



CARSPHAIN

HERITAGE

GROUP



NEWSLETTER - NO. 3

JULY 1988

EDITORIAL COMMENT

This time much of our newsletter has been compiled with material gathered from members and visitors to the area. We are most grateful to those who have taken trouble to contribute. Two of the walks publicised in the Carsphairn Heritage Trails pamphlet are described here. 5,000 copies of the trails were printed and while they are by no means all in circulation we hope that many people are getting the opportunity to see them and hopefully use them. Robin Ade did a lot of work on the maps and we appreciate all his efforts.

It has been felt for a while that it was time that some views of Carsphairn should be reproduced on postcards. The Heritage Group has undertaken joint sponsorship of postcards with Mrs. Richardson from Carsphairn Shop and it is hoped that these will be on sale in July.

When you receive this the summer exhibition "Local Tales and Legends" will be on in the Lagwyne Hall. It is open daily from 11 until 5 from July 23rd until August 7th. The enlarged mounted photographs of the leadmines will also be on display and there will be the usual teas and homebaking available. We hope you'll be able to come and bring your friends and relatives.

WINE AND CHEESE PARTY

About 75 members and friends attended the wine and cheese party at which the mounted photographs of the leadmines were displayed. Mr. Brown gave the

answers to the quiz with the aid of a slide show given by Mr. Marshall and additional material given by Miss Rutherford, Mrs. Campbell, Colonel C. Kennedy and Mr. Marshall. The answers to the quiz, some more difficult than others, spanned about 700 years of Carsphairn's history and showed that remarkable characters had connections with the area. The winners, Dr. and Mrs. Moffat of Craigview, Carsphairn had used many local history books, one of the most useful being East Galloway Sketches by Alexander Trotter who lived at Dalshangan about 100 years ago. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, Drumjohn, Carsphairn were second.

SUMMER VISIT TO WATERSIDE

On 24th June 16 members and friends of the Heritage Group were conducted round the old Dalmeilington Iron Works at Waterside on a beautiful summer evening.

An impressive stone retaining wall about 30 ft. high is all that remains of the smelting furnaces of which there were seven. Ironstone and lime stone, locally available, were tipped into the furnaces from the top of the wall and draught provided by bellows from a nearby building. The Bellows House is a beautiful edifice of carved stone, described by some as "Italian" and is now a Listed Building. It was built in 1846.

Molten iron flowed into moulds in a

Mr. Stewart knew exactly where the burial ground was and immediately set off to prove it. Mrs. McNae and Mrs. Halney were fairly certain where they thought it was and set off in different directions to make sure. We spent the morning trying to keep tabs on all parties, catching their reminiscences.

Mrs. Halney's sister Jenny fell down a well in the snow. She spent half an hour up to her waist in water before help arrived. She also remembered the beautiful garden behind the manager's house, which a Miss Morrison rented; it stretched back to the Garry Burn and particularly she recalled the delphiniums. She looked through a window of the cottage where she had lived, next to the manager's house, and was disappointed to find a hayrake where her white table should have been. We never did find the graveyard. We did however have a thoroughly enjoyable journey around the memories of the village which was once Woodhead.

Contributed by Carol Cathcart.

GUIDED WALKS TO THE LEADMINES

This summer these walks will be taken by request only. Please contact Mrs. Campbell on Carsphairn 208 for further details. Two small groups have already been taken up this summer.

THE LEADMINES

The chimneys dominating the skyline,
Watching over the mines
Like a guardian soldier
The clanking of the wheel.
Fumes bellowing from the chimney
Cogs, chains, rods, groaning and
creaking

Hobnailed Boots
Sparking fire on leadfilled stones
The bustle of life

But now a ghost town,
The wheel will never turn again
The fumes have smothered and died.
No men, no life.
No more cogs groaning
No more sparks flying
No more fumes swirling up the vents
The chimneys dominating the skyline,
Watching over the mines
Like a guardian soldier
All that is left of the earlier glory

Helen Campbell.

MAPS

It has been suggested that signposts are required on some of the trails so the Group is working towards this. The Group is most grateful to the Economic Forestry Group for the work they have done in brashing a path through the trees to the burial chamber at Brownhill. It had been extremely difficult to find the chamber before although it is not far from the road and now, together with the temporary signpost that the Group

is erecting it will make this trail extremely worthwhile. We are asked by the E.F.G. to observe certain rules as follows:- no fires, stay on the path, observe the Country Code and to keep the road and gates clear at all times. There is sufficient room to park opposite the stile which the E.F.G. are erecting.

We hope that by next year we will have permanent signs and information boards so that visitors can have maximum pleasure from the trails.

TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTIONS

In 1853 and 1854 several leadminers, some with their families, emigrated to America. We know the date from the communicants roll of Lamloch Free Church and we know the place from one gravestone in Carsphairn Churchyard, that of Alexander and Christina Martin. They lived at the mines for probably over 20 years and after Christina died in 1867 Alexander moved to Pittston, Pennsylvania to be with his sons who had emigrated. The following are extracts taken from the obituary notice in a 1912 Pittston newspaper of their son, Alexander. Before he emigrated he was a lead-washer at the Woodhead Leadmines.

"In the death of Alexander Martin, Sr., which occurred at 12:30 o'clock this afternoon, at his home, on Oak Street, Pittston loses one of its old time residents - a man who for a great many years had been active in

public affairs in this community.

Alexander Martin was a native of Carlisle, Scotland, having been born on Jan. 20, 1837 and was in his 76th year. He was a son of Alexander and Christine (Parke) Martin. At the age of 17 years he decided to come to this country and throw in his fortunes with the people of the anthracite region of Pennsylvania, as the coal beds of this section were then being developed. Mr. Martin came direct to Pittston, landing here in July, 1854, and he had been a resident of this city ever since. For a great many years he was engaged as a mine worker, but a number of years ago he met with a severe accident in the mines, his leg being broken, and he never returned to underground work. After recovering from his injuries he secured a position as janitor of the Union Savings & Trust Co.'s bank and continued in the same until three years ago, when his illness necessitated his retirement.

Mr. Martin is also survived by three aged sisters all of whom reside in Scotland. The last of Mr. Martin's brother, Henry Martin, of this city, died seven months ago."

One of the aged sisters mentioned was Mrs. Bell of Braidenoch who is mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter and from whom several members of the Heritage Group are descended.

sand filled pit and was removed when cool, as pig-iron. This was hot strenuous work so the workers had to wear wooden clogs and were noted for their strength and inordinate thirst. At its peak 1200 workers were employed.

About 1900 pig-iron manufacture became uneconomic so the Company expanded into brick making using clay obtained locally from Dunaskin Glen. The brick kilns with fine arched brick ceilings are in good condition. Waste products were used to produce chemicals. Two tall chimneys (one 43 metres high, the other 41½ metres high) stand on the site. These chimneys will need repointing at £1,000 per metre.

A brief visit to Minnivey was made to see the locomotives but the midges caused a rapid retreat to Cathcartston Centre where tea and sandwiches were kindly provided by the Dalmellington ladies.

Contributed by Dr. and Mrs. Moffat.

The Dalmellington and District Conservation Trust hope to open part of the site to the public later this summer.

THE BARDENNOCH HILL WALK

On Sunday the 19th June nine of us from Castle Douglas, led by members of the Carsphairn Heritage Group, enjoyed the Bardennoch scenic walk.

First stop was to survey the remains of medieval Polmaddle village. There, under the guidance of Miss Anne Rutherford, we tried to populate the empty scene with people of bygone days.

Tongues were stilled for once as we made our way over bog and up through the forest on the old drove road, the path of which was quite clearly defined. On reaching the open hillside, all - including 6 month old Rachael, comfortable on grandmother's back - were ready for their picnic lunch. We sat and admired the panoramic view of the Kells Range with only the singing lark and bleating sheep to break the silence.

One walker was particularly pleased to see Braidenoch where her great-grandparents Robert and Mary Bell had lived. This led to reminiscences of children in the not too distant past who had walked to school in Carsphairn from Castle-Maddy carrying Tilly lamps over the hills. Changed days!

Celtic crosses and stone circle remains caught our interest and attention - the only disillusionment being finding that "the ancient stone huts" were in reality grouse butts. The burial mound at Carnavel recompensed for this. Once again imagination was fired,

As we followed Mrs. Campbell and Fiona towards Carsphairn, which looked so photogenic and attractive from this vantage point, only the oyster catchers overhead and the startled pheasant objected to our presence. The question we asked was - When may we come again to walk in this interesting and beautiful countryside.

Contributed by Castle Douglas Walkers

THE WOODHEAD AND LAMLOCH TRAIL

As a mere southerner it was compulsory that I should try out one of the Carsephairn Heritage walks while here for my week's stay, so on a bracing, slightly drizzly morning I set out to do the walk from the lead mines to Lamloch, and very enjoyable it turned out to be. It is an interesting, easy walk along a clear path with very little rough ground.

One could spend a long time in the area of the lead mines, imagining what life must have been like for those miners and their families. The chimney on the hill, with the flues running up to it, presumably from the smelting mill, is fascinating. There is a piece of railway track just waiting for full excavation to find out where it runs and the air hole obviously holds great mysteries as a stone falling down it produces a metallic thud as it reaches the bottom, presumably still harbouring some machinery.

Reluctantly we left all this history behind us and took the walk the miners would have taken every Sunday to get to church, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away at Lamloch. Watched only by the sheep, curious but unsure of us, we passed through the gate to begin our downward path. The views of the hills are magnificent and I wished I had a tape recorder to record the lovely sounds that greeted us - the silence broken only by the trickle of water in the various streams and waterfalls along the way, the cries of the sheep and occasionally a bird piping overhead.

At one point a patch of white cotton

plant billowed beside us, looking as if the sheep had left clumps of wool on the grasses.

Across the fields below us a house nestled in the lee of the land and all around it the fields were striped where forestry workers had ploughed and planted new trees.

All too soon we reached the church at Lamloch and our trail was over. A most pleasant walk to be recommended to all, however keen you may be on walking.

Contributed by Helen Turner.

NOSTALGIA AT WOODHEAD MINE

Anna Campbell and I spent a few hours at the Mine one hot day at the end of June with five people who had connections with the place. Minnie McNaie used to live at Brockloch; Kate Halney nee Sykes, lived at the Mine for the first year of her married life in 1936. In the house at the bottom whilst her sister Jenny lived in one of the houses in the row above the school at the same time. Jimmy Stewart's grandfather had worked there as a miner; John Hastings visited there when he was a boy, and Willie Dixon had worked there at the school, the houses at the top and bottom when he was an apprentice to his uncle in 1928/29. None of them had been there for about ten years and two had not been there for over 50 years so memories played their usual jokes.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Extract from the Ordnance Survey Object Name Books 1848.

"Cairnsmore of Carsphairn

The largest as well as the highest mountain in Galloway with the exception of the "Merrick" it rises to an elevation of about 3696 feet* above the level of the sea, and from its summit when the atmosphere is clear, a most extensive view is obtained of many counties of Scotland, the Isle of Man, Allis Craig and a part of England and Ireland. The surface of this mountain produces good pasturage, but very rocky. On the south side of the hill are a quantity of loose stones of a bluish colour which are called "Blue Stones". And near the summit are a number of springs, two of them are known by the name of "Gold Wells" out of which and some small streams in the locality a Mr. Dodd who was celebrated for his chemical skill collected a quantity of Gold and converting it into some foreign coin but while doing so he was disturbed by some of the officers of the Crown sent to apprehend him in his lucrative retirement. About 1 chain N.E. of the Trig Station is the remains of a cairn of stones said by the country people to be the pile erected by Colonel Collyer. In 1814."

The Compiler of the notebook made an error.

*Cairnsmore of Carsphairn is 2613 feet above sea level.

EXTRACTS FROM THE DUMFRIES STANDARD

May 19th, 1795

"Longevity

Died last week, in the parish of Carsphairn, Marlon Muir in the 103rd year of her age. She retained the use of her faculties to the end:— What is very remarkable, she had three sisters, one of whom lived to the age of 101, another to the age of 95 and the third died at the age of 98."

"A Schoolmaster Wanted October 4th, 1803.

The Parish School of Carsphairn being vacant, the Heritors have agreed to meet at the Church on Saturday the 29th of October 1803 in order to elect a Teacher to supply the vacancy.

Any Candidate that chooses to come forward on this occasion must be qualified to teach the English and Latin Languages, Writing, Arithmetic and Book-keeping. The emoluments connected with the office shall be such as the late Act of Parliament enacts in favour of Schoolmasters. The school fees are just now augmented. There is a commodious dwelling-house in good repair for the use of the Schoolmaster and a rood of excellent land contiguous to the house marked out for a garden. Previous to the day of the meeting, certificates of good moral character must be produced by the Candidates to the Ministers of the Parish or to Mr. McMillan of Holm.

Carsphairn 28th September 1803."

Accident during the Thunder Storm

July 28th 1852

On Thursday, about 9 o'clock in the morning, as David Hastings, a boy of 14 years of age, was driving his uncle's cow home from the field, whilst on the public road near the farmhouse of Stravliannah in the parish of Carsphaln, Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, he was struck by lightning and killed upon the spot. During the storm, his brother William went to meet him, when he found the cows all safe but David lying upon the road quite dead with a scratch down the left side. His clothes were completely torn from the body, and rent in upwards of fifty places."

EDITOR

Please note that Mrs Gillian Brown, the editor of the newsletter and also the membership secretary has moved to Ayr. Her new address is 10 Cedar Road, Ayr. She will be very pleased to receive any contributions for the October newsletter.

