

**Carsphairn  
Heritage  
Group**



Garryhorn Farm in the 1860s. A sketch from the book entitled  
"The Traditions of the Covenanters" by Reverend Robert Simpson of Sanquhar

**Newsletter No 71  
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What a treat for us organisers-of-exhibitions - not to have to begin from scratch and set up a new exhibition this year. All we needed to do was to re-instate the excellent and popular "A Carsphairn Family - 300 Years at Knockgray" with some additions from The Colonel of course and open up at Easter. This is the first time we have repeated an exhibition although we have continued showing parts of previous exhibitions the following year. It seems to be working well and visitors from last year appreciate getting another look at what is on display.

### **'Postman's Walk'**

under the banner My Scotland in unknown publication  
by John Herries McCulloch

In the lovely but lonely Glenkens of Galloway this week I saw cottages and one school which are empty because people can't stand loneliness nowadays.

Believe me, some of the loneliest places in this country are in Galloway. Alec Borthwick, the postman at Carsphairn, delivered a letter to the shepherd at Muir o' Deugh yesterday, and I walked out there with him, just to have a look at the drystone dykes built across the hill by Bible-punching Hugh McCulloch, my great-grandfather.

We trudged 18 miles to deliver the letter. It took us the same time as the Flying Scotsman's run from London to Edinburgh, but the train has the advantage of a good track all the way.

Alec Borthwick takes that long walk three times a week, through sunshine, rain and snow. He has walked thousands of miles for the Post Office, but has still some distance to go before equalling the record of 76-year-old Charles Edward Steuart, who retired recently at 37 years as postman at Carsphairn.

Mr Steuart walked 90 miles every week during that period, which adds up to 173,160 miles - about seven times round the world, if you like such calculations.

At the end of it all he was still classified as a temporary postman because, when he started in nearly 40 years ago at 14s a week, he was over age.

## NO MAN'S LAND

Muir o' Deugh is just one of the many isolated houses in the Glenkens of Galloway. It lies at the head of the Water of Deugh away up near the Ayrshire border, and just over the hill Afton Water begins to flow gently among its sweet braes.

Sheep country, and at this time of the year its austere loveliness is accentuated by its loneliness. After passing Knockengurroch, I paused on the sheep-track and looked around a vast expanse of uplands, on the distant perimeter of which a heft of blackface sheep looked like large maggots. Not a human habitation in sight, and not even the cry of a whaup to break the silence.

The little wooden schoolhouse at the head of the Deugh is closed, because there are no children up there now. A pretty flower garden had been laid out, obviously for study, but it is all overgrown and the surviving flowers are struggling, unaided against grass and weeds. This school may never reopen, for it stands up there at the head of the Deugh as a symbol of a dangerous drift in Scottish rural life.

## THE SIGNAL

It is the accelerating drift of shepherds from very lonely hirsels. In the Moffat Hills recently, I met Alec Renton, who used to be herd at Back Hill of the Bush, in the sombre and almost trackless solitudes of the Rhinns of Kells. There, his nearest neighbour was seven miles away, across tricky country.

The postman from Dalry left his letters with another shepherd who carried them four miles across the hills and put them in a cairn, hoisting a flag as a signal that they had been left there. When he had nothing else to do the herd at Back Hill of the Bush walked four miles to the cairn and collected them.

Back hill of the Bush is vacant because shepherds won't live there nowadays. It is one of many lonely Galloway herdings where the house is vacant - Culsharg, beyond the head of Loch Trool, Black Laggan and White Laggan, on Loch Dee, Erriff on Loch Doon, Clenoch near the head of the Water of Ken, and Margree over by Lochinvar.

## THOSE NAMES

A country of almost menacing loneliness of mist-shrouded

mountains, mysterious lochs, moors and mosshags, marked at many points with man-made vestiges of prehistoric civilisations which make the marks of the Roman invaders look like the blundering footprints of trespassers.

Yet a lovely land, of an ancient kindliness, the very names of which roll like thunder through the hills - The Merrick, Loch Dungeon, Meikle Millyea, Benyellary, Corserine, Clatteringshaws, Black Water o' Dee.

We love it and call it Bonnie Gallowa'.

Neither the date of this article nor publication is known. The Deugh School, referred to, closed in 1947 so this may have been written in the 1950s. When was Alec Borthwick postie at Carsphairn? Ideas as to the source or date of this article would be very welcome. Please contact Anna Campbell at Holm of Daltallochan, Carsphairn, Castle Douglas, DG7 3TH tel: 01664 460208 For those who still live in these lovely hills around Carsphairn this article, written contemporarily, invokes the disintegration of hill farming into what we know today as the Parish of Carsphairn and other parts of The Glenkens.

## IT'S A TOUGH LANGUAGE

A letter to The Independent Monday 6th June 2005

Sir: I applaud the move to return to teaching reading through synthetic phonics, but there are problems. Try this sentence I have just devised which has thirty words ending in "-ough", with nine different pronunciations.

Although I thought that I ought to have bought enough doughnuts on furlough with the dough I brought to the borough, I coughed roughly and hiccoughed as the wind soughed in the boughs and wrought havoc in the drought, and the snake thoroughly sloughed its tough skin in the trough by the lough, while I fought doughtily, ploughed through the slough, sought help as a chough flew by, and all for nought.

Dickon Snell

## Ownership of Carsphairn from 1509

How names change over the centuries continued

### Knockingarroch

- 1584 Jonet Greir, sometime spouse to Quentene  
Macadame in Knockingeroche, par. of St  
John's of Dalry

### Lamloch

- 1674 Barbara Cunningham, spouse to Thomas Cubbison  
in Lambloch
- 1676 Thomas Cubbison in Lamloche
- 1680 George Greg
- 1740 Hugh M'Hutchon
- 1776 William Clerk
- 1777 Jean Clerk, spouse to William Gibson in Lamloch

### Lochhead

- 1594 Andro Macilna in Lochheid, par. of Kells
- 1669 Christian Murdoch, relict of Robert Murdoch in  
Lochhead, par. of Straitoune
- 1670 James Murdoch in Lochhead, par. of Straitoun

### Longfurd (? Lamford)

- 1595 Christiane M'Adam, daughter lawful to umquhile  
George M'Adam in Longfurd, par. of Kells

### Marbrack

- 1608 Robert M'Michaell in Marbrok, par. of Dalry
- 1712 William M'Millan in Merbrack
- 1787 Thomas Moffat, late in Knockgray, commonly  
designed of Moorbrock
- 1794 James Moffat in Muirbrock

### Marscalloch

- 1591 Thomas M'Millan in Marscalloch, par. of Dalry
- 1668 George M'Millan in Marsicaltoch

- 1741 William M'Millan  
 1749 Janet M'Millan, daughter of Thomas M'Millan in  
 Marscalloch and spouse to John M'Millan in  
 Woodhead

1776 William Oughterson

### **Muirdockwood**

- 1581 Robert Acannane in Merdroquhat, St John's Par. of  
 Dalry  
 1733 John Gourlay at Miln of Mardocket in Carsphairn  
 1751 George M'Millan in Mardrocket

### **Polneadow**

- 1622 Jonet Mure, spouse to Andrew Steinsoun in  
 Pinmadie, par. of Dalmellingtoun  
 1676 James M'Ilnae on Polmerdow

### **Portmark**

- 1607 Thomas Ahannay in Portnek (? Portmark) par. of  
 Kells  
 1675 James Gibson in Portmark  
 1719 Andrew Wight of Portmark par. of Dalmellingtoun

### **Waterhead**

- 1577 William Cathcart in Wattirheid  
 1590 Andro M'Cadein of Watterhead, in the stew. of  
 Kirkcudbright  
 1602 Cristian Kennedy, relict of Andro M'Caddame of  
 Watterheid of Geich (? Deugh) par. of Dalry  
 1609 Donald M'Caddame in Watterheid, par. of St John's  
 Clachane  
 1672 Quentine M'Adam in Waterheid, par. of Stratoune  
 1682 Jean Cunningham, relict of Gilbert M'Adam,  
 younger, of Waterhead  
 1683 Jean Cathcart, daughter of the deceased Allan

Cathcart of Waterhead, par. of Ayr

- 1731 James M'Adam of Waterhead  
**Woodhead**  
1581 James Chalmer of Wodheid, stew. of Kirkcudbright  
1598 William Chalmer of Wodheid, par. of Kells  
1682 William Ferguson in Woodhead  
1715 John Gibson in Woodhead of Kells  
1733 Janet, relict of John M'Turk, in Little Auchrae,  
afterwards relict of Alexander Hislop, in  
Glenhould, par. of Dalry, and thereafter  
spouse to John Ferguson in Upper Woodhead  
of Carsphairn  
1736 James Murdoch in Woodhead of Kells  
1749 Janet M'Millan daughter of Thomas M'Millan in  
Marscalloch and spouse to John M'Millan in  
Woodhead  
1775 John M'Millan in Cornavel, afterwards in Little  
Woodhead

**AUTUMN BUFFET SUPPER**

will be held on

Friday 9th September 1005

at the Lagwyne Hall, Carsphairn

**William Crawford of Dalgoner**

will be talking about

**Grierson of Lag** who stayed at Garryhorn Farm, Carsphairn  
while pursuing Covenantors in the area

7.30 for 8pm Tickets £4.50 Children £2.00 Bar Raffle

## The Lorg Conventicle

The morning of Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> June, dawned cold with the promise of rain. Not an auspicious start to the day arranged for the Conventicle to be held at the Lorg at the head of the Water of Ken. Conventicles are outdoor services held to commemorate the Covenanters who, in the seventeenth century, defied the authorities under Charles 1 who wished Scotland to acknowledge the king as head of the Church and had turned out of their churches any ministers who would not use the Prayerbook.

Although holding these services was treasonable and attendance at one incurred a heavy fine if not worse, the faithful people of the Glenkens gathered in secret places up in the hills where they worshipped the Lord in their traditional Presbyterian way. One of their safest spots was what is known as the Whig's Hole, a natural hollow high up on the south shoulder of Altry, the high hill of Lorg Farm, hidden from below by a small escarpment.

Modern worshippers are not made of such stern stuff as their forbears and it was a relief to see chairs set out on flat ground beside the river. Sixty people had gathered in the rain and it could only have been divine intervention that caused the sun to come out as the Reverend Dr David Bartholomew called on us to worship in the singing of the metrical psalm "O come, and let us to the Lord in songs our voices raise" and, considering we had no precentor as such, we managed to make a joyful noise. Prayers, an address and more psalms followed, each one mentioning the hills or pastures green that surrounded us.

A collection was taken in the traditional way – a blanket carried round into which offerings were thrown. A small aeroplane droned in and out of the clouds far above, the minister gave the Blessing and the rain came down again, but gently this time. Tea was served by the Carsphairn session, after which about twenty hardy souls including one lady of eighty four, made their way up to the Whig's Hole itself where they still had breath to sing again and were answered by those who remained below.

I am sure that all who attended felt, as I did, privileged and humbled to remember those who came before us to such an inspiring setting, surrounded by the eternal hills.

JHB