

Carsphairn Heritage Group



Flooding in the village on December 30th 2013

Newsletter 105
Winter 2014

The Winter of 2013/14 in Carsphairn.

As this is written in the midst of January this is only be a mid-season report of this winter and what a report it is.

On 26th November 1960 The Galloway News had a front page article entitled "Flooding in Galloway." If that had been written last week it would have been so relevant to what we have just suffered. The first sentence reads "The extensive damage which was caused throughout the Stewartry by the recent heavy flooding was referred to by Mr John Brewis M.P for Galloway in the course of a debate in the House of Commons last Thursday on the Flood Prevention (Scotland) Bill which Mr Brewis described as a step in the right direction." What the Act stated is not recorded and in the description of the damage in the Stewartry Carsphairn is not mentioned.

Carsphairn is not a village which normally suffers from flooding - until 30th December 2013. Those who have lived in the area for many years cannot remember a flood as bad as this as several homes in the village were flooded. In Di Lawrence's photo albums in the Heritage Centre there are three photographs of floods in 1926, two of them showing deep water at the Greenhead and the other showing water lying on the old road (which now goes round the Liggate) For our records it would be a good idea to have photos of the recent flood. Please email them to info@carsphairnheritage.org

In old newspaper articles there are references to some flooding in the parish. In 1947 "The River Deugh hit an ice barrier, making it change course and flood the farms of Waterhead and Darnscaw." At Waterhead horses and cattle were driven, struggling and afraid across the flood. A young calf lay in three feet of water on the ground floor and was taken to a bedroom where it was tied to the bedpost. A picture has the caption - (it is too faded to reproduce) "This Waterhead cow gave a lot of trouble before it was got across and pulled one of the farm workers into the water."

We have also suffered from high winds and in the early morning of December 12th our electricity went off and we remained without it until the late evening of the 14th. Many trees had blown down and we spent a few miserable days, all very aware of how dependent we are on electricity for everything. The entire parish was without electricity for at least 62 hours – hence the postponement of our Annual General Meeting.

There is still time enough for further difficulties caused by extreme weather but we should take heart, the snowdrops are coming out now.

MARY TIMNEY
THE ROAD TO THE GALLOWS
BY
JANE BALDWIN

“Anyone seeing the omnibus making its way from Carsphad to New Galloway late one night in January 1862 would have been surprised at the sight of its only passengers, the local police constable and a young woman carrying a babe in arms.”

So began Jayne Baldwin’s account of the death of Ann Hannah and the arrest, trial and execution of Mary Timney for her murder. Jayne is a natural story-teller and from that moment she held members and guests of the Carsphairn Heritage Group in thrall as she recounted the background of the crime and the stages which led to the hanging of Mary Timney, the last woman to be publicly executed in Scotland.

We were gathered at the Catstrand on the afternoon of Saturday 7 December. This was a suitable venue as the scene of the crime was only a few miles away.

Mary Timney led a wretched life. Married to a man twice her age who, as a casual labourer, brought in an uncertain wage she was left for long periods with four young children in a one roomed cottage rented from the Hannah family. At first, while Ann’s mother was alive, all went well. Margaret befriended Mary and did not begrudge the twist of tea and sugar which she regularly asked to borrow but after her death her daughter did not wish to continue the friendship; there was talk of terminating the tenancy and accusations of stealing wood from the Hannah land. There was no doubt that Mary had gone to the Hannah cottage intending to confront Ann but it is less certain that she intended the encounter to end with Ann lying battered and bleeding on her kitchen floor, only hours from death.

Jayne Baldwin shows how the public turned against Mary Timney, their judgement influenced by some extent by a sensational press but once she was sentenced to death by the judge, Lord Deas, aptly nicknamed “Lord Death”, their opinion switched at the thought of hanging of a young woman who, for all her shortcomings, dearly loved her four children and did her best for them. Petitions asking for the sentence to be commuted were eagerly signed. One with signatures of over three thousand women was personally delivered by two ladies to the Home Secretary at his country

retreat. Nothing, however, could save Mary. The preparations for the execution and the actual carrying out of the sentence are described simply, supported by extracts from contemporary newspapers but this serves only to increase our horror at what we are reading:

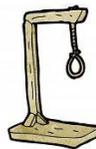
“The body, a hideous spectacle in the calm, blue sunny April morning hung fully thirty minutes – the customary time- exposed to the gaze of the vulgar crowds on the streets from whom solitary cries of pain and distress arose at intervals.”

After the drama of the trial and execution Jayne Baldwin considers Mary Timney’s case in relation to those of other women who were found guilty of murder and yet had their sentences commuted. Despite her research she can find no explanation for the harshness meted out to Mary; “the refusal of Sir George Grey (the Home Secretary) to commute her sentence to imprisonment even after her confession, the petitions, the high profile support and the legal questions about the trial still begs the question why he showed no compassion about her case.”

Against this background of harsh justice Jayne Baldwin leaves us with an appreciation of the kindness of human nature. On the night of her arrest Mary sits by the fire drinking tea with the wife of the constable who has escorted her to what is now known as Copper Cottage in New Galloway. Mary, herself, testifies to the kindness of those responsible for her in Dumfries prison, in particular the prison chaplain, the Rev Mr Cowans, is her support and comfort to the end.

Finally Mary’s beloved children were not forgotten. Our own Glenkens set up a fund to look after their education, even ensuring that her only son was not separated from his sisters at the girls’ industrial school they attended at Penninghame near Newton Stewart.

In “Mary Timney – The Road to the Gallows” Jayne Baldwin has set the sad tale of a young woman of the Glenkens within its historical context and within the wider picture of the movement towards the abolition of capital punishment. She is to be congratulated on thus holding a balance between a personal story and a public issue.



Sheila MacKenzie

A visit to Brochloch October 2013

This account has been written by the daughter of the co-pilot who was one of the eleven killed in the B29 crash on July 7th 1951.

As a child, I always knew that my dad had crashed in Scotland during the Korean War on special missions. I had pictures of the memorial and dedication and even pictures of the sky and horizon depicting the path that my dad's plane took before it crashed. The pictures have always been so important to me and I always knew that Scotland must have had some really kind and compassionate people to take the time to organize and give of themselves to put this all together. So I want to thank all of you of Carsphairn and the surrounding areas of your overwhelming kindness to people that you did not even know.

My dad was 1st Lt. George Merrill Foote, the co-pilot of the B29. It had been converted into a tanker that was being used to refuel spy planes going into enemy territory. It was secretive special missions. My dad was 30 years old and had been married to my mother for 7 years with 3 children. He was a very beloved man by anyone who knew him. I do not remember my dad as I was only 15 months old when he was killed. So I have always latched on to any info of him I could get. When my husband offered for us to try and go see his memorial, I went into action with the info I had.

(Cecelia emailed the Heritage Centre in the summer and her visit to Brochloch was arranged so that Jim McNae could show her the memorial plaque and the site of the crash.)

Thank you for getting us together with Jim McNae and his lovely wife Moira and their grandson, Adam. They were such gracious hosts to take us to the site. Jim had information that I had never heard, such as the bagpiper that stopped and played at the crash site. That touched my heart deeply and shows how wonderful the Scottish people are. I also learned other facts from Jim as he was 8 years old when the crash happened and remembered so much of it.

It would be difficult to explain the emotions I felt visiting the site, but from the bottom of my heart, I want to praise and thank everyone that had anything to do with the aftermath of the crash and the memorial: from the people that tried to save the airmen, to the firemen, the people that organized the memorial, to the ones that gave of their finances, to the band that played at the memorial, to the ones that prayed for them, and to those that hearts were filled with compassion. It helps to know that they

didn't die alone. I realize that most of those people are deceased that took part, but to their families, know that you come from very caring and giving families. I will never forget your kindness.

Cecelia Foote Parham (from Texas)

An account of the crash and the subsequent service and unveiling of the plaque is in Newsletter No. 15 July 1991

Carsphairn 1745

The year 1745 is perhaps best remembered in Scotland for the dramatic events of the Jacobite Rebellion and the Battle of Culloden. But in Carsphairn parish the minister Rev Andrew Reid had more mundane matters on his mind. He appealed to Presbytery that the glebe land available to him was insufficient. He maintained that by various Acts of Parliament the minister had the right to 4 acres of good arable land near to the manse, as well as grass for one horse and two cows. He confirmed to the Presbytery that he did have a glebe of around 4 acres, but he had no grass pasture for a horse and two cows. He asked for a Presbytery visit to resolve this matter and at the same time inspect the newly rebuilt manse.

A meeting was arranged for 4th September to which the heritors (local landowners) were invited. The minister had asked for 2 or 3 honest local men and a couple of land surveyors to be in attendance also to offer advice. In the event the Presbytery asked the Kirk Officer William Gordon to arrange for 5 honest men of the neighbourhood to attend – John McMillan of Carnavel, John Paterson of Holm, Robert Dunn of Garryhorn, William Sloan of Carminnows and James Howatson of Dundeugh. He was also asked to contact local land surveyors George Haining of Drumness and John White of Burntown of Dalmellington.

The Presbytery duly met at Carsphairn Kirk on that day. Nine heritors came along – James McAdam of Waterhead, John Cannon of Barlay, James Wight of Portmark, Robert McMillan of Holm, Alexander Kennedy of Knockgray, John Campbell of Lagwyne, William Grierson of Milnmark, John Campbell of Millwood and John McMillan of Brockloch. In addition, Robert Dunn of Garryhorn came as proxy for Mr Shaw of Dalton. William Gordon declared that he had summoned all the individuals requested, and all had come except William Sloan. Robert Dunn asked to be excused from giving his judgment as to what was an acceptable amount of grass to be made available to the minister, seeing as he was acting as proxy for one of

the heritors. James Howatson refused to take the oath on giving an honest opinion on the matter and refused to give a reason why. This left John McMillan and John Paterson to take the oath and then be sent out to mark out what they thought was a fair amount of pasture for a horse and two cows adjoining the present glebe. George Haining, the local land surveyor also took his oath; John White declined to do so but said he was willing to accompany Mr Haining to measure the extent of the present Carsphairn glebe. Two ministers were asked to accompany the honest men and the land surveyors.

The land surveyors found that the glebe was just over 5 acres in area. The honest men then gave their verdict. They suggested two pieces of grass pasture be allocated to the minister – a piece lying to the south of the glebe between it and the river which the minister was presently renting from Lord Cathcart; and a piece commonly called ‘the Little Fold’ lying east of the glebe between it and the march dyke of Nether Knockgray which belonged to John Campbell of Lagwyne. This was agreed by all concerned.

Regarding the manse, the Kirk Officer had been asked to summon John White, mason, wright and slater at Dalmellington, James Coupar, mason and wright at Bridge of Ken, Nathaniel Kirk, mason and wright at Kirk of Carsphairn and Charles Campbell, slater of the Clachan of Dalry, to inspect it. Nathaniel Kirk did not come. John White again declined to give his oath but expressed his willingness to go along with the other tradesmen. James Coupar and Charles Campbell took the oath and went to inspect the manse, accompanied by two Presbytery members – Rev John McNaught and Mr David Newall of Knockreoch. Their following report is included in the Presbytery minutes:

We undersubscribers having carefully surveyed the manse of Carsphairn in all its parts, stone, timber, sclave and glazier work. Do find the whole sufficiently done and the whole taken together to be worth a thousand pounds scots (which the law provides) and greatly more, only that ye house hath suffered by the injury of ye weather or accidents in pains of windows and sclave and lime to the value of eight shillings sterling which will take other eight shill. for workmanship. And this as our judgement is given at manse of Carsphairn this fourth of Septr Jaivis and forty five years, sic subtr James Coupar, Charles Campbel.’

Rev Andrew Reid promised to repair the small blemishes reported; and in the light of this, the Presbytery declared the manse a legal and habitable manse.

David Bartholomew

Obituary

We record, with sadness, the death of The Reverend John Miller who was minister of the linked charge of Carsphairn and Dalry from 1972 until 1992. He inspired and led the first local history exhibition in 1981 which led to the setting up of the Carsphairn Heritage Group. In his retirement he was always willing to answer questions not only on our Church history but also on wider church matters.

Titbits from The Galloway News 24 December 1960

Rural Round: Carsphairn

Following a short business meeting members enjoyed a delightful Christmas party. The president Mrs McIllwraith extended a warm welcome to everyone and thereafter the committee served tea and this was followed by games and dancing to music provided by Mr J Wilson and company from Kirkpatrick Durham who kept the party going with a gay swing. Mrs Galloway entertained by singing two songs. The singing of "Auld Lang Syne" brought a happy evening to a close.

Road Works

At a meeting of the Stewartry Roads Committee the surveyor recommended that in the years 1963/64 £16,000 should be spent at Ligate Carsphairn and £45,000 at Lamloch.

New Registrar – The county council have appointed Mr Alexander Borthwick, Ellenslea, Carsphairn to be registrar for the district with Miss Jean G Howatson, Ligate, Carsphairn as his assistant.

For the worst weather wear the best Waterproof, our olive green PVC at 58/6 and leggings at 18/6 – Crozier, Dalry.

The **postponed Annual General Meeting** will be held in Lagwyne Hall on **Saturday 22nd February at 2.30** when our speaker will be Alison Campbell who is the Learning Manager at Holyrood Palace.

Alison will explore the history of the Royal Collection, gathered together since the time of Henry VIII and one of the largest art collections in the world. She will discuss some of the Collection highlights, the role of key collectors like Queen Victoria and look at the palaces and galleries where the Collection is displayed. Her talk will be entitled "From Titian to Tiaras: Stories from the Royal Collection".

Non-members, as well as members are very welcome. Refreshments will be served and there will be an opportunity to renew subscriptions or become new members.