

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

Bonnyseen

The magazine from Greenhill Historical Society



Issue Number 14 April 2017



Introduction

Spring is upon us and yet another Bonnyseen is emerging from the memories of our community. Keep up the good work folks, as without you there would be no record of our precious social history.

This history includes that of our Irish, Italian and Polish families who made Bonnybridge their home. The society is always grateful for written and /or photographic memories. So please get in touch if you would like to share your information. We have had response to our request for information on any evacuees from the blitz in Glasgow who came to Bonnybridge but I am sure there are still untold stories out there.

The next edition of Bonnyseen is scheduled for November and we are already logging new submissions! So no time to waste if you want your story included.

We send a huge thank you to our contributors of literary and financial support.

P Swierczek

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Greenhill Historical Society

WHERE TO FIND US



**GREENHILL
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

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greenhillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Meetings The Society meets every Friday in the Bonnybridge Library from 2pm till 4pm and all are welcome to join us. In summer months we go on historical visits on the last Friday of each month.

Front Cover:
Bluebells in Seabegs Wood.

Photographs courtesy of 
P Swierczek

Back Cover:
Spring has Sprung.

Photographs courtesy of Frank Walton.



Gala Days of Bygone Years

We are pleased to inform our readers that the Gala is to be reinstated this year and is to take place on the 5th August (2017).



Jessie Porteous
(Bonnybridge Public School)
Carnival Queen 1934



Molly Shanley
(St. Joseph's School, Bonnybridge)
Carnival Queen 1935



GREENHILL GALA DAY.

Greenhill Gala Day Year unknown

Gala Day 1946



Gala Day 1952



Gala Day Year unknown

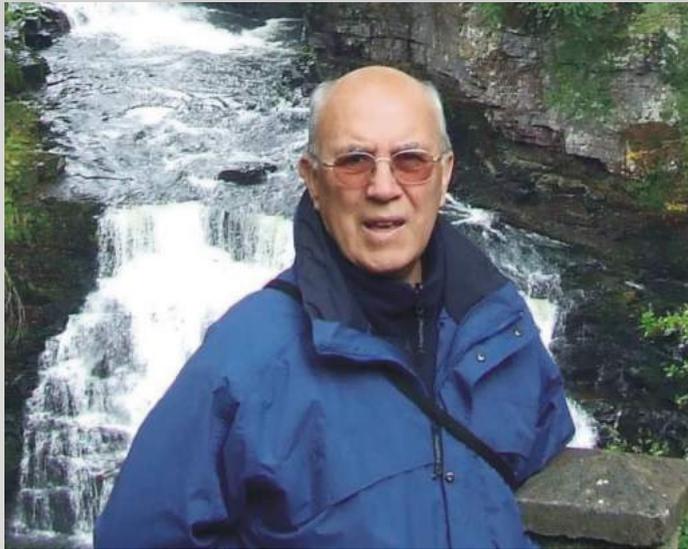


Gala Day Year unknown





OBITUARY



Mike Robinson

1944 - 2016

On 31st of July 2016 Greenhill Historical Society sadly lost one of its long standing members following six years of devastating ill health. Mike Robinson met Sheena Lambie from Slamannan on holiday in Eastbourne, fell in love and set up home in Reading, where they lived for ten years. As Sheena's family were all still in the Central area of Scotland, Mike and she travelled north regularly. Mike fell in love with the beauty of Scotland and suggested that maybe they should

live here permanently. Sheena happily agreed and they moved to Bonnybridge in 2005. Sheena enrolled in a WASP class on Square Foot Gardens at Denny High School and there she met Janice MacFarlane. They discovered that they both enjoyed walking and Janice invited her to explore Bonnybridge with her friend the next Sunday. Her friend was Gillian Cowell who co-founded Greenhill Historical Society and by the end of the walk, not only had Sheena decided to become a member of GHS, but she persuaded Mike to join too. They were both interested in the history of the area and as a trained engineer Mike was particularly interested in the industrial heritage and history of the Bonnybridge area. Mike entered the cyber world of computing in its infancy and became so adept at Computer Aided Design that he ended up travelling all over the country to train large companies in the use of the new technology. His computing skills endeared him immediately to GHS as he was able to teach us a great deal about the application of computers for our use and set up our very first web site. Mike was also a keen and accomplished photographer and we have used several of his excellent prints in the early editions of the Bonnyseen magazine.

We all miss his wonderfully kind and happy nature but None more so than Sheena, who continues to be a very valuable member of the Greenhill Historical Society.

R.I.P.





The History of St. Joseph's R.C. Church Bonnybridge

Edited by Paul Cortopassi

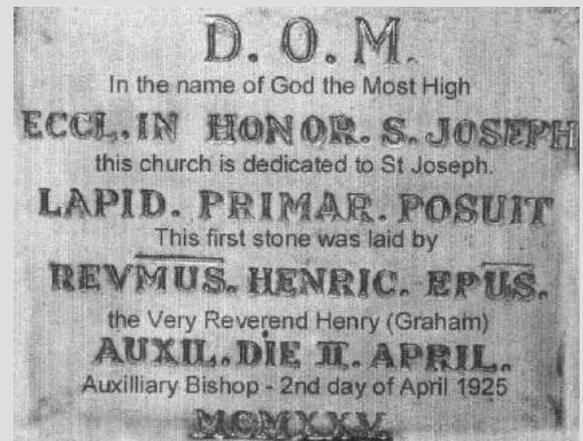
In 1877 there were only 41 Roman Catholics in Bonnybridge, but by the end of the 19th century numbers had increased, partly, due to the workers of Irish descent in the foundries, mines and brick works in the area. Very early in the 20th century they were probably hearing Mass in Griffith's Hall, High Bonnybridge. The hall was built for the use of the workers and was allowed to be used for social and religious purposes. Some of the earliest meetings of the Roman Catholic community were held here, under the control of St Alexander's R.C. Church, Denny. A branch of St Alexander's 'League of the Cross', a Total Abstinence society, was formed in High Bonnybridge on Tuesday, 20th October 1908.

Mass must have been said in the hall until parishioners opened a place of worship of their own in February, 1910. Part of the building of Broomhill Paper mills was converted into a suitable place of worship called 'St Joseph's Mission'. Fr Daniel Conway was in charge. There was a small hall for the use of the parishioners, in which many congregational activities were carried out, including a very active Sunday school. Very soon, St Joseph's congregation sought a larger and more beautiful church, and began a Building Fund. Amongst other functions for raising funds was a sacred concert held on Sunday afternoon, 19th April 1914 in the Picture House, Bonnybridge. There is a report in the Falkirk Herald of Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning services in St Joseph's church at Broomhill in 1921. Father Conway died in 1922. He had been first curate and then parish priest of St Joseph's and was succeeded by Rev Father Edward Miley. By that time the congregation was too large for the size of the church at Broomhill, which had worthily served the parish since 1910, and Father Miley started work for a larger church. In July 1924 he found a suitable site on the high ground adjoining the small cottage that was the Rectory. On Sunday 10th August 1924 the Right Reverend Henry Gray Graham, Bishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, visited to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to six adults, 68 girls, and 68 boys – clearly a sizeable congregation. His Lordship was assisted by the Rev Fathers Kelly, Morrison, McKee, Murdoch, and Miley, and Mr. Thomas Corcoran - a student from Blair's College, Aberdeen and the first Roman Catholic in the village to become a priest. The children had been prepared by Father Miley, assisted by Miss Elizabeth Reilly, Bonnybridge who was one of the Sunday school teachers in the small hall. The last service in the Broomhill church was held on Sunday, 1st August 1925 having served the congregation for 16 years. The service was conducted by the Rev. Father Miley who had been in charge of St. Joseph's for over 2 years. The new church had a seating capacity of 500 people measuring 95ft. by 40ft. standing on high ground adjoining the rectory. A bell turret was built to the right of the entrance. Below the church, there was a large hall for the congregation to take part in social activities. The church and hall were fitted with electric light and central heating. The work only began in April but it was pushed forward quickly by the voluntary labour of the parishioners in beautifying the church and grounds.

At noon, Saturday 7th August 1925, the new church was officially opened in the presence of a crowded congregation. The new bell was consecrated by Bishop Graham who said that when a bell was consecrated it received a name. In this case, the name given was 'St Joseph' who was Patron Saint of the church. In the same year on Tuesday 17th August the new catholic school was opened, and the church hall opened on Friday 18th September.



Laying of Foundation Stone, 2nd April 1925





The Changing Face of Bonnybridge Railway Line

Retired Rail Engineer

The contributor of this article is a career railway engineer, mainly involved in electrification work. Now retired and settled in Bonnybridge with his family since 2006 he is watching with interest the progress of the Edinburgh/Glasgow Electrification Project (EGIP).

After initial delays the project is now due for completion by July 2017 with a full service of electric trains to start in December 2017. Because of the costs involved in such a complex project electrification is restricted to the busier routes which are deemed to be most cost effective. The principal benefits of electrically operated trains are that they are environmentally superior to diesel trains, cheaper to build and maintain and have better acceleration making the journey times faster.

The technical name for the system of electrification being used is the 25 kV alternating current single phase overhead which was first used in Britain in the late 1950's. The Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) being used is a modern development of older versions used in the Glasgow area and on the East Coast and West Coast main lines from Scotland to London. The main component of the OLE are the along track wires, known as the Catenary, formed of an upper catenary wire from which droppers support contact wire through which the electricity is conducted to the train. Insulators separate off the live part of OLE. The contact wire is zigzagged along the line to even wear across the pantograph head which is mounted on the top of the train.

The power is sourced from the National Grid and a feeder station for the line is under construction at Greenhill where the lines to Stirling and the north diverge from the Glasgow /Edinburgh lines. This is an ideal location from a railway aspect but it required a long incoming cable from Bonnybridge Power Station which caused disruption for motorists in the area. Power is transmitted from the feeder station and collected by the pantograph on the train roof and through on-board electrical equipment to the motors that power the train. The current is returned to the feeder station through the train wheels into the track and finally through a return conductor at the side of the line. The system is designed for trains to receive power continuously, safely and reliably. The larger portal structures seen in more complex areas such as Greenhill junction can in extreme situations form a tunnel impression when viewed along the track and it is incumbent on the designers to make them as aesthetically pleasing as possible.



With overhead electrification, additional headroom is often required at overbridges and tunnels to accommodate pantograph and the overhead wires with sufficient electrical clearances. This means that many must be raised or rebuilt or the track lowered beneath the bridge. The former can impact significantly on road users, unfortunately requiring temporary road closures and consequential disruption, whereas track lowering brings its own challenges in drainage problems etc. This element of the works is a major component of the overall cost. Some tunnels, including Winchburgh and Falkirk High are equipped with OLE formed of a rigid conductor bar as best suited to the space available.

The new trains will be 100mph 3/4 car Class 385 electric multiple units capable of operating up to eight car trains at peak times. They are being built, partly in Japan and partly in Darlington, by the Japanese company Hitachi. The first ten units ordered for Central Scotland services arrived for testing last September. A noticeable feature of the new trains will be the gangway door on the front of the cab to allow a throughway for staff and passengers when two or more units are coupled together. As the new trains will be longer, they will provide more seating at peak times than at present. The longer trains also required many platforms to be extended at stations along the route. On the plus side however, the end is in sight for this massive project. All the necessary work, disruption and cost will be worth it in the long run in terms of greater comfort, faster journeys for passengers and a safe, comfortable working environment for the train staff.



Safety of the public and rail staff is, of course, of prime importance to designers and regulatory authorities. All electrically live parts of the OLE are designed to be at a safe distance on the station platforms and any accessible place on the railway. Bridge parapets are made higher and there are specific requirements for lineside fencing which will provide the safest possible environment for staff and public alike. We look forward to a future where those of us who live in Bonnybridge will see the reopening of at least one of our previous four railway stations.





Making Bonnybridge our Home

By Irene M Ryan

People have settled in the Vale of Bonny and Bonny Water area for at least 3000 years. A farming community for centuries, the village started to grow after the canal came through. With the coming of the railway the village developed further. There were 4 railway stations in Bonnybridge but only one, the Central Station, behind the Royal Hotel, ran on the west side.



Woodlea Park was built on Bonnyfield farmland. The entrance to the farm house was facing Drove Loan now called Vale of Bonny View. The Gillespie family had worked the farm for generations.



Mr Johnston took over after WW2 and the Johnstons' worked the farm until 1971 when the family moved out and most of the land was left neglected for many years. Mrs Johnston told me how upset her family were, when out walking over the Bonnyfield one day in 1991, they saw the house being demolished.



To the south of Bonnyfield farmland, now Bonnyfield Nature Park, was found a rich source of quality sand and gravel. Scottish Aggregates opened Bonnyfield Quarry in the 1960s, creating a new road, facing Dickburn Crescent, to access this resource. Many trucks ran out of this quarry every day carrying hundreds of tonnes of material, until the quarry closed in the 1970s.

The land was left vacant for many years but 2 farms to the west and south of Bonnyfield, Easter and Wester Seamores were, I believe, still working farms. For a reference to where these farms were, use the link to a map which will put all farms mentioned, into place - <http://maps.nls.uk/view/75676710>

The first application for houses on Bonnyfield farmland was made in January 1995 by United Distilleries, who then owned the land. Objections, mostly on traffic, wildlife and trees, were received by Falkirk Council but permission was granted, after some changes to the plans.

United Distilleries sold the land, with planning permission to Wilcon Homes, who then applied to change the building consent, in 1998, to 178 houses. Wilcon, being the first builders, gave the estate its name and created a new entrance road into Bonnyfield land.



Over the next few years plans for Woodlea Park changed many times, in both number of houses and builders. Wilcon sold some land to Tulloch who sold on to Beazer who were taken over by Persimmon. Woodlea Estate finished with 228 houses but in December 2012 one house was so destroyed by fire it had to be demolished, to date, that plot is still vacant.

Many road names used in the estates come from old Bonnybridge, High Bonnybridge or Greenhill. Woodlea Brick Work and House, Caledonia Railway, Bonnymuir Battle in 1820 and Bonnyfield for the farmland the estate is built on.

Since the first house was erected in Woodlea Park, Bonnybridge has grown, with new estate all around. Many people from across Scotland and further afield have chosen to make their home Bonnybridge. The census for 2001 -2011 shows the number of houses built in the village increased from 2748 to 3393. The population in 2001 was 6620 by 2011 it had grown to 8185. Since 2011 more houses have been built and further are planned or in construction.

There are still more people who want to call Bonnybridge their home. Not incomers' new villagers.



A long Way from Tongland

By Ian McNeish & Irene M Ryan

From the outbreak of WW2 children were taken from their home and sent many miles away to a place they, and possibly their family, had never heard of. Inner city children must have been nervous, worried or afraid with this upheaval to their lives.



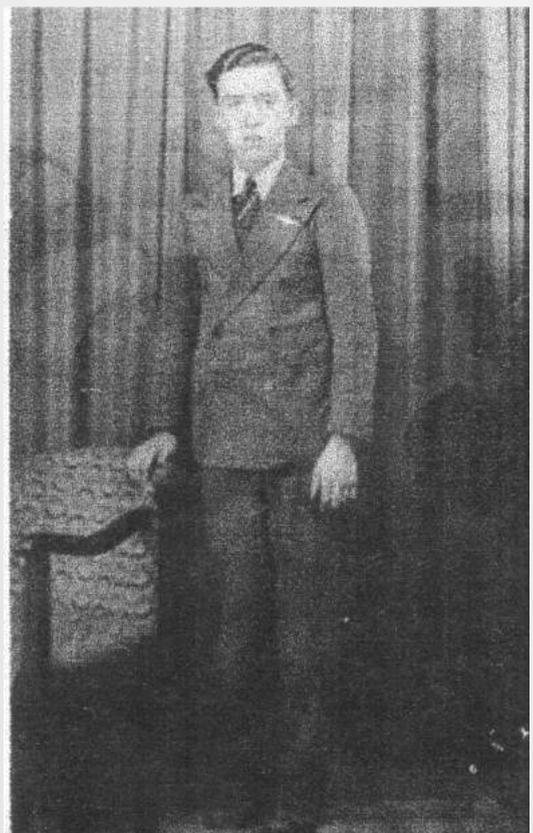
Florence Allan, born in 'the' Calton district of Glasgow, was one of these children. Calton in the 1930s was a disadvantaged area but it had been a prosperous village in the past, supporting brick works and weaving industries. When the Calton Weavers asked for an increase to their wages, it was refused, so they went on strike. The troops were sent into the village but they were driven back by 'the mob'. The 'Riot Act' was read and the troops opened fire into the crowd. Six were killed that day and many more were injured.

When it was Florence's home the Calton was also known as the territory of Glasgow's infamous gang The Tongs. Calton became known as Tongland. Florence lived there with her eight brothers and sisters. When war broke out Florence was eight years old and she, her Mum and some of her siblings were packed onto a bus and heading out of Glasgow, with no idea as to where they were going. She recalls being excited but also sad as her dad and three older brothers were left behind.

It seemed to take many hours, in a child's mind, before they reached their destination which was Bonnybridge. Although an industrial area there were so many open spaces around for children to play, rather than dirty streets and backcourt middens. The family were housed in Allan Gillespie's barber shop, in the High Street. Mr Gillespie was absent on War Duties so Florence and her family had the full space to themselves. They were between McGregor's shop and Marcella's chip shop, to the Allan's an ideal position. Florence and her family could not believe their new home, "it had so many sinks". She had never seen so many sinks outside the 'Steamy'.

The war raged on and the Allan family settled into their new home in Bonnybridge. The family that was left behind in Calton would visit when they could, but dad and the older brothers had to do their bit for the war. Her brother, Malcolm, joined the merchant navy in 1942, he was only 17. Florence, then 11, cannot remember the name of the first ship he was on but it must have been a traumatic experience as her big brother turned up in Bonnybridge not the same boy who had gone away. Mum, Jeannie, did not want her son to go back to sea, so she persuaded him to stay with her and not return to Glasgow.

Of course this settled life did not last long. Florence thinks it was only a few days, but might have been a bit longer. One day two police officers came to their house and arrested Malcolm. They hauled him down the hill to the Police Office at the Toll.



Malcolm Allan, Mess Room Boy, M.V. San Delfino (London)

One of the officers was Sergeant Fraser, who Florence remembers very well, and she says she will take the image and memory of her brother being marched away by the police, to her grave. That was the last time Florence and her family saw Malcolm.

Her brother was put on to the merchant ship MV San Delfino where he served as a mess room boy. This armed British tanker was sailing from Houston Texas to Halifax Nova Scotia, carrying aviation spirit when she was sunk by a German U-boat on 9th April 1942 off the coast of North Carolina. There was a crew of 49 of which 28 lost their life, Malcolm Allan, at just 17, was one of the lost.

A lone, unidentified body was washed ashore at Buxton Wood, Hatteras Island. The young man, along with others, was buried in the British Cemetery, Hatteras Island of the coast of North Carolina. Every year their sacrifice is remembered, at a memorial service, by members of the National Park Service, who maintain the graves.

It is only a few years since Florence found out where her brother lost his life. She was heartbroken when she was told of her brother's fate. If only she had known when a younger woman, perhaps she could have gone to the annual memorial service. She could have said; 'Goodbye Malcolm' you rest such a long way away from Tongland.

After the war Florence and her family stayed on in Bonnybridge for a short while. Because the barber wanted his residence back the Allan family moved to Banknock. Florence met and married George O'Hara in 1954 and they moved into the O'Hara family home in Thornton Avenue. The couple managed to get a flat in a Lane and Girvan company house. After a few years the council were building new houses in Thornton Avenue and Florence was so happy to be offered one of them. They were the first tenants to move in and Florence loved it so much she is still there today.



EVACUEES

Margaret McDougall

A back issue of Bonnyseen asked for information on people evacuated from Glasgow to the Stirlingshire area in WW2. I remembered the McLean family who came from Clydebank at the start of the war and lived in Longcroft. The father and his eldest son, George, travelled by bus every morning to go back to Clydebank to work. There were also two girls Jessie and Betty, in the family and another son Alistair. Alistair worked for the council as a builder and I know that he and his two sisters married and stayed on in the area after the war. However, I lost track of them years ago although I heard that Alistair had died. Perhaps other readers will have further information of the family. Two girls also came to live in Longcroft with Maggie Black and went to Dennyloanhead school. Again maybe someone will be able to help with some information on them.



Back Row: Mamie Laird, Davina Dickson, Christine Paton, Isobel Thomson, Winnie Paton, Jeanette Christie, ? Burns, Marlene Parker

Middle Row: Audrey Gow, ? Burns, Nan Paton

Front Row: Helen Higgins, Marjory Paton, John Dawson, Margaret Higgins, Nan Maxwell, Mary Hutchison, Liz Baxter

Granny's Dumpling

Margaret Murray



1lb Self Raising Flour
8oz Atora Suet
1lb 4oz Sultanas
6oz Sugar
1 Tin Treacle
1 level dessert spoonful of Mixed Spice
1 Level dessert spoonful of Cinnamon



Method

Mix all the ingredients with enough water to make a doughy consistency
Rinse a cotton cloth (not a fluffy one!) in warm water and sprinkle with flour
Put mixture into centre of cloth and gather all the corners up
Leave enough room for the mixture to rise and tie all the corners at the top
Put a plate in the bottom of a pan of water and bring to the boil
Put dumpling into the pan and boil for $\frac{3}{4}$ hours.
Keep water level topped up-it should always be half way up the dumpling.

ENJOY!

What do YOU know about the History of Bonnybridge

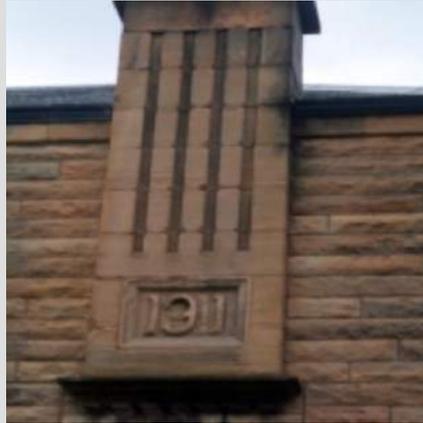
By William Parker

NAME THAT PLACE

An Illustrated Quiz within Bonnybridge.
Where can you find these Local Features?



1



2



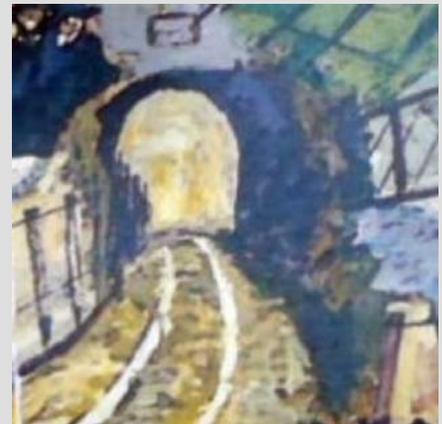
3



4



5



6

QUIZ 14



Quiz Photographs courtesy of
Paul Cortopassi

Answers on Page 15



Broomhill Primary School 1913 - 1988

By Danny Deans

The proposal that a school be built at Broomhill was first addressed in 1903 by the Landward Education Board following receipt of a letter from John G Stein, the founder and owner of Milnquarter Fireclay Mine (1887-1971). The Clay Mine and Brickworks were more commonly known simply as Stein's by those who worked and lived in High Bonnybridge. He advised the Board that he planned to build houses to attract and accommodate prospective employees and that the need for a school close to the houses and works was vital. The nearest existing school was Greenhill School which was a fair walk, especially for the youngest pupils. Although the postal address of the houses he subsequently built was Milnquarter Cottages, they became known locally as Stein's Row.

The Education Board agreed to his request and the school was built at the junction of Broomhill Road and Church Street, adjacent to the old Co-op building and opposite St Helen's Church. It was opened in 12th August 1913 with 72 pupils and Miss Mary Knowles as the first Head Teacher. There was no provision for Catholic education in the village at that time and for 12 years Broomhill was a mixed religion school until St Joseph's opened 1925 and 34 pupils transferred to the new school.

Following a reorganisation of Educational provision in 1947, all children in Broomhill and High Bonnybridge over the age of seven were reallocated to Greenhill school. The primary 1 and 2 pupils stayed on at Broomhill which from then on was known as the 'wee school'. Transport was promised to take the pupils to Greenhill School but this did not happen until somewhere between 1951-53. The reason I know this is because I remember walking from the prefabs in Park Street, taking a shortcut via Waverly Crescent, climbing a 'wee' bing and joining the 'pad' opposite Stein's brickwork. (The 'pad' ran parallel to the main Glasgow to Edinburgh railway line with huge steam trains passing within several feet of young pupils (really frightening!) I then passed Dykehead brickwork and emerged opposite Thomson's shop (featured in Bonnyseen 10) which was just round the corner from the school. Like many other landmarks the 'pad' has disappeared but its starting and finishing points can be identified by well-worn railway sleepers.

In 1988 the new Antonine School was opened to accommodate the pupils from Broomhill and Greenhill and these two schools were closed, Broomhill after 75 years and Greenhill after 104 years of educating the youth of High Bonnybridge and Greenhill.





Broomhill School Roll 1947/48

Back Row- left to right

Janet B Nicol-Head teacher 1939-1965; Robert Burns; Jimmy Buchanan; Charles Lindie; John Deans ; Daniel MacPherson; Thomas Carson; John Newton; John Wallace; Ian Moffat; Cecil Ferguson; Jim Haig; Hunter Browning; George Napier; Billy Laird; Thomas Osborne; Ian Rithchie; Miss Straw-class teacher.

2nd Back Row

Mamie Laird; Morag Yeaman?; Pamela MacPherson; Margaret Higgins; Leona Donaldson; Marlene Lees; Mary Browning; Glynis Anderson; Morag MacPherson; Pearl Moffat; Esther Peat; Anne Cooper; Rena Sneddon; Isobel Lees

2nd Front Row

John Osborne; June King; Sandra Mochrie; Phoebe Donaldson; Morag McGregor; Davina McLanachan; Lavina McLanachan; May Wilson; Lena Osborne; ? Lottie Russell; Elizabeth Wren; Ian Fraser

Front row

Jim Aitken; Jim Cuthbert; Malcolm Simpson; Danny Deans; Tom Bell; Duncan Livingston; William Stretton; John MacPherson; Billy Archibald; John Sneddon; Sandy Lees; Alec McArdle; Thomas Carson

These pupils were all born between 1939-1942 making the survivors 74 to 78 years of age. Forty-four years after John Stein first wrote to the Education Board in 1903 at least eleven of the pupils were living in Stein's row which was eventually demolished following the closure of the clay mine and brickwork in 1971 after 84 years of production.

With the passage of 70 years since the photograph of the whole school was taken I apologise for the inevitable mistaken identities and spelling of names.



1. This stained glass window is on the entry door at Bonnybridge Golf Club
- 2 Date stone above where the old Dairy was in Unitas Terrace now called Ford Road.
3. Plaque at entrance to Jenny's Park (aka Duncan Memorial Park)
4. Millstone built into front boundary wall of Bonnybridge Parish Church
5. Wee Willie Wyse (on plaque outside Library)
6. Section of mural on the outer wall of the Jet Garage (not the Pend itself!)

PICTURE QUIZ ANSWERS



Spring has Sprung

