabegs to the barges on the canal.

I have no reason to believe that he ever lived in our house and this gives us the comfort of knowing that the connection is too tenuous for there to be any chance of our being haunted by him, Burke and Hare or any of their unfortunate victims. **OR IS IT??!!**

Got a story to tell? Contact us!

The Refractory (Brick) Industry

By Willie Thomson



Boyd Presses were widely used in many Scottish refractory brickworks. When a crate was opened at Dougall's in High Bonnybridge, written on a huge bit of cardboard was "Chang was here." Chang was the nickname of Mr. Weir who was a fitter at Dougall's before going to the States and ended up working for Boyds, in the U.S.A., on a press bound for Dougall's.



Dougalls High Bonnybridge works

Photograph, brochures and catalogues supplied by Mr. M. T. Gerardi, General Manager, Chisholm Boyd and White, Illinois, U.S.A.

Rollo's and the Stone of Destiny

By William Parker

John Rollo's St. Andrews engineering works in High Bonnybridge made high quality lathes as well as a whole variety of engineering goods such as mini-tractors, trailers, ploughs, and other associated farm equipment. However, they also manufactured other less-known items such as outdoor bowls, extending walking sticks, mini-vices, tablemats, etc. Rollo's other claim to fame locally and nationally is the connection with the Stone of Destiny when it was removed from the Coronation Throne in London in early 1950 by a group of Nationalists. The stone was hidden in Rollo's St. Andrews Works for a period of time, as well as other locations as police searched Scotland for it. There are many versions of the story and these, along with the memories and portrayal of working life in Rollo's, have been told by the

people who worked there over many years. Their life and experiences associated with Rollo's will be illustrated in an outdoor exhibition of their machinery in the spring as well as the first entry to our interactive exhibition in Bonnybridge Library showing the many practical and historical events with which Rollo's has become synonymous. The exhibition will be built up over time, and include the many other industries in the area.

Contribute to this exhibition with your own knowledge of the industries in the area!



Frank's Facts No. 1

by Frank Walton

The first railway station in the District was High Bonnybridge, opened on 21st February 1842. There were three more stations in Bonnybridge: Greenhill, Canal (pictured right) and Central. My dad was a signalman based at Greenhill Upper Junction, he first worked in the station and then worked up at Greenhill.



Greenhill Memories

by Diane Smith

When you are over fifty years old and you live away from Greenhill, the place holds unique and happy memories. I have recently attended meetings of the Greenhill Historical Society in the Bonnybridge library and it is a friendly, informative and enthusiastic group of people.

I spent a lot of my childhood in Greenhill at my grandparents' croft of Forrester Quarter. We travelled back and forward to Stenhousemuir by public transport and this made me appreciate the good character of the place. Originally the train could be taken from Larbert to Greenhill until the Beeching cuts dismally ended this fine service. I recall the friendliness of the people at Greenhill Station and I have a strong visual memory of the highly polished wood within the station building. Wilson Terrace on Glenyards Road was peopled by the most decent folk. Dear old Mrs Oliphant with her rosy cheeks, Mrs Sim, Dora and the others were always cheerful and friendly in every memory of them. You could walk through the brickworks with every assurance that the workers were happy for you to make your way close to their place of work among the hot ovens.

Of course after a walk by the railway line the best thing was your Granda walking down the field to meet you and Jackie, a mongrel terrier, bouncing with joy at your arrival.

At New Year there would be a family gathering and a tray of very small glasses would sit on the sideboard. I believe one bottle of Harvey's Bristol Cream would provide for several New Year celebrations. Eating was encouraged but not drinking alcohol. Auld Lang Syne was sung earnestly but there wasn't much space for us all with our joined-up arms and there was some jostling to keep the circle formation. Granda would make one phone call to his nephew, Sandy, in Strathaven and this was a long distance call so the family listened in intently to "A happy New Year to you, Sanny, and mony o' them." The importance of such an expensive call was appreciated by the assembled family.

I can't recommend that way of life too highly. Times change and you cannot reclaim the past but the Greenhill Historical Society is a means of hearing others describing the heritage of the place. It is an old song but a powerfully memorable one.

There will be more memories from Diane in the next edition.

Send us your memories, stories, information, walks, opinions: greenhillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
Come to a meeting—Fridays 2-4pm, Bonnybridge Library

Memories of bygone days

This photo was taken at the Bonnybridge Bowling Club, year unknown, can you help?

You can also view this on our website at www.greenhillhistoricalsociety.org.uk if anyone has further information or related photos please get in touch - see our contact details on Page 8.



Back Row—Walter Bain, David Reid, Jas. Drummond, A. McHugh, David Brown, J. C. Ferguson, Allan Neilson, Hugh Mitchell, A. Lowe, Chas. McPhie.

Second Row—Geo. Esplin, John McEwan, Alex. Kirkwood, Jas. Leishman, Jas. Mochrie, Wm. Mitchell, And. Mitchell, Wm. Stirling, John Mitchell.

Front Row—Peter Brown, J. B. Mitchell, Tom McGrouther, Tom Shearer, Alex. Mitchell, Jas. S. Ferguson, John B. Mitchell, Daniel Waugh, Chas. Kirkwood.

Got any photographs you want to show or information you are seeking from people in Bonnybridge? Send it to us!

Can anyone remember...

...when Agnes Henderson ran the pantomimes in Bonnybridge Public Hall? Agnes Henderson had a tobacconist's where Barbers Inc is now. She ran the pantomime for three nights in the hall. Productions included Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Aladdin. GHS member Margaret Murray was in the chorus when she was nine and loved wearing the makeup!

What can you remember or what would you like others to help you to remember? Let us know!

Regular Snippets from
Smith & Wellstood Magazine
By Sheena Lambie & Mike Robinson

The Lass O' Cowden Hill

Oft have I heard o' maidens fair
With beauty far beyond compare,
Yet there is one I think of still -
The Bonnie Lass O' Cowden Hill.

I met her when the heart was young
And cares aside were easy flung,
A laughing, Dancing Daffodil
On the sunny slopes o' Cowden Hill.

Her sparkling eye and cherry smile
My boyish fancy did beguile;
As, gathering flowers her lap did fill,
She bloomed unknown on Cowden Hill.

O! had I some uncanny gift
The artist's brush I'd gladly lift
And paint, with a great master's skill,
The Bonnie Lass O' Cowden Hill.

When life the Great Illusion ends
An Unseen Hand the curtain rends,
May angels guard from ev'ry ill
The Bonnie Lass O' Cowden Hill.

And then, perhaps on verdant lea,
In the brighter world that's yet to be,
Gathering flowers her lap to fill,
I'll meet the Lass o' Cowden Hill.

By H. McL

The rest of our work so far...

Our major interest is wandering and exploring the community of Bonnybridge, **Our Activities So Far: Fen exploratory walks** Over these physical spaces new and old residents layered their stories of using, enjoying and understanding these places from a historical perspective. **Five historical walks** around Milnquarter and Canal Station, Seabegs Wood and Pend, High Bonnybridge derelict industrial areas and station, Greenhill, Roughcastle Roman Wall. **Interviews** with ten local residents on their experiences and knowledge of the area. A **film** of our walking routes, a collaboration with the artist Jason Nelson, as part of the exhibition "And So It Goes" at the Park Gallery in Falkirk exploring community spaces. **Five Mapping Exercises** with new residents to the area and residents who have lived in the area a long time. We explored how the landscape is experienced and understood from historical and contemporary points of view. **Historical Research:** interviews with local people, visits to Callendar House Archives, Falkirk Council Museum Stores, Falkirk and Bonnybridge Libraries.

We're always looking for new members and contributors to Bonnyseen from everyone who lives here! Letters, opinions, stories, memories, photography, objects are very welcome.



Clayknowes House Ruins

Back Page Recipe

Frosty Pudding by Margaret Murray



Method:

Heat the milk gently. Place cornflour, plain flour, sugar and egg in a bowl. Pour warmed milk into bowl, stirring well. Return mixture to pan and cook it over a low heat, stirring constantly, until it thickens and just begins to boil. Remove the pan from the heat. Beat the custard until smooth. Cut butter into small pieces, add to custard, stirring till completely melted. Refrigerate till cold. Whip cream and fold into cold custard. Add all other ingredients. Mix well. Spoon into one-and-a-half pint pudding bowl. Freeze for two hours or for as long as one month until needed. Allow to thaw slightly before serving.

Ingredients:

Half pint milk
Half oz cornflour
1oz plain flour
1oz caster sugar
1 medium egg
1oz butter
Quarter pint double cream
2oz raisins
2oz currants
2oz glace cherries
1oz blanched almonds
Half teaspoon cinnamon
Cherries to decorate



Bonnyside factory units



Polly Halls farm: photo by Phil Swierczek

Find us at www.greenhillhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Email: greenhillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Telephone: Gillian on 07850 250495

Come to a meeting: Bonnybridge Library, Fridays 2pm

If you need this magazine in another format (larger size/audio) please let us know.