



CARSPHAIRN

HERITAGE

GROUP



NEWSLETTER - No.14

APRIL 1991

EDITORIAL

Some of you may have heard the programme 'Speaking Out' on Radio Scotland on January 30th. The topic being discussed was forestry and it was focussed on Carsphairn, a community ringed by forestry. Two inhabitants of Carsphairn and one person concerned about the amount of forestry in the area, gave their opinions on forestry on pre-recorded interviews but the programme was live with three experts discussing the topic with comments being 'phoned in' by listeners. One speaker from the World Wide Fund for Nature commented that Carsphairn was a community where "virtually nothing happens" and a "community that doesn't have any life in it". How far from the truth! This lively little village with a strong community spirit where many activities take place and where newcomers have said there is far more to do here than in the town, can certainly not be described as "lifeless".

During the live forestry debate, there was a full discussion on the wildlife in the area. It was said that since then, the increase in wildlife was one of the success stories of forestry. Mr. Watret, the Ranger with the Forestry Commission for 38 years, has recorded a conversation on the wildlife of Carsphairn. An article based on this conversation appears in this Newsletter. Perhaps we have concentrated on the historical aspects of the village - wildlife is our heritage too - something we shouldn't take for granted.

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GIFTS

The Heritage Group has been very fortunate to have been given a gift of various Valuation Rolls from the late Mr. McMillan who used to own 'Lamloch' in Carsphairn. Included in the gift are the following:

Valuation Roll of Stewartry of Kirkcudbright	1819
Valuation Roll of Stewartry of Kirkcudbright	1859 - 60
Valuation Roll of Stewartry of Kirkcudbright	1863 - 64
Valuation Roll of Stewartry of Kirkcudbright	1875 - 76
Valuation Roll of Stewartry of Kirkcudbright	1884 - 85
Valuation Roll of Stewartry of Kirkcudbright	1890 - 91
Valuation Roll of County of Dumfries Owners of Lands and Heritors	1827
_____ In Scotland	1872 - 73
Map of sale of Craiggengillan lands in Dalmellington	1919

If anyone would like to borrow these, please contact Mrs. Campbell on Carsphairn 208.

Other Carsphairn residents have given the following:

- Mr. Wright from 'Mascalloch' has given three World War One Medals.
- Mrs. Richardson, now of West Bardennoch, has given an old poster of McVitie & Price's Royal Scot biscuits when a packet cost only 11d and a poster from Turner's of Ayr. Also a copy of the schedule for the 1873 Glenkens Show.
- Mr. Marshall from 'Cairnview' has given 3 coloured photos of the former homes of Lt. Col. MacAdam Cathcart (leadmines proprietor) and his sister in Leamington Spa.
- Photocopies of photographs of the lead mines have been given by Mrs. Cathcart the Vice Chairman of the Group.
- Mr. McAlpine of Ayr has given a copy of the Transactions and Journal of Proceedings of the Dumfries & Galloway

Natural History and Antiquarian Society for the years of 1918 - 1919.

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Quentin McAdam, the writer of the following letters, is related to us in the strangest way by marriage. That is another and fascinating story which I may tell in some future Newsletter.

Two books of copies of his letters written between May 1800 and April 1804 have been kept by our family and reveal a great deal about this man who lived 200 years ago at Craiggengillan, near Dalmellington - not Carsphairn. The house was at the time 'Berbeth', an ancient name, and only given its modern name after Quentin McAdam died in March 1805. The subject selected from some 470 letters copied into the letter books - no carbon paper in those days - by an employed scribe, is Muirdrochwood, Carsphairn. Here are the letters, absolutely verbatim, to speak for themselves:

"To Thomas Smith Esq., Argyle Square, Edinr.

Dear Sir,  
I went on Saturday and looked Mr. Cannons farm of Mardrochwood, it lies well into my farm of Smiton, so if he will give it for twelve hundred pounds I desire you to buy it. He has been offered, I suspect 1100 pounds or Guineas, by the present tenant, who has Smiton, as well as it. However you may offer him 1150 for it. Be sure to make the day of payment 1st Jany., next at soonest. I would rather enter at Whity., next and pay then.  
Greenoch Mains in Muirkirk is also in the market. It lies in the very heart of my property, and if sold worth the money. I ought not to miss it. I believe it belongs to a Mr. Dougal a writer in Edinr., whether I keep or sell the Muirkirk Estate it is a desirable object to have. If you can do it slyly, try & find out what they are asking for it, & the rent.

I am, Dear Sir,  
Yours Truly, Quentin McAdam  
Berbeth  
4 August 1800 "

"To Thomas Smith Esq. Edinr.,  
Berbeth 8 March 1804

Dear Sir,  
When Mr. Cannons farm of Mardrochwood comes to be sold, I should buy it, it lies so well into my farm of Upper and Nether Smittons, that they cannot well be possessed separately. That farmer Willm. Barber in Bogue had a 20 years lease of it at £64 which expired at Whity., 1803 I, like a fool, let him a New Lease of it, upon his paying me £350 of Grasser??? I threw it away. Now, he also rents Mardrochwood, and wishes to buy it. He is very able; I have £1280 of his money, the interest of which exactly pays his rent to me. He says, if he buys it, I shall have it; but I think it is better to buy it myself. He declares, it is worth no more than sixty pounts perannum, including the Publics, in that sum. I doubt he undervalues it; but cannot say, as I am unacquainted with it. At 25 years purchase it comes to £1500. If I can get it at that, I think it cheap; but rather than want it, I think you may give £1700 for it. Bogue says Mr. Cannan is very keen to sell it, and that no body but he or I will buy it. You can take your own way of sounding Mr. C. if he is desirous of selling, and what is the lowest he will take, without letting me appear in it. and if you see you can conclude a bargain, do it. but if not, keep off him. Only, it would be a great matter, if you could get him to promise to give me an offer of it, before he disposes of it. As it is worth more to me than any other person.

Cont...

If you find you can make a bargain, I should like to enter to it at Martinmas next, and to pay the money at Newyearsday. By this, I would get this years rent to pay it with.

The purchase of my Ayrshire land tax, which is just a making, will be settled in ten days, for both Entailed and Un-entailed Estate, in two contracts, as you directed, takes more than I have in the Bank; besides the very expensive improvements I have going on. They have kept me bare these some years, my rents being always a good deal Mortgaged to the bank before due. At same time, do not miss a good purchase of it, for that, as I know Hunters & Co. will let me have what sum I want. But, you know, by putting it off this summer, if you can conclude a bargain to enter at Martinmas, Mr. C. will be brought in for all the expence of Carsphairn Kirk & Manse, also Glebe, if the Heritors are brought in for that; which will be very considerable.

You now understand the business so well, that I give you full power to act in it for me as you please.

I am, Dear Sir, Truly Yours, Q M

PS Get Gustavus advertised to cover, immediately, in two of the Edinr., and one Glasgow paper. In these words. To Cover, this season, at Berbeth, Ayrshire, Gustavus. At 3gs., the Mare, and 5/- the Groom. Grass for the Mares at 1/- per night, or Hay and Oats if desired. Every thing must be paid before the Mares are taken away. "

"To Thomas Smith Esq., Edinr.,

Berbeth 29 March 1804

Dear Sir,

My carter came here on tuesday night with the Malt. The 12 Bolls new is most capital, the two bolls old is not so good as it, but very good - Miss Walkers things, and those for the house, are just what we wanted; and also, all I wrote you about, from Messrs Manners & Bannatine. This day, I have written Hunters & Co. to send you an hundred pounds to account. Many thanks to you, for being so kind as take so much trouble for me. You execute my commissions so well, that I am afraid I shall tease you with them. In a month or two, I will be writing you for another years Groceries. Your letter of 23rd Inst. is most distinct in answer to all I wanted to know. Yesterday I had a conversation with Mr. Baird, there was no contract of marriage, and his wifes titles are, precisely, as you supposed.

A friend of mine is here just now, who says, he thinks Mr. Barber was the highest offerer for Moordochwood, and that he offered 1700 pounds but was not to pay the money, till he had possessed it a year, free of interest.

In short, make the best bargain you can, for it, but buy it. And whatever the price is, try to get my entry at Martinmas, at soonest. My friend says, Mr. Cannon is set on a high price, but will perhaps give a years possession, or perhaps two, free of rent and interest, before the money is paid. You may try this way, or any other way you like, only be sure to secure the purchase; altho' I should pay rather dear.

I am, etc. Quantin McAdam "

Whether Quentin McAdam ever got his offer of 1700 accepted for Muirdrochwood, history does not relate as the above is one of the last in the book and of course the replies from his man of business, Thomas Smith, Edinr., are long gone.

Perhaps a reader of this Newsletter knows the answer. Did Quentin McAdam ever own Muirdrochwood?

How did people manage without a telephone? The P.S. about advertising the services of his stallion is amazing. There is absolutely no description of the horse at all. No height, colour, breed - just his fee of 3gns. Perhaps he was so well known he needed no description!

Carol Cathcart.

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#### WILDLIFE IN THE FORESTRY

Mr. Ian Watret joined the Forestry Commission in 1947 and came to Muirdrochwood in 1952. Then only 200 acres were planted in this area, all by the Forestry Commission, although there were some small plantings on various farms and estates.

When he first came, he was a forest trapper which later changed to stalker and then to his current title, Ranger. His job could be described as twofold; firstly controlling the wildlife and secondly, taking groups around the different aspects of the forestry.

The deer in Galloway are the biggest, best and healthiest in Scotland because they have been reduced to between 1500 and 2000. The deer have adapted well from the open hill into the forest but it was found necessary to cull them because of the potential damage to trees. In the new plantations, the roe deer

nibble the shoots and take the main leaders off, which allows the saplings to grow into double headed trees. Just two or three bites will allow disease into the trees as the red deer peel and eat the bark.

All red deer are shot by the Forestry Commission rangers. The roe deer does, kids and some of the bucks are also shot by the rangers but Danes, Dutchmen, Germans and Frenchmen come to shoot bucks in May and June. The venison goes into cold storage and is bought by a Perth game dealer and mostly exported to Germany.

There are foxes in the forest as there is plenty of cover for them. They kill off rabbits and voles and do not do any damage to the trees. However some are killed by the ranger as a neighbourly act towards the nearby farmers.

The mink that came into the area about ten years ago have largely disappeared - some were trapped but Mr. Watret wonders if the disappearance could have anything to do with acid rain.

The goats are a nuisance as they get into the trees and strip the bark, but in general, they stay above the tree line. They are a tourist attraction and although the goat population is not controlled now, many years ago numbers had to be reduced which caused many problems for the Commission as people objected.

When Mr. Watret first came, there were a lot of black and red grouse which have almost disappeared. This decrease appears to be general throughout Scotland. The red grouse that formerly inhabited the heather covered areas have moved off and have possibly been the victims of tick-worm fever.

The numbers of golden eagles in this area have hardly changed for forty years. They eat a lot of deer calves and goats and the rangers leave out carcasses for them. Mr. Watret has a vivid memory of watching a fox chasing a hare when suddenly an eagle swooped down and caught the hare. The fox circled the eagle and each time it came near the eagle, the bird lunged at it. This went on for a few minutes until the fox left empty-handed, leaving the eagle with the unfortunate hare.

There are a lot of peregrine falcons, birds highly prized by the falconer. Quite a few nests are robbed of eggs and young chicks for this reason. The numbers of peregrine falcons have increased since the chemical 'Deildren' was removed from dip. This caused a form of brain damage and the birds ate their own eggs. Hen harriers nest in the clear fell areas feeding off the many voles there.

Buzzards and kestrels are increasing but the merlin is only rarely sighted. Barn owls are becoming scarce as there are not so many old houses and barns available for them to nest in, but the sharp-eared owls are increasing. If the vole population explodes, then owls prosper. Owls can lay eggs whilst incubating others. Therefore chicks hatch out at different times. In a nest, one could find a fully grown young bird and chicks of various sizes, down to newly hatched ones. Barn owls suffer in bad weather. This year in February, when it was particularly cold, several were found dead locally, all with their claws in a tightly closed position - a sign of hunger.

The most common bird in the forestry is the crossbill. They nest as early as Christmas or the New Year and continue as long as the food supply is there. They are parrot-like but smaller and the male

is a reddy colour and the female greeny colour. The golden crest, siskins and chaffinches are all common. Summer birds such as the shrike and the ring-ousel are occasionally seen. The ring-ousel nests on the top edge of the forestry above the treeline. Overall, the bird population has increased since afforestation of this area and there is a large variety of species. Many nest around the periphery of the forest but inside the forest there are still open spaces which are good nesting areas for the birds. The rarest birds here are the Golden Eagles and the Great Northern Diver, which very occasionally nests here. Other birds sometimes seen are the red-backed shrike, woodrush shrike and the nightjar - another summer bird.

The Forestry Commission is actively encouraging wildlife in this area. Deer will always be here but the numbers will have to be controlled constantly. Nesting boxes are being put up for the birds, particularly for barn and tawny owls. Badgers and otters are protected by the rangers. The Forestry Commission has been involved with other agencies in attempts to deal with the problem of acid rain in local lochs. This has been successful so far and the work is going to be extended to other lochs. Rocky faces are either being left or cut away to allow nesting areas for the peregrine falcon and ravens. Areas known as 'deer lawns' are being left in new plantations.

This has only been an extract of the conversation with Mr. Watret who must glean much satisfaction from the wildlife in the area and the commitment that the Forestry Commission is giving towards it.

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CARSPHAIRN HERITAGE CENTRE

Heritage Group Members who have access to the Galloway News will know that Robison & Davidson's tender for the building of the Heritage Centre has been accepted and funds are now in place. It is hoped that work will commence sometime in June.

We are still looking for stone to face the building. One of our members has kindly donated some and a further source is to be visited, but more is required. If anyone has stone available from an old building that has been demolished or a wall knocked down to extend a building, please contact Rhoda Campbell - Dalry 365 - as soon as possible.

Completion dates are not yet available for the project but we are tentatively looking at the possibility of opening Easter 1992.

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WINE & CHEESE PARTY

Tickets are available from Committee Members for our annual Wine & Cheese Party on Saturday 18th May in Lagwyne Hall. This year we will be entertained by Mrs. Gillian Shackleton and party. Mrs. Shackleton, who has many years experience of entertaining during Kirkcudbright Summer Festivities, will also play the piano during our Buffet supper - speaking of which:

If any members would be prepared to assist in the provision of 'eats', could they please contact Evelyn Watret or Rhoda Campbell before Friday 10th May.

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'OLD TYME' RECIPES

Evelyn Watret and Mary Cummings would like to hear from anyone who has recipes which are over 50 years old for soup, meat courses or puddings. They are hoping to produce a recipe book which will be on sale at the Exhibition so ladies please have a look through your grannie recipes and get in touch with Evelyn or Mary.

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INFORMATION REQUIRED

- (a) Does anyone know anything about Jane McRoberts who was the proprietrix of the Salutation Hotel definitely between 1884 and 1981 and perhaps earlier and later than those dates?
- (b) Any information on the Slaughterhouse in the village would be very useful. It is mentioned in all the valuation rolls that we have from 1959-60 including the 1884-85 one but in the 1890-91 one, it is no longer mentioned. It was owned through-out that period by Robert Hastings who was described as a flesher. He died in September 1885 and is buried in Carsphairn Kirkyard. Any details on either query would be appreciated by Mrs. Campbell.

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PERSONAL RESEARCH

For those of you interested in doing your own research, the Mormon Church has opened a library at its church in Johnstone. The church is opposite the Police Station which is near the Railway Station. The library is open:

Tuesday 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.  
6.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.  
Wednesday 7.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.  
Thursday 6.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.  
Saturday 9.30 a.m. to Noon

There is no need to 'phone ahead but it might be advisable to do so to check if the records you want are available. There is only the 1871 Census returns available for Carsphairn but there are records for all other parishes in Kirkcudbrightshire and the rest of Scotland. The telephone number is 0505-20886

1891 CENSUS

No. of Schedule	Road, Street etc and no. or name of house	Houses		Name & Surname of each person	Relation to Head of Family	Cond. as to marr.	Age at birth.	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where born	Employer	Employed	Rooms with or not window
		Inhab	Uninhab									

This is the layout of a page of the enumerators' book for the 1891 Census which will be released to libraries and other interested bodies later this Summer. At present it is only available at General

Register House Edinburgh. A column not shown here asked if anyone was an imbecile or idiot, deaf and dumb from birth, blind or a lunatic.

1991 SUMMER EXHIBITION -  
'A CENTURY OF CHANGE'

On 21st April we were all involved in the 1991 Census and thought it appropriate to look back this year to the 1891 Census and the changes this reveals in a century of life in our Parish. The Exhibition will run from 3rd August to 17th August. The Committee would appreciate any members who

have artifacts, letters, photographs or any other material from around 1891 which might be of help in our research, getting in touch. Any Committee member will be pleased to hear from you or you can contact Rhoda Campbell on Dalry 365.