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

# Bonnyseen

The magazine from Greenhill Historical Society  
Issue Number 21 October 2023







# Introduction

## Sad News

On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August, Greenhill historical society lost one of its newest members. Bob Buckley was a new Scot who was interested in and fascinated by the history of the locale he was living in in his later years. He was a talented and interesting man who contributed to the work of the society. Bob had composed two articles for this years Bonnyseen and his family have kindly agreed to allow us to keep them in the magazine in recognition of his enthusiasm for local history and a tribute to Bob from his friends in GHS. Bob summarises his life and career in his articles.

**RIP Bob.**

## Thanks

Grateful thanks go again to all those who have contributed their personal stories. Our magazine is very much international, as the Bonnybridge diaspora share all their fond memories and precious photographs from around the world.

Special thanks to Gary Fitzpatrick who gave us permission to use his truly wonderful photograph of the UCI road race as it sped through the town and now adorns the outer covers. Also, to Brian Maddison, our magazine designer, for his skills artistry and patience!

*Watch out for more news on Paul Cortopassi's new project.*

**P Swierczek**

## Front Cover and Back Covers:

*UCI World Championship 2023 passing through Bonnybridge. (See page 17)*

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Greenhill Historical Society

## WHERE TO FIND US

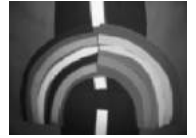


**GREENHILL  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

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or [greenhillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:greenhillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

## Meetings

The Society meets every Friday in the Bonnybridge Community Centre from 2pm till 4pm and all are welcome to join us.



## THE FALKIRK WHEEL

### Memoirs of a New Scot

Robert (Bob) Buckley

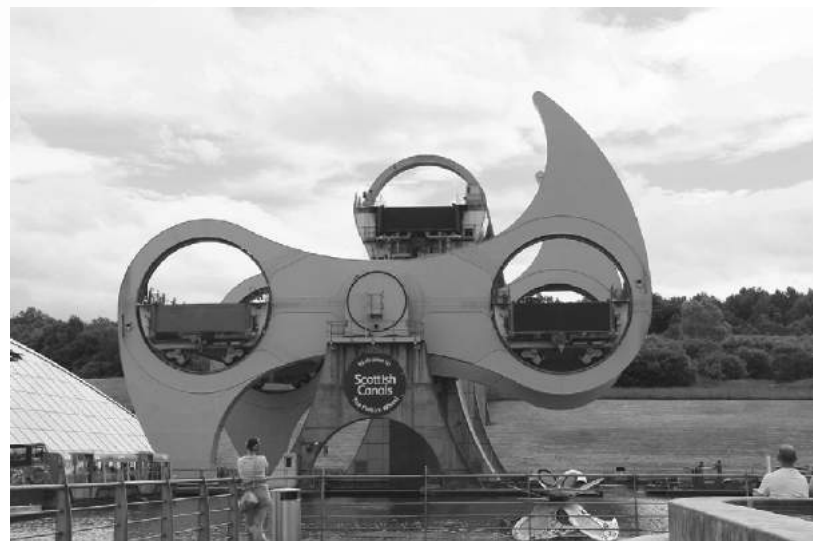


*I was born before the war in London and had two sisters and a brother but lived all my life in Oldham. I became a skilled Toolmaker in engineering but later in life took ownership of a Christian Bookshop for 22 years. I have been married twice and have had five children and seven grandchildren, As a young man I was Scout Leader and enjoyed camping and walking the hills of Northern England including the English Lakes, North Wales and the Isle of Skye. When walking became difficult. I even tried fix wing gliding for 2-3 years.*

*I hope as a 'comer in' and a 'Sassenach' you will look kindly on the words I have penned here. I am sure many will already know this, - what is modern history, but I have linked it with a little bit of the area I come from as part the larger picture.*

I was living in Milnrow, Rochdale until November 2021, when I moved up to Bonnybridge to live with my daughter Rachel and spend my remaining days under her TLC. In the past, I have enjoyed the great outdoors walking in many places in Britain but unfortunately, now at 85 my body cannot continue to support walking even short distances. So shortly, after moving here, we purchased a wheelchair and Rachel took me to explore the Forth and Clyde Canal. Then shortly after I bought a Mobility Scooter and I was then able to explore further on my own and was pleased to find the canal towpath was in much better condition than the street pavements! Of course, when the canals were built back in the seventeen hundreds, they were equivalent to our motorways today. Back then travel was by foot, horseback, or cart (carriage, for the wealthy) – that is if you had permission to travel at all. So I went out to explore even going as far as the 'Kelpies' but well, WOW! The Falkirk Wheel really is an impressive construction and together with the many other attractions there it is well worth visiting and I have now done so several times. By connecting the Forth and Clyde Canal with Union Canal, the 'Wheel' performs a great service. I believe, before it was built, it would take the best part of a day to navigate from the Forth and Clyde Canal over a staircase of eleven locks to transfer to the Union Canal and so on to Edinburgh. Now, thanks to 'The Wheel' and the new Rough Castle Tunnel, the journey is less in time, effort and miles! I am sure the industrialists of by-gone days would have loved to have had something like the wheel in their time. In searching, I discovered the Wheel was part of the £85.4m Millennium link project to lift barges 79 feet initially and another 36 feet by 2 additional locks – 115 feet in total. 'The Wheel' is a wonderful and modern asset to the area, I discovered it was constructed and assembled at the Butterley engineering plant in Ripley, Derbyshire, not too far from where I lived.

I am sure many will know there is another barge lift in the U.K. on which I have travelled, namely the 'Anderton boat Lift' in Cheshire and on the Trent and Mersey Canal, transferring boats to and from the river Weaver lifting them fifty feet from one to the other. It was built in 1875 and closed in 1983 due to corrosion. However, restoration started in 2001, re-opening in 2002 together with a visitor centre and exhibition and run now by the Canal and River Trust. In the late 1970's together with the folk at the church I attended, we went for a barge trip outing which included this lift. Originally, the industrialists had the lift built to save time and money by transferring barges of salt, iron, coal and cotton from canal to river and vice-versa. Of course, when built, it was unique and the story of its restoration is fascinating and well worth finding out.







# CLOGS

**Robert Buckley**

*When we hear of CLOGS we often think of Dutch wooden clogs or perhaps more likely the mill towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire. While it is true that clogs are a feature of both, what is not as well known, but is still true is that clogs have been known the world over and for centuries. Here I offer a short personal history of my early years when I wore clogs.*

It is well known that Bonnybridge was home to Brickworks and an Iron Foundries and it is more than likely some of the workers in these factories would have worn clogs. Why? Well working in either of these industries was hard graft on both men and their footwear, ordinary leather shoes would not have stood up to the punishment from sand/gravel or hot molten metal. Clogs with the iron shod wooden soles would have been able to take the punishment from their employment and be easy and relatively cheap to repair. I do not know if there was a clogger (maker of clogs) in Bonnybridge but there certainly was one or more in Glasgow. So, it is not unreasonable to think the working men of Bonnybridge would have worn clogs at least for work even if it meant the occasional trips to Glasgow. So having said that, I got to reminiscing and thinking of when I was a boy running around in my clogs and thought perhaps you may find my experiences of clogs and cloggers of interest.

In the U.K. we are told that the clogs 'hay day' was between 1840 to the 1920 and the Industrial Revolution, centred between the lower midlands and up into the Dumfries and Galloway area of southern Scotland, but I think that is limiting the clogs influence far too much. So, going back some eighty years and a bit, when the last war was still raging my family moved from London (my birthplace) back north to Oldham where Mum and Dad were originally from. Now neither Mum nor Dad were skilled workers and by any standards we were poor but we were well looked after. I think, for a time a least, we all wore clogs but I think we must have also had a pair of shoes, if only for special occasions. Where we lived was on the east side of Oldham and we had to go on the bus into Oldham then across town to Chadderton on the west side to get our clogs. Mr Lamb, the clogger had a corner shop at the end of a row of terraced houses, as is typical of cotton towns. I loved going to get my clogs 'ironed' (repaired) - not quite the same as ironing a shirt! You will see from the pictures the irons were nailed on to the sole and heel of the clog to give it another lease of life, much like the shoeing if a horse. That done, the clog was as good as new.

In clogs you were heard coming (though not too much in the countryside) but I liked my clogs. With them, by skid-kicking the flags or the edge of the road, I could make sparks, and the other kids with shoes, jealous. Likewise, in the winter when the pond froze, I went skating with ease. Winter was a mixed blessing when it snowed as I became six or more inches taller because the snow compressed and stuck in the irons under the sole and you ended up like walking on stilts (known as 'cloggy-boggies') making it difficult to walk. Sometimes you would lose one clump while keeping the other for a bit longer and walking a bit up and down like a clown. Being in the countryside in clogs was great, it didn't matter going through mud and you never felt the discomfort of gravel or uneven ground, I would even paddle through shallow water and climbing trees was a doddle. In a fight you could always kick your opponent and know he would be hurt! I never heard or saw it but it is recorded that in days of old there used to be clog fights with the contenders fighting naked! Also, we have to mention 'Clog Dancing' not to be confused with Morris Dancing, two very different things all together, again I never saw any but I believe it has never really died out and is still practiced in some places in the U.K. today.

I did have one accident with my clogs. I was 9 or 10 years old and at that time I had a pair of lace-up boot clogs. One evening I was out playing when, while running, I felt a sharp pain in my left foot and I limped home crying I had hurt my foot. Mum took my boot off saying my foot was wet, but I hadn't been in water, as she took off my sock she discovered it was wet not with water but blood and I had an inch long gash at the root of my big toe! What had happened was the worn iron on the inside of the right boot had come loose and swung out as I ran, cutting through the leather and into my left boot and my big toe. Ouch! I continued wearing clogs until I was almost fourteen years old by which time - 1951 - they were dying out as footwear. As we had moved back into town and 'civilisation' I left clogs behind and moved to a local school while Mum and Dad found work in a local mill that still spun cotton using the old spinning 'Jenny' mule. Mum continued to wear her clogs for quite a while and I could recognize the sound of her footsteps as she came home from the mill.

Today, seventy years later, as you see I still have fond memories of those times, when it was said wearing clogs was good for the feet. Today others say differently but be that as it may, clogs have played their part through history and no doubt here in Bonnybridge and in the Iron and Brick industries of past generations.



Boot Clogs



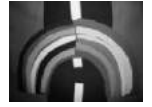
Clasp fastening



Clog Irons



Showing the Irons



## Theo Vervoort

### Requests for Help and Information

Good evening,

My name is Theo Vervoort from Venray, South East of the Netherlands. I'm a volunteer researcher of the Commonwealth War Cemetery Venray. At the Venray War Cemetery, is buried George Laurie, who we think is from Falkirk/Bonnybridge. George was killed in action during WW2 in our area. George served the Gordon Highlanders. A friend of mine adopted his grave. We try to find relatives and a photo of George, who paid the highest price for our freedom. Our research found that he possibly had relatives in Bonnybridge. Some information I have found about George Laurie. His brother was Robert Laurie, he had 2 daughters I know of, Helen Fox Laurie b1948, d2020 - she married Derek Marr Blackwood and Janet Susan Laurie b1957 who married Cameron William Cairns. Is there anybody who can help us further? Hope this can bring us a photo!!!! Please can you help me?

Regards

Theo Vervoort



*I tried hard to help Theo with his search and was delighted that volunteers in the Netherlands were taking care of our war graves. It seemed that George served in the Gordon Highlanders regiment and I wrote to the Gordon Highlanders museum to see if they could help with no luck. But Theo solved the problem himself! He contacted The Falkirk Herald and they had two photographs of George and were delighted to share them with Theo. Thank you so much for getting in touch Theo and helping to look after the war graves in Venray.*





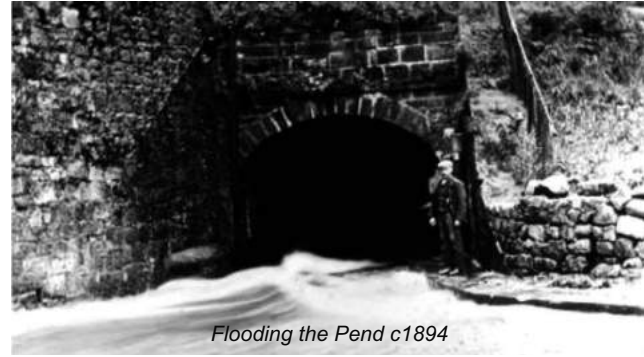
# The Canal, The Pend, The Weather

## The Struggle for the Bridge

Irene Ryan

When the Forth and Clyde Canal reached the Vale of Bonny, c1768, there was no need for a bridge. The south side of the canal was sparsely populated; there were only a few farms and some small cottages dotted about. Even as late as 1862 the only works south of the canal was a disused dye works and a small distillery. One of the largest tunnels built under the canal was the Radical Pend which served a double purpose as a passageway for people of the area to move from one side to the other and to allow the water of the Bean Burn to run through. Access to the north side was essential, the shops and most housing were there.

By 1885 the road through was resurfaced and a 3ft wide elevated pedestrian footpath was built. Previously, everybody had to walk through the Burn. But even this was not high enough to protect pedestrians. Many people today talk about the Burn running as high as the foot path. There had been many calls for a bridge over the canal but by 1891 this call was getting louder. The Caledonian Railway Co., owners of the canal, were presented with a petition signed by 444 owners of public works, merchants, farmers, private persons and working residents of Bonnybridge. The petition pointed out the inconvenience, difficulty and danger when using the Pend.



Flooding the Pend c1894

By 1893 south of the canal had grown significantly with the establishment of many large companies employing thousands of people. With railway stations both north and south of the canal and most of the housing on the north side, congestion in the Pend, especially on the narrow footpath, was causing danger to the public. According to some sources there could be up to 6000 trips every day by people and traffic through the Pend. Because of the head height Carters (hauliers) would leave half of their load at one side of the Pend and pick it up on the return journey.

There was always a constant flow of water through the Pend but in the 1890's the weather was changing. There were storms, heavy rain and flooding happening year after year. By November 1894 there was a great storm which caused dangerous heavy flooding through the Pend making it impassable to everybody. One early morning a carter had an accident trying to get through the flood. The carters' horse, hauling coal for Messrs. Wordie & Co., was brought down by the gale and water. This caused such a traffic jam, at both ends of the Pend that it was out of use for the rest of the day. The village was really cut in two that day. This was happening often causing untold problems to the industries on the south bank with workers or deliveries not getting through to the factories. Travellers trying to get to train stations on both side of the canal were also held up.

Yet again in January 1899 the Pend was impassable so the businessmen and residents thought "enough is enough". The Pend was considered dangerous to public safety and the railway company were still ignoring the call for a bridge. Prominent Bonnybridge businessman and public figures were writing to their Member of Parliament insisting that a bridge was essential. The M.P, Mr McKillop took that question to the Board of Trade and asked them to contact the Caledonian Railway Co. It took this pressure from Parliament to move the Company to consent, but they only agreed if Stirling Council paid half of the cost. After almost 20 years of committees, petitions, questions in the House of Commons, floods, gales, disruption to businesses and everyday life on both sides of the canal, at last, in September 1900, a bridge was completed.

The bridge was officially opened by Mr. George Ure. Mrs Smith, wife of James Smith of Smith and Wellstood, placed a memory bottle into a cavity in the bridge containing a newspaper of the day, a record of all the negotiations and a history of Bonnybridge. There is only a record of the Stirling County Council portion of half the cost of building the bridge as the Caledonian Railway Co. did not publish their costs. The Council paid £2,200 of the bridge costs, the access road both sides and the full cost of the lock keepers cottage that is equivalent to almost £190,000 in today's value.



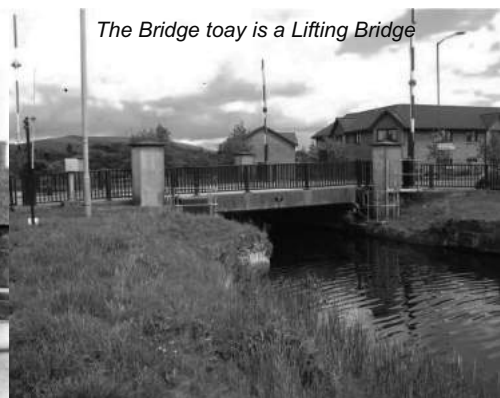
People on footpath c1904



Opening of the first Bridge over the canal 1900



Few days after the first Bridge opened 1900



The Bridge today is a Lifting Bridge



## Fond Memories of Bonnybridge

Graham Haxton Bernard

By way of an introduction, my name is Graham Haxton-Bernard, DOB April 1952 which now makes me 70 years old. I was born and bred in the city of Kingston-upon Hull, East Yorkshire England and have remained there throughout my life. I was a lawyer specialising in Consumer Credit Law and Practise, not in private practice, but taught Solicitors and Company Directors the subject of Financial Regulation.

I might add that I have not taken kindly to retirement for various reasons including the fact that retirement was effectively forced upon me due to Covid restrictions (Training could no longer be carried out face to face and was incapable of being presented by way of ZOOM and Microsoft Teams). I feel retirement has carried me into age related nostalgia mode!!!- and Bonnybridge appears to be at the forefront of my fond memories and I am grateful to the town for that.

Enough of my reasons for feeling nostalgic, my connection with Bonnybridge is simple.

**My Mother** was born and brought up in Bonnybridge, her name at the time was Isabella Bernard and resided with her parents and siblings at **Bonnyside House**, Bonnybridge which I believe is now some sort of Hotel. I have a photograph of the Bernard family all at the front door of Bonnyside House.



Kenneth Roy

**My Mothers father**, Thomas Love Bernard, was a manager at James Dougall & Sons Ltd, Bonnybridge Firebrick Works, Bonnybridge. Sadly, his life came to a premature end in a tragic railway accident. Please see below an extract from an online history text entitled, 'Bonnyside Brickworks or Fire Clay Works, Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire'

**11/09/1931 – The Scotsman – Brickworks manager killed on the railway – The body of a middle-aged man found lying on the railway line near Camelon junction, was identified yesterday as that of Thomas Love Bernard, Bonnyside House, Bonnybridge. The deceased, who was the manager of Dougall's Brickworks, High Bonnybridge was returning home along the line when, it is surmised, he was overtaken and run down by a goods train before he could get out of the way.**

**My Mothers sister and my late Auntie** Esther Roy (nee Bernard) has already been mentioned in your excellent publication 'Bonnyseen' Issue 2: Spring 2011 page 7, see below extract:

*Rae Wilson also recalls another talented group in the village – **the Bonnybridge Players**, who won several competitions in the world of amateur dramatics. She writes: "Many of their plays were produced by **Fred Roy and his son Dick Roy whose wife Esther Bernard** often excelled in leading roles."*

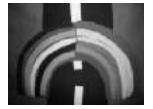
**My Auntie and Uncle, Dick and Esther Bernard/Roy, went** on to have two children namely Linda Roy and Kenneth Roy. Linda is a retired school teacher and is currently living in Edinburgh. Kenneth sadly died in November 2018.

**Kenneth Roy, my cousin**, whom you may have heard of, was a publisher, television presenter, editor and author. Roy was a presenter on the BBC Scotland news programme *Reporting Scotland* throughout the 1970s and founded the *Scottish Review* newsletter. Kenneths obituary service is available to view on U Tube

Well, there we have it. The majority of my relatives were Scots and originated from your lovely Town/Village (the internet is confused as to whether it's a Town or Village). Because of this connection, I spent most of my summer school holidays in Bonnybridge returning each year. We stayed with my Auntie Esther who lived, at that time, in Balfour Street. The journey in those days, 1950's early 60's from memory, was mammoth and seemed as though I would never get there but I enjoyed every minute. Now because of my age-related nostalgia mode, I can honestly say amongst my fondest memories of my childhood are those spent in Bonnybridge and I will be forever grateful for that and that I have Scottish blood running through my veins.

Kind regards, Graham





## Greetings from Canada

Hello, my name is Gordon Macdonald. I lived in Bonnybridge for the first 35 years of my life, growing up in 88 Larbert Road, and I have many fond memories of the village. My mum Margie was a baker at Mathiesons when it was in Bonnybridge, then latterly a cleaner at Bonnybridge Primary school, which I attended before going to Denny High. My dad George worked for SBG Engineering then Midland Scottish, before spending the last couple of years of his life working for Malcolm Allan, who he was good friends with. I myself worked with both SBG and Midland Scottish, then worked in Alexanders in Camelon for 12 years, before emigrating to Canada in 2004. I love what you do, your magazine articles are wonderful, and I enjoy reading them on a rainy day. Anyway, I read with great interest that a miniature mural of the old Smith and Wellstood mural was now in Bonnybridge again, on the side of the community centre. I have tried to describe to my children how magnificent the old Smith and Wellstood mural was. What I'd like to know is, are there miniature versions of the new mural available to buy? I'd love to get one framed and hung on the wall of my house. Even if it was a small poster version, it would be great. I'm sure there are many ex-pats from Bonnybridge and even current residents who would love one. I look forward to your reply. I have attached a photo Bonnybridge Primary School football team. We were not that successful, but we loved playing!



***Back row, left to right:***

(Substitutes) Alastair Campbell, can't remember, James Leishman, Alan Taylor, Des Moffat, can't remember, William Proffatt (manager).

***Middle row, left to right:***

Ian Alexander, Gordon Mitchell, Frazer Tulloch, Alan McGregor, can't remember, Stephen Graham, can't remember.

***Front row, middle to right:***

Can't remember, Peter Clark, David Hud, Grant Russell (captain), Gordon Macdonald, Ian Stirling, David Burns.

I'd love to know what became of all these guys. I know Alan Taylor is a bricklayer, Frazer Tulloch is a military policeman, Grant Russell was a butcher but now a lorry driver I believe, Ian Stirling is a doctor, not sure about the rest. I'm sure the others are scattered around somewhere, doing their own thing. Andrew Leishman was one of our best players, but he moved to Northern Ireland before this photo was taken. That's all I remember for now, but I'm enjoying reminiscing.

Yours, from across the ocean,  
Gordon Macdonald





# BONNYBRIDGE HAS TALENT

## Winner of the Portrait Artist of the Year 2021



**Calum Stevenson** attended Bonnybridge Primary School and it was here that his artistic talent was recognised for the first time. The art teacher was preparing a corridor display and asked Calum to paint the train that was to feature in the artwork. That was when he realised that he must be good at drawing and painting! He remembers his brother asking him in primary school what he wanted to be when he left school and he replied without even thinking twice that he wanted to be an artist.

He moved on to Denny High School where his talent was nurtured and developed by the staff of the school. But by S6 he still had not decided on his future and considered various careers, all involving his artistic ability. E.G Photography, design, architecture. Calum eventually settled on the fine arts and was accepted to Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee and later Glasgow School of Art where he completed his Master's Degree. Calum's time at GSA was a period of disruption due to not one but two devastating fires and then followed by the pandemic which cancelled his degree show.

Calum was still a GSA student when he decided to enter the Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year, a nationally televised competition. There was a slight problem however, you had to submit a self-portrait to the panel for scrutiny before you could be accepted as a participant. Calum no longer owned any self-portraits and his last one had been purchased by a collector in Philadelphia USA! He took a chance, contacted the collector and asked if he would mind sending it back so he could enter the competition. The collector agreed and the rest they say is history. Calum's self-portrait was accepted by the judging panel and he was off to London for filming. Calum progressed through each round painting Kelly MacDonald in the heats, Nick Mason in the semi-final and Barry Humphries in the final. Calum used oil on wooden board for his portraits and each one had to be completed on camera in only four hours.



Calum won! He was gob smacked, amazed and terrified all at the same time! His prize was a commission to paint world-renowned Scottish violinist, Nicola Benedetti. What followed was a very stressful time for Calum. He lost his beloved Gran and Uncle, Covid was still very much at the forefront, and he was only given twelve days to complete the large and complex commission. Calum often worked on the portrait until 4am and suffered many sleepless nights with the enormity of the task and the knowledge that it was going to be the most important piece of art he had ever worked on. As with most artists, he is his own severe critic and wished he had been given more time to refine the portrait. The final episode was seen by over one million viewers. Anyone who has seen the portrait would agree it is a wonderful rendition of Nicola and it deserves the accolades it received from far and wide.

What followed was beyond Calum's wildest dreams. He was congratulated, interviewed, photographed and best of all offered many commissions as a result of his success. One of which was to paint a portrait of the chairman of Surrey County Cricket Club, Richard Thompson which now hangs in the Kia Oval Stadium. His latest commission is to paint the former Lord Provost of Glasgow, Philip Braat, which will hang in the City Chambers at George Square.

*Well done Calum and good luck with your future career.*

**P Swierczek**





# Visiting a War Grave Cemetery in the Netherlands

*Continued*

1939 – World War 2 began and brought about many changes. My father was a member of the local Home Guard until he was “called up” in 1943 and was enlisted in the Royal Artillery Regiment. He was first posted to Aldershot, then to Southborough near Tonbridge Wells, Kent.

In April 1944 D-Day was imminent and my mother was determined to see my father before he was shipped overseas. (It seemed inevitable that this would happen any time). My father somehow managed to get a two-day pass and arranged a place nearby for my mother to stay. How she managed to make this journey from Greenhill during the war when London was in the middle of constant bombing is beyond my understanding and my grandmother was not happy about this decision, especially as she was taking 3-year-old Robert and me, (age 10), with her. I do not know (or remember) how we got there and back. What I do remember is that a friend was working in London at that time met us at Euston Station. I have no knowledge as to how we got to Kent, but I do remember Dad coming into the house where we were staying. We obviously spent the night there; Dad’s leave from camp was only on a 24- or 48-hour pass. This was the last time that we saw him. We knew that he went overseas as we did have some mail and know that he went through France and Belgium to Holland.

He was killed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1944 near the small town of Grave near Arnhem. A simple service was held at the graveside by the chaplain. He now lies in Uden War Cemetery in Holland one of the smaller Cemeteries in Northwest Europe.

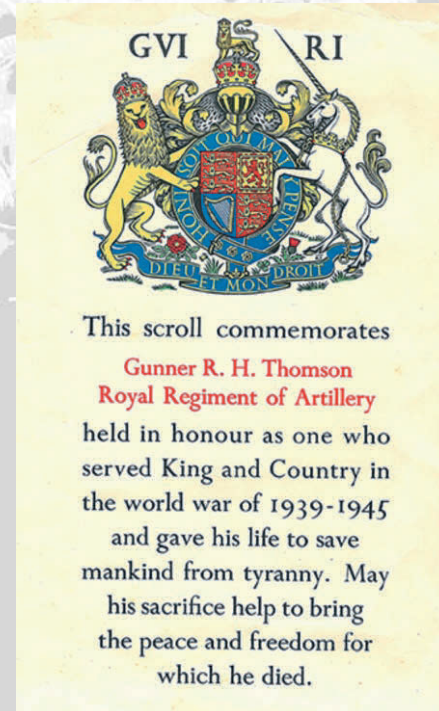
In 1947 my mother contacted the War Graves Committee (WGC) for information on making a visit to the War Cemetery at Uden. A reply came from the Netherlands War Grave Committee (NWGC). The reply said that she would hear from a Dutch family who had taken an interest in my father’s grave, and this was followed by a letter from the Dutch Family. The letter was written in their language but fortunately someone was able to translate it for us. This would be the family we would stay with when we visited the following year.

A quote from the correspondence received from the NWGC was: “The Netherlands population have made themselves responsible towards the dead of the second World War now resting in their soil. From this responsibility they cannot and will not withdraw”. She was also informed that the plain wooden crosses that were originally placed on the graves would in time be replaced by headstones and we would have a choice of inscription to be put on the headstone.

**The first visit** to the cemetery was in late summer 1947 when we finally got the documents and travel arrangements for the journey to Holland. This part was organised by the British Legion. We went by ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland and then by rail and bus to Uden, a small town in a rural area of Holland. We were met and taken to the Dutch Family home for our short stay. They were a lovely family so welcoming and pleased to do this for us. They had a son and daughter. The son told us how he had been taken out of school to work in a factory for the Germans. Words cannot express how awful life must have been for the Dutch people during the occupation. There were many stories to tell.

The Family gave us a large bunch of Chrysanthemums for the grave. The Cemetery was only a short walk away. We laid the flowers on the grave and took a few photographs. We then had a walk round the village before going back to the house.

*Original resting place*



*Now in Uden Cemetery*



*Robert Hopkins Thomson*



*Margaret Thomson*



*Me in 1947*



*Mum in 1990*



*Me in 2005*



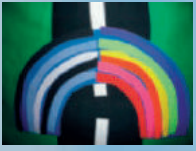
The Dutch people and future generations have never forgotten the Allies who liberated the country and have made the 5th of June “Liberation Day” a National Holiday. That was our first visit to Uden, but not the last for either of us. Further visits were made by my Mum and me in 1966, Mother and Aunt Annie in 1985, me in 1991 and Bert and I in 2005 and 2015.



*Mae & Bert*







# FLYING HIGH

As a young boy Jim Beveridge was fascinated by his father's stories of his time in the RAF during WW2. So, when he was old enough, he joined the Air Training Corps and became involved in all their activities. He was thrilled by the opportunities which allowed him to be a passenger in training and combat aircraft. He flew out of several air bases, including Turnhouse, as it was then known on outskirts of Edinburgh. The cadets flew mostly in Chipmunk aircraft and, although not allowed to take off and land, they were trained on controlling the aircraft in flight.

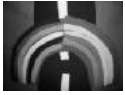


*Jim Beveridge, 4th from the left, Bac Row*

Another popular activity in the cadets was the chance to train in rifle target shooting. This was mainly carried out at the 'Targets' just outside Bonnybridge and Lord Roberts shooting range in Falkirk. Competitions were held all over Britain and the local corps was very successful, winning the British Cadet Championships no less than fourteen times. Jim was particularly adept at rifle shooting and the attached photos show his many awards along with invitations to civic receptions.







Stuart Duncan

Wondering if you can help me. I was just looking at the latest Bonnyseen magazine and spotted my grandmother's sister Betty Torrance in the photo marked 'Broomhill School, High Bonnybridge - 1941c'. I was hoping it would be possible to get a copy of this picture as I've never seen it before and would love to add it to the family archive. There is also another school photo of Betty in the issue from 2019 marked 'Bonnybridge Primary School 1945 Misses Ross' Class's that I've never seen before. My gran moved to Peterhead when she married and then my parents moved along the coast to the Moray area when they married. I've only ever been to Bonnybridge once or twice when I was very young.

I have some other family photos that I could share with the society if they would be of interest. There are some group pictures with family members in but many other people I don't know, so perhaps someone might be able to identify them?

Regards, Stuart.



My grandmother Isobel Torrance back 2<sup>nd</sup> right & her cousin Margaret Torrance back row 3<sup>rd</sup> from left.



Grans younger brother William Torrance (born 1938) back row 4<sup>th</sup> from left?



Newspaper cutting of grans sister Rita's class. Rita 2<sup>nd</sup> row from bottom 5<sup>th</sup> from left. Anyone have and original of this?



Great gran Elizabeth Torrance (Cordiner) 2<sup>nd</sup> left and husband Robert on right hand side.

Williams class at school? 2<sup>nd</sup> row 4<sup>th</sup> from right.



Grans' family lived in Dunure Street. This might be neighbours? Great gran on far left, gran Isobel is standing with infant holding teddy bear, maybe her sister Betty? Brother John is kneeling in front and Rita at left of him.







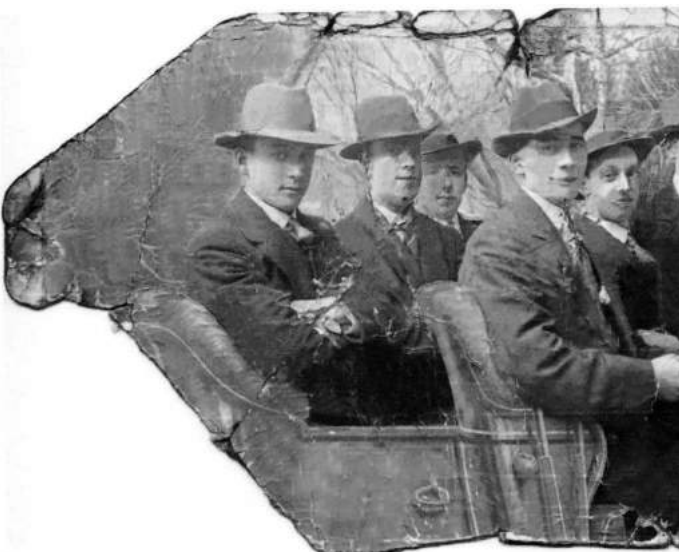
Great gran Elizabeth on left



Grans brother John on left



Think the young lad with the man's hand on his shoulder is John.  
Pantomime or amateur dramatic production?



Really poor state! However, grandfather Robert Torrance is furthest left and his image is undamaged.

## Torrance Family Request *continued*

### Response To Stuarts Request from Alex Burns

When I was growing up in Bonnybridge my family were close friends with the Torrance family and knew them very well. The parents, Robert and Elizabeth whose nickname was 'Auld Torrance for some reason (no disrespect intended) had seven children. Isobel, Rita, Jim, Betty, Robin, Billy & William. John, the oldest son, was killed when on active service with the RAF over Germany. He was a navigator flying in the Lancaster bomber. Elizabeth (Auld Torrance) never got over his loss. The family moved from Dunure Street to 72 Thornton Avenue, where the family grew up and moved on to independent lives. Robert finished his working life as a sheet metal worker in Smith & Wellstood's where I was an apprentice sheet metal worker.

After great grandad Robert (Rab) died great grandma Elizabeth (Auld Torrance) moved to a smaller house at 20 Anderson Street where she lived for the remainder of her life, dying at the age of 90 years.

My last memory of Isobel Torrance was when she visited her family at 72 Thornton Avenue to say goodbye as she was leaving to return to her home town of Peterhead. She was a really lovely lady. Betty married a local farmers son and they lived at 13 Bonnywood Avenue. When her husband died, she moved to Polmont/Brightons area to live with her daughter Wendy.

Kind Regards  
Alex Burns





## Memories of my Bonnybridge Roots

*Richard Finney*

Members of my family worked in Smith and Wellstood and I wondered if you would be interested in my recollections and photographs.

I am currently gathering as much information and photographs as I can as I go through my late mother's albums and boxes etc. I came across the attached photos the other day. I've no idea of date but it looks like Gala day in The Anderson Public Park. There are Scouts and Guides, a pipe band and what look like "Village Queens". The photos were taken from my grandparents' window at 75 Falkirk Road. If you have more information about the event I would be interested.



My Grandfather, Richard Aitken (auld Dick) had been an ironmoulder at S&W, my mother worked in the office and her brother, Tom Aitken, was a sales manager and had been based in the London and Liverpool showrooms before coming back the factory.

3 of our female relatives emigrated to Canada and one married a gent called David McPhee who sold Esse ranges in Vancouver.

I am putting together a time-line of our family in Bonnybridge and will send this and more information in due course if you are interested. You may already know one of my 2nd Cousins, John Aitken, who was married to Jackie. She was involved with the girl scouts but unfortunately died in 2016 as a result of a riding accident. I have lost touch with John and wonder if any of you know if he is still alive, after Jackie's death he moved away to near Prestwick.

*Best Regards  
Richard Finney*





## A great New Bridge over the Bonny

*Irene Ryan*

The late 1600's saw the population of Bonnybridge grow quickly. Our area only had a few farms, but it was the growth of the farming industry that saw the need for better road conditions. Travelling to other areas for trade became important, so bridges over any water course were essential.

There were a few single arched bridges in our area, one built over the Red Burn, another over the Rowantree Burn and one over the Bonny River. They were narrow but significant, allowing traders to sell their goods further afield.

There are records of the Red and Rowantree burns old bridges still surviving in the 1960's but in poor condition.



*Image from  
the Interweb*

When the Turnpike Trust was established, the bridge over the Bonny could not meet the needs for the much-increased traffic, it had to be replaced. A Mail Coach was being run between Edinburgh and Glasgow via Falkirk but had to be stopped as it was taking 6 days to do that journey. It was reduced to a mail man on horseback who could use the narrow bridges. Most of the traffic until the 1780's had to use our Ford to cross the Bonny, (where the Ford Bridge is today); all the traffic had to then turn left once through the Ford up the hill to Glenbonny. Thanks to the Turnpike Trust most direct roads were improved, making travelling and trading much easier.

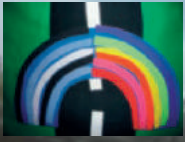
By 1794 a new bridge was built over the Bonny. It was about 17ft wide making it the best bridge in the area to cope with the increase in traffic, goods and people. Before the bridge was built our area had many names but mostly it was called either Ford of Bonny, Water of Bonny or Vale of Bonny but some records say the collective name for all of these areas was "Catscleugh", thought to be an ancient Scots name for a deep ravine or glen. The Bonny runs through such a ravine on its way through the village. The great new bridge brought trade, traffic, people and prosperity to our district, so the growing village became known as Bonnybridge.

Of course, the Forth and Clyde Canal cut the village in half, but no bridge was built over the canal for many years. The Pends constructed under the canal were the only means of travelling from Bonnybridge to High Bonnybridge and Greenhill, causing huge problems with the movement of people, goods and Livestock.

The bridge we all use on the High Street replaced the 1794 bridge. It was built in 1904 to replace the previous bridge which was too narrow and starting to crumble away. Stirling County Council had to improve the structure again in 1959 because of the volume of traffic.







*Flying to the Bypass Road.*



## The World came to Bonnybridge!

The UCI world cycling championships were held in Glasgow in August 2023. One of the many events taking place was the Mens Elite Road Race which started in Edinburgh on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August and 134.8 miles later ended in Glasgow. The route took the racers through some of the most spectacular scenery our country has to offer including Bonnybridge! The streets were lined with folks cheering them on as they flew passed the town and headed to Denny and Carron Dam. The race was not always straightforward as it was held up for nearly an hour by protestors and the eventual winner, Mathieu van der Poel had a nasty fall but got back on the bike immediately to win in superb style.

The racers were going so fast it was difficult to take photographs which weren't blurred by the speed they were travelling at! However, as you can see from our cover pages Gary Fitzpatrick managed to capture the most amazing and iconic photograph of the racers and the Bonnybridge mural. We are grateful to Gary for giving us permission to use his photographs.



*Time Car.*



*The Winner coming through Bonnybridge.*





## PANTOMIMES at Bonnybridge Public Hall



Public Hall

The public hall on the main street in Bonnybridge was erected by public subscription and opened in 1900. This beautiful building was home to cultural and social activities in the village.

The main hall, which had a capacity of 750 people, had a beautiful sprung floor perfect for ballroom dancing. It was the venue for several of the local companies to hold their annual staff dances which were very formal affairs with everyone in evening dress.

There would also be occasional visits from Opera singers from London. It would be interesting to find out if this was organised through some connection with the Smith & Wellstood office in London's Conduit Street.

The most eagerly anticipated productions were the plays performed by the Bonnybridge Amateur Players. These were produced by Dick Roy and mostly starred Esther Bernard as the leading lady. The company also performed in many locations across Britain and won numerous amateur drama awards. As a youngster, the undoubted highlight of the year was the annual Christmas Pantomime. This was produced by Agnes Henderson and staged managed by the aforementioned Dick Roy. A cast of local children were choreographed by Archie Walker, accompanied by Mr Gibson, pianist. Agnes Henderson ably coached large groups of local children. We children were effectively given a master class in stage craft. We learned entering and leaving stage left-right, working with stage lighting and spotlights and how to hit a mark. The shows normally starred Marion Proven as Principal Boy, Madeleine Gregg as leading lady and principal ballerina Joyce Blair. Adult male roles would be filled by men from the Bonnybridge Amateur Players, Alex Gillies, Archie Walker and Dodie Sprunt among others. Musical accompaniment was provided by an orchestra of local musicians led by Mr Gibson.

I remember as a 4-year-old, being fascinated by the huge gantry and ropes required for each scenery change. Local men, not fighting in the war, manned the gantries changing the scenery and operating the lighting rigs.

Material for all the children's costumes (which was extremely difficult to source in wartime) was supplied with patterns to be made by mothers or family friends. Several different costumes were required for each scene in every panto performed. I remember the costumes were beautiful, with lovely fabrics and colours and finishing we didn't have on our everyday clothes.



Childrens Panto

Panto circa 1941

Dress rehearsals were on Monday. Agnes always in despair should anything go wrong! Then with tears of joy crying "O" my bairns "O" my bairns" as rapturous applause filled the hall on opening night. Agnes sold tickets for the panto in her tobacconist shop at The Toll. They were in the form of raffle tickets and Agnes sold to anyone who asked for a ticket regardless of the seating capacity, resulting in many standing in the passageways during the performances.





## PANTOMIMES at Bonnybridge Public Hall *continued*



Rae in  
"Oh You Beautiful Doll"



Rae (McNeilage) Wilson



Rae in  
Panto "Alladin"

The panto ran Tuesday to Saturday in Bonnybridge, then for 4 nights in Falkirk Old Town Hall, one night in Plean and one in Cowie, where the stages were not of the standard we were used to, but each child was given a slab of McCowan's toffee - what a treat in war time!

I believe the last panto may have been after VE day and ended with the cast dressed as soldiers marching to the rousing music of the Pomp and Circumstance March and Land of Hope and Glory.  
What a privilege to have grown up in such a vibrant caring community especially in the midst of World War 2.

## DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN?

As a fairly recent (23 years!) resident of the Bonnybridge Community I am intrigued by the number of times an historical project has been introduced by one of our original resident members starting a discussion with the phrase "Do you remember when...".

Sadly, more and more people in our community can always remember when We had planned to put up a series of small Point of Interest panels around Bonnybridge and District to inform residents of the history of particular places such as the Toll and the Memorial Gardens for instance.

However, after visiting the town of Troon with its dementia Troon programme I noticed a display of old-ish photographs to help sufferers trigger memories of places and events from the fairly recent past. To help them remember when  
When I put this to the GHS group, they were very enthusiastic about producing as many panels as possible with themes which may help those suffering from memory loss.

Look out for these in the coming months, they well help you remember, even if your memory is as sharp as ever!

**Paul Cortopassi**

### BONNYBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Bonnybridge Public School was opened in March 1876 as a single storey building. It was built on made up ground into which piles had to be driven for foundations. The cottage was for the janitor. Built to accommodate 300 pupils, it was soon overcrowded. A second storey was added in 1891. It ceased to be a school in the 1960s.



### BONNYBRIDGE SOCIAL CLUB

The Bonnybridge Social & Recreational Sports Bar was formally opened on 17 December, 1969 after four years of fundraising by local residents for the benefit of the community. From the outset the management committee ran numerous social events with the help of local bar and serving staff. The social club hosted several entertainers who went on to become very famous in their time – singers Gerry and the Pacemakers, Lena Martel, Christian, Frank Ifield among others; world darts champion Bobby George gave a display of his skills and Glen Campbell presented his 'Cartoon Cavalcade' programme. Dances, weddings, birthday parties, were all hosted at the club.

The  
Greenhill  
Historical  
Society

