

**Carsphairn
Heritage
Group**



**Conventicle held at Auchencloy Monument
on Sunday 11th June 2006**

**Newsletter No 75
Summer 2006**

2006 Update

As I write this on 19 July for the forthcoming newsletter over 700 people have visited the Heritage Centre since it opened for the season on 14 April.

Visitors have come not only from all over the UK but from Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada and, nearer to home, Finland. Many complimentary comments have been put in the visitors' book about the content and the presentation of the exhibition and the welcome received from helpful stewards.

From recent research done in Carsphairn, information has just been received about the will of Richard Jamieson from Holm of Daltallochan who died in mysterious circumstances in 1869 (*The story of his death is included in our booklet Tales and Legends on sale at the Heritage Centre £2.00*)

By e-mail we received a transcript of the will of John McTurk of Castlemaddy written in 1678. Amongst other e-mails has been a request asking if the Salutation Hotel still exists as a hotel from a lady who is hoping to visit Carsphairn this summer as she spent her honeymoon there in the 1950s.

Our queries are as diverse as our visitors. It all makes it very interesting and rewarding and I would like to thank all those who give their time to stewarding at the Centre.

Anna Campbell

AUTUMN BUFFET SUPPER

will be held on

Friday 15th September 2006

at the Lagwyne Hall, Carsphairn

Dr Lizanne Henderson, Lecturer in history

University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus

Will be speaking on

**Turning the Riddle : Charms and Charmers
in South West Scotland**

7.30 for 8pm Tickets £6.50 Children £2.00 Bar Raffle

Window Tax: Waterhead and Lagwyne

In the latest edition of Ayrshire notes there is an excellent, very well researched article by David McClure entitled **James McAdam: Waterhead to Whiteford**. The full article can be read on the Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society's web site www.aanhs.org.uk This article is based on the above and I thank David McClure for his permission to use extracts.

James was the father of John Louden McAdam of "tarmac" fame. From using window tax records the movements of James and his family can be traced from Ochiltree House to Waterhead to Lagwyne (Lagwyne) and then on to Whiteford, now Blairquhan.

Window tax was first levied in Scotland under an act of 1746 for "taxation of Houses, Windows or Lights". The higher the number of windows the higher the cost for each window. There were exemptions in Scotland but the conditions for exemption changed regularly. The tax was paid by the occupiers rather than the owners.

In May to November 1753 James McAdam lived in Ochiltree House which had forty four windows. His wife Susannah was the granddaughter of Sir John Cochrane of Ochiltree and therefore there was a strong family connection with the house.

Waterhead did not appear in the Window Tax Records (WTR) for the parish of Carsphairn for the period starting on Whit Sunday 15 May to Martinmas 11 November 1753 when three other dwellings in the parish were listed so that it meant that at that time it had fewer than nine windows.

Lagwyne, which was McAdams new house appeared first in the WTR for the period Martinmas 1754 to Whit Sunday 1755. It was recorded as having thirteen windows and being "not finished". In subsequent periods it was "not inhabited". McAdam was not liable for tax there until Whit Sunday to Martinmas 1757. From May 1755 when he left Ochiltree until Whit Sunday 1757 when he occupied Lagwyne McAdam was occupying a house with seventeen windows in Ayr. John Louden was born on 23 August 1756 during James McAdam's time in Ayr when Lagwyne was unoccupied.

The house at Lagwyne did not last long. For the year from Whit Sunday 1757 until Whit Sunday 1758 McAdam was liable for tax on thirteen windows and for the next six month period eight windows and then only house tax was levied. Just after a year after entering his new home at Carsphairn McAdam had taken steps to reduce its size or to stop up five of its windows. He continued paying house tax on Lagwyne until Whit Sunday

1763 following which it disappeared from the records having been destroyed by fire in December 1762.

The story of the disastrous fire and the dramatic rescue of John Loudon McAdam has been told in Newsletter No. 13 January 1991. James Boswell who was a cousin of James McAdam's wife had visited the house in September 1762 and shortly after the fire his tutor William McQuhae wrote to him saying "*the house at Lagwine, which afforded you a hospitable retreat on your road to Galloway was burned to ashes about ten days ago. With great difficulty the children's lives were preserved by their leaping naked out of windows two storeys high. Not a single paper or piece of furniture could be saved from the flames. It is a prodigious loss to the worthy gentleman, particularly as his bills and rights of his estate are all destroyed*".(1)

In another account written by a descendant of John Loudon McAdam, D.S. Ramsay, stated "*To reach the nearest place of shelter, the party now homeless wanderers, carrying Loudon in their arms, had to make their way as best they could on foot, over half a mile of dreary upland rendered still more desolate by snow and darkness. After a weary tramp and much suffering they reached at last the manse of Carsphairn, where they were hospitably received by the good minister.*"(2)

McAdam did not rebuild Lagwyne and his whereabouts for the following year are unknown but in Whit Sunday 1764 it is recorded in the WTR that he occupied the thirtyfive windowed house in Straiton parish belonging to Sir John Whitefoord after whom the house was renamed from its earlier name of Blachane to Whitefoord. After its sale in 1798 to Sir David Hunter Blair it reverted to a form of its earlier name, Blairquhan.

As he grew older McAdam, with his distant relative John McAdam of Craigenhill acting as an agent sold his Waterhead estate to the Earl of Stair. In a few years the estate was sold to John McAdam giving rise to a great deal of ill will on behalf of the Waterhead McAdams who felt that they had been cheated out of their inheritance.

(1) Letter dated 27 December 1762 is cited in Frederick A Pottle, ed Boswell's London Journal 1762-1763 (Yale 1950) editor's note to entry for 14 -15 September 1762.

(2) Mgr D S Ramsay "Biographical Sketches of some Ayrshire people of the last and present centuries" 1883, 59-60: unpublished manuscript in Carnegie Library Ayr.

Anna Campbell

The Killing Times - A Tour Around the Sites

This year's exhibition despite its name The Killing Times, or perhaps because of its name, has brought people from far and wide. Hopefully they have been rewarded by a brief canter round the Glenkens to sites of Covenanting activity. A guide is available at the Heritage Centre to most of the sites mentioned in the exhibition.

Of interest to some may be the graves in the four kirkyards of the Glenkens - Balmaclellan, Carsphairn, Dalry and Kells as well as the graves out on the hills and moors. Some beautiful walks can be taken to sites of conventicles and baptisms hidden beside burns in the glens and one out on the hillside in the open but hidden from the King's dragoons and lastly one preposterously dangerous site on the top of a hill in defiance of the King's decree. For this defiance which lasted around 50 years people paid the price - fines, jail, penury, eviction or death.

If you are thinking of visiting any of the sites a Landranger map No 77 together with our Guide to Covenanting Sites price 25p are essential - as well as a car of course.

Two Deaths in the Killing Times

One of the most notorious informers against the Covenanters was Peter Pierson, the curate of Carsphairn, who was friendly with Grierson of Lag. He had taken over his pulpit when the local minister John Semple was outed because of his Covenanting sympathies. Many of Pierson's parishioners found their new minister informing on them and he was directly responsible for the arrest and subsequent death or transportation of twenty one local men and women.

When Lag held a court in Carsphairn in 1684 the curate sat on his right-hand side on the bench. Through him people were punished for non-attendance at church, their houses looted by the Royalist troops, their crops confiscated and given to the curate and others, and in some cases people were tortured for the amusement of the soldiers.

Pierson's behaviour did little to endear him to the local population and

they appealed to local Covenanters for help in dealing with him. It was decided that he would be given one last chance to mend his ways before any action would be taken, and he would be handed a paper ordering him to cease informing on his parishioners. It was hoped he would sign this paper and agree to its demands.

A delegation of five Covenanters met at Muirbroke and three of them were selected to confront Pierson. Unarmed, they walked into the village, went up to the door of the manse and demanded to see Pierson. He met them at the door with sword and pistol and reluctantly agreed to listen to their petition. Upon hearing its contents he flew into a rage and threatened to report them to his 'good friend' Lag. He ordered them out of his house with their worthless scrap of paper.

As he ushered them to the door one of the Covenanters, James McMichael, made a grab for Pierson and there was a scuffle during which a shot rang out. Pierson fell to the floor dying. McMichael claimed that the curate's own pistol had gone off during the struggle, though it later was claimed that McMichael had in fact had a pistol in his belt despite the agreement to go unarmed, and the rumour spread around that he had in fact murdered Pierson.

Accident or not, his death was seen as murder by most people and McMichael was immediately dismissed from the local Covenanting Society, who wished to distance themselves from such violent resistance to the Royalist persecutors.

A week later McMichael and some other Covenanters forced an entry into Kirkcudbright Tolbooth and released some Covenanters being held there, during which action a guard was killed. Two days later Graham of Claverhouse caught up with eight of them on Auchenloy moor off the Raider's Road to the south of New Galloway. Two of their number did manage to dash off as soon as they saw the approaching soldiers. The others made their last stand by a large boulder which still stands there in the midst of the forestry plantation.

Claverhouse in his *Memoirs* records that the Covenanters fought for their lives with sword and pistol, and Claverhouse himself, who prided himself in his skill with the sword, engaged McMichael in mortal combat. Claverhouse was so hard pressed by McMichael's superior swordplay that he had to call upon a sergeant of dragoons who rushed on McMichael from behind and cleaved his skull with one blow. On hearing Claverhouse call for help, McMichael is said to have exclaimed: 'You dare not abide the issue of a single combat; and had your

After the fight was over McMichael lay dead upon the moss and Ferguson, Grierson and Stewart, who had all been badly wounded, were shot dead where they lay. The two others, Hunter and Smith, were bound and dragged off to Kirkcudbright, where they were executed a few days later. The bodies of the Covenanters who died at Auchencloy were left lying where they fell. It was there that their friends found them. Ferguson, who came from a more distant part, was buried where he lay; but the other three were carried back to Dalry where they were buried by their families in the kirkyard.

But no sooner had the graves been filled in than Claverhouse arrived with his troopers. They dug up the bodies and hung the corpses from a tree beside the church, and the villagers were then ordered from their homes and forced to parade past them as a warning of what would happen to them if they supported the Covenanters.

Stewart and Grierson's bodies were then permitted to be reburied (their grave may still be seen under a tabletop stone at the north corner of the kirkyard), but McMichael's body hung there swinging in the wind for a further three days until some of his friends came under cover of darkness and spirited his body away to a safe resting place in the hills. It is said that his body was brought back to an unmarked grave in Dalry kirkyard after the settlement of 1689.

A conventicle was held at Auchencloy in August 1835 to raise funds for the building of the large granite memorial that now stands on that spot. Fifteen hundred people gathered for a moving service conducted by Rev Robert Jeffrey of Girthon.

On 11th June 2006 another conventicle was held there to remember the faith and commitment of many who lived in our parishes in those troubled times. McMichael's sword, which was discovered hidden in the rafters of the Clachan Inn in Dalry, is on display as part of this year's Carsphairn Heritage Centre Exhibition.

David Bartholomew

I am indebted to Alastair Penman for his helpful article entitled "*Black*" James McMichael - "*The Cameronian Assassin*".

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
will be held at Lagwyne Hall, Carsphairn on
Friday 10th November

The Wrath of a Woman - from The Killing Times

Lagg's Ridge which is on Glenshimmeroch Farm was the setting for a story where Grierson of Lag did not get everything all his own way.

Grierson of Lag was told of a family at Glenshamrock (Glenshimmeroch) and another at Barbourlea who were sympathetic towards the Covenanters.

One day after he left Carsphairn he called at a cottage near Lagg's Strand (photographed here) on the back hill of Glenshamrock farm. There he found an old couple praying. He asked if they had money hidden and when he was told there was none in the house he ordered his soldiers to tie up the old couple and the set fire to the cottage.

Then he rode a mile to Barbourlea where two John Barbours - uncle and nephew lived in separate houses. The home of the nephew was visited first. He was away but his wife was questioned by Grierson as to where was her husband. She replied that he was attending his business to which Grierson replied that he was likely to be feeding or listening to the Covenanters and unless she told him her husband's whereabouts she would be killed.

She refused and Grierson ordered her to give him all the money she had in the house. She said she had none for him and furthermore added that it was a pity that peaceable people should be molested or menaced by troops of the degenerate Stuarts. The argument deepened and Grierson losing the argument decided to try the other house, the home of the uncle.

The woman, fearing that the soldiers might murder the old man caught the bridle of Grierson's horse. He was furious and ordered his soldiers to set fire to her home. She let go of the bridle and burst into tears.

Grierson abandoned his ride to the uncle's house and started taunting the woman. He ordered his men to burn the byre so one of them took a burning ember from her home towards the byre. She attacked the trooper and got him to the ground and then snatched up a graip (a four-pronged iron fork) and drove it against Grierson's right arm and then against his wrist making him drop his pistol. A third blow was aimed at his side but deflected into his horse. He ordered a soldier to shoot her but he refused saying that she had suffered too much already without losing her life. Hearing this, the woman summonsed new strength and drove the prongs of the graip into the flanks of Grierson's charger. The animal was so hurt so Grierson decided to retire.

He bawled out "leave that d---d whig, she must be a devil." He left but not before one of his men had also been injured by the woman.

The Stewards' Lunch

this year will be held at Culraven, Borgue on Saturday 7th October. Invitations will be sent nearer the date. This is one way in which the Committee can thank those who so generously give their time to stewarding at the Heritage Centre. We are very grateful to you all.