

**Carsphairn
Heritage
Group**



**The Curlers of Dalmellington in February 2005 on the rink built in 1856
Story inside**

**Newsletter No 72
Autumn 2005**

The year is over once again and the exhibition dismantled. This is the first time a full exhibition has been held over for a second year and, from the response of visitors, was greatly appreciated.

Those lovely dresses are once again safe in their box and the mannequins back with their owners. Grateful appreciation to Dr Devereaux who lent us three from the Stewarty Museum in Kirkcudbright. And of course our best thanks go to 'The Colonel' - Lt Col John Clark Kennedy who so generously supplied the material for the whole exhibition.

He continued supplying us with another, then another this or that which he'd just found almost up to the day it finished thinking it might be of interest. Well it was of interest, all of it and we shall miss the glamour, diversity and sheer volume of the history of the estate of Knockgray in Carsphairn from 1703 to 2003.

The Carsphairn Heritage Map

A new project in 2005 has come to fruition recently and the text below appears on an exclusive new illustrated map designed and executed by Robin Ade, local artist and writer. It shows the hills, farms, forests and places of interest in the parish and is decorated with birds, plants and animals in Robin's accurate and beautiful manner.

The high hills of Carsphairn are the ice-shaped remains of what geologists believe were once the highest mountains in the world. After the last ice age ended 10,000 years ago people began to arrive here as nomads, spending summers in the hills and winters by the warm waters of the Solway and Clyde coast. Mesolithic and Stone Age finds include local chert blades from Moorbrock Hill as well as flints from as far away as the Grimes Graves mines of East Anglia.

Prehistoric stone buildings like the chambered King's Cairn on the Deugh and the Iron Age fort on the Ken began to appear after the arrival of agriculture in the region over 5,000 years ago. Early written records suggest connections with the 6th century kingdom of Rheged and also with the Romano Britons of Strathclyde whose leader, Maximus, became one of the later Roman emperors. The name Carsphairn first appears in official records as 'Keresban' in the Charters of Carrick in 1196.

Prime hill grazing above the dense lowland forests supported a substantial population based on cattle rearing, and the area's strategic location at the heads of the Dee and Doon allowed the development of a powerful dynasty unique in South Scotland for its Gaelic (i.e. Scottish) language. It appears that Gaelic was present in the Southwest even before the unification of the country following the final fall of Dumbarton Rock, capital of the North Britons, in 889 AD.

The Green Well of Scotland near Carsphairn may be the only named relic of the 'fons Scoti' (Scottish Well) culture recorded by St Adomnan as existing before the Christian era began in earnest with the arrival of Ninian at Whithorn in the late 400s.

Carsphairn has strong associations with Robert the Bruce who arrived alone at Polmaddie in 1306 at the start of the guerilla campaign which would lead him to power. The miller's wife, who hid him from pursuers, was later rewarded with freehold of the mill, while the hill folk of the Free Forest of Buchan, which comprised the main hill massif of the Southwest, were permitted to manage their affairs under the traditional elder system.

Centralized government was almost as slow to arrive here as in the Highlands and it was only after the Killing Times, the Covenanting civil wars of the late 1600s, that the hills were seriously integrated into the political and economic life of the nation. The 1700s, however, remained disturbed, with the agricultural improvements resulting in large scale emigration while the smuggling of luxury goods became a major occupation along the remote hill roads from the Solway ports to Edinburgh.

The age of Empire and the Industrial Revolution brought new business, notably the Woodhead lead mines which operated from 1838 to 1873. John Louden McAdam, whose ancestral seat was at Waterhead on the Deugh, gave the world modern road construction. His early childhood was spent at Lagwyne Castle near Carsphairn, which was built by his father James.

The problem of emigration continued through the 1800s and 1900s as new agricultural methods and modern machinery resulted in a steady drop in demand for farm labour. The decline was compounded when commercial afforestation led to loss of the population on forested land which now amounts to some 50% of the parish. The current population of under 200 is probably the lowest since the Stone Age'.

The Galloway Words Competition continued

Although we learned in Newsletter no 70 in the Spring that Mrs Nettie Cowan in Northern Ireland had won Anna Campbell, who set the questions, adds that special mention must be given to Mrs Sue Wiseman's entry in which she made a valiant attempt to give appropriate meanings but succeeded in reducing the markers to giggles...

'Newsletter Quiz - This is as far as I got due to trauma and 'flu!
Don't suppose I'll win the Aston Martin or the holiday in the Bahamas but never mind!

- 1 Anent - Treebeard
- 3 Clinkit - everything you need for making your own clin
- 5 Emyp - Peter Duncan (lost his seat in the last election)
- 6 Fleesom - Three fleas
- 7 Gorach - Onomatopoeic. Noise made after consuming several
whiskies and half a dozen deep fried Mars bars
- 8 Hunker - Dog belonging to an eastern European tribe
- 10 Lowp - Opposite of hype
- 11 Moocher - Cross between a cow and a greyhound
- 12 Praties - Refreshments after the church service
- 13 Quait - Upper middle class adjective (usually used with 'naice')
- 14 Rive - (anag.) Really Interesting Verbal Eccentricities

You did say you wanted this by April 1st didn't you!

Christmas Shopping

How does the idea of buying 'different' Christmas presents with no hassle of going round busy shops appeal to you?

The Heritage Group may be able to help. Think of your Christmas list and pair some of the items below with people you know

Streams of the Stewartry CD Rom - £12. A delightful wander through the Stewartry with superb photographs, poetry and an insight into the secrets of the hidden Stewartry. Limited number left

The Stewartry video/DVD - £12. Excellent film of the Stewartry at its best with commentary and explanations by many locals

Carsphairn Heritage Maps written and illustrated by Robin Ade - £6.64 inc. tube and UK postage. A welcome addition to our sales table it is a bird's eye view of Carsphairn with places of interest and historical significance clearly shown. See page 2 for text.

- 'Schools of the Glenkens'** by Anna Campbell. Full of history, school log book records and photographs. Now reduced to £4.00
- Carsphairn tea towels** - £2.95. Attractive tea towel of Carsphairn scenes by Robin Ade and bordered by the motif of the Heritage Group.
- Carsphairn mugs** - £3.95. China decorated with local scenes.
- Carsphairn Heritage Padblocks** - £2.50. Useful beside the phone.

There will be a sales table at the AGM on 11 November.

We can post gifts - packaging and postage extra

Do email Anna Campbell at a.campbell@cairnsmore.fsnet.co.uk or ring 01644 460208 to discuss your possible unique Christmas presents!

Round The World Flight Attempt in 1922

During the summer we received photocopies of newspaper cuttings relating to Captain Norman Macmillan, a pioneer aviator who was the pilot on the flight attempting the circumnavigation of the world in 1922.

Captain Macmillan was born in Glasgow in 1892, the son of John Campbell McMillan who was born in Carsphairn in 1855 and grandson of Robert McMillan and his wife Agnes Campbell who married in Carsphairn in 1829. Captain Macmillan had a distinguished flying record. His first experience of war was undergone with the 9th Highland Light Infantry with which he landed in France in 1914. He was gazetted into the Royal Flying Corps in September 1916 and saw extensive aerial action in France during 1916 and 1917 and in Italy from 1917 until February 1918.

The flight round the world attempt was made initially by three brave men, Major Blake, Captain Macmillan and Lieutenant Colonel Broome - the latter not being mentioned after Rome. He was probably replaced by Captain Malins at that point. These edited extracts are taken from The Daily News and The Evening News, the two papers to which reports were sent. The newspaper cuttings do not provide the background into the decision to make this daring flight but they provide an insight into a very different world as well as giving a geography lesson of names of places that have long been changed.

It is obvious that the flight caught the imagination of those who read the reports as well as the people who greeted the plane on its arrival in different countries. In 1922 it would perhaps have been the equivalent of today's attempts to circumnavigate the world by balloon.

The 30,000 mile journey started from Croydon aerodrome on May 24th 1922. Major Blake in his report from Paris noted "Broome kept himself very busy taking movie pictures from the time we started, but just as we were flying over Dover Cliffs I caught him throwing kisses at something or someone below. Whether he had spotted some charming English girl or merely saluting dear old England I can't say. He won't tell me anyway. I called Macmillan's attention to it immediately but he being Scotch just went straight on".

In his next report to the Daily News sent from Paris Major Blake wrote of his frustration caused by the delay in waiting for a second plane from Croydon which was to

accompany them to Athens so that the journey could be filmed. It was delayed as it had crashed at Croydon but the damage to the undercarriage was slight so they hoped that it would arrive the next day.

Time had not been wasted during the delay as every detail of their engine had been overhauled and everything was now in perfect working order. He recounted a pleasant little incident. 'Le Bourget (where they had landed) is the civil aviation ground of the French Government so it was to the French Government official I had to tender the ground fees due for landing our DH9. With perfect French courtesy he intimated he could not accept it "We are proud, monsieur" he said "you should do us the honour to use our aerodrome in your tour". That is what I call strengthening the Entente.

But the kindness all round has really been beyond our expectations. For instance the Belgian minister sent the first Secretary of the Legation to the hotel this morning to greet us and saying that the Minister himself would, if it were at all possible, be present at our start'.

Technical troubles started on the flight to Rome. The plane was forced to land at Marseilles. Major Blake in his report to the Daily News published on May 29th 1922 wrote 'Here we are at Marseilles, sound in limb certainly and on the whole cheerful but a little impatient to reach a turn in the lengthening lane of troubles which has been our course from the start.

It was when we were above Aix that, much to our surprise, we found our petrol beginning to give out. We had been told before leaving that there was an aerodrome at Marseilles, and for this we were soon looking with some anxiety. We circled round and round the racecourse and spectators with faces turned towards us, became quickly aware of our desire to land and cleared back beyond the rails.

Then we saw Macmillan's mettle. In a sideslip at such an angle that I think none of us expected to stand up whole again he brought us down clearing the hedge by a few inches and making what was a truly wonderful landing. Unfortunately there was too little space and we bumped forward slightly on our nose, breaking the propeller and also one wheel of the undercarriage. None of us sustained any hurt and Broome immediately got busy taking cinematograph pictures of the machine on the ground.

The aerodrome authorities were immediately helpful. They are sending over a lorry and men to remove the wings and take back the machine for repair'. He commented in further reports how helpful the French pilots had been and said "More could not have been done for a French machine". The journey from Istras (where the plane was repaired) to Rome was uneventful. Major Blake even apologised in his report for falling asleep between Pisa and Rome.

In our next newsletter there will be a continuation of their attempt

World War II at the AGM

If you have an item or recollection from the last World War please bring it along to the AGM and tell us about it.

If in doubt phone Anna Campbell at 01644 460208

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of the
Carsphairn Heritage Group
will be held at
Lagwyne Hall, Carsphairn
on Friday 11th November 2005
AGM at 7.00pm
followed by
Reccollections of World War II
by members - see page 6

Sales Table

Refreshments

N (ice) try by Dalmellington curlers

Meet the ice breakers (front cover) at Dalmellington Craigengillan Curling Club who brought back the outdoor sport after an absence of more than 100 years. The club was formed in 1841 at the Loch Doon Hotel in Dalmellington and has continued ever since.

In 1856, Colonel F McAdam Cathcart of Craigengillan built an outside curling rink but it fell into disuse in 1899.

Three years ago, club members decided to re-instate it to its former glory. When found, it was completely overgrown with trees growing through it. Only the concrete base and curling rings were visible.

With a grant from The National Lottery Awards For All and East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership plus many arduous hours of labour by the members, the rink was completed in December 2004.

When ice formed on Sunday January 25 2005, members were able to open the rink officially and take part in an inaugural game. After 106 years, the rink was back in use and a great day ensued with secretary Kennedy Ferguson throwing the first stone.

The pond is not only for the club's use but will be made available to local groups.

The Ayrshire Post, 4 February 2005

Bells Bridge

Under the dark arch
the same river runs, the same water
that plumbed and dripped,
the river we named in biro, bridging

the ordnance survey map with strips
of envelope labels: the pig tail rapids,
dentist's dam, Miranda's meander,
diver's downfall, the coward's plunge.

Under the dark arch we imagined eels,
black smudges making curlicues
in a lifeless inkpot and blue
corpses, soft as clay, lining the bed.

I tried to rename it in stanzas
but the old one has stuck,
itching at the eyes and feet,
mouth leaking.

I offer some words,
only pretty scars,
holding the banks together
with butterfly stitches.

Joe Dunthorne

Contributed by a member - Mrs Brander of Stroanfreggan.
The poem was written by her grandson about Smitton Bridge where he
and his cousin played when they were little. He is now about to
graduate from University of East Anglia in writing and poetry.
August 2005