



Carsphairn
Heritage
Group



*Carsphairn Heritage Group
cordially invites*



*to the opening of
Carsphairn Heritage Centre
Saturday, 18th April, 1992, at 2 pm*

*Afternoon tea & Reception thereafter in Logwyne Hall
Guest Speakers: Sir Michael Horrie and Mr Alfred Truckell*

RSVP by 10 April, to Mrs P.Tilbury, 2 Dundough, Dalry, Castle Douglas

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Spring 2012

The 2012 exhibition

The best yet?

It is always with a sense of mounting excitement that I drive up to the centre for my first stewarding stint of the season. I am totally inept when it comes to mounting, staging, setting-up or doing any of the jobs involved in putting on the exhibition, so I keep well out of the way until it is 'fait accompli'.

My word, I was not disappointed (not that I ever have been). There before me was the life of John CK, one of my favourite people. Who but John would have thought of keeping all those things - photographs, uniforms, riding boots, letterheads, travel warrants, poems, cuttings, cartoons who but Pam would have put up with it all? What were the chances of Alison Campbell's being available that summer, training in Museum studies, to record and archive all these things, the Colonel would never have put up with anyone else.

From the moment you walk in the door, faced with the incredibly glamorous young Officer, until you reach the last photograph of the old Gentleman, leaning on his stick, this is a wonderful exhibition, not to be missed.

Joyce Hunter Blair

Carsphairn Church Matters

In the autumn of 2010 I visited Register House up in Edinburgh with the aim of having a look at the old minutes of the Presbytery of Kirkcudbright to see if they had any information on our Glenkens church buildings or other local church matters of interest. I found that the minute books, which have all been photographed and are available to view on computer ran to thousands of pages and had a vast wealth of information. They go back to 1700. Thankfully not long after I was granted internet access to them, so that I can view them at leisure at home when I have a spare moment – which is not that often. I was particularly interested in finding out information on the Carsphairn church building that existed before 1815 and to see if there were any references to the central communion table. I have found some information but that search is still ongoing and I will write further when I have a clearer picture of things. Some of the handwriting is beautiful and easy to read; but in other instances it can be challenging to decipher!

One of the most interesting sagas recorded was a controversy in 1736 over the appointment of Rev Andrew Reid as an assistant to his ailing father, Rev John Reid. Most of the parish was strongly in favour of this, but some of the heritors (landowners with a responsibility towards paying the minister's stipend) objected to the

appointment. Heads of families in Carsphairn parish were called by Presbytery to vote in this matter and we have what virtually amounts to a 1736 census of heads of families with details of where they lived. It is a fascinating record with the names of many old dwellings that long ago were abandoned and fell into ruin.

We find out that Carsphairn Church had 7 elders and 7 deacons in 1736.

Unfortunately the minutes at this point do not record where these officebearers lived, though some of that information I have managed to find elsewhere. The elders were Martin McLymont, John McMillan (I think he lived at Bridge of Ken), John Paterson in Knockgray, Hugh McHutcheon in Lamloch and Robert Dun in Woodhead (he had had a stroke and was failing). Two elders were also heritors residing in the parish and are named in the list of heritors. One of these was Robert McMillan of Holm of Dalquhairn. The other was either James Wight of Portmark or Robert Rorison of Marscalloch. A year later John Hair in Holm (of Daltallochan?) is also referred to as an elder.

The seven deacons were John Fergusson (the treasurer), David McCrae, James Gillespie, Robert Herries, Robert McGill, William McClellan, William McAdam and William Gray or Greig. In addition there was a Kirk Officer or Beadle named William Gordon who lived in Carsphairn village. Elsewhere he

is referred to as the Presbytery Officer and he clearly had duties to arrange for workmen to come and quote for work that required to be done on the church, manse or glebe.

The 1737 church accounts are also preserved. They include details of items purchased for the dinner that followed the eventual ordination of Andrew Reid after his father had died. Here is an excerpt from the beginning of them to give you a taste of them:

Jan 13th 1737 To William Gordon Kirk Officer Impr Two Shillings for gathering and carrying fogg to the kirk [fogg was moss used in packing walls].

Item three shillings for a pair of shoes being part of his wages for ringing the bell and a shilling due to him on the slater's account who slate the kirk.

To the said William also for going to Clyde for Mr Robert Hunter preacher of the gospel that the parish might have a hearing of him among others in order to be Mr Reid's ordained assistant two pounds eight shillings.

To the said William also for making two graves to the poor two shillings sterling.

To John Fergusson kirk treasurer for necessary expenses in travelling on the affairs of the poors money, four pounds scots.

To James Douglas mason wright for work about the kirk one pound four shilling

To David Heron one of our poor eighteen shilling

*Feb 27th To said David Heron his wife being very infirm and frequently confined to bed one pound ten shilling
The same day to Jean Clemmett in Pomaddie another of our poor twelve shilling*

March 27th To William Allan an old man and poor, belonging to the parish one pound five shilling

The same day to John McMillan at the Bridge of Ken for teaching a poor scholar fourteen shilling

May 5th Debursed at the moderation of the call to Mr Andrew Reid and at his ordination as follows

Impr to the Presbytery Clerk at the moderation of the call as his due three pounds scots

Item to John Paterson in Knockgray for meal bought by him for the ordination dinner five pound eighteen shilling

Item to John Hair in Holm for a boll of malt bought by him to the said ordination dinner nine pound

To said John Hair for a weather and a lamb he furnished on said occasion five pound

To Hugh McHutcheon in Lamloch for a weather three pound twelve shilling

To George Stevenson for a lamb one pound four shilling

To Mrs Mcyne in Dalmellington for flour and baking on said occasion two pound fourteen shilling

To the schoolmaster in part payment of his salary from Martinmas 1735 to Martinmas 1736 sixteen pound thirteen shilling four pennies scots

Rev Dr David Bartholomew

A Carsphairn Centenarian

Mrs Isa Murray (nee Templeton) who was born in April 1912 at Moorbrock, the highest house in the parish of Carsphairn, celebrated her 100th birthday last week. With her niece Janette Montague, I visited her not long after her birthday and spent an afternoon listening to her vivid memories of life in the countryside over the last 100 years. Her lively conversation was peppered with those wonderful descriptive Scottish words which we hear less and less of nowadays.

She was born on April 6th during a terrible snow storm. One of the neighbouring shepherd's wives was called to assist in the birth. She started school at Stroanfreggan on June 18th 1917 together with her older sisters, Mary and Nellie. By then Mary was nearly 8 and Helen nearly 7 but Mrs Templeton had kept them back from school until Isa was ready to go so they could all go together. Mrs Templeton firstly took them in a horse and cart to a certain point and then the girls would walk the remaining miles to school and on the way home she would meet them. It was over three miles to Stroanfreggan. When they were older Mary was taught to drive the pony and trap and the three girls would go to Smeaton, two miles from home, where the pony was taken out of the trap and put in a sheep stell to graze whilst they were at school. School was from 9.30 until 3pm.

Children at Stroanfreggan walked several miles to get to school. Mrs Murray special friend was Jeannie Gillespie from Knocksting which was even further than Moorbrock from school. When the weather was bad many of the children were not able to attend school. Her first teacher was Mrs Mitchell followed by a Miss Jenkins whose mother and sister also lived at the school.

The water at the school was provided by a pump at the back of the school and there were dry lavatories. Heating was provided by an open fire which had logs and peats on it. The children brought their lunch, often a scone split with butter and jam and their drink, tea, came in a metal flask with a cork in it. They were allowed to put their flasks on the hob beside the fire to keep them warm. The favourite game was Hide and Seek.

The youngest pupils who used slates sat on benches at the front of the classroom with the older ones having desks behind them. Mrs Murray remembered the things that children were told off for - talking too much and copying from someone sitting close by. Occasionally the tawse was used and she recalled it as being "very nippy". She learnt a lot at school and at night she and her sisters were made to repeat everything they had learnt that day to their mother.

Mrs Murray's father Walter worked for 35 years at Moorbrock for three generations of the McTurk family. Her five sisters and one brother all went to Stroanfreggan School where they

stayed until they were 14. The children all had to help at home and Mrs Murray spoke of the cutting of the peats for the fire when her father "flaed the moss" and her mother "was in the hag". The cows and calves were part of a shepherd's wage and so getting the hay in for the winter feed for the cows was an important job. Mrs Murray helped build stacks which had to be thatched in the field and eventually when they had dried out taken into the hay shed.

When Mrs Murray left school at 14 she went into service at a house called Wallacehall in Wallacetown Village near Dunscore, belonging to Mr and Mrs Stobie. He owned a large furniture business in Dumfries and his wife owned the antique shop next door. Mrs Murray had to cook, clean the floors, polish everything and clean the bedrooms. She had to wear a white cotton "wrapper" (dress) with a white overall and a white cap in the mornings and then change to black uniform with a wee white dinky apron and white cap in the afternoons. The Stobies liked to entertain and have tea parties and Mrs Murray was the maid at those also. When the family went on holiday she went too but, as the maid, she had to sit at a separate table. She was there for five and a half years.

In 1935 she married Tom Murray, a widower with small children who was shepherd at the Clennoch, a very remote house in the hills

behind Holm of Dalquhairn. (It is now a mountain bothy with a vehicular track being made in quite recent years) The family was only there for 2 months as getting to school at Stroanfreggan, six miles away, was almost impossible.

From the Clennoch they moved to Wee Shalloch at Pinwherry in Ayrshire where the children were able to walk over the hill to school and then they moved to Earlshaugh near Moffat where their daughter Violet was born. Mrs Murray's aunt came over the hill from the Tweed to assist at the confinement. By 1939 they returned to live at the Holm of Dalquhairn, firstly living in the current farm house and later at the Upper Holm. School transport was now available to Stroanfreggan.

During the war they became accustomed to seeing soldiers coming over the hills during their training exercises. Mrs Murray also remembered a plane crash lower down in the valley because the black smoke coming from the burning wreckage could clearly be seen from the Holm. She showed us a letter opener in the shape of a knife that her husband had carved out of a piece of Perspex from the window of the German plane.

There was a carpet bowling club at the Holm to which all the local shepherds came and there was the occasional big social night where a shepherd played the fiddle and

dancing took place with the shepherds wearing their big tackety boots.

Throughout her years as a shepherd's wife Mrs Murray always milked the cow and made butter and cheese. Many rag rugs were made by her and when they moved to Glenquicken near Creetown in the 1950s she kept bees.

From Glenquicken they moved to Netherplace near Dalbeattie where Mr Murray had his final job. He retired when he was about 80 and they moved to Violetbank at Drumsleet near Dumfries where Mr Murray passed on.

Mrs Murray moved from there to her current home in 1992. In her own words she's "in with the bricks" Several beautiful bouquets of flowers still adorn her room after her birthday when a party was held attended by her granddaughter and two successive generations.

She calls herself a "country buddy" who loves the high hills. She married into the "same life" as she was brought up in.

I am very grateful that such a remarkable lady has shared her memories of those bye-gone days as we will never see the likes of them again.

Anna Campbell

Those boots were made for walking (apologies to Nancy Sinatra)

I found the poem about the three old men who climbed Cairnsmoor really “rang bells” for me. I had spoken with Di Lawrence many years ago and she told me she had a poem about one of my forebears who had climbed Cairnsmoor along with two other old men – one was old “Furmy”. So now I have seen the poem for the first time – and the “Seaton of that ilk” would have been my Great great great grandfather from Cornharrow. The minister, Rev James Mather who wrote the poem, also conducted the marriage ceremony of my grandfather James Seaton to Mary Anderson at the Liggate (nearest cottage to the Deuch I believe?). My maternal grandfather Robert MacMillan from Carsphairn was also at the wedding – he told me years later. What amazes me was the distances they walked in those days – James Mather walking from Dalry over the moors to Cornharrow. Robert MacMillan cycled from Carsphairn to Manchester along with one of Mary Anderson’s brother Alex! Years later James Seaton’s son David met Robert MacMillan’s daughter Jean – they married and I was their only child. A small world – three of my grandparents from Carsphairn Parish. The MacMillan family – joiners, were friendly with the Wilson’s of the Shiel of Castle

Maddy and I understand the Wilson’s walked each Sunday over the hills, crossing the river to reach the village in time for the Sunday service, then after lunch they set off over the hills and home again.

Some years later my grandfather MacMillan moved to Manchester and as a journeyman joiner walked almost everywhere, carrying his heavy box of joinery tools to his place of work. As an Elder of the Kirk he once got in trouble from my grandmother for walking miles on Christmas Day to visit some of his “flock”! All his life it seemed to me that he wore leather boots – never shoes – and always mended them himself!

Well, I am soon seventy five and have climbed a few of the local Carsphairn hills – though I’m not so fit now! If my forebear did it at seventy four perhaps I should venture forth - care to join me? - two old men needed (and perhaps younger ones to carry me home!

(... Where are those boots?)

David Seaton



Carsphairn Heritage Centre 20th Anniversary

From the frontispiece of this newsletter you'll see that the Heritage Centre was officially opened 20 years ago this month. Much has happened here since then but our original aims when the Group was set up in 1987 of establishing walking trails to sites of special interest, collecting objects, articles and information about Carsphairn and holding talks have been adhered to and developed.

The interior, little changed since the opening, now has a huge amount of paper material all pertaining to the parish and described on our new web site. Our "loft" contains many of the donations made throughout the years which were displayed in our 2011 exhibition "Legacies from the Loft".

Outside the heather garden has been removed to be replaced by grass. We had fought the losing battle with the tenacious encroaching weed, horsetail and in the end we decided to make the whole area grass. In this year's exhibition there is a photo of John Clark Kennedy with Rhoda Campbell, then chairman in 1992, and others preparing the ground for the heathers and rocks.

Since 1992, 24 exhibitions have been held as in the first three years two were held each summer. Of the 24, only one has been mounted by an outside agency and only one was extended when John Clark Kennedy brought new material for the Clark Kennedy family exhibition "300 years at Knockgray" in 2005.

We look forward to the next 20 years but in the meantime do come to the Private View, details below

Private View

You are invited to a private view of our 2012 exhibition –
"An Officer and a Gentleman" - on Friday 11th May from
6 -8pm, also to join our celebration of the 20th anniversary of
the Carsphairn Heritage Centre

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