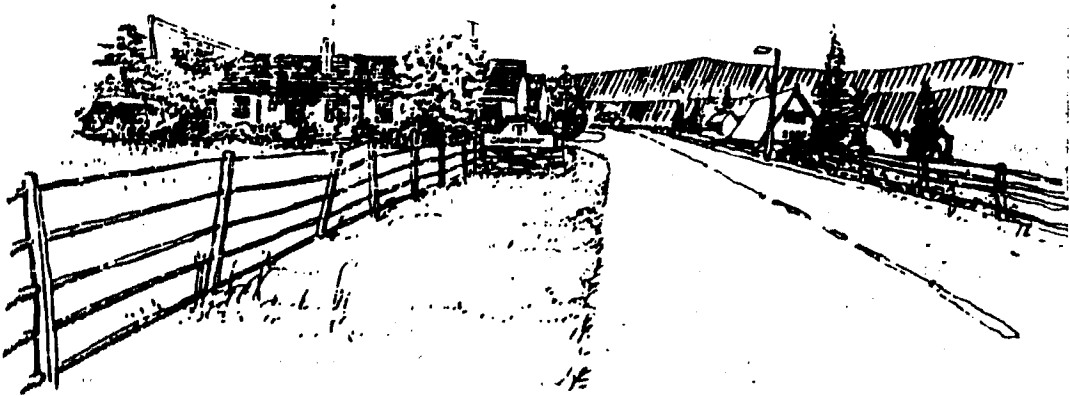




CARSPHAIRN
HERITAGE
GROUP

NEWLETTER - No. 5

JANUARY 1989



An Extraordinary General Meeting of Carsphairn Heritage Group has been called for Thursday, 16th February, 1989 at 7.30 p.m. in Lagwyne Hall. Details inside.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Since the AGM the subject which has dominated Committee Meetings is the SDA's offer of an A-Frame timber building. While the whole Carsphairn Community is involved in discussing and deciding on the uses to which this building could be put the Heritage Group may have a special part to play. The Committee has recommended that if the project goes ahead our group should, if asked by the Community, be responsible for its management. This would probably involve the amendment of our Constitution. In order to discuss this important issue an Extraordinary General Meeting has been set for 16th February to discuss this. We ask all members who can attend to do so.

Further progress has been made in the establishment of our heritage trails. We have been offered a grant of £500, with possible annual additions, towards the setting up of signposts, waymarkers, leaflet dispensers and information boards. It is hoped to have these in place by the start of the tourist season.

It has been proposed that the subject of our summer exhibition this year should be "Farming". If members have any farming artifacts, historical information, local tales or any other relevant information which could be used for the exhibition we would like to have details by March 21st, the date of our next Committee Meeting.

An Extraordinary General Meeting of Carsphairn Heritage Group has been called for Thursday 16th February 1989 at 7.30 p.m. in Lagwyne Hall to discuss the following recommendation made by the committee of the Heritage Group.

It is recommended that should the community of Carsphairn agree to proceed with the possible acquisition of the A-frame building and ask the Heritage Group to assume responsibility for the management thereof the Heritage Group membership should accept and that the constitution be amended accordingly.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If you have not yet applied for membership renewal for 1988/89 we hope you will do so now. Fees are the same as 87/88 :

Individual Membership	£3.00
Senior Citizens	£1.50
Family Membership	£5.00

New members are also welcome.

The Membership Secretary is Mrs. C. A. Cathcart, Culraven, Borgue, Kirkcudbright DG6 4SG.

HERITAGE TRAILS

While the potential acquisition of a building for use as a Heritage Group Centre at Carsphairn has been the focus of attention recently another ongoing project, the Heritage Trails, has also

seen significant developments.

On December 6th three members of the Committee met with Arthur Howitson, the Rights of Way Officer, and Jane Page, the newly appointed archaeologist for the region, to discuss signposting of the Heritage Trails. The group walked from Carnaevel to Polmadie to confirm the type of signposting most appropriate. This followed a previous visit by Mr. Howitson, who has now walked most of our trails. The following items have been decided :

- 20 waymarkers branded with C.H.G. logo.
- 4 routed signposts
- 7 leaflet dispensers

These will be positioned at strategic points on all the trails this spring. In addition a number of Information boards are planned; these would be simple plastic coated typewritten sheets. More elaborate boards will have to wait till a later stage since, at £300 each, these are too costly to be considered under our current £500 grant.

Jane Page has been kind enough to send copies of published material on many of the historic sites on the trails. A summary of these will be included in the April issue.

NEW BUILDING

The interest generated by the SDA's offer of an A-frame timber building at Carsphairn was reflected in the number of people - over 50 - who met in Lagwyne Hall on January 23rd. Convened by the Community Council, this was the latest

in a series of open meetings being held with the SDA to discuss the feasibility of erecting this building possibly opposite Lagwyne Hall and probably running it as a heritage Centre.

If the community is prepared to take on the running of the building - estimated running costs are about £1450 a year - the SDA may be able to purchase the site and erect the building free of charge. The various problems connected with the scheme were discussed, the general consensus being that, whatever difficulties may be encountered in running it, the opportunity of acquiring it should not be missed. In addition to the building itself the SDA are also discussing the possibility of a general facelift operation for Carsphairn including the painting of houses, provision of floral accoutrements for house fronts, and new signposts for the village.

An attractive visual display of all these suggested improvements prepared by Richard East and his associate, the architects commissioned by the S.D.A., is on display at Lagwyne Hall until the next meeting on Wednesday, 22nd February. Anyone interested in seeing it can obtain a key for the hall from the village shop.

INCIDENT AT THE LEADMINES

You may remember an article in the May newsletter about a visit to the leadmines by several people who either lived there, played there, or knew it in the 1930's. In it was a

description of how a lady who lived in one of the houses in the long row above the school fell down a well.

The lady, Mrs. Hunter, who is now in her 80's and lives in Cornwall, wrote to us to tell us what really happened and the following is an extract from her letter.

"It was very hard frost and my husband Geordie had gone with some others to Castle Douglas to curl on the loch. When it started to snow and looked like being a lot (it did) I decided to get in coal and water. The well was just a round hole, quite deep. I had got one bucket of water and was getting the other when I slipped in the snow round the edge and dropped right in. Fortunately the well never froze, or I would have been worse off. I was nearly up to my armpits. There was nothing to take hold of except the snow covered grass around. It was over half an hour before I managed to scramble out, meantime wondering what my four children (aged between 2 months and five years) were up to, I yelled and shouted hoping they might hear and one of them could have gone up to the other house for Mrs. Fergusson to help me.

They had been told to stay in with the door shut and were doing just that so didn't hear me. I eventually got out and was glad to find they were all right."

At that time only two houses were occupied. Mrs. Fergusson lived in a house at the top which overlooked the mines. The last house to be occupied was the one near the ruins at the

bottom and this was occupied until the early 1950's.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Campbell recently received the following letter which the Group committee felt might be of interest to the members.

"Dear Mrs. Campbell,
I was recently on holiday in your area and picked up a leaflet about the 'Carsphairn Heritage Trails' which I find of extreme interest.

We managed a couple of the suggested walks and were particularly intrigued with the remains of the former Lead/silver mining village at Woodhead.

Unfortunately your Centre was closed in Carsphairn and no-one seemed to know much about its history whom we mentioned this matter to, and I am wondering if you publish any leaflet about the history etc., of this leadmine which might interest an amateur.

Yours sincerely,
Audrey Dent,
Lancashire."

It is pleasing to know that our pamphlets are being picked up and that they are giving pleasure to those who are visiting the area.

CATALOGUE

A catalogue of all the artifacts that the Heritage Group has been given or

acquired has now been prepared. If any-one would like a copy please contact Mrs. Campbell at Carsphairn 208.

Another recent gift has been received from Mr. Murray of New Galloway. He has given the book "Hettrick's Poems and Songs." This particular copy was reprinted in 1896.

Mrs. Auld, from Ayr, has given us several old photographs of the area, including the Tinkers Loup in 1925, Carlins Cairn and Loch Enoch. Mrs. Cruickshank has also donated an old two handed saw.

SONG REQUEST

Miss Jo Miller from Dalry is looking for old songs that were sung in the area years ago. If you think you can help her please contact Jo at Dalry 235. Her address is Garroch Burn Cottage, Dalry, but after March she can be contacted at the Manse, Dalry - telephone Dalry 380.

REMEMBRANCE POPPIES AND CARSPHAIRN

In December, 1915 there appeared, in the magazine "Punch", a poem which began thus:

In Flanders fields the poppies grow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

When the poem was reprinted in America,

a Miss Molna Mitchell added the lines:

And now the torch and poppy red
Wear in honour of the dead.

After the Great War was over, the British Legion adopted the poppy as a symbol. In November, we still wear a poppy on Remembrance Day. The poem - or rather the poet - has a connection with Carsphairn. "In Flanders Fields" was written by John McCrae, a doctor from Guelph, in Wellington County, Ontario, Canada.

Guelph had been founded by a Scotsman, John Galt, who is best known in Scotland as a novelist, particularly for his amusing "Annals of the Parish". To Guelph, in 1849, there came a family called McCrae from Carsphairn. It is possible that it was at Fumliston that they were tenant farmers or farm workers. There was David McCrae (born in Carsphairn in 1800), his wife Marlon Munroe (who was 99 when she died in 1893), three sons, two daughters and several grandchildren.

The eldest son, Thomas (born Kells 1820) had married Jean Campbell and their son, also named David, was born in Laurieston in 1845 and so would be just four years of age when the family sailed for Canada.

In Guelph, grandfather David became a book-keeper, then in 1853 established a lumbering business which flourished. Ten years later he bought 'Janefeld', a farm on the outskirts of the town and to Janefeld his son Thomas brought a herd of Galloway cattle which became renowned all over America.

In turn, his son David became one of the best known breeders of Galloway cattle. Keenly interested in agriculture, he helped to found the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph which became a famous centre. But he was also a soldier and as late as 1916 he took to England a unit of men he had recruited in Guelph and was bitterly disappointed that, as a reserve officer aged 71, the authorities would not allow him to lead his men in France.

This David had married Jane Simpson Eckford, daughter of the Rev. John Eckford of Edinburgh who had come to Canada in 1851. She is described as a gracious woman of rare qualities of mind and personality, with a deep interest in literature. There were three children of the marriage: Thomas and John, who both became physicians, and a daughter Glellis.

In "The Gallovidian Annual" of 1938, there was published an article (with a photograph of David and Marion McCrae) by Mae Stuart Clendenan who seems to have known both brothers, referring to them as Tom and Jack. Thomas wrote medical books. John wrote poems.

John eventually became a lecturer in medicine at McGill University, Montreal (a University founded by a Scot). Mae Clendenan describes John as being "best remembered for his personal charm, his gift for friendliness, his ready wit and quick sympathy, all allied with a good deal of true Scottish reserve. Love for children and for animals was his outstanding characteristic. He was deeply religious and his constant attendance at church service made him

a source of a good deal of wonder during his years at the front. And he dearly loved fishing, a taste nurtured in the trout streams of Wellington County and brought to perfection when as a boy he visited relations in Scotland."

One wonders if some of these relations lived in or near Carsphairn. If John came as a boy, possibly he would be brought by his father who would doubtless wish to visit places associated with his early childhood. John had joined the Guelph Highland Cadets at the age of 14 and he served in the Boer War in South Africa.

In August 1914, at the outbreak of the Great War, he offered his services and by September he was in France. On the banks of a canal near Ypres, in an eight-foot square dug-out which he used as a dressing-station, John McCrae saw the poppies and wrote the famous lines. He may have been thinking particularly of a friend who had been killed on 2nd May, 1915.

A month later he was posted to Boulogne, as Lieutenant-Colonel, in charge of medicine at a hospital organised by McGill University. Here, some time later, he became gravely ill and he died on 28th January, 1918. He was buried in Wimereux War Cemetery.

John McCrae had been born on St. Andrew's Day, 1872, in a stone cottage in Guelph. This has become a literary shrine and here the Colonel John McCrae Birthplace Society has gathered numerous mementos, including the manuscript of the famous poem.

John's father, the little David who
had left Galloway in 1849, outlived
his famous son and died in 1930.

Contributed by Jean C. Gibson.

LAMENT FOR BROCKLOCH

The bold MacMillans held you
In the days of Robert the Bruce
But you're gone to Fountain Forestry
In the days of the Sitka Spruce !

They've ripped apart your granite heart
For all the world to see
And now they've finished sticking in
That spiky, alien tree !

And as they grow the view will go
From Brockloch to Drumjohn
The light and shade on coloured hills
Our eyes now feast upon !

A few small woods enhance the view
And give shelter to the stock
But what we all object to is
"The Blanket Forest Block" !

They've done something for the landscape
With hardwoods on the knoves;
But we preferred you as you were
Pastured by sheep and suckler cows !

You cannot blame the Farmer
When farming does not pay
And if his bairns don't want the life,
Then it's got to "go away" !

You cannot blame him either
If he takes the highest price
Tho' those who can afford to pay
Plan things that ain't so nice !

Oh yes ! He gets a "subsidy"
Which helps with wages and with rent !
But in return he gives us Views and Walk
Which don't cost us a "cent" !

When he takes his stock to market
And gets "Nothing" bid for these !
Well that's ANOTHER hill farm
That will likely "go for trees" !

And so you Conservationists
Although you "Winge" and "Greet" !
You've only got yourselves to blame
If you don't buy good Red Meat !

Lt. Col. A. J. Clark-Kennedy.

FRONTISPIECE

The illustration on the front of this
newsletter is a sketch of the suggested
improvements to the northern approach
to Carsphairn with the A-Frame
building in situ, trees and shrub
planting, and a stone wall with
CARSPHAIRN lettered on cast-iron and
let in to the stone work.

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