



GARGUNNOCK NEWS

Spring 2008

The Magazine for News, Views and Information
about Gargunnoch Village and the Surrounding Area

**FLOWER SHOW
SILVER
ANNIVERSARY**

**FARMERS CLUB
212 Years of
History**

**TREASURE HUNT
A Great Success**

**MARION WYLLIE
End of Year 2**

**OLD SCHOOL'S
150 Years
Celebration
Weekend**

**A REMARKABLE
EXPERIMENT
Clearing of the Moss**

**MCISAACS IN
GARGUNNOCK
One Woman's
Search**

**PARIS IN APRIL
Sally's Remarkable
Feat (Feet?)**

**OBITUARIES
Farewell to Two Old
Friends**

....and much, much more!

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 Funniest Headline
 Best Article (Runner-up)
 Best Use of Photography (Runner-up)

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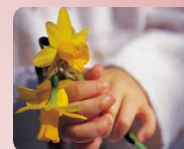
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Editorial Policy Statement -
 The Gargunnoch News is a Community Magazine produced on a voluntary basis tri-annually under the Gargunnoch Village Trust . Its aim is to provide news, views, information and entertainment for the benefit of the local community and visitors to the village and surrounding area.
 Letters and articles published do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Village Trust and may be shortened, edited or not published at his discretion.
 Contributions will be attributed to the author and vested interests will be declared wherever appropriate.
 Items for publication are welcomed in any form although electronic is preferred. Ask for guidance beforehand on size and content. Minutes may not be printed in full.
 Good quality photos are very welcome and these will be returned as soon as possible.

Cover Picture - Two old posters floating amongst a fabulous annual display of flowers in the Community Centre, the venue this year for the 25th show since it was resurrected in the early 80s. Thanks to Catherine Irvine and Joan More for drawing my attention to these old posters



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**All New Gala Day
Sat. June 21st**

Following a consultation process Gala procedures, by popular demand, have undergone a major revamp.

The main change will be the move of the Thursday evening BBQ to the evening of Gala Day. This means that all the Gala events including sports, BBQ, parade etc will happen on Gala Day, Saturday June 21st.

The theme for 2008, chosen by the school children, is "a character from your favourite book"

In addition to the fancy dress competition there will be a new class for a decorated float. Floats should be about the size of a pram. After they have been judged there will be a float race and prizes will be awarded.

This year there will be 2 raffles, a children's one in the afternoon and an adult one in the evening. Tickets will be on sale very shortly!

We will have our wonderful tea tent and we would appreciate donations of home baking (please hand to Lisa McCabe tel:860202).

Side stalls this year will be organised and run by various village organisations for their own benefit. If your group is interested in having a stall please contact either Jane (860287) or Maitland (860460).

A great day is being planned, keep your fingers crossed for good weather!

Provisional Programme for Gala

- 2:00 Procession, led by the Balaklava Pipes and Drums, leaves school
- 2:15 Crowning of Gala Queen and Laird
- 2:20 - Fancy Dress Judging, Float judging
- 3:00 - Events
 - Welly boot throwing
 - Haggis Hurling
 - Spacehopper Derby
 - Childrens Races - 3-legged race, sack race,
- Interspersed with goodie bags and ice cream
- Also interspersed with the semi-finals of the football
- 4:00 - Final of the football competition
- 4:15 - Float race
- 4:20 Presentation of medals and prizes
- 4:25 - Children's raffle
- 4:30 - BBQ gets set up
- 4:40 - Adult's football
- 7:00 - Tug-o-war
 - sweetie tombola
 - lucky dip
- 9:00 Adults raffle
- 10:00 Bar closes



Talent

One thing Gargunnoch is not short of is talent, hidden or otherwise and the non-hidden variety was much in evidence at the two main events held this Spring. The Treasure Hunt (p?) and the weekend of celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the Old School now Community Centre

Take the sketches above of yours truly. Recognisable? Definitely, in fact my under 3 years old grandson picked me out immediately. The attention to detail is impressive, right down to Callum's individually drawn "laughter lines!"

There were many more pictures than just those two of course and all were impressive. But there was much more talent on show during the weekend as Buskers at the shop "busked", performers in the Saturday evening concert performed and many others did what they do best even if that simply meant they organised, served, baked, fetched or carried, quietly in the background perhaps but oh so essential nevertheless.

The Treasure Hunt was also an opportunity for all concerned to let their lights shine, especially the adhoc band of local musicians.

Thank you one and all, you make

Gargunnoch what it is today, a lively, vibrant good-to-live-in place. Long may that continue.

Old Photos

As I suspected the display of old school photos and other information about the history of the building ably put together by Jane Arneill and Douglas Johnston was a hit.

Everyone could recognise some acquaintances or friends. Children found parents, parents found grandparents and many were the huddles round particular photos and minor arguments as to who was who. All good entertainment.

To the Point

Catherine Richardson hit the nail on the head at the end of her poem when she made her feelings about any threat to the existence of the Centre from Stirling Council to an unsuspecting Councillor O'Brien. (see page 15)

Judging by the roar of laughter and approval from the audience she was not wide of the mark and you can be fairly sure that those collective feelings will be transmitted into the corridors of power in Viewforth.

Power to the People!

John McLaren, Editor

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Map showing routes: A84 To Callander DOUNE, A820 To Dunblane, B824 To Stirling (7 miles), B8032 From Thornhill B826, and RTA PLANT HIRE at LOCHILL INDUSTRIAL ESTATE.

GARGUNNOCK FLOWER SHOW SILVER ANNIVERSARY

It's not long now until the Annual Flower Show in August in the Community Centre so I hope you've all had it in mind when planning your gardens this year.

Can it really only be 25 years since the resurrected Gargunnoch Flower Show staged its first annual event in 1983? Seems like only yesterday.

There had been a "Gargunnoch Horticultural Society" before, from 1883, but it had petered out around 1910/12 so it was perhaps overdue a resurrection. I recall that there was great excitement in the village at the prospect of the new show although it's fair to assume that the organisers had their fingers crossed that there would be enough entries. In the event their fears proved groundless and it was a big success.

There were plenty of classes to enter and a good chance, if you entered for enough of them, that you would come away with an award or two. I certainly did...and Helen...and the kids.

But of course there emerged a few real expert gardening wizards for whom the show was an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities and set the scene for closely fought competitions between them in the years to come right up to the present day when the same names are still to be seen in the prize-winners lists, names like Ronnie Carson and Bill Nicol come to mind.

But other competitors are gaining in experience and competence and will soon perhaps be challenging the Old Guard while further down the list lots of minor skirmishes are annually fought over such things as lemon curd or photography!

So while laying out your garden this year why not do so with an eye to what you might submit to this 25th anniversary show and try to make it a really special one.

~~~~~

**T**hat Flower Show poster on the front page was shown to me by Catherine Irvine (nee Morrison) of Larbert. Her Gran, the late Mrs Blair of Stevenson Street, had a long association with Miss Philp, the Gargunnoch Postmistress for many years, indeed at Christmas Mrs Blair could often be seen trudging the streets of the village, sometimes through heavy snow, helping out with deliveries.

Through that association, Mrs Blair inherited some of Miss Philp's personal effects, including scrap-books, personal poems etc and also this poster. I'm greatly indebted to Catherine for allowing me access to her archive on your behalf.

It was obviously produced by Dobbies for general use and serves as an attractive and colourful way for any small flower show to advertise its big annual event. Dobbies also provided an award for most points in the show too.

But when was it? Someone has pencilled in 1900 and certainly 25th August was a Saturday that year, but then so it was in '06, '17, '23 and so on or for that matter 1894 etc. So the deciding factor should be the bit in small print which says, "...Will hold their 18th Annual Exhibition"

So I dropped into Stirling Council's excellent Archives Service down at Borrowmeadow Road to seek confirmation. That confirmation didn't take long to find as the Archivist Jane Petrie, who has Gargunnoch connections herself, soon had the relevant copies of the Stirling Observer to hand. 1900 it was.



**So who are all these young (well 25 years younger) guys? Well, left to right, David Turner, Jimmy Hill, Ronnie Carson, Robert Petrie, Jimmy Petrie, Jack Turner, Eddie Milton, 3 judges, Don Kirkpatrick, and Hugh Ferguson pose for this photo down in the old Chuch Hall.**



**And the ladies were there in force too. Left to right - 3 judges, Liz Petrie, Maisie McArthur, Anne Carson, Margaret Hill and Mary Turner Photos from the archive of Whyler Photographers, Stirling**



More interesting small print at the bottom tells us that entries closed eight days before the show! Also entry to the show cost one shilling between midday and 3pm then 6d thereafter, with children half price.

A brass band from St Ninians was to be in attendance from 3pm to 8.30pm and a wooden dance floor would be provided.

Food for thought for today's organisers eh?

From the magazine  
 "Rural History Today"  
 comes this article  
 written by Susanna  
 Wade Martins in 2006  
 about the Gargunnoch  
 Agricultural Show,  
 one of the oldest in  
 Scotland.



**The establishment of The Highland and Agricultural Society in 1784 as a national forum for Scotland stimulated interest in the founding of local ones but the Gargunnoch Farming Club may well be unique in that the records of this still flourishing club go back to its foundation. These consist of a collection of letters and notes of meetings from 1796 to 1817 and minute books from 1847 to the present, all kept in an in-laid chest with two keys which also contains a small but equally elaborate ballot box. (see below)**

The club was set up in 1794 by John Fletcher Campbell of Boquhan. In 1784, the Clackmananshire Club had been founded and it was there that Campbell looked when seeking a model for his and so he sent for its rules.

Their activities consisted of four dinners a year at which members wore blue coats and scarlet waistcoats with buttons stamped with a plough and wheat stalk, as well as the running of ploughing matches. New members were proposed at one meeting and elected at the next. Their object was the 'Improvement of Agriculture'.

Armed with this information, Campbell wrote the rules for Gargunnoch. Membership was restricted to those living in the nearby parishes

*'The design of the farmers' club is to collect the knowledge of facts chiefly with regard to agriculture and to judge of what improvements may be introduced with success in this part of the country, each member furnishing information in particular that falls under his own experience and is connected with his situation and profession, the effect also of which it is to be hoped will be to connect the Tenant with the Landlord as members of the same society'.*

Meetings were to be once a quarter. The initial membership was 23, but when it reached 30 (later increased to 40) the role was closed and new members were admitted by ballot. Membership included landowners, farmers and members of other professions, such as clergymen, medical men, surveyors, engineers, merchants and manufacturers who could be useful to farmers.

There was one surgeon, one clergyman, two 'writers' and John Smith of the Deanston iron foundry and inventor of the sub-soil plough. The quarterly meeting consisted of a dinner and discussion. At these dinners, the president was to promote 'cheerfulness and good humour while preserving decency and mutual respect'.

Members were expected to come suitably attired in coats of 'Presbyterian blue with silver buttons' on which was engraved the club's emblem. A cash book for 1806 shows the cost of dinner and the only other major expenditure at this time was prize money. At this time five guineas was awarded for the best bull, **(worth an incredible £315 at todays prices! Todays organisers please note! - Ed)** with three guineas for the second and two guineas for the third prizes. For the first time, because the Club wanted to encourage the introduction of the Ayrshire breed into the area there were also prizes for Ayrshire bulls.

Little is known about the club's founder. Like many Scottish landowners, he spent much of his active life away from his estates which were managed by the Reverend Tait of Kincardine. Tait was also an early secretary of the

## Ploughing Match.

**THE GARGUNNOCK FARMERS' CLUB** will hold a **PLOUGHING MATCH**, on **TUESDAY** the 4th day of March, on a Lea Field belonging to Mr Henry Richardson, of Wester Culmore, when the following Prizes will be given :—

- 1st Prize. One Pound.
- 2d. Do. Fifteen Shillings.
- 3d. Do. Ten Shillings.
- 4th. Do. Seven Shillings and Sixpence
- 5th. Do. Five Shillings.

The Ploughs to be on the Field by half-past Nine o'clock.

**N. B.**—No Ploughman will receive a Prize, but such as perform their Work at the rate of an Acre in Ten Hours and a half.

Ploughs from those who are not Members of the Club will be admitted.

Stirling, 21st Feb. 1823.

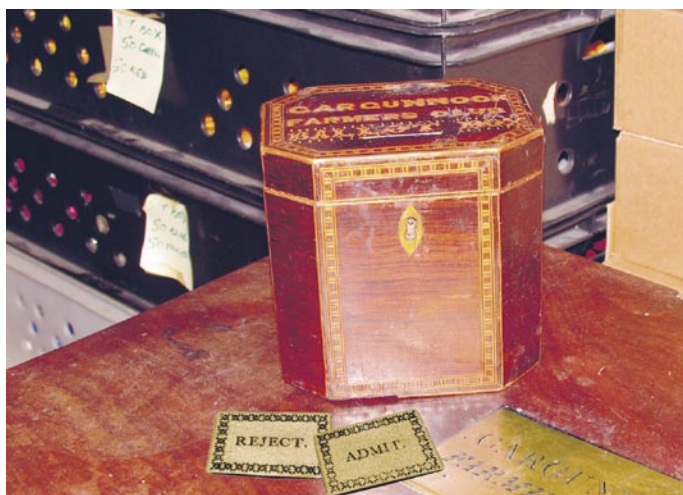
Stirling—Printed at the Journal Office, by C. Murray and Co.

Club, dying in office in 1812 'owing a considerable amount to the club'.

During the first fifty years of its existence the club was responsible for promoting a whole range of activities. It followed the example of the Clackmannan Club, where the earliest ploughing matches in Scotland had been held in 1784, and so organised its own. The matches in 1804, 1805 and 1807 were specifically to prepare a drill for turnips. In 1804 there were 19 entries. The furrow should be five inches deep and nine inches broad and whoever was straightest and nearest the gauge would win. At meetings in 1814 and 1816 it was decided not to hold the match that year as work on the farms was so backward as a result of the stormy weather.

A notice for the 1823 ploughing match lists prizes of between one pound and five shillings. "No Ploughman will receive a prize, but such as perform their work at the rate of an acre in ten hours and half." By 1855, entrants had to be 'regular servants'. A competitor who was 'merely a weekly servant' was disqualified. A further incentive to farm servants staying on the same farm was given by a premium to the servant who had been ploughman on a member's farm for the longest. However to qualify, a certificate of moral character had to be produced. In 1817, the premium was won by Mr Spicer's servant who had 'held the plough for twenty years'.

This effort to include a moral element into the prizes was typical of the clubs in both England and Scotland and reached its most popular in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1847 Gargunnoch was offering a premium to 'the farm servant under twenty five years of age who has conducted himself with the greatest propriety for the longest period'.



The Farmers Club box contains many old papers and also this inlaid ballot box with voting tickets for perhaps voting on proposed new members.



As well as ploughing matches there were also trials of new implements such as ploughs. In 1833 eleven ploughs were tried by John Smith of Deanston, the author of the influential "Thorough Drainage and Deep Ploughing," published in that year, and three other farmers. Four were wooden and seven made of iron. The depth of the furrows were all measured using a 'dynamometer' or draught measurer.

Other trials include the testing of the 'Hainault Scythe' in 1827. The scythe was a small version of the large implement with which we are familiar and there was no cradle for holding the cut crop.

*'The work was pronounced to be superior in regard to close cutting and clean gathering to that of the sickle and the swathe laid in complete order for the binders. They (the committee) do not consider the instrument as one likely to be used by women'.*

Other premiums were offered for standing crops and so field inspections of wheat, hay and turnips were regularly reported on in the early 1800s. Prizes were also awarded to the best stallions and bulls, but there is no indication that a regular show was run in the early years.

Although one of the stated aims of the club was the presentation of papers, the reading of only two is recorded.

In 1814 the club received an advertisement for Sir John Sinclair's General Report on Scotland (three volumes), which they appear to have bought, as in February 1816 it was reported that the members north of the River Teith had not as yet finished reading it and requested retaining it until the next meeting, on the understanding that it would be forwarded from one to another. This along with Thomson's Chemistry, White's Farriery and Munro's Guide to Farm Bookkeeping was the extent of the club's library.

There is a thirty-year gap in the record from 1817 to 1847 when the second volume of the minute book begins. By this date the functions of the club were similar to those it performs today. The annual show was now well-established with classes for Cydesdale horses and both Ayrshire and Shorthorn bulls and cows, as well as for butter and cheese.

Prizes for implements included ones for drainage ploughs and a 'green crop grubber'. Gradually more classes for poultry, sheep, collie dogs, Freisan cows, donkeys and riding ponies

were included. Classes specifically designed for farmers' wives were also included with oatcakes, scones, ginger and sponge cakes alongside butter, cheese and eggs.

Ploughing matches were still important. However, the dinners were not well attended and were gradually discontinued with the one on the day of the show only remaining. Gradually various sporting events were also introduced with musical chairs on horseback being included in 1927 for the first time. Musical chairs in cars lasted until the 1990s when it was banned on safety grounds!

Today's club is very different from that of the 1850s. The show includes a much greater variety of classes and while the number of children's ponies has increased, farm stock still plays a very important part.

**The Gargunnoch show is still a significant event in the local farming calendar and is attended by both urban and farming folk. Whilst its original aim was the improving of agriculture and the informing of farmers, it is now a means by which the farming community can keep in touch with the public at large.**



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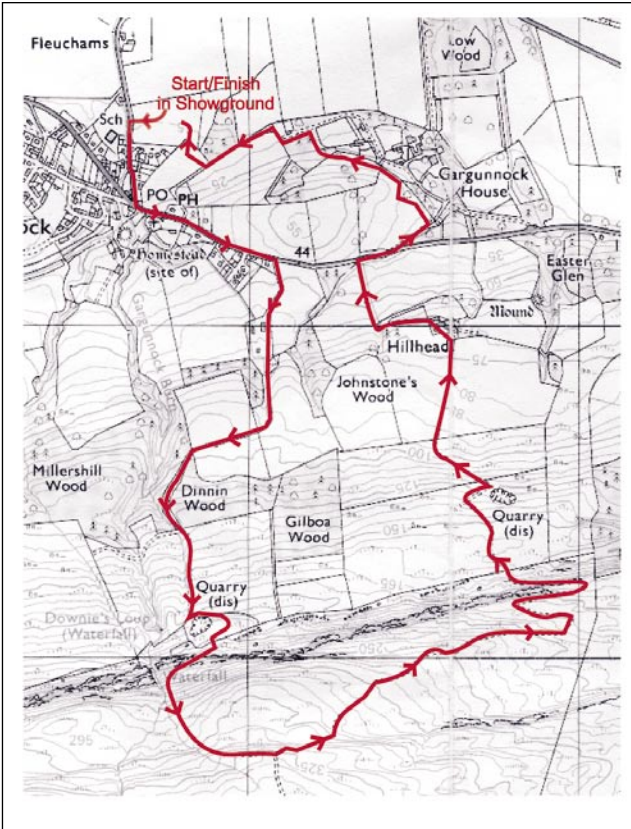
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## HILL RACE TO ADD INTEREST TO THE GARGUNNOCK SHOW



David Hay of Drummond Place brought me details of a new event to be run on show-day called **The Gargunnoch Hill Race**.

So if you fancy a challenge and a change from pounding the roads and tracks down at Carse level why not give it a try?

The route is roughly circular and about 7.5k with a total climb of about 300 metres to the back of the pinnacle, on the skyline behind the village.

Leaving the showfield at 2.30 pm the route runs up Station Road to the Square then follows Manse Brae before turning right up through the woods and on to the old Quarry itself.

Over the stile then and leftwards to curve round to the back of the quarry before climbing diagonally up to the right through the rock faces then traversing left i.e. eastwards past the back of the pinnacle to catch the hill road which hairpins its way down

again past Hillhead farm.

On reaching the Back Road it turns right for a short distance before picking up the Lady's Walk prior to cutting through Charles Crescent and back to the showfield.

Entry is at the marquee on the day and the fee is £4.00.

In addition to prizes for the first three senior men and ladies all finishers will receive the much coveted Gargunnoch Hill Race Mug!

**Any surplus from the event will be donated to the Scottish Alzheimers Association.**

**Local businesses wishing to sponsor the event please contact David Hay at**

**01786 860522 or**

**david@bremnerblack.co.uk**

So there you are all you Gargunnoch Iron-Men and Iron-Women, go on, lets see what you're made of!!



**Post Office Services in the Shop Close after 150+ years**



So that's it then, the long tradition of having a Post Office within an existing shop in Gargunnoch ended pretty quietly on February 21st when Whyler's photographer came out to record it for the local paper. There to witness the sad event were Carol McGregor, the outgoing Postmistress, Maitland Clark her predecessor, Phyllis Cameron, McNeil Crescent, the last customer and your Editor of course.

It was cold and breezy with a bit of fine rain in the air as the man removed the Post Office sign from outside the shop and carried it inside. The photographer took the opportunity to use it in a shot and instructed his subjects not to smile as he took his shots. He didn't really have to as any smiles that afternoon were half-hearted and tinged with sadness anyway. We all knew this was the end of an era stretching way back to Charlie Forsyth,

Postmaster in his Shoemaker's shop up at Belton Cottage in the nineteenth century.

But, "The King is dead. Long live the King," as they say. The new peripatetic Postmaster for Gargunnoch, Thornhill and Arnprior is John McNicol from Kippen Post Office.

John has been Postmaster there for a number of years and now finds himself driving the new P.O. van round the villages of Gargunnoch, Thornhill & Buchlyvie.

When I went along to interview him I had to wait in a small queue, a good sign, and he confirmed that although there were fears of an initial backlash drop in business they have proved to be unfounded. Business is no less than before and everyone is so friendly he says. He's also considering taking the van to the Gargunnoch Show to provide a service there too on the day.

# Shermans

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01786 472407

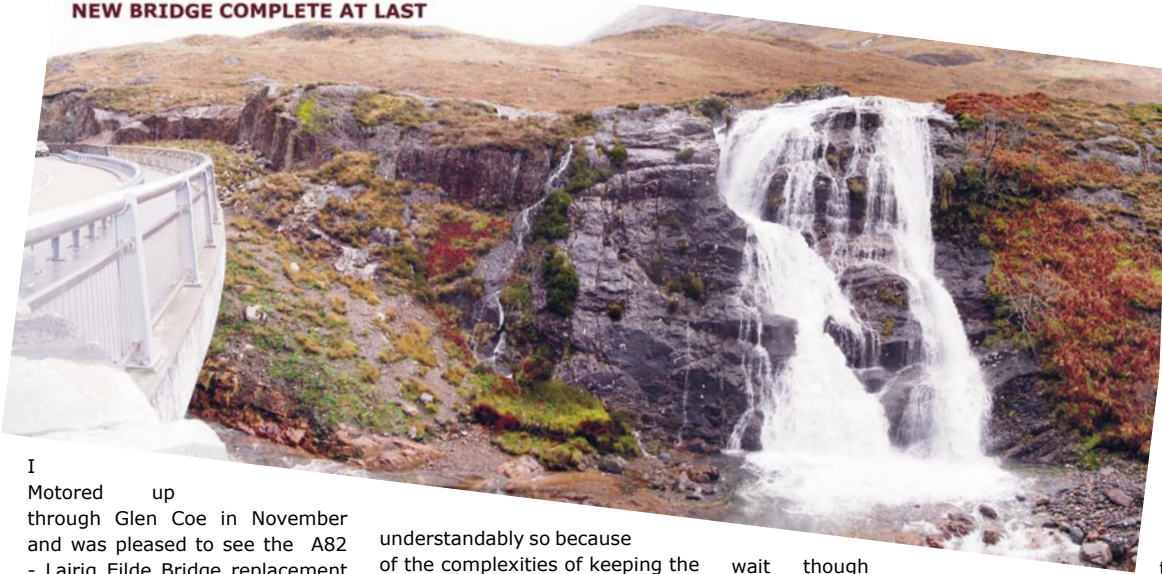
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*Remember.....*

*You only live once  
But if you do it right  
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**NEW BRIDGE COMPLETE AT LAST**



I Motored up through Glen Coe in November and was pleased to see the A82 - Lairig Eilde Bridge replacement is finished now. It took about 60 weeks to complete,

understandably so because of the complexities of keeping the traffic flowing on a temporary bridge where space was very much at a premium. It's been worth the

wait though and access to the inbuilt viewpoint for the falls is now so easy and the parking facilities are

much better and safer than before. The more observant among you may have noticed that this panorama is just a wee bitty off the level. Well yes, I might agree with you and in my defence claim it was a freezing cold day and I was keen to get back to the car. On the other hand I could also claim that I'm a free spirit who doesn't always stick to conventions? But I've got to say that if you believe that you'll believe anything!!

**CARPET BOWLERS CELEBRATE A SUCCESSFUL YEAR**

The Gargunnoch Carpet Bowling Club celebrated the end of another enjoyable season with an excellent dinner in the Gargunnoch Inn on Friday 28th March.

Concerns last year about dwindling membership resulted in an appeal for more members and a special "try-out" evening. President Max Drummond was more than pleased with the result as some new members were gained as a result.

Shown in the photograph are this years' prizewinners, from left to right,

- Helen McLaren (President's Cup),
- Barbara Drummond (Doubles),
- Johan Mailer (Doubles),
- Bob Marshall (Runner up Doubles),
- Dorothy Pitts (Runner-up Doubles),
- Anne Lees (Singles & Points),
- Ian Lees (Lollipop)
- Margaret Marshall (Runner-up President's Cup & Lollipop).

....And the Lollipops? They were awarded to the losers of the longest lasting semi-final play-off in the history of the club!

The new session starts in September and interested parties are most welcome to come along and try it out with no obligation to join. You'll be made most welcome and fun and laughter are guaranteed.



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**GEMMA SHARES DUX MEDAL**



It's always good to hear of local students doing well so I was delighted to hear that Gemma Milne, Leckie Road, had been awarded Dux of Stirling High School jointly with her good friend Fiona Clubb from Stirling. But that's not all as Gemma recently secured a place on the coveted NASA Space School programme in Houston, Texas.

This is a 10-day course run in conjunction with Careers Scotland, which attracts over 3000 entrants from all over Scotland. Only 50 students are offered a place on the course after an intense programme of maths, physics and NASA knowledge modules has been submitted.

It goes without saying that Gemma is over the moon (and who knows might eventually be some day!) to be offered a place on the programme. She jets off to Houston in September of this year and I hope to hear all about it when she returns.

The good news continues, though, as another Gargunnoch student Anna Jamieson has been awarded Proxime Accesserunt.

Even more, in 5th year Hannah McKeith attained a 1st place in Art while in 4th year 1st places were gained by Louise Mansion in English & Graphic Communication, Becky Hay in Geography and Andrew Coubrough in Craft and design.

So congratulations to all of these students but lets not forget the parts played by our local primary school and of course the homes they come from. So teachers and parents, feel free to give yourselves a wee pat on the back too.



**WATCH THE BIRDY!**

There was a bit of excitement next door on 1st May when, as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations for the old school building (now Community Centre) it was arranged that the "new" school would be marched up to be photographed in front of it.

The organisers also rounded up some ex-pupils of the old school to be included. By happy coincidence one of the former headmasters, John Henderson, was in the village at the time, home on holiday from retirement in Cyprus, so he willingly agreed to join in. Another former headteacher Mrs Jean O Whitelaw came too so that gave me a rare opportunity for an archive photo.

Looking at the photographer's big bellows camera I couldn't help thinking that the oldest school photos would have been taken by a camera not unlike that one, even to the extent that the photographer disappeared under a big black cloth to focus it.

For those of you, like me, interested in the technical side of such things it uses



**Current head-teacher Mr Angus Black (from 2007) with former old-school head-teachers Mrs Jean O Whitelaw ('74-'77 in old school then '77-'86 in the new one) and John Henderson. ('70-'73 in the old school) school.**

expensive 10"x8" cut film and has a 240mm f5.6 lens shooting at about 1/30th at f11 on the day to produce the depth of field required to cover the rows, front to back.

Producing high quality prints from such a huge negative is a doddle of course. Potentially it could do sparkling prints 100" wide or more but it was interesting to see that an 8Mp digital image 3200 pixels

wide produced an image on A4 paper at 260 dpi, 300 dpi being about as much as the human eye can discern on a good day.

The big advantage in using the pros, though is the aluminium staging to arrange the kids on. The days of perching them on wooden benches at the back are gone, no doubt for health and safety reasons!



**At the show of old films in the Centre at the end of the weekend of celebrations (see centre pages) I was intrigued to catch sight of a row of what may be Gargunnoch-built carts.**

**I was told by a collector and restorer of old carts that Gargunnoch ones could be recognised by a distinctive "logo" on the front and all three of the carts in the old film sported that logo.**

**Interesting thought.**

**LAUGHTER - THE BEST MEDICINE**

**C**hildren are funny and never more so than when they're learning the language and get it just about, but not quite, right.

A typical example which had us all in stitches a while back was when my daughter's wee chap sat down to eat his dinner but then announced "Feetwarm, Mummy."

"Oh dear, Kyle, are your feet too warm?" said his Mum in that annoying way all adults have of repeating everything a child says as if they hadn't heard it the first time.

"No, feetwarm," repeated the child.

"Shall I take your wee socks off then? Is that it?"

"No!" This time with a hint of desperation in the voice. ("How can adults be so dim, sometimes," seemed to be the inference)

"Feet....warm!" Each syllable clearly enunciated as if speaking to an imbecile. (which, as far as he was concerned his Mum certainly was at that moment!)

"Well, can you show me what's wrong?" said his Mum, by now totally mystified.

"My do it," said the wee chap and climbing down from his chair he trotted off to a nearby kitchen cupboard, opened the door, reached in and returned clutching a tin of his favourite vegetable..... sweetcorn!

His Mum had forgotten to add it to his plate!

**PARENT COUNCIL TREASURE HUNT A BIG SUCCESS**



**S**aturday 26th April turned out a brilliant day weatherwise for the Parent Council Treasure Hunt. The normally quiet streets of the village were thronged with people frantically searching for clues,

not helped by the fact that the questions were grouped in no particular order!

The event had villagers, young and old, puzzling over questions such as, What year was the Community Centre built? Where will you find eight giant stepping stones? and What time is the first bus to Stirling on a Sunday? ( Unfortunately the Council had removed the timetable!)

Be that as it may no one seemed to particularly mind and everyone had a good time. In any case on their return to the Community Centre with their completed forms the bar was open!

The afternoon BBQ food was much enjoyed and served from about 5.30 - the chefs, who did a tremendous job, being Sue Berits and Ally Thompson - aided by Peter and Tracy Brown.

Maitland did a run through of the treasure hunt answers at about 6.45, before Head Teacher Angus Black announced the winners. Mr Black said "I would like to thank everyone for coming and also say a big thank you



**The absence of a set route had one or two families scratching their heads to begin with until they realised that it just added to the fun of the day.**

**Colin & Muriel Ferguson with daughter Maisie, nephew Alistair and son Alex.**

to all who have supported us and also to the companies that very kindly donated prizes for the treasure hunt."

There were 3 teams in joint first place and one runner-up so the top three were put in a hat and the winner drawn from there.

1st prize, £50 of Vouchers for Go Ape at Aberfoyle was won by Hazel and Rowan Bovill

2nd prize, a family pass to Blair Drummond Safari Park was won by Iona Donaldson and Myra Stewart

3rd prize, 4 game vouchers for AMF Bowling in Stirling, was won by Douglas and Moira Coupethwaite

4th prize, a month's Taekwon-do classes at Blair Drummond Community Centre was won by Evie Gulland

Neo Klemer won the best treasure bag section for collecting the most interesting things (leaves, sticks, feathers etc!) on the route of the treasure hunt.

Many thanks to Muriel Ferguson for donating the prizes for the pre-school/toddler category and to Berits and Brown for donating the paper treasure bags.

So then the dancing started.....! The band, which formed especially for the occasion, was organised by Kate Bovill. We are very grateful to the musicians who gave up their evening to help raise money for the school. As well as Kate the band included Derek MacLachlan (Guitar & Harmonica), Helen Weaver (Fiddle), Karen Scrafton (Fiddle), Fiona Johnston (Accordion) and Iain Watt (Banjo & Double Bass). The music sounded superb and judging by the number of people dancing they made an excellent debut as a ceilidh band.

Bales of straw provided seating around the community centre for tired legs to rest in between dances! Thanks to farmer Matt Steel in Kippen for providing this. By the end of the evening there was straw everywhere but it didn't seem to matter much and just added to the atmosphere!

Thanks also to the parents on the fundraising committee who gave up their time to help organise different aspects of the event, and to those who donated delicious salads.

**Although Graham Dingley is still working on the final total as I write it looks to be in the region of at least £1300. A great result!! This has been used to purchase an interactive white board for the P1/2 class.**

**Joanne Dallas**



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Down at the Guildhall School of Music in London, ex-Gargunock Songster (if you ever can be an "ex"), Marion Wyllie, will soon reach the end of her second year at the Guildhall School of Music in London and as always things have been pretty hectic.



Hello everyone!....Here is another update after an extremely hectic, but very productive term.

#### **Singing lessons**

My lessons are going well. I have been singing some quite challenging arias and songs, and working a lot on the top of my voice and my runs. Next term I am going to work more again on my middle and lower range. I have been singing: Handel, Alcina and Amadigi; studying the two arias by Smetana in further depth; Fauré's 'Après un rêve', two songs by Poulenc (very tricky to pitch); two by Purcell, a Mozart concert aria, ' and a short recitative like aria from Monteverdi's L'Orfeo. All of them are beautiful in their own way and make me work on different parts of my voice and technique.

#### **Harmony**

We study Baroque harmony so at first I thought 'Aw, this will be easy', but actually there are a lot of rules that must be adhered to. We have to compose 12 bars of Baroque harmony each week and then our teacher takes someone's arrangement and uses it as an example for the class to understand what they did well and what they can improve on. I am steadily improving.

#### **Jazz Workshop**

As I took Jazz Workshop last term, I am now in the advanced class We have looked at "Doodlin'", and "But not for me", the latter by Gershwin and "Doodlin'" is a Horace Silver Jazz standard. We began with "Doodlin'", which has been sung by a Jazz singing coach from Guildhall. It has a lot of triplet rhythms and we worked a lot on the solo. 'But not for me' is a lovely piece which I will be able to use in recital programmes. I love

Gershwin and with this one you can really swing it and just enjoy singing a gorgeous melody. Both Harmony and Jazz are eminently training my ear, each in their own way, but both to great effect.

#### **Italian Recitative**

Lessons with Emanuele are never boring! Since mid January, I have sung recitative from before 'Di cor mio'- Alcina, Così fan tutte (I was Fiordiligi), and the role of Adina in Donizetti's L'elisir d'Amore. I also sang a recitative that I had worked on with Annette in first year and which I put on my CD to send off for Erasmus. It seems to be reasonably easy as you just have to sing it as if you are speaking it, but it is far from it!

#### **Kodaly**

I am still attending some of the Kodaly classes on Tuesday and Friday mornings. We do dictation and sight singing. I love singing through the early 16th,17th century music and I think it is vital for me to keep up my sight singing. David has worked on transposing a piece into every mode and singing it through. Once he had me singing and playing modes in parallel. I was able to do it thanks to singing some Estonian songs last year with The National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS).

#### **Conducting**

This term we have been conducting the class singing Pergolesi's 'Stabat Mater', 'Requiem' - Fauré, and 'Rejoice in the Lamb' by Britten (extremely hard! Our Songsters' Helen makes it look so easy!). The 'Stabat Mater' and 'Requiem' are fine as the time changes in both are fairly easy (on the whole anyway!), but the Britten is a complete nightmare to conduct! Singing it is OK because I did 'Chichester Psalms' with NYCoS so

I am used to the rhythms, but I do think that Noël has been slightly too ambitious giving this to us!

#### **Vocal Ensemble**

This has been absolutely great this term! We were studying 'Cavalleria Rusticana' by Mascangi and sang as members of the chorus in a concert performance in The Barbican, and, we are going on an all expenses paid trip to Italy for a few days!

The conductor, Paolo Olmi (the Italian's love him!) was so impressed with the standard that he asked Linnhe to provide the chorus for the Barbican concert 18th March 2008. The orchestra played fantastically and Elizabeth Connell did well. I am not sure if she is coming to Cesena with us or not.

The trip originally contained 4 concerts, the last being in Rome for the Pope's birthday, but unfortunately the Pope said he was too busy and we are now down to the one concert. It will be great fun and I am sure the concert will be amazing; I hope they all sing along!

#### **Music Theatre (MT)**

We have only just started our MT class on Tuesdays, therefore we haven't done much as yet. Bridgitta is aiming to give us musical theatre songs that challenge us, broaden our MT knowledge, and find songs that would suit our voices well so that we can pop them into a recital programme as light music.

She has given me - and many of the others - some Sondheim to look at because I have never sung any before. She seems really enthusiastic to get on with actually working on the songs and she has already helped some of us with our own version of 'Three Little Maids'.

When we began our second academic year, our Head of Department (Robin Bowman) announced that he would be leaving us. For his last 1st and 2nd year platform, a large group of us from 2nd year did a performance of 'Nine Little Maids from The Guildhall School of Music and Drama' which Bridgitta worked on with us for about 5 hours! It was hilarious: we re-wrote the words to contain as many of Robin's favourite phrases as possible and we had

some of the French students to sing a verse as Robin's main field is French song. Then we presented him with a copy of the '9 Little Maids' words, the poem and a few photos. He will be sorely missed.

#### **Song Class**

This term I have sung 'Di cor mio' (Handel), Fauré's 'Après un rêve', and 'Oh! lead me to some peaceful gloom' (Purcell) in Song Class. In 'Di cor mio' Robin focused on trying to get the creamiest legato line possible as Alcina is an exceedingly charming sorceress who has almost everyone under a spell. With 'Après un rêve' he looked at how to create more contrast, especially between the first and second verse. It is the closest Fauré got to an operatic aria and thus needs to be sung with great control and line.

#### **Platform**

In Platform this term, I sang 'Après un rêve' and 'Die Sennin' by Schumann. I have learnt (and really should have by now) to never commence a programme with 'Après un rêve'! My nerves need a wee bit of time to settle and unless I have been singing the song for years, I should never start with a slow controlled piece. It went not too badly however and 'Die Sennin' went very well.

#### **Tutorial**

I did well with my composition and essay for my mid year Tutorial assessment. My composition used a lot of modes and was set to 'Mirror' by Sylvia Plath (we studied her poetry at school), and my essay compared the characters of Don Giovanni and Leporello in Mozart's 'Don Giovanni'. I didn't need a great deal of help from David and he said he was very impressed with the depth I achieved in my composition and some of the points I put forward in my essay. Once we had finished that assessment, we started looking at Stravinsky because David wants to get people listening to more orchestral and 20th century music. We have been listening to The Fire Bird, Petrushka, and The Rite of Spring which has been really interesting. We also did a few lessons on general musicianship.

#### **Alexander Technique**

The Alexander Technique lessons are great. It is so important that you are able to just take a half hour out of your day and completely relax. Selma has started showing me how to bend your knees with limited effort. She has also helped me with my tight jaw. It is about releasing the muscles from the inside and not forcing

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them to release by tensing other muscles. Selma said she studied the technique for nine years before even beginning to get half way there so it is something that will take time, but will definitely benefit me in the end.

### Judith Weir

I mentioned previously that I was going to be singing some Judith Weir pieces in January that might have been broadcast on Radio 3: unfortunately our songs weren't broadcast. It was great to do it though, I really loved her work. I was asked to sing a very short duet at the beginning of one of the songs. Her music was very hard to pitch but we did pretty well with it, considering we only had a few quick rehearsals and a couple of the postgraduates were sight reading.

### Other Performances

When we started back after Christmas, a third year singer - Bruno - sent round an e-mail asking if anyone would like to join 'Choir 43'. 'Choir 43' was started at the beginning of the year by Rosie, a first year vocalist. It is called 'Choir 43' after the annex practise room that the rehearsals are held in. This term we performed an arrangement of 'Sing a Song of Sixpence', the first four of the Vaughn Williams Folk Songs, an early baroque piece, and 'The Mermaid' by Arne. Emma Kirkby came along! I could not believe it! She sent an e-mail to Bruno to say how much she enjoyed it and that we were to let her know next time we were performing! So it was a great success!

### Out and about

Due to our busy schedule and me being ill for two weekends, I haven't been able to see quite as many concerts and operas as I would have liked, but I still managed along to a few. In February, I kept within the Barbican as I saw the Met broadcast of 'Macbeth', the LSO, and a Jazz concert in

Guildhall.

'Macbeth' was phenomenal: Lady Macbeth is such a hard role and

major', and the 'Glagolitic Mass' by Janáček. The London Symphony Chorus sang in the Mass, alongside

Humber College in Toronto came to Guildhall for a couple of days and performed a concert with the 2nd year Jazz students. It was a downright good concert! I don't know much about Jazz, but I know that those Canadians played some unbelievably amazing Jazz! It was one of the best concerts I have ever been to. They were all lovely as well and were so modest.

A week later, I went to see the LSO again, this time playing along to an old film - 'Alexander Nevsky'. There was more for the LSO Chorus here too, and a short - but gorgeous and extremely effective - solo from Anna Stephany. It was a woman (Xian Zhang) who conducted the Prokofiev piece and I was astounded at how well timed it all was. I managed to get one trip to The Royal Opera House in, and I saw the wonderful 'Eugene Onegin'. It truly was a stunning production: they had a river, a frozen lake which the villagers skated on, a lavish ballroom scene, and the singing was first class. The only slight mishap was that Gerald Finley (Onegin) had an infection and his cover had to sing for him at the side of the stage in the last act. It was a tremendous shame, but even with the infection, his voice is exquisite. I have already booked a few tickets for the next two months, so I am looking forward to them!

Overall, it has been a busy, but extremely productive term. I am definitely enjoying my holiday though as we were all needing time out and some well earned rest. I have just been catching up with friends, working a bit, and taking in the fresh air! It will be great to go to Italy though, and I think we will manage to fit a lot into the little time we have left of our second year.

I hope you are all well and have had a lovely Easter.

Lots of love,  
Marion.



Marion in a chilly Chinatown at the time of the Chinese New Year

Maria Guleghina who played the character did a marvellous job. Every aria is different as she sings one lyric, one dramatic, one that sits really low in the voice; it is just mad - very fitting!

Macbeth and Banquo were played by Željko Lucic and John Relyea, again, both excellent. A week later I went to see The London Symphony Orchestra performing Dvořák's 'Symphony No. 8 in G

Measha Brueggergosman (Soprano), Karen Cargill (Mezzo who sang with Scottish Opera last season), Stuart Skelton (Tenor), and Matthew Rose (Bass).

I completely love the LSO and the Dvořák was beautiful. The Janáček was also fabulous and it was great to hear something like that as it is rarely done. At the end of February, the Humber Studio Jazz Ensemble from



We had a lot of rain at times earlier on this year and this was the end result on one occasion as the burn over-ran the road to Millmuir Farm. Just as well there's an alternative pedestrian route via Burnbank Cottage.

# 150 Not Out!

## Gargunock Celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the Old School / Community Centre and shows it's Alive and Kicking .....and Woe Betide any Politician who dares to threaten it! (says Catherine)



First off in the weekend of celebrations was an evening of jazz from Angus Scott's excellent band "Culbeg Connections"

Angus was also to be seen busking at the shop on Saturday morning, playing in the tearoom in the afternoon and handling sound, recording and lighting requirements in the evening concert. Truly a man of many parts! Thanks Angus, it's noticed and appreciated.

During the performance local girl Sophie Grosvenor was invited to join the band to display her talents too.



.....and Sean Mayhew found the gird and cleek plaything of yesteryear not so easy to master...but he succeeded eventually.



A display of old school photos and items from 1901 onwards aroused a lot of interest and hilarity as folks spotted themselves, a parent or even a grandparent. Here Joyce Chisholm points out herself in a 1930s photo to Eric and Elspeth Able.....

A selection of the Buskers who entertained us at the shop on Saturday morning



One young lady was engrossed with the old slate and pencil found during the current alterations to the centre and this selection of Buskers outside the shop illustrated well the breadth of talent in our village. By the way the slate pencil disappeared... has anyone found it yet?



Benjamin Rowley



Angus Scott



Helen Webber



Grace Gill & Amy Bruce



The Bain family and Gillian Bruce



The Saturday Tearoom was a big success



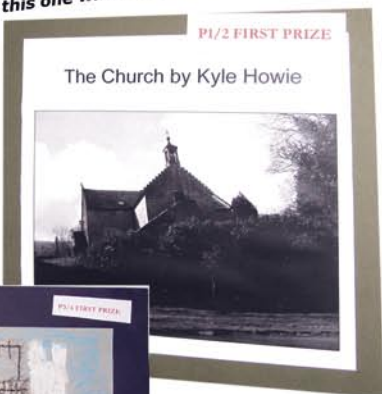
The Songsters concert as always was a winner with fine renditions from the whole choir, especially, "All in an April Evening," delighting the audience. Groups from the choir did their own thing, especially this one which was kept a secret from Leader Helen Cumming until the night!



Catherine Richardson's performance of her latest poem, about old school days, was arguably her finest yet and her off-the-cuff remark to Councillor O'Brien at the end ("If ye ever think of shutting this place doon I'll shoot ye!") almost brought the house down. He took it in good part, though. And she didn't need that microphone!



Amantha Anderson (right) & friend

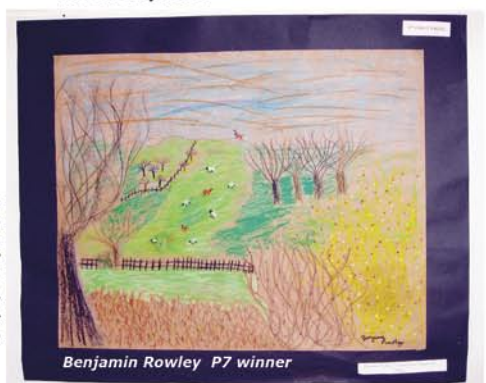


The Church by Kyle Howie



Travelling Cottage  
Cameron Urquhart

The winners in the children's art competition displayed a very high level of artistry and attention to detail, especially in the portraits where each and every laughter-line was faithfully reproduced!



Benjamin Rowley P7 winner



PI/4 FIRST PRIZE

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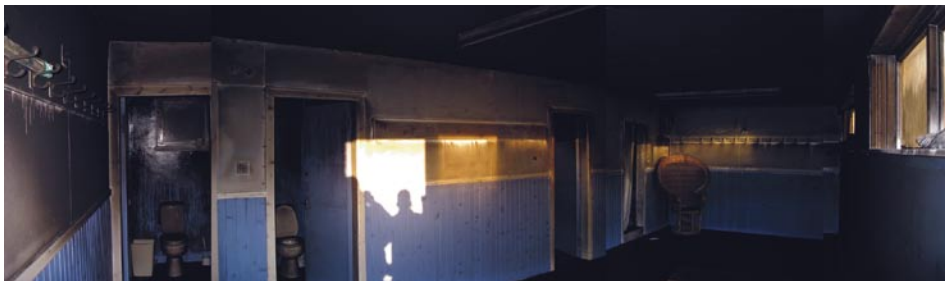
## FOOTBALL CLUB

### START OF SEASON MARRIED BY MYSTERYFIRE

Take a close look at these two photos, especially the smaller one. It's not as if there wasn't enough light for the photo, the sun was shining brightly outside and the flash was firing away merrily. It was because the pavilion had suffered from smoke and noxious vapour damage after a small fire which destroyed some plastic seating stored within.

As reported in a previous issue of the Gargunnoch News the pavilion had not long been redecorated so this was a real blow, especially since the start of the season was imminent.

Luckily the fire hadn't been fierce. It must have smouldered over a fairly long period so that the whole of the inside of the pavilion was coated with a greasy, mat-black residue and at first sight you could be forgiven for saying that it might have been better for the whole thing to have gone up in smoke so you could start



again.... except that the insurance had lapsed! However, not to be beaten, the committee

set about remedying the situation and when I visited at the end of April Robert Hanlon was putting the finishing touches to his repainting.

## MANAGER'S REPORT

Gargunnoch finished 5th in the league last year with 39 points which was a big improvement on previous years,

At our Player of the Year dance

which was held at The King Robert Hotel the player of the year title was jointly won by John Morris and Adrian "The Cat" Pirie. The young player of the year was Jordan Monaghan, Player's Player of the Year was George Lamond,

Neil Sheriff was Supporters Player of the Year and top goalscorer was Derek Hunter.

We had an excellent night hosted by Maitland at the King Robert however the food on the night was a bit of a let down for our 50th anniversary dance, but this

however did not stop everyone enjoying themselves.

The minor prizes on the night went to Colin Ferguson for Most Injured Player of the Year, Craig Heron for Miss of the Year and Jordan Monaghan for Worst Haircut of the Season which will take some beating this year.



We now have new strips sponsored by the Gargunnoch Inn and I would like to thank Paul Bedwell for this particularly as funds are a bit tight following the redecoration of the pavillion.

We have a few new players this season with James Rock and Craig Watt from the village, Graeme Ritchie coming back and Sam Hart moving into the village. Our first two games in the new strips didn't go too well but hopefully by the time you read this we will be back to winning ways.

**Andy Mayhew**

## CALEDONIAN CHALLENGE 2008

### Team - GARGUNNOCK'S USUAL SUSPECTS

In aid of The Scottish Community Foundation Charity



#### Walkers/Runners:

Marshall Dallas - Paul Gilhooley - Lovat MacGregor - Lois Simpson - Andrew Simpson

Support: Leona Paget - Rebecka Gustavsson

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We are taking part in the Caledonian Challenge and aim to walk 54 miles of the West Highland Way in 24 hours. We have pledged to raise a minimum of £2,500 to help build stronger communities. Make a donation at [www.caledonianchallenge.com/sponsorship/online.php](http://www.caledonianchallenge.com/sponsorship/online.php) or Fill in the form at the Shop Counter. THANK YOU from all the team.





## SCHOOL REPORT

A significant aspect of the children's learning during the Spring term involved each class tackling their topic work through a cross curricular approach. Classrooms were transformed, trips were arranged, experts visited; while staff and children worked together to answer specifically set 'big questions'. Some P7 children along with pupils from other schools in Stirling even presented to an audience at Dunblane Hydro on what they had discovered about the mysteries of the Lost City of Atlantis.

All the children's learning was on show for parents during a successful Open Evening on April 1. The school was full of interested parents learning from their enthusiastic children and participating in a range of activities, as they visited all the classrooms.

This year's Parent Council have done a fantastic job at fundraising for the school. The recent Treasure Hunt was very well organised and provided a great opportunity for the whole village to come together. The money raised this year by the Parent Council has enabled the school to buy another Interactive Whiteboard; meaning that all classes now have this key teaching resource. Well done and thank you to the Parent Council.

Work has begun at the school to fit two security cameras. Organised by Stirling Council, the cameras, which will be situated at opposite sides of the school playground will provide 24-hour recording in and around the school grounds.

**Angus Black, Head Teacher**



## THINGS ARE MOVING AT THE CENTRE

At last, a major step forward in the improvements to the Centre. Jane Hunter managed to secure a grant at the end of the financial year which had to be spent quickly. So with the help of a group of enthusiastic volunteers and after the appropriate safety briefing we demolished the old store and cycle shed.

During the demolition we found some interesting objects including a slate and stylus and a photo of Queen Victoria. These were on display at the 150th Anniversary Exhibition.

The demolition squad included, Jane Hunter, Jane Arneil, Ewan Hunter (not pictured), Douglas Coupethwaite, Mike Pizey, Iain Gulland and myself a hard days work, we now know what the Lottery mean by sweat equity!

Progress is also being made with the main building, A full planning application has been submitted, building surveyors have been appointed and a business plan is well underway. We have also received "Investing in Ideas" money from the Lottery to help us with the costs of the surveyor which is a good sign that our full application will receive favourable consideration when it is submitted in June.

There is also progress with Stirling Council who will soon have a policy that will allow us to apply for the transfer of the building to community ownership. After two years of slow progress things are now beginning to take off.

I would like thank all those who have been involved with the 150th Anniversary. It has been a real community effort.

## GREAT NEWS FOR PLAYGROUP & TODDLERS

We have received great news from Awards for All that Playgroup & Toddlers will receive just over £3,000 funding towards play equipment to promote active play. This will include ride-on toys, a new trampoline, gardening equipment such as planters, wellies, seeds and bulbs. It will also cover the cost of some new interactive toys to promote brain activity too.

A boost to funds such as this means that the playgroup can concentrate on raising funds to help cover running costs over the next year

**Karen Anderson**



Learning was on display during a school open-evening where parents and friends could inspect, appreciate and admire the children's work on various projects

Some of the 10 kids who took part in the Schools Cross-Country in January



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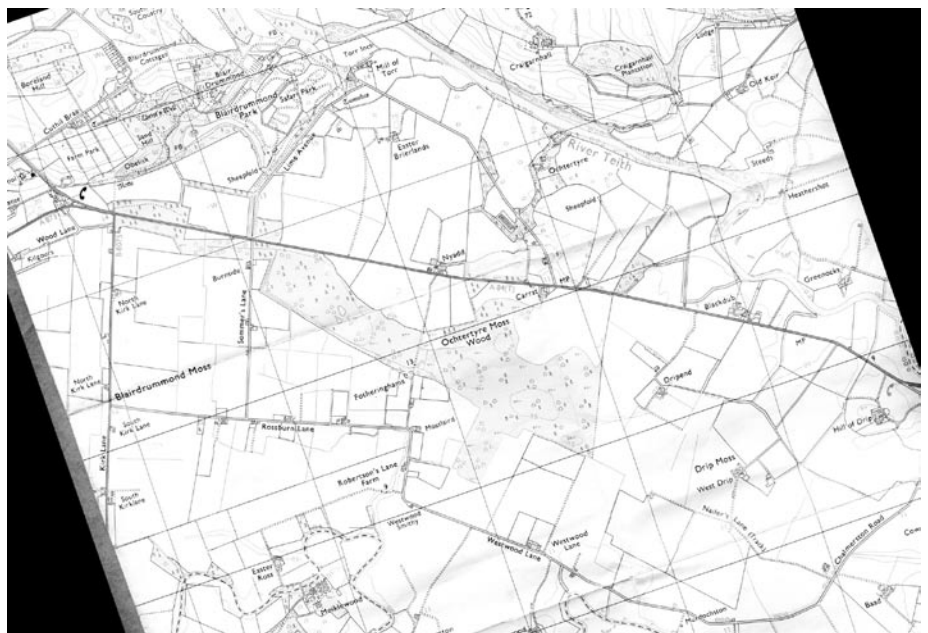
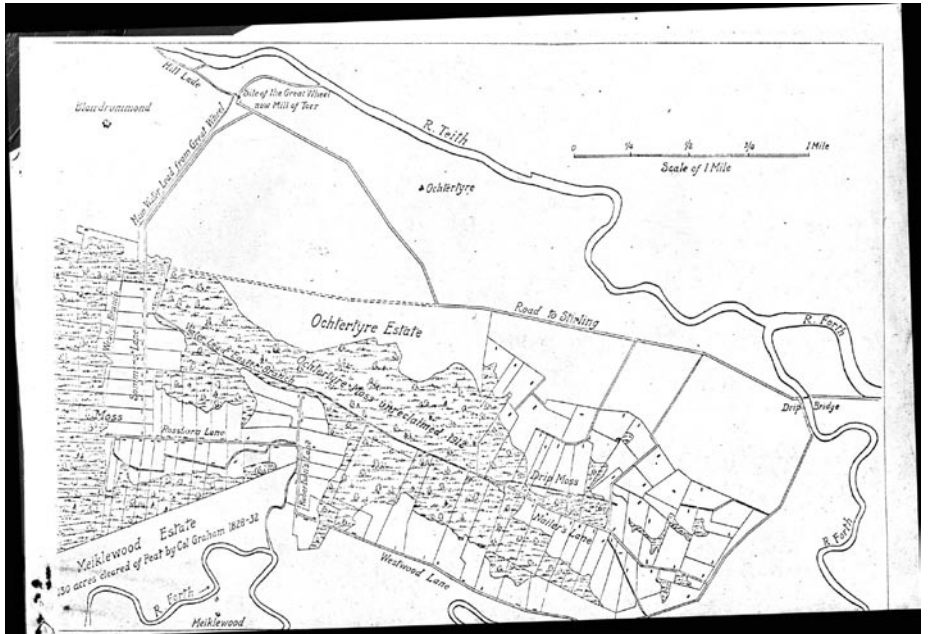
## A Remarkable Experiment

In 1766 the 70 years old Henry Home, Lord Kames, a distinguished judge, critic and author, succeeded through his wife to Blairdrummond Estate and directed his acute and versatile mind to the very practical scheme of turning a barren moor into a fertile plain. At that time most of the Carse land between Stirling and the Menteith Hills was covered by 6 to 12 feet of peat moss and heather, approximately 2 miles wide and stretching 12 miles up the valley overlying a fine fertile gray clay with beds of shells, but no stones of any size. He considered it a highly desirable matter to remove the peat but how to do so and reclaim the ground on sound economic principles had not yet been discovered.

Although in his seventieth year, he had a young heart and a strong mind in an equally vigorous body and set in motion a long term plan which he worked on for a further 16 years. It was his son and successor, George Home Drummond, who carried on the work with even greater skill and energy, and introduced several important improvements which contributed to the final and complete success of the old judge's great project.

### The Task Ahead

About 1800 imperial acres of Blairdrummond estate lay under the moss and Lord Kames made up his mind that the only effectual way of laying bare the underlying clay was to use



water-power and sweep off the whole moss into the Forth. The land being perfectly flat, the operation was far more difficult than if there had been any slope down which the peat might have been made to travel.

### The Plan

The method finally adopted was to lease the moss in sections to small-holders, who received a little financial help at first, but paid no rent until the return from the reclaimed land allowed them to do so.

A channel was first cut down through the moss from north to south into the clay below, fed from an old mill-stream and thus led for a distance of about a mile to the Forth at a gradient of 1 in 300. The water was found capable of carrying off as much peat as twenty men stationed 100 yards

'apart could throw into it.

### The first Tenant

The next thing was to find the people to do the work. The crushing of the Jacobites 20 years previously had created a surplus of poor clansmen, driven from their native glens to make way for sheep. The reclamation of the Blairdrummond Moss gave hundreds of them the very kind of useful occupation that they needed at home rather than abroad.

The area was marked off into long and narrow lots of 10 imperial acres, running at right angles to the channel. In 1767 one tenant agreed to take a lease on the prescribed terms which were: a tack of thirty-eight years, with no rent for the first seven years. The landlord to provide the tenant with timber to build a house, and 2 bolls (or 8 bushels) of meal to live on while he was building it. At the eighth year rent was to begin at 1 Merk Scots (or 13.33d), and increase by a merk every year till the end of the nineteenth year, and during the last five years, when the tenant should have begun to keep poultry, a hen was to be added to the annual cash payment. At the beginning of the second nineteen years he was to pay a rent of 12s. for each acre cleared and 2s. 6d. for each acre not cleared, plus two hens yearly. This was a low rent, for such good soil, but the tenant was entitled to a liberal reward



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Nearby Flanders Moss is the only remaining relic of the once extensive moss that covered most of the Forth valley from Aberfoyle to east of Stirling

for his exertions. Although few were at first found willing to undertake the risk, as soon as its advantages became clear plenty of settlers came flocking to the new labour colony.

A second tenant was settled in 1768, a tradesman with another occupation to fall back upon when not employed on his croft. The prospect of an independent holding, however small, with fixity of tenure for a long period, no doubt induced these settlers to break the ice at first, and, as there was always plenty of peat fuel for the digging, the winter's hearth was sure to be warm and cheery. Their work was afterwards further encouraged by the gift of numerous prizes in the shape of ploughs, harrows, spades, and clover seed, for the removal of the greatest quantity of peat in one year, and large numbers of these useful things were distributed, to the great advantage of the settlement and its poor inhabitants. But the settlement was slow at first, and in 1769 only five more buildings were taken up.

#### The Moss Lairds

These "Moss Lairds," as they were called in derision, were at first a topic of ridicule locally and the scheme was regarded as that of an unpractical visionary, destined to early failure. The neighbouring farmers put every obstruction in the way, and it was feared that the hungry Highland settlers would ultimately

prove undesirable aliens and end by becoming a burden on the parish. However, the opposition began to die out as soon as the scheme proved self-supporting and by the end of 1774 there were a total of thirteen settlers who disposed of 104 acres. This was as much land as could be reclaimed with the available water supply. The part of the ground first cleared was known as the Low Moss. It lay next the arable land, and the depth of peat was only 3 feet. It was quite accessible, and the clearing made such progress that by 1774, seven years after the first tenant started work, it had begun to yield good crops.

#### The High Moss

The more remote tract of the High Moss, which was from 6 to 12 feet in depth, had now to be tackled. To reach this deep bog it was necessary to cross from 300 to 400 yards of the Low Moss so without delay the proprietor had a road cut through it, 12 feet broad, by floating off the moss down to the clay, and along this the new tenants took up their holdings. In 1775 twelve settlers had taken up 8 acres each on the High Moss. In recognition of the greater difficulties here no rent was to be payable for the first nineteen years of the lease. From the twentieth year onwards the rent was to be the same as that of the other tenants. Every encouragement was given by the laird, and the success of the first twelve led to other settlers

arriving every year, so that in 1782 there were twenty-nine of them at work, plus the previous thirteen on the Low Moss clearing 336 acres of the bog.

#### Death of Lord Kames

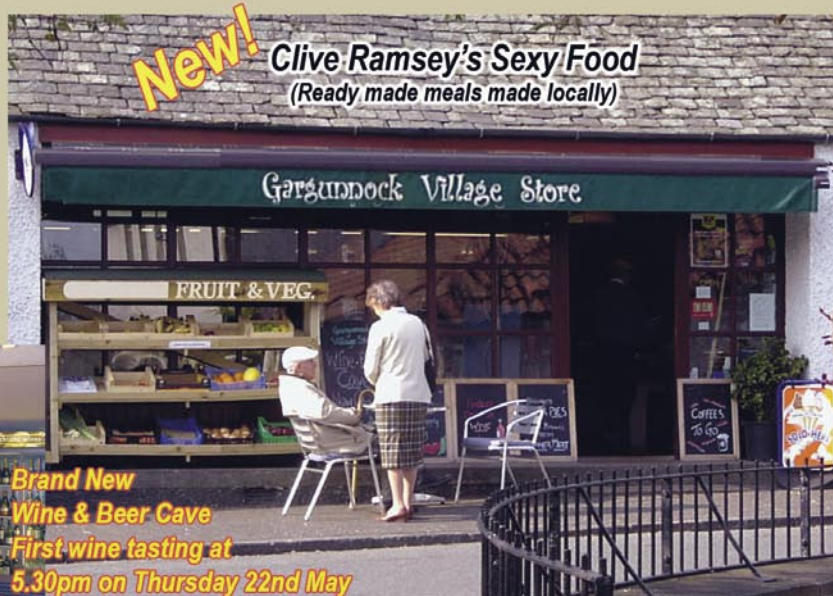
Lord Kames died at the end of 1782 in his eighty-seventh year, having witnessed the success of his great scheme and his successor, Mr. George Home Drummond, at once set about subduing the remaining 1200 imperial acres. The problem was the water supply if more tenants were to be profitably employed and the work expedited but it was also necessary to open up the ground better. A new road was therefore cut down through the moss to the clay, half a mile further in and parallel to the first lane. The new road and the prospect of a better stream of water brought more settlers in, and by 1785 fifty-five new tenants had arrived, who disposed of 440 acres more of the High Moss.

#### The Great Wheel of Torr

The laird set about to increase the water supply by using the river Teith, which ran from a higher district to the north. At a place now occupied by the Mill of Torr, there was a sufficient fall to produce the necessary power to drive a water-wheel. Mr. George Meikle of Alloa, a skilful millwright and son of the inventor of the threshing mill designed one 28 feet in diameter and 10 feet broad with a double ring of buckets set inside the circumference of the float boards at each side, so placed as to lift water from the Teith and discharge it as each bucket came up and was gradually inverted as it reached the apex of the circle into a trough at either side. From there it was conveyed in a large pipe made of wooden staves hooped with iron like a barrel to tenants more than a mile away. The whole cost to the proprietor was about £1000, and although the moss tenants had offered, of their own accord, to pay the interest on any sum he might expend he generously refused, as a reward for their industry, to allow them to

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do anything towards implementing their part of the bargain. This shows the kind and friendly feeling that subsisted between some lairds and their tenants in the brave days of old.

To obtain the best results, a canal had to be cut for a distance of nearly 3 miles through the centre of the moss and sluices were made at intervals to admit water to the reservoirs of the different tenants. The wheel worked continuously day and night for 52 years filling storage reservoirs during the hours of darkness. By 1790 eighteen more tenants had taken up allotments on 144 acres of the High Moss.

**The Flow Moss**

All the area was now disposed of except the Flow Moss, 400 acres in extent and 3 feet above the level of the surrounding moor. This was a semi-fluid quaking bog, so soft that a pole could be thrust with one hand to the very bottom. The reclamation of such a morass was generally considered almost impossible but after many failures the Laird at last succeeded in bringing in a stream of water and carrying it across the centre of the bog. But further difficulty confronted him of inducing settlers to live on it and begin the reclamation. He finally bargained with some of the nearest tenants of the Low Moss to take leases of portions of the morass, and to encourage them he agreed to advance £12 by instalments to each until 1 acre had been cleared for which the tenant or his successor was bound to pay 12 shillings of

Thus the settlement was completed and 1440 imperial acres of what thirty years before had been a desolate bog were converted into a thriving township with 150 families and a population of from 800 to 1000 industrious folk.

The whole land cleared by the year 1817 was about 1130 acres, and the last of the leases in the Kirk Lane expired in 1855. But long before then the tenants were reaping the fruits of the proprietor's foresight and their predecessors' labour. As early as 1774 some of them began to dispose of their holdings, and between that date and 1792 no fewer than fifty sales took place, the whole sum realised for the sale of the leaseholds being £849. Soon afterwards the reversion of leases tripled in value, and many insignificant moss lairds blossomed out into large farmers in the vicinity.

**New Turnpike Road**

After the success of the settlement was assured, a new turnpike road was formed along the north side of the moss, largely at the expense of the proprietor, to give the tenants a better access to the mills and markets. They voluntarily came forward and offered him a contribution of 100 guineas towards it, but, with the same generosity as had been shown on a former occasion when the prospects were less bright, he again declined to take anything from them, even when they had passed from the stage of poverty to one of comparative

about £100 a year. In 1796, thirty years after the scheme had been planned, there were 764 inhabitants, with 54 horses and carts, 201 cows, and 102 good houses. These were built from bricks made on the ground by the tenants themselves at a cost of about £15 each. The land produced 32 bushels of oats per acre, and the value of the crop on the 400 acres that had been cleared up til that time was, at the current price, about £2240.

**The Workers**

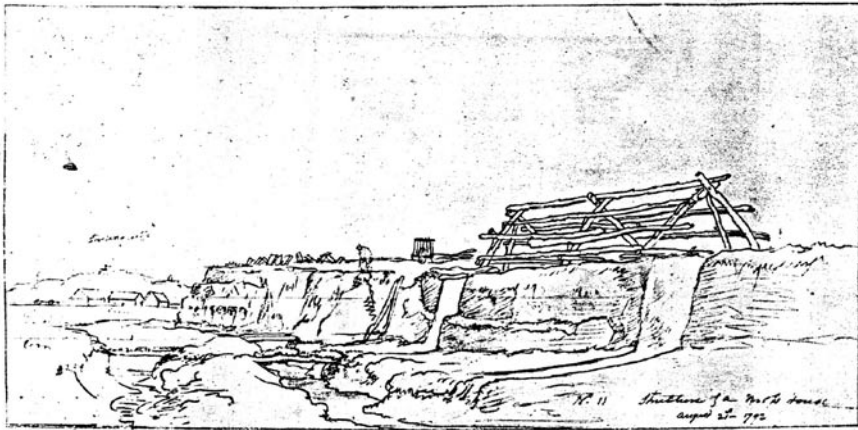
The method of removing the moss, to clear the ground, was, as we have seen, to cut it into pieces and throw it into the channels that carried it away to the river. As the strip next the first channel was thus cleared off a second channel parallel to it was cut in the clay close to the face of the moss, These conduits were about 2 feet deep and 2 feet wide, and a capable man could cut and throw in 48 cubic yards in a day for one shilling, or at the rate of one farthing a yard.

The settlers worked with immense zeal and energy from dawn till dusk, and did not mind being often soaked to the skin. On a good day hundreds of men, women, and children might be seen labouring on the moss. The women sometimes declared that they could make more on the moss than at the spinning wheel, and indeed, they were often to be found working at night by the light of the moon. It was largely their energy and enthusiasm for work that made the settlement such a success.

**The Dwellings**

But perhaps the most striking feature of the establishment was the housing created by the original settlers on the High Moss. On the cleared areas good brick cottages were, in course of time, erected for the modest price of about £15 each, but not until the peat had been removed. These hardy Highlandmen, children of the mist, from the Braes of Balquhider and Rob Roy's rainy country (*Clan McLaren country - Ed.*), were not accustomed to many luxuries. Their tastes were simple and their necessities of life few and easily satisfied. All they wanted was a family home, self-contained and close to the work, no matter how damp and humble, in which to bring up a healthy family in the degree of independence and respectability prevailing in the colony.

The method of construction of the moss houses was as follows. A deep closed rectangular trench was first cut in the moss and carried down into the clay round the site selected for the dwelling. In the centre of this was left a large block of solid peat of the same size as the house. Then the house itself was scooped out of this square block, like making a Halloween lantern. The walls were 4 feet thick at the base and 3 feet at the roof level which was perhaps at first 12 feet above the clay floor. The gables were completed with sod or mud, and the timber for the roof was supplied free by the Laird. As the walls dried and contracted they sank down, perhaps to half the original height, so that a roof originally 10 feet high came down to five. Although this sounds very basic and somewhat damp families lived for many years in happiness and also in the best of health. The antiseptic qualities of the peat, in spite of the dampness of the dwellings, prevented any serious disease. Many of these inhabitants lived to great ages, eighty or ninety years being not uncommon.



TURF HOUSE, CARSE OF STIRLING

yearly rent, or 5 per cent, on the sum advanced. As soon as the ground was cleared, the holding was to be disposed of to purchasers, who would, no doubt, be easily found.

The plan worked, well, and, in 1791, thirty-five of the old tenants agreed to these terms to take up 8 acres each of the Flow Moss. When every tenant had cleared his acre, thirty-five additional tenants were to be secured, so that the moor would be inhabited by 150 families altogether. To further encourage the settlers on the High Moss, it was determined to extend the period of their thirty-eight-year leases by nineteen years, to fifty-seven years in all. During the third period of nineteen years the rent was to be one guinea per acre, the value of the cleared land at the time, but much less than it was expected to (and did) become before the expiry of the lease.

**Completion of the Clearance**

affluence.

The moss tenants did not send nearly all the peat into the Forth, as the lowest part of the moss, which made excellent fuel, was cast and dried, and what they did not use at home was sold in Stirling and the surrounding villages in large quantities, the revenue from which was

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The sites of these remarkable dug-out dwellings were too soft to carry a house on the top of the peat, as a stamp with the foot would make the whole moss quake for 50 yards around. At other places on the Low Moss, however, the houses were set on a wooden floor, laid on the moss, and were built of moist peat and turf that dried and hardened in time. They were roofed with peat and heather, which began to grow vigorously, so that the whole settlement was dotted with picturesque huts, shaggy with purple heath and moorland plants, and fragrant with peat reek.

It should also be mentioned that the aroma of mountain dew was present too at times, for which the King's Gangers had a particularly keen scent when they visited the colony. The peat stacks were sometimes made hollow like the houses, and inside of the innocent-looking exterior there lurked the warm-hearted "Ewe wi' the crooked horn," whose discovery and extermination sometimes gave the Laird and the minions of the law a lot of trouble.

### Thriving Community

The Moss Lairds were a community by themselves. Gaelic was their tongue and the philabeg their dress, and the old feeling of clanship was strong among them and their children. After they had begun to increase in numbers, their social and moral condition were attended to by the appointment, in 1793, of a schoolmaster, who could speak both Gaelic and English and also acted as minister to the community on Sunday. He was paid the handsome salary of £10 a year by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. In order to obtain the services of a teacher of superior qualifications, the Laird added £5 to this salary and provided gratis a school-house, a dwelling-house, a kailyard, fuel, the maintenance of a cow, and an acre of ground for a miniature glebe worth a guinea a year.

The success of this reclamation led to further work of the same sort on the neighbouring peat mosses. Mr. Drummond acquired 280 acres of the Poldar Moss below Thornhill. By the year 1844 he had cleared 170 acres of it at Littleward, between the Forth and the Goodie Burn, by means of water impounded in reservoirs on the higher part known as Flanders Moss. The moss was here very deep, and the whole of his portion was never reclaimed.

### Meiklewood Clearance

Another neighbouring Laird, Col. Graham of Meiklewood, near Gargunnoch, who owned 130 acres of the good Carse land along the Forth, immediately to the south of the Blairdrummond Moss, was animated by Mr. Drummond's success, and set to work to float off the part of the bog on his estate. He had not a supply of gravitation water at hand, but, being close to the Forth, he erected a 10 horse-power steam engine, which pumped up the water to a height of 38 feet above the river at the rate of 5 tons a minute. It was conveyed 400 yards in wooden pipes, and kept twenty-five men constantly at work. The gallant Colonel related he found it best to cut the levels or channels in pairs, working one squad of men against the other, so as to promote wholesome emulation as to which would do the greatest amount of work. At one period, one half of his men were Irish and the other half Scots. "When the strife of rivalry commenced, heroic deeds were achieved, and I thought my heroes were much

better employed than others of more renown for mine were making food for men, while they were making men food for worms."

He began operations in May, 1828, and by 1832 the whole 130 acres were cleared and bearing a crop. The moss was 10 feet deep, and the removal of so much in less than four years was certainly a great achievement. The work cost him about £35 an acre in addition to the price of the engine, but it gave him great delight as well as a good return. "Notwithstanding all my disadvantages," he says "I shall have the land for less than half its value." It is true, the land was mine before, but then it never yielded a farthing of rent, and did a great deal of injury to the surrounding land by keeping it in a damp

state, besides the existence of so ugly an object in the midst of my property was exceedingly disagreeable. However, ugly as it was, I wish I had a thousand acres more of it, and I should soon have enough cleared to pay the expense of the remainder."

These figures give some idea of the value of the cleared land in 1832, and the inducement there was to carry out schemes of reclamation at that time. No wonder the adjoining Moss Lairds on Blairdrummond became prosperous people so soon.

### Relics of Antiquity

During the clearing of the moss many interesting relics of antiquity were found. The

remains of an extensive forest of oak, alder, birch, hazel, and willow trees, whose roots were in the clay, had to be removed at great trouble to the tenants after the covering of peat was swept off. Many of these trees were of great size, larger than the average stems in recent forests. One of the oak trunks was 50 feet long and more than 3 feet in diameter.

An old road about 4 yards broad was also laid bare near Drip, under the eastern end of the moss. It was constructed on what is known as the Corduroy system, with tree stems laid close together at places where the clay had been particularly soft. Ancient brass pots were discovered on Ochertyre and Blairdrummond Mosses, all of which point to the Roman occupation about 81 A.D. At that time there must have been an ancient forest that had flourished for several centuries before the Roman invasion. The trees were felled to destroy the shelter they gave to the Caledonians, and not for the sake of timber, otherwise the valuable trunks would not have been left to rot on the ground. After the ground was thus encumbered with fallen trees, the forest did not spring up again, but became overgrown with peat. The moss, when the clearing first began in 1766, may thus have been some 1685 years old.

### Ancient Relics

But there were also found relics of still older inhabitants of the Forth Valley

under the moss. In 1824, the bones of a large whale were found.

We thus go back to a time when the fair valley was a secluded arm of the ocean, where whales and other animals were hunted by primitive men, and fine mud was being laid down in the quiet water. Then the sea bed was slowly raised by a great upheaval of the land, and the salt water retired to a distance leaving bare a broad expanse of soft mud. On this Carse land a noble forest sprang up in time, and gigantic oaks and other native trees grew on it for 300 or 400 years or more, among which our savage ancestors made their homes and hid securely from their relentless foes. Agricola with his Roman legions appeared on the scene in the first century of our era, and proceeded to cut down the splendid forest out of wanton mischief and from the sheer lust of conquest. Then, like a fox in a henhouse, he left the victims lying beheaded where they fell. A dense growth of peat covered up the fallen giants of the forest, and nothing more was seen of them for 1760 years until Lord Kames appeared and restored the Carse clay to the condition it was in after the sea bed had left it dry some 2400 or more years ago. Such in brief is the eventful tale of the appearance, clearance, and disappearance of the famous old Blairdrummond Moss.

### Pollution of Forth Estuary

But the Blairdrummond Moss was only the eastern part of the vast peat bog that covered the Carse land a century ago. The process of reclamation by floating off other portions was continued till about 1865 resulting in the shores of the estuary as far down as Bo'ness being covered with lumps of peat when these later clearings were going on. While this was, no doubt, an easy way for the riparian proprietor to get rid of their waste products, it was not so convenient for some of their neighbours and for other people who had fishing interests lower down the river. Salmon fishing with stake nets and "cruives" was an important industry in the Forth, and the mass of floating moss and peat pulp was so great that it grew into a public nuisance, and both the fish and the traps for them as well as the oyster beds in the estuary, became choked with moss litter. To prevent the industry being thus damaged, the floating away of the mosses had to be prohibited. So ended the reclamation of the Forth Valley from the great mosses. Those that remain, notably Flanders Moss near Thornhill are now looked upon as worthy of preservation.

*My thanks to Alistair Jackson, George Place, for bringing to my attention the 100 year old book from which this article was condensed.*



Remains of either a shield or arguably an early wooden wheel found in the moss at Blairdrummond

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McIsac/MacIsaac etc)  
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**My Great great great great Grandparents John & Margaret (Whitehead) McIsic** were married on the 21st May 1781 at Lecropt Perth. John may have been the son of John MacIsaac of Smerrisary but this hasn't and may never be confirmed due to the upheavals of the time. The Moidart Family History Group have published some fascinating articles and there is much related information on the Internet re MacIsaacs in Nova Scotia, the MacIsaacs being a strong presence in the Highlands and Islands. You will notice variations in the spelling of McIsaac these are as written by the local recorders. I have included details of siblings in case anyone reading this recognises someone on their tree, but have placed my forbear last of the group.

John & Margaret`s children were **Andrew** born 1788, **Margaret** born 1789, **John** born 1792 and **James** born 1783, a weaver, who married **Janet Lockhart of Gargunnoch**. They were my great great great grandparents.

Their children were,

1) **John** born 1801 who married **Elizabeth Liddle** in 1829. Tragedy struck their family in 1837 over a very short space of time when, on 20th June **Alexander**, aged 5, died of scarlet fever, then 5 days later his brother **Andrew** aged 14 months died, 4 days later their father died aged 36 and three weeks later John aged 3 also died. Their firstborn son, James, thankfully survived.

2) **Andrew** born 1803 married **Margaret McLaren** in 1827 earning them a rebuke from the Minister in front of the congregation, when their son **James** was born 7 months later, the first of 7. After reading your Editors genealogical article in the Feb. 2007 issue I was sure I'd be able to place her on the McLaren

tree but couldn't. At the age of 14 James is working at Hill Farm. (presumably Hillhead - Ed.)

3) **Margaret** born 1806 married **Patrick Reddie** in 1830.

4) **James** born 1811

5) **Jean** born 1821 and

6) **William, born 1816 and who married Mary Buchanan of Bute, born 1814, died 1901. They were my great great grandparents.**

He is shown later as a Master Tailor, and they were buried in the family lair at Gargunnoch presumably with other family members, but I haven't located it.

Their 5 children were: **Catherine** born 1836 mother of John Robertson (a postman) who lived at Ballendall Farm in the early years of her marriage, **Janet** born 1840 died aged 3, **James** born 1842, **Mary** born 1846 and **my great grandfather William born 1844.**

The family were members of the Free Church of Scotland. A transcript of William's Indentures dated 11 November 1861 as a Pupil Teacher at Kirklane, Gargunnoch Free Church School has the signatories : William McGlashen, John Draper, James Stirling, John Patterson, Alex W McArthur, James Sinclair (Master) Wm Bryce and Peter Sawyer (Minister). In 1864 William graduated from the Free Church College in Glasgow as a Certified Teacher as his brother James had also done two years earlier.

**William married Agnes Brown**, born in the Borders, a few months after her father had died of Variola (smallpox) in Edinburgh. She was only 19 and they went on to have 11 children. She was said to have the second sight. He taught in Scotland, the Borders, Northumberland and Durham.

Their children were, **William James** born 1873, **Elizabeth** died aged 6 months in 1876, **John Brown** died aged 6 weeks in 1877, **Mary Agnes** born 1878, **Robert** died aged 6 months in 1881, **Andrew** born 1882, **Edgar** born 1884, **Herbert** born 1889, **Margaret Christina Staward** born 1892, **Dorothy** born 1894 who married **John Douglas** a Photographer from Perth and **my grandmother Jane Isabella b 1887 who married William Straker** from a well respected Northumberland Mining and Trades Union family.

My grandmother was very much a Scotswoman all her life and often talked about her father's Gargunnoch birthplace and really wanted her family to be aware of

their roots (she also taught me how to sword dance).

It is typical that by the time you begin to ask questions about your family history the people with the answers have gone. I began dabbling in family history in the mid 1970s, when local registrars were only too happy to have a look in their registers for you. Now the Internet is an unbelievable aid, familysearch.org is very good and Ancestry.co.uk is excellent. You can complete a good family tree in days when previously it would take a couple of decades. I have boxes of records of phone calls, queries, letters and replies to prove it.

There finally comes a point when you think you won't find another thing, then unexpected things happen.

For instance eight years ago I popped "Gargunnoch" into Google and made contact with your Editor, John. I mentioned to him that I had an old photograph of 2 elderly men standing in a field. Written on the back was "Da with his nephew John Robertson in Gargunnoch", probably taken in the early 1930's. John then began some amazing photographic detective work and was able to pinpoint where he thought the photograph had been taken. He reckoned William's family home had been either Briar, Rose or Haven Cottage with Drummond View a possibility, all backed up with then and now photographs.

Whenever I'd passed by on the A811 over the years I'd always looked over to the hills to see if I could recognise the features shown in that photo so it was wonderful to see John's work.

About three years ago, again idly pottering on Google I popped in McIsaac and came across Billy McIsaac, Scotlands Premier Wedding Band, sent an email and amazingly, it



**William McIsaac, Val's Grandfather & John Robertson, the Gargunnoch Postman, shown in the photo below.**

Close inspection of the area behind that hayrick on the left revealed a recognisable feature, now long gone, which lay behind the dyke behind present day uphill goalposts in Provost Park.

That meant that the hedge behind the hayrick marked the path which later became Stevenson St and the one on the right indicated the path leading to the Beeches at the bottom of the feus.

So that in turn meant the figures were probably standing behind either Briar, Rose or Haven Cottages.

transpired that Billy is descended from John & Margaret (Whitehead) McIsic`s son John, born 1792, brother of James my Great great grandfather.

Then as if this abundance wasn't enough, two years ago my sister made contact with a couple from Stirling, descendants of John Robertson, the postman son of Catherine McIsaac Robertson, my great grandfathers sister.



**Mary Buchanan of Gargunnoch with her grandson John who became the Gargunnoch postman**



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**"This is a photo of myself (Lisa McGloin, Stevenson Street), Sue Jones, Charles Street, Elizabeth Wickham (who used to live in Charles Street, now Kippen) and Ruth Turner who also used to live in Charles Street now Ayrshire. All holding the famous "Gargunock News". We visited Sorrento in Italy (in March), Much fun was had by all!"**

**(Thanks, Lisa. Another destination to add to the international list of those the mag. has visited over the past 6 years - Ed)**



**Little Lauren Taylor is delighted with the arrival of her wee sister, Nieve, who was born on 19th February.**

**Willie and Fiona Campbell are also thrilled to have another granddaughter.**



**10 days late and 8lbs 4 oz, baby Merryn Penman arrived, eventually, much to the relief of Stewart and Allison (nee McLaren) Young Kyle thought it was a great thing too as he got a brand new scooter out of the deal!**

**Both sets of grandparents are delighted, of course, especially on Stewart's side as Merryn is the first girl in a very long time.**



**Jesse Wyllie's daughter Jan Flint wrote..... "Finlay arrived on Saturday the 22nd of December at 6.50am weighing 8lbs 5oz. He was born in our lounge at home in a birthing pool! The Christmas tree lights were twinkling throughout! Have slowly adapted to parenthood. My mother has made it look all too easy!"**

On meeting them they brought a photograph of John Robertson aged about 10 taken with his grandmother Mary Buchanan McIsaac born 1814. She must have been about 62. I would never ever have thought that one day I would be able to look at her, and now have a framed copy in my bedroom. I have enormous respect for women and their lives then. Childbirth without pain relief, no NHS for the benefit of their children and no Lancome or Boots the Chemists! I think the hardships of her life are shown in her face.

They also brought a cross stitch tapestry which may show at its centre, Deanston House, Doune and it was fascinating to see the detail, interpret the design and see her stitchcraft improve over the years it took her to complete it.

For a woman born 14 years after the end of the 18th Century and who just made it into the 20th, I love the idea that she can now go global if some of you take this magazine on your exotic travels, she'd never have believed it.

There have not been any McIsaac families in

Gargunock for a long time now, but they did make their mark and live out their lives facing happiness and tragedy surrounded by family and friends, seeing much the same hills and fields that you see every day, and if you are an old Gargunock family, chances are you might carry some McIsaac genes yourself.

PS I have just found a stray which I don't remember seeing before, Elisabeth McIsac, born 1796, a Grocer of Gargunock.

Another lesson in not assuming

you're finished yet!

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In the last edition of The Gargunock News, I talked a bit about the easy decisions I had made about choosing to run the Paris Marathon for Cancer Research UK and about choosing to run the Paris Marathon over the London Marathon, due to the significance of the date to me. Through the training I did leading up to Sunday 6th April 2008, I discovered that those decisions really were the 'easy' part of my journey!

### Training

Choosing to run a marathon in the spring is quite a good idea, if you live and train in a country where it doesn't rain too much and there is only the hint of a breeze; just enough to cool you down. However, the reality for me over the winter, particularly for my long run on a Sunday was running with wet feet for several hours and a wind determined to send me back the way I had run! But as the weeks went flying by and I continued to rack up the miles, I looked forward to my long run, despite the wet feet at mile 2, when I still had another 18 to go. The sense of achievement after my first 18-mile run was incredible. At that point, I felt that there was more than just a chance that I could complete the Paris Marathon!

Almost on a daily basis for a while, I was receiving emails to alert me to the fact that someone else had sponsored me online, this in itself was all I needed to get me out, I was so determined to stick as rigidly as I could to Billy Mitchell's Marathon Training Schedule, as well as bearing in mind all the money people had so kindly pledged!

### Injuries

Along the way, I trained with a bad case of athlete's foot, a bit of a nagging pain in my right Achilles

tendon and also sustained a toe injury on Glinn's Road, when I kindly opened a heavy metal gate for a passing farmer but managed to hit my big toe with the gate in the process, which then resulted in a week out of training and within the next month, I fully expect to lose that big toenail - no sandals for me this summer! There were also a few scary runs on Glinn's Road when running towards about eight big, black cows that were blocking the road, thankfully they let me past without a problem and I was able to incorporate a sprint into that part of the run.

### What a Relief!

I became adept at very quickly relieving myself at the side of the road, in the middle of nowhere. Unfortunately, on one occasion just a few miles into a 20 mile run, I quickly pulled underwear and tights up thinking that I could hear people coming. It was only when I bent over in the shower many hours later that I discovered that some amount of chafing had occurred due to pants not being adjusted properly, so on subsequent runs anti-chafing cream was liberally applied!

### Doubts

Two weeks before the Paris Marathon, I ran the Alloa Half Marathon (thanks for the lift

## PARIS IN APRIL SALLY EXCEEDS HER TARGET



Duncan!) Great, I thought, only 13 miles this week for my long run! I took off pretty quickly and had covered the first 3 miles in around 22 minutes, which is fast for me! Realising that I couldn't maintain this pace for long, I slowed down and finished in 1 hr 59 minutes. I began to think that a sub 4-hour marathon was perhaps a bit optimistic.

Throughout all the training I did, Boyd was always very supportive and boosted my confidence when I returned from a

run disappointed about the time or my performance. Sarah and Fraser were also supportive, in that their first question to me was usually, "Mummy, did you win?" or "You're the speediest Mummy in the galaxy!"

### Arrival in Paris

We were all very excited about arriving in Paris, we had been talking about it for almost 6 months. Our hotel was very close to Gare de Lyon, which I chose because it was a 10-minute train ride to the Arc de Triomphe and the start of the Paris Marathon. My parents and sister also travelled to Paris and were a great help with Sarah and Fraser, especially on the Saturday when Boyd and I had to collect my bib number at the Marathon Expo.

After eating some lovely pasta at

a great Italian restaurant close to the hotel, we had an early night. We were in a family room with Sarah and Fraser and by 9.30pm, we were all tucked up in bed. I was delighted about this as my alarm was set for 5.40am for an early breakfast, I was looking forward to 8 hours of sleep!

By 2.30am, I was actually thinking that any sleep would be good. Fraser was finding it particularly difficult to settle and despite only being 100cm tall was doing a good job of taking up most of the king-size bed, I was teetering on the edge, while Boyd had been relegated to Fraser's part of the sofa bed with Sarah. Sleep did come to me at some point, though when my alarm rang at 5.40am, I felt dreadful.

### The Big Day

We were on a train heading to the Arc de Triomphe by 7.20am. The train was packed with runners and their supporters and everybody looked like they had slept for much longer than me!

Getting out of the Metro station was a bit of a squash, literally hundreds of people alighted from the train and were trying to make their way through narrow corridors to the steps. Having never been to Paris before, I looked in awe at the Arc de Triomphe before thinking that I really needed to get in a queue for one of the few Portaloos. Unfortunately, each Portaloos must have had a queue of at least 40 people at it but I was certain I would be able to use one on the way round.

After having a few photos taken by my family and hugs, kisses and words of luck, I ventured forth to find out how I was meant get on to the Champs-Élysées to the green section which signified your aim was a 4 hour marathon. Some of the barriers were moved and runners streamed through this



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## GREY & YELLOW WAGTAILS

In the last Gargunock News I said I might give you an insight into the other wagtails, well, here we go.

The grey wagtail and the yellow wagtail. The more yellow one is quite a rare being, would you believe. The numbers of the yellow wagtail have fallen drastically in Scotland, no explanation has been found. They are still numerous in Southern England as a summer visitor. in damp river valleys. water



meadows, fresh and salt water marshes. They often feed on insects under animals hoofs, mostly cattle and horses. The male is one of our most colourful birds. The deep yellow of its plumage is approached only by the colouring of the cock yellow-hammer. Its short warbling song, punctuated with "tsweep" call notes, is heard mainly in May and is given from a perch or in bouncing song-flight. Their nests are on or near the ground, usually well hidden, built of moss and grass and any suitable material with fur, hair and feathers added.

The eggs are laid in clutches from four to six each usually two clutches a year. The eggs of the wagtail family are very much alike and are not easy

to distinguish one from another. The grey wagtail is most colourful, its bright yellow underparts contrasting boldly with its blue-grey back and long black tail.

The bird has a strong preference to be near water - especially rushing water. It flits along mountain streams, pausing now and then on a rock or overhead branch and flicking its tail which is as long as its body and waits to dash out to catch an insect. In hilly country it can often be seen in company with dippers. In winter the grey wagtail moves to lowland streams but again seldom seen far from a weir or other tumbling water.

Their nesting site is usually near a stream, the nest built in a hollow in a bank, a wall or among rocks. It consists of grass, leaves, moss and roots, with a lining of hair



and a few feathers. The first eggs are laid in April-May often two clutches with four to six eggs in each. The eggs are as I have indicated closely resembling those of the other wagtails.

So, if you happen to see a wagtail with yellow bits, chances are that it is a grey wagtail, or again it might not be!!

Angus Mailer

opening to take up position on the Champs-Élysées. It was a very exhilarating place to be standing. With two helicopters hovering above, television cameras on big cranes and the smell of garlic, body odour and liniment!

It took 12 minutes to reach the start. To remain upright en route to the start, it was essential to look down so as to avoid tripping over the discarded items belonging to the many others in front; from jackets, trousers, body-bags to stay warm in, empty bottles... and sometimes full bottles!

### Ego Boost

Having my name ironed on to my Cancer Research UK vest was a great idea. The biggest ego-boost on my way round came at about mile 15 when a group of roughly 20 French fire fighters shouted, "Allez, Sally allez!" They made me forget about my full bladder, my aching Achilles tendon and helped me to focus on why I was running a marathon!

En route there was some fantastic entertainment, which was both funny and motivating. There was a brilliant female drumming, who beat out powerful rhythms, while

dancing at the same time. There were jazz bands, men dressed up as women disco-dancing on a stage and thousands of spectators shouting, "Bravo", "Bon Courage" or "Well done."

### Drinks Stations

The drinks stations were heavenly and well stocked with bottles of water, quartered oranges, bananas, sugar cubes, prunes and dried apricots. However, the stations were also treacherous as the road became covered in orange peel and banana skins. There were Portaloo's at the drink stations but I was concerned that if I stopped to queue for the loo, I might not be able to start running again. I don't think I've ever been so envious of men and their ease of toileting mid-marathon.

### The Pain Barrier

By 19 miles and just over 3 hours of running, everything was really hurting, the niggling Achilles tendon, my left knee and ankle. Others around me were hurting too, as some just in front would go from running to walking, with no warning and I would have to negotiate around them - and on cobbles too!

The last 12 kilometres of the marathon were a bit of a blur, not because I was running so fast, it actually took me an hour and a half to do but because every footstep was painful, it was at this point, I thought again about who I was running for and repeated a list of names, my mantra. I didn't ever want to stop and walk, the progress was just slow.

The latter part of the marathon is run through the Bois de Boulogne, the sun had come out, the views were picturesque and the drinks stations were serving wine and cider! I could see them up ahead offering a mouthful or two in a plastic tumbler, I wondered if the alcohol would help or hinder then thoughts about my still full bladder took over and I declined.

### The End in Sight

As I turned into Avenue Foch - the finish or Arrivée, I started to cry, the end really was in sight. I managed to lift my knees a bit higher and propel myself forward just a bit faster, at 4 hours and 39 minutes, I had been running for about 40 minutes longer than I wanted to but I had completed the Paris Marathon, my first

marathon!

My family knew I had finished, they had seen me running over the line on a big screen, and were all looking out for me. The reunion was emotional, my first words were, "I'm never doing that again!" before heading for a queue for a Portaloo!

I was initially disappointed with my time, however, thankfully my time hasn't affected the amount raised for Cancer Research UK, which currently stands at £1815, a massive £815 over my initial target! Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed so generously. For those who wanted to sponsor me but didn't manage to before the event, it's not too late to sponsor me as my fundraising page remains open until 06/07/08. You can find it at [www.runningsponsorsome.org/sparky70](http://www.runningsponsorsome.org/sparky70)

I really hope this money does help to make a difference.

I'm currently having to take an enforced rest from my 30+ mileage a week but hope to return to Paris in April 2009 for the 33rd Paris Marathon!

Sally Park

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## OBITUARY

### Miss Sylvia Miller ~ 1916 - 2008

Sylvia, often known as "Nurse Miller," was born in 1916 in Forestmills, Clackmannan and lived to the great age of 92 years, mainly in Gargunnoch.

Her Dad was a woodcutter who moved around following the work. She was the eldest of four, her siblings being Jessie, John and Nancy. Sadly her Mum died while still a young woman as did brother John during the war.

They moved to Gargunnoch when she was a young girl and she attended school here before being trained in nursing work in Stirling, Glasgow and Oswestry before returning to Stirling. She specialised in orthopaedic surgery working for consultant Mr Innes as Sister attending to patients at clinics and at home. Later she was a District Nurse and drove around in her Stirling County Council Morris Minor.

Sylvia's constant companion in those days was her cairn terrier Neil. Her

nephews and neices enjoyed coming to stay during the school holidays when, due to lack of accommodation in the house they would sleep in a shed at the top of the garden. A great adventure.

She enjoyed classical music and attending choral concerts locally. Her bird-watching took her as far as St Kilda and an interest in archaeology had her take part in digs in various locations including a search for the Peel of Gargunnoch. Visits to local Flower Festivals were also on her agenda and she was a member of the National Trust.

The great outdoors was another passion for her and in her time she towed a small caravan, drove a small campervan and at one time had a converted single-decker bus at Easdale.

She was very serious about her membership of the church having lived through no less than 7 ministers; Rev R. Stevenson, Rev Horton McNeil, Rev William Turner, Rev Lindsay Muirhead, Rev Katherine Hepburn and latterly Rev Richard Campbell.

My own relationship with Sylvia was largely superficial from childhood to adulthood, being confined to the usual passing pleasantries. She was well known as a lady of strong opinions which she was not afraid to voice and was more than able to fight her corner if need be. I well remember her berating me once about 40 years ago for washing my car on a Sunday in the Main Street.

Much later, about 7 years ago, when she became aware of my growing interest in local history she kindly invited me to inspect her own collection of local photographs and to copy them for my archive. During succeeding years we spent more time together and I became aware of other facets to her character previously hidden to me which revealed a warmth and at times a humour of which I had been unaware all those years.

I shall miss the blethers by the fireside of her wee hoose which is probably one of the last remaining examples of a type once common in the village. In a way it's a shame, although inevitable, that it will in the not too distant future be "modernised".

Truly a redoubtable character and one who rightly takes her place in the annals of our village.

## OBITUARY

### Eddie Milton ~ 1923 - 2008



Eddie was born in Glasgow but his childhood and school days were spent in Blairmaud, Banffshire living in a wee croft next door to the school. His weekends were spent chopping wood for the schoolteacher!

After leaving school he moved down to Tarbert on Loch Fyne where he lived and worked on a farm with a family called Dewar. He worked with horses, indeed he delivered milk in Tarbert with a horse and cart.

During the war he was conscripted into the army and stationed in Orkney. After the war he returned to Tarbert and took up the post of Beadle in the church.

In his 30s he moved to Gargunnoch and although at first he didn't think he would remain here for long he did so for 52 years! Initially he worked with Bobby Henderson in Hillhead Farm, the Logans in the Mill Farm, the Grahams at Culbeg then the Ross-Andersons at Boquhan Home Farm.

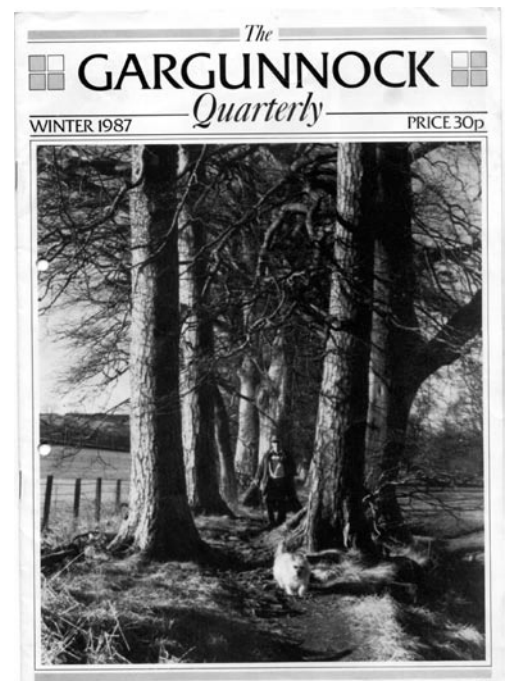
Leaving farming he took up employment at Cambusbarrow Quarry then latterly with the County Council Roads Department from where he retired early due to ill health at the age of 57. He was also Caretaker at the Community Centre for about 10 years.

A keen fisherman he enjoyed fishing weekends to Clunie with his friends Ronnie Carson, Rab Wright and others. Bowling at Kippen was another interest of his and he took an active part in the Flower Show when it was resurrected 25 years ago.

If the expression "a weel kent face" could be applied to anyone here it could certainly be applied to Eddie. He was always to be seen on the road with his stick and at one time with his wee dog McDuff.

You seldom found him in anything other than jovial mood with a smile on his face and a mischievous twinkle in his eye, especially if there were any ladies about. That was even true latterly when hip joints began to give him trouble and replacements were not always successful.

He had the knack of leaving you in better



**Eddie and McDuff featured on the front cover of the old Gargunnoch Quarterly back in '87**

spirits than you were when you met him and even now looking at that photo of him above he still has that effect on me. Now that's got to be a priceless legacy to leave behind.

He is survived by daughter Anne, son Donald and grandson Iaian as well as 2 step-brothers Alex & Jim and a sister Cissie. A brother, Albert, was killed in the war.

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 Gargunnock Songsters Wed 7.30 Helen Cumming 860253
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 Playgroup - Mon/Thurs 9.00-11.30 Hilary Flett 860588
 Toddlers Fri. 9.00-11.300 Hilary Flett 860588
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 Sept. 8, 22 Oct. 6, 20 Nov 3, 17
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 M. Coupethwaite 860344
 Old Folks Welfare

Village Websites

Gargunnock CommunityVirtual Village www.gargunnock.com
 Gargunnock Village History www.mclarn.plus.com

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Sat 7th June **Gargunnock Agricultural Show**
Sat. 21st June **Annual Gala**
Fri 27th June **School closes for Summer Holidays**
Mon. 18th Aug **Staff Development Day**
Tue 19th Aug **Pupils return**
Sat. 30th August **Annual Flower Show**
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Mon. 13th Oct. **Oct. Holiday starts**
Fri. 17th Oct. **Oct Holiday ends**
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