

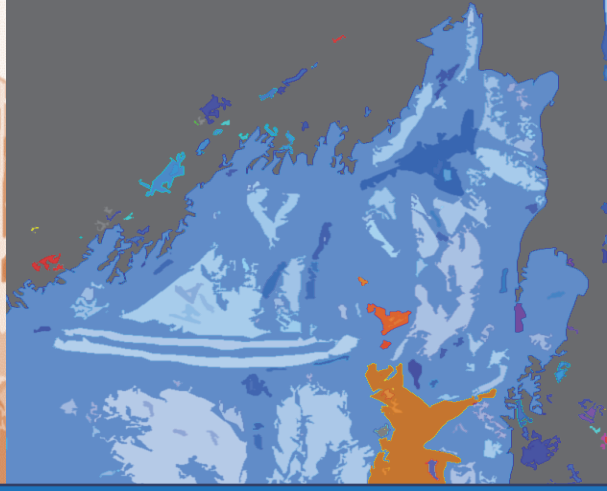

TWECHAR -
AN ORAL HISTORY OF A PIT VILLAGE






TWECHAR

An Oral History of a Pit Village

CONTENTS

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In addition, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the following:

Dr Sue Morrison, Oral History Research & Training Consultancy, who provided invaluable project management mentoring and consultancy, oral history training and support, and spent lots of time working with volunteers, respondents, local youth groups and schools to produce the project outputs, including this book. She was also on hand to support the project at its various reminiscence and other events in the community.

Our fantastic project co-ordinators, Isobel Hartley and Rachel Kelly, who assisted Sue with all of the above and worked with enthusiasm and dedication, for which we are greatly appreciative. Isobel organised the oral history interviews, whilst Rachel did much of the additional research required for the project outputs. Their enthusiasm was infectious!

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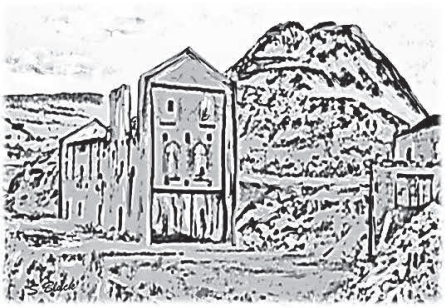
Most of all, we are eternally grateful to all those lovely Twecharites who shared their memories, stories, experiences, photographs, poems and writings, thereby helping us to create a unique oral history archive of this former pit village.

Thank you, All!

INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of William Baird & Co. in the 1860s, a strong mining community was established in Twechar - a lovely rural village that lies between Kirkintilloch in East Dunbartonshire and Kilsyth in North Lanarkshire, and sits close to both the Antonine Wall and the Forth & Clyde Canal. In addition to sinking several pits, Baird's also sited its main offices and training school in Twechar, which brought in mineworkers from across Scotland. The mining industry continued in and around the village for over a century, until the pit closures that followed the miners' strike of 1984-1985. The industry that chiefly justified the village's existence suddenly disappeared. This book is just one of the many outputs of an oral history project aimed at ensuring that the memories of the remaining mining community families do not suffer the same fate.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and supported by Oral History Research & Training Consultancy, the project delivered a range of heritage research and creative skills to local volunteers and school pupils, which included professional training in oral history, film making and creative writing skills, and they were supported to produce a variety of heritage outputs (digital, print, performance and presentation). Crucially, we and our wonderful volunteers digitally captured the oral testimonies of over fifty Twechar folk. Respondents discussed their experiences of family, community, education and work, and shared their fantastic memories of childhood, places and people, including some 'weel kent faces'. These testimonies, along with original photos, films, poems and artwork, form a unique archive that will preserve Twechar's unique heritage long into the future.



Twechar No.1 Pit & Bing

TWECHAR'S MINING HISTORY

Small scale coal mining has existed in Scotland since the 12th century, though it was James Watt's development of the steam engine, in the 18th century, that boosted demand for coal and accelerated moves towards industrialisation. Together with other railway and industry developments in the 19th century, the demand for coal further increased, which eventually led to the exhaustion of shallow seams and necessitated extraction from deeper deposits.

It was not unusual to find whole families working down the pit. Hewers were the most skilled workers and were paid by the amount of coal carried to the surface. They often paid their wives and children to carry the coal to the pit top so that they could concentrate on digging it out. Everyone who worked in the pits laboured hard and worked long hours. The Mines Act of 1842 ostensibly put an end to women and children under the age of 10 from working under ground and introduced the first pit inspectors. Yet mining remained a notoriously dangerous occupation and fatalities, injuries and dust-related diseases were not uncommon.

Mining provided common employment throughout East Dunbartonshire, where mines extended from Baljaffray in the west, to Twechar in the east. Coal was the most common mineral extracted locally, but limestone and ironstone were also extensively mined, and the presence of alum shale led to the building of a chemical processing works at Campsie to process the alum for use in the textile industry. The 'Secret Works', as it was known, was a major employer in Lennoxtown for most of the nineteenth century.

Early mines followed an angled seam from its protrusion on the surface; miners then excavated the mineral seams at progressively deeper locations. Perpendicular pit shafts were also sunk from an early date, with crude winding mechanisms used to lift the elements to the surface. Modern collieries were established during the second half of the nineteenth century, some of them employing many hundreds of men. The most important coal-owner was the firm of William Baird & Company, which came to the Twechar area about 1860 and developed extensive mining operations to supply coal and coke to its Gartsherrie iron-smelting works at Coatbridge.

Twechar's proximity to the Forth and Clyde Canal, as well as the abundant seams of coal, were also key factors in Baird's decision to sink pits in the area. Twechar No.1 Pit, was sunk on the north bank of the canal, to the east of Twechar Bridge, with 12 shafts eventually being sunk. With the arrival of Baird's and due to its location at the northern limit of the vast Lanarkshire coalfield, a mining community was firmly established in Twechar.

While much of Twechar's history is typical of the situation across Scotland, there is also much that is distinctive. Baird's established their huge headquarters here, which trained apprentices and contained workshops for most of the tradesmen that manufactured, maintained and repaired supplies for the whole organisation. Those trades included engineers, blacksmiths, joiners, electricians, painters, slaters, chimney sweeps and transport workers. Notably, the Bevin Boys came here during WWII, from across the whole of Scotland, to learn about mining in a training pit that was linked to the local school.

Despite bringing much employment to the area, Baird's was very much disliked by mining communities, who deplored its treatment of workers and their families, particularly when those folk fell on hard times. The animosity towards Baird's continues to this day, even though the National Coal Board took over all the pits in 1947, and was perhaps most noticeably observed when Twechar folk petitioned hard against plans to name a village street after William Baird.

Nonetheless, industrialised mining activity continued in and around Twechar for almost a century. Twechar No.1 Pit closed in 1964, while Gartshore 9/11, the very last colliery in the area, was shut in 1968. Following this closure some Twechar men travelled each day to collieries such as Bedlay and Cardowan in Lanarkshire, until those pits, too, were closed, during the early 1980s.

Many reminders of the mining industry can be seen today, from spoil heaps to fenced-off shafts. Unfortunately, subsidence of the ground above former mine workings sometimes occurs, as at Grampian Way, Bearsden, in 1982, when a huge hole appeared in the ground.

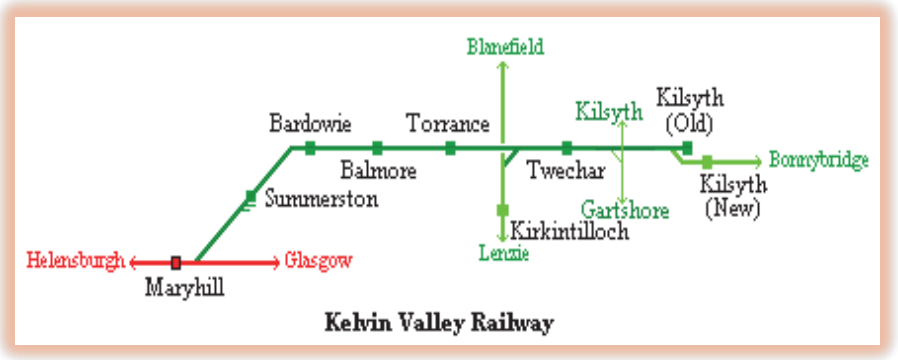
- William Baird & Co.

"They worked for a private company, it was William Baird & Co. then….and the NCB (National Coal Board) didn't come into existence until, I think, 1946. But everything you done in Twechar, William Baird controlled it…coal and steel baron he was in this area. Pop worked in Dumbreck No.2, which was down towards Queenzieburn. And there was No.1 pit, which was just across the canal, and there was a pit called St Flannan's, but there was also an iron ore pit. It was as you came up over the bridge, to the left. Over to the left there was an iron ore pit, and these were all owned by William Baird & Co., and you lived, breathed and danced to William Baird's tune. If William Baird's, what you call it, factor, didnae like you, you were out. You didn't go anywhere after that, you just were out. You lost your house. You lost your job. I mean it was tyranny. Luckily, in '45, '46, the mines were nationalised. It was never a great job, but it was more of a job that the men were in control of rather than the coal baron."

Andrew Bell

TRANSPORTING THE COAL

Before 1860, mined coal and ironstone had to be transported by wooden carts along rough roads. To increase transport speed and efficiency, Baird's created their own railway network that spread out from Twechar across Lanarkshire. Also known as 'Gavell', Twechar Station was single track and had an extensive yard for stabling trains. Coal was carted in a train of 'tubs' and hauled by small locomotives called 'pugs'.



However, the company continued to transport much of their coal via the Forth and Clyde Canal and Baird's had created an extensive mineral tramway system connecting their pits to the canal. During the 1860s, Baird's was allowed to place a railway swing bridge over the canal, just to the west of the Twechar road bridge, to form a connection between its collieries on either side of the canal. In 1966 freight traffic ceased and the line was closed completely. The swing bridge had continued in use until 1st January 1963, when its hand-winding apparatus was made redundant, and the canal closed just a few years later. Now reopened in its entirety as part of the Millennium Project celebrations, the canal is used for sport and leisure activities – the days of king coal are long dead, but not forgotten.

A Twechar Pug

TWECHAR'S PITS

No.1 Pit

This pit was opened in 1865 as an iron extraction pit and later became a coal mine. It was situated on the north bank of the Forth and Clyde Canal, close to the centre of the original village of Twechar. The mine was mainly manned by miners from Twechar and from neighbouring Kilsyth. The mine was reported to be both dry and comfortable to work in. During World War Two, it was joined by tunnel to Dumbreck colliery in nearby Queenzieburn as part of a national war scheme to provide alternative shelter from German bombing raids. It was also possible to travel by tunnel to No.10 Pit in Twechar (indeed, all the Gartshore pits were linked together), which was linked to a classroom in the local school. Here 'on the job' experience was provided for novice miners - the most famous of

these being the 'Bevin Boys' (young men drafted in to the mines to help the war effort), who are discussed in more detail in the section on the World War Two. When the National Coal Board (NCB) took over the pit, it built a new engine house as the previous set up resulted in the engine being in constant motion. Residents remember that Twechar No.1 Pit had a huge coal waste bing, which always appeared to be smouldering and regularly sent plumes of smoke over the village. No.1 pit closed in 1964 and was one of the last pits to close in Twechar.

Gartshore No.1 Pit

There were several mines to the south of Twechar, which were named after the Gartshore Estate. This estate was bought in the late 1870s by Alexander Whitelaw, a joint manager of William Baird and Company and an ancestor of the 20th century Conservative MP, Willie Whitelaw.

Pit 9/11 Gartshore (No. 11)

These pits were built in the 1860s and situated south of the Glasgow to Edinburgh railway line. This was the main Twechar pit as most of the workforce hailed from the village itself. These were very gassy pits. This situation became improved when Grayshill pit (discussed in the quote below and in a subsequent paragraph) was sunk to the south of these shafts in the mid-1930s. A siding was linked from the pit to the main railway to transport coal out of Twechar. The mine contained very high-quality coal and because of this a new shaft was sunk in the 1950s to make it possible to reach further seams of coal. This was the last of the Gartshore pits to close, in 1968, and men who wanted to continue in the mining industry were given transfers to pits in Cardowan and Bedlay. There is little sign left of this pit and even its pit bing, a feature which is often seen in old coal mining areas, has disappeared.

Mining accidents referencing 'Twechar' between 1899 and 1963 (verbatim).
(NB. More Twechar mineworkers suffered injuries and death but their addresses were not included in the accident reports. Many more suffered from occupational illness, including silicosis and coalworkers' pneumoconiosis – none of these are included here.
http://www.scottishmining.co.uk

Mining Fatality - John Higney, a miner, residing at 40 Auchinstarry Row, met with an accident which proved fatal in No. 1 Twechar pit on Monday. He was working at the face when a quantity of stones came away from the roof and crushed him severely. On being conveyed home he was attended to by Dr James Park, but the internal injuries were of such a nature that he only survived a few hours. Deceased was 53 years of age. [Falkirk Herald 28 January 1899]

Kirkintilloch Miner Killed - James M'Guire, 40 years of age, pit-drawer at St Flannans' colliery, and residing at Black Bull Close, Kirkintilloch, has been killed while at work. He was buried in a fall from the roof. He was unmarried and resided with his widowed-mother. [Scotsman 12 February 1916]

Grayshill Pit

This pit was sunk in the 1930s to provide ventilation for pit 9/11. However, the huge ventilation fan disturbed both people and cattle. It was named, like many pits, after the farm where it was situated. Grayshill closed in 1967 as a phase of the gradual rundown of the collieries.

Pit Gartshore 3/12 (No.3)

These pits were sunk close to the railway near the village of Croy at Easter Board Farm. It was connected to the siding at pit 9/11. The pit was mostly mined by men from Croy, but there were a few from Twechar. Gartshore No.3 was originally used for mining ironstone and later became a pumping shaft in to which the water from other pits was drained. Finally, in the early 1920s it became a coal extraction pit. A sump was sunk to deal with the water from other pits. No.12 pit was sunk alongside No.3, and just before it was completed in 1923, a gas explosion killed 8 of its workers. These were among the first pits to close in the area, in 1959.

St Flannan's Pit

This pit was opened in 1904. It was originally used to extract crude petroleum, known locally as 'Tarry Dook'. This pit had a particularly deep shaft and closed down in 1930 as accessibility was difficult. However, the seams were accessible from Pit No.1 and so they continued to be excavated. As with St Flannan's, several other small pits in Twechar were closed as their seams were accessible from the larger pits.

Pit No.2

Local brickworks were opened in the 1930s using materials from the bing at No.2 pit. This closed in 1983.

Mining Accidents (cont. p.2)

Croy Pit Fatality - William Law (18), pit bottomer, Barrhill Rows, Twechar, was on Saturday instantly killed in Gartshore No. 1 pit, Croy, belonging to William Baird & Co. (Ltd.) Law had tried to cross the cage at the bottom of the shaft just as it was about to ascend to the surface. He was caught and jammed between the cage and the framework of the shaft. [Scotsman 5 October 1925]

Youth Electrocuted - Kilsyth Pithead Fatality - Hugh Smith (18), apprentice electrician, son of Mr James Smith, colliery manager, 1 Barrhill, Twechar, was on Saturday electrocuted at Messrs William Baird & Co.'s, No. 11 Gartshore Colliery, Croy. Along with another youth, he was on an iron framework connected with the electric, transformers on the pithead, about 15 feet from the ground. He was engaged cleaning the insulators, when he inadvertently touched a live wire, and was instantaneously killed. His clothing was badly burned. His companion immediately dropped to the ground and escaped injury. [Scotsman 21 October 1929]

Croy Pit Fatality - Alexander Truten (16), pithead worker, residing at Twechar, was fatally injured last night while a work at Gartshore No. 3 Colliery, Croy. He had been at work at the coal-washing plant when he was caught by a hutch and so severely injured about the neck and chest that he died almost immediately. [Scotsman 6 May 1933]

"It was a hard life for my mother because John was working in the pits and more so, there were five sets of working clothes from the pits. They all worked there and my brother was killed in the pit - he was 25 years old. There was a fall in the pits and Davy had went for a fireman or something, I don't right mind. When he came back, Samuel was under a boulder and he had been killed outright. He wasn't married. My uncle Bill, my Mother's brother, and my Aunty Meg came and told my Mother and she was never right after that - she took a slight stroke. They got something in compensation, ah, but I don't know what it was. My Mother really had a hard life after Samuel died because she just really didn't know what was wrong with herself. I remember Teeny Boyd lost her son and her man in the pits; my brother went in to help with that, to help carry them out the pits – oor Davy. Davy was next door, helped to carry them out the pit. Everybody seemed to come round and see if they could help, in my Mother's case, and the neighbours were good. We were angry when my brother got killed in the pits. I can't remember any management coming to see us but I was only 17 years old."

Mary (Brown) Kennedy

Mining Accidents **(cont. p.3)**

Fatal Accident in Twechar Colliery - Walter Irvine, oncost worker, Kingston Flats, Kilsyth, was last night killed, while at work in Twechar Colliery, Eastern Dunbartonshire. He was caught by a fall of material and knocked into water, death being instantaneous. A married man, he was well known in Masonic circles, having been Master of Lodge St John No. 39. John Kennedy, another oncost worker, residing at Kingston Flats, Kilsyth, was also involved in the fall, and received injuries to the head and back. [Scotsman 20 December 1935]

Boy Killed and Father Injured at Twechar, Dunbartonshire - David Boyd, Jun., a lad of 15 years, of Burnbrae, Twechar, Dunbartonshire, was killed in Messrs William Baird & Co.'s Easter Gartshore No. 11 Colliery Croy, on Tuesday night. He had been working alongside his father, David Boyd (42), coal cutting machine man, in a section on the backshift when an explosion took place, the boy being killed outright. The father was severely burned, but succeeded in reaching a telephone and warning the pitheadman. Rescuers who found the boy applied artificial respiration methods for an hour without success. The father was removed to the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow. The day shift lay idle yesterday as a result of the tragedy. [Scotsman 13 February 1936]

– The Rescue Boy

"…Andy McNichol, miner, but he was at the piling. He was my supervisor for forty years. Aye, he was a gentleman. He was at the Cardowan disaster. He was a rescue boy. He was only twenty odds but after that, he, och, he came away. Getting him tae pull bodies out. Sitting in the bogie, you know. Aye, he never went back. Quite right, life's hard enough without that."

Archie Fulton

– Beyond the Pail!

"[No toilets]…they had pans, see the likes o', what would they put you in mind o'? See the likes o' paint tins? See this man – this was the man - he used tae come doon, and this was his job. The pans were taken up the pit…the hutches went up the pits. They'd be full o' coal, with dirt, and there was a space left for these pans - full of jobbies, and sometimes they were stinking. They were terrible. You just wonder how hygienic that was. If they needed the toilet - there's nowhere tae wash their hands you know, and what if you're doing a jobby or something like that? See, if you think, you'd never get away with that now, hen, never…."

Robert Hardie

Mining Accidents **(cont. p.4)**

Second Death in Croy Pit Explosion - David Boyd, Sen., coal cutting machine man, Burnbrae, Twechar, Dunbartonshire, has succumbed in the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow, to burning injuries received in an explosion in Easter Gartshore No. 11 Colliery, Croy, last week. Deceased, who was 43 years of age, was walking along with his 15-year-old son David when the explosion occurred, the boy being killed instantaneously. The father managed to reach a telephone in the underground workings and inform officials at the pithead regarding the accident. He was immediately removed to the Infirmary, where, as stated, he has died from his injuries. [Scotsman 20 February 1936]

Two Lives Lost in Fire – Gartshore Colliery Outbreak – Missing Man Found Alive - Two men lost their lives as a result of an outbreak of fire early yesterday morning in the underground workings of Easter Gartshore No. 11 Colliery, situated in the Croy district of Dunbartonshire. The colliery belongs to Bairds and Scottish Steel, Ltd. The men were in a party of brushers and repairers numbering between 20 and 30 men engaged at work in various parts of the colliery workings. Those who lost their lives were: William Burns (50), repairer, who resided at Newtown Street, Kilsyth (a widower); and Richard O'Raw (28) repairer, of Shuttle Street, Kilsyth (unmarried). A third man who was reported missing was found alive by a rescue party after a search extending over eleven hours. [Scotsman 31 May 1940]

– Down the Pit

"It was a horrible job, but it was a horrible job done by good men who cared about each other. You couldnae go doon the pit and no care about the lad who was next to you. You had to care about him, because he had tae care about you, because you're three hundred and fifty feet underground and you're working in a section...the main road would probably be half up this thingummy, but the smaller roads were probably about four feet high. And where my father worked it was probably two feet, two and a half feet high….and he had, there was probably twenty men on. The coal face was probably that length (demonstrates just under a metre), and then you had to go in four and a half feet. You'd tae take that coal out. It added up tae roughly ten tonnes of coal a day. He'd to lie on his side and shovel it out….and when I started doon there, I delivered trees, we called them trees. They were pit props. They were about this height (demonstrates)...for tae hold the roof up while he was doing this. He was doon the same pit as me. It didnae always work that way, you know, there were different people worked different places. But, it was a good, you couldnae say it was a good job, but what it was, was good men doing a rotten job tae the best o' their ability, but they had to care. There was very few people in the pit who didnae care who survived. You know, you could be miserable if you put your workmates in any line o' danger. You had tae care and, as I say, I was only down it three and a half years. Pop, was down it - fifty-four years he worked in the pits, and he got £2.25 a pension after fifty-four years."

Andrew Bell

Mining Accidents **(cont. p.5)**

Two Miners Suffocated - Scottish Colliery Fire - Two men were suffocated in a fire at a section of Gartshore Colliery, Croy, Dunbartonshire, early to-day. They were Richard O'Raw, 26, and William Burns, 49, both of Kilsyth. Firefighting and rescue squads worked all night; and all but the three men reached safety. Rescue teams recovered the bodies. The colliery is owned by Bairds and Scottish Steel, Ltd. The escape of 17 miners attributed to the pluck and resource of Pat McGarry, of Twechar He gathered a team of men from a section in the colliery not affected by the outbreak; and they were able to assist all but the three victims to safety. [Nottingham Evening Post 31 May 1940]

Three Die in Colliery Fire – Three men were suffocated in a fire at a section of Gartshore Colliery, Croy, Dunbartonshire, early to-day They were: Richard O'Raw 27 and William Burns, 66, both of Kilsyth and Archibald Cairns, 40, married with large family, of Twechar. Rescue teams recovered the bodies. [Hull Daily Mail 31 May 1940]

1963 August 6 , NK (Twechar area) Stirling: Thomas Airlie, 38 coalmining deputy struck by steel instrument

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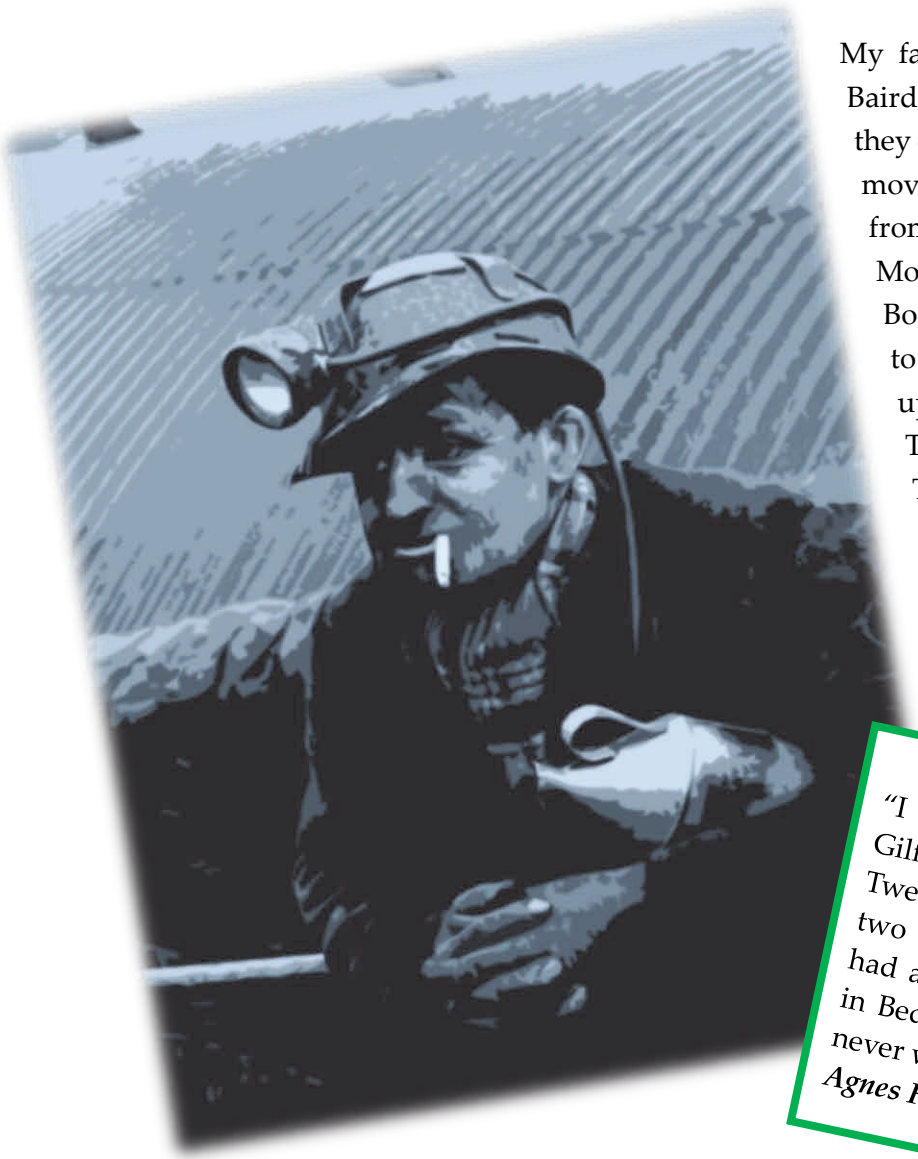
Auchengeich Pit Disaster, 18th Sept 1959 http://www.scottishmining.co.uk/250.html



My father worked when it was Baird's… my father was what they called a tramp brusher, they moved from pit to pit. He was from Motherwell and he left Motherwell and went to Bo'ness, and then from Bo'ness to Twechar, and he finished up working in Grayshill. That's how we came to Twechar."

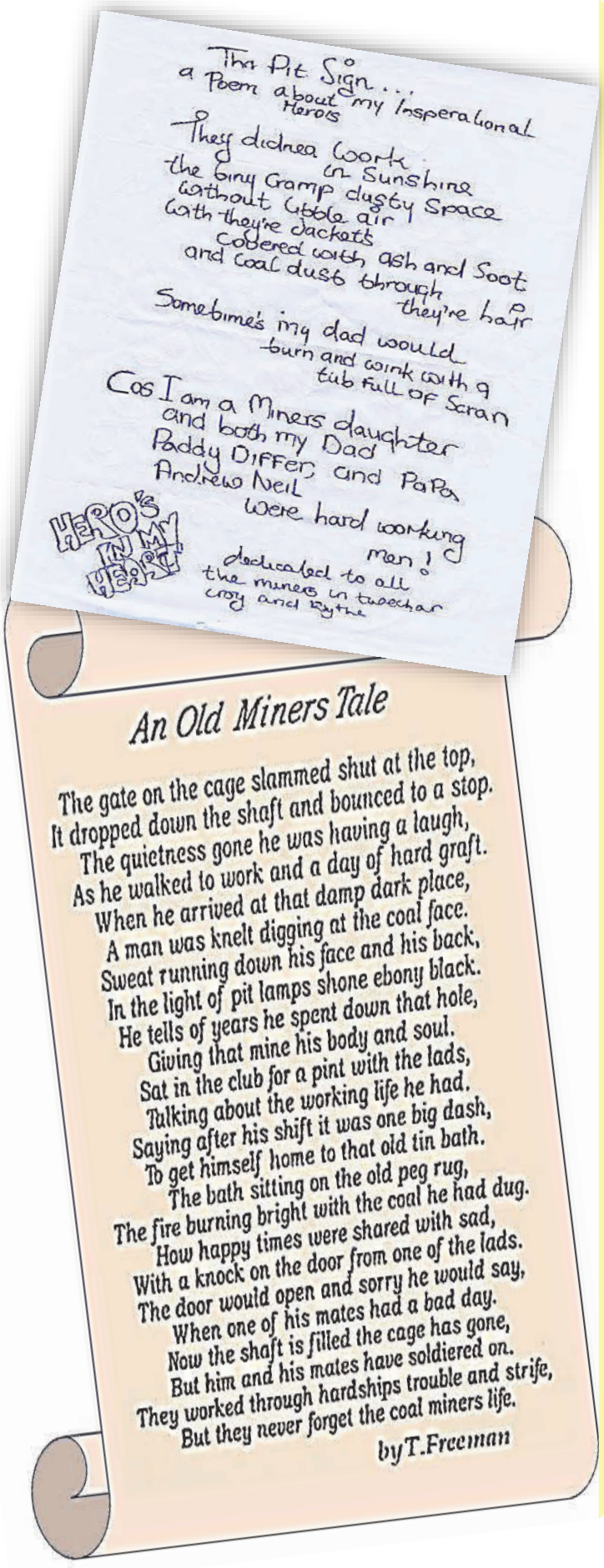
Jim Cowie

"I remember a man, Gilfillan, being killed in Twechar 1 and my dad had two or three accidents. He had a bad one (he worked in Bedlay at the time) and never worked again."

Agnes Hendry

"When I left school my first job was with a carrier, delivering for 'Ingles' in Kirkintilloch. I left there to go to the pit; I was 16/17. I didn't go down the pit at that age. I served so long at the pit - a year or two. Then you went to the training centre at Twechar. You did your training there, then back to the pit, that was you qualified to go down the pit then. When you were training at the pit-head, you picked the slats and separated the stones from the coal. You went from there up to the pit-head, uncoupling haunches, putting clips on the ropes. The training school was at Number 10; it was good, you had 16 weeks of training there. You had your underground training there, you could go to Dumbreck or Twechar 1. Underground the two pits were connected. It was quite a long walk to get to Dumbreck underground from Twechar 1 and they didn't have underground trains at that time. My first pay was about £2.00 odds. I remember some of the people who trained me - Tam Anderson (Kilsyth), James Bell (Kilsyth), Jake Bell, Tam Bell and other local people."

Jim Cowie



The Pit Sign...
a Poem about my Inspirational Heros

They didnea work
in Sunshine
the tiny Cramp dusty Space
without Gobble air
with they're Jackets
Covered with ash and Soot
and Coal dust through they're hair

Sometimes my dad would
burn and wink with a
tub full of Scran

Cos I am a Miners daughter
and both my Dad
Paddy Differ and Papa
Andrew Neil
were hard working
men!

dedicated to all
the miners in twechar
crey and Blythe

HERO'S IN MY HEART

An Old Miners Tale

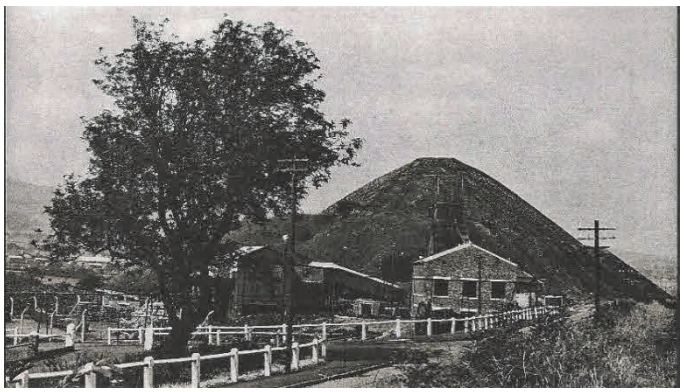
The gate on the cage slammed shut at the top,
It dropped down the shaft and bounced to a stop.
The quietness gone he was having a laugh,
As he walked to work and a day of hard graft.
When he arrived at that damp dark place,
A man was knelt digging at the coal face.
Sweat running down his face and his back,
In the light of pit lamps shone ebony black.
He tells of years he spent down that hole,
Giving that mine his body and soul.
Sat in the club for a pint with the lads,
Talking about the working life he had.
Saying after his shift it was one big dash,
To get himself home to that old tin bath.
The bath sitting on the old peg rug,
The fire burning bright with the coal he had dug.
How happy times were shared with sad,
With a knock on the door from one of the lads.
The door would open and sorry he would say,
When one of his mates had a bad day.
Now the shaft is filled the cage has gone,
But him and his mates have soldiered on.
They worked through hardships trouble and strife,
But they never forget the coal miners life.

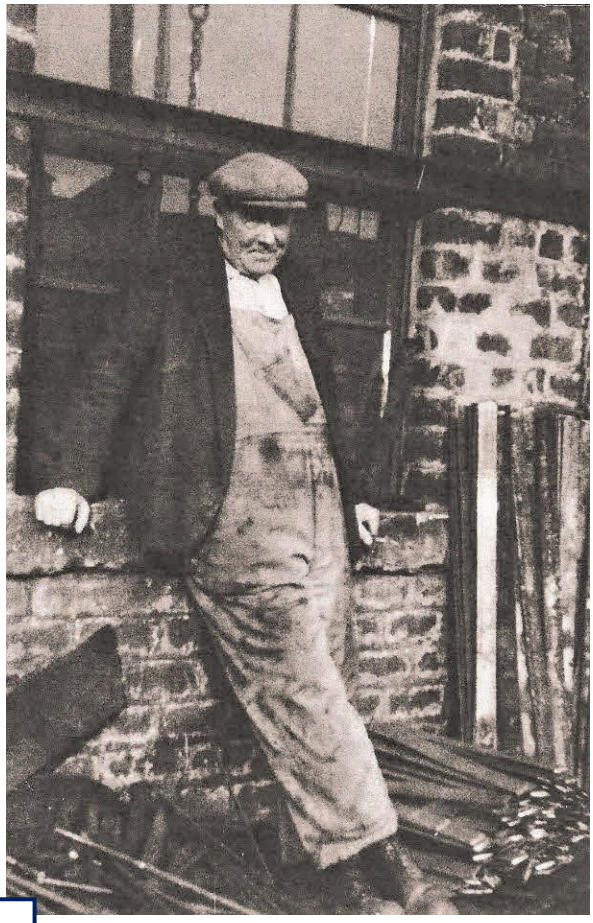
by T.Freeman

– Starting Work at the Pit

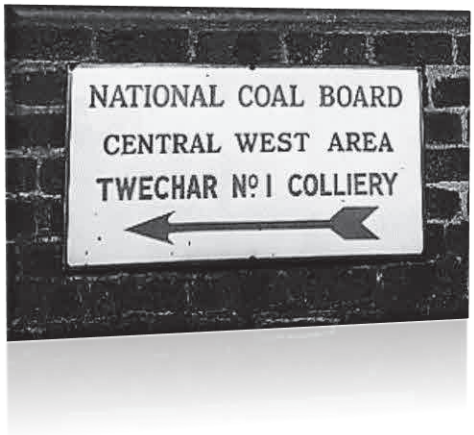
"I went to school till I was 15 and after I left school I started working at the pithead, No.11, 9/11 pit, and I was 15. Then I went to the training school. Twechar Bevin Boys, you've heard o' the Bevin Boys? Aye, the Bevin school. This was, you'd to go doon the pit - do your training before you went down the pits. This was, well, no ex-miners but miners that were ready to retire, was telling you, giving you experience for tae work doon the pits, you know. You done that for three months; and they came from all over this area tae Twechar. You done three months, three months training, and after that you would actually work at the pithead. And then when you left the pithead, you went doon tae the pit, then you could work your way up and all that too, you know. I went from No 11 to Gracehill. They were two pits parallel together - they were joined up. And there were quite a lot o' local people worked in the pits then; in fact, we were surrounded by coal mines, you know, the likes o' that. In fact, maybe the young ones would never think about it. You were up at 6 o'clock in the morning tae go tae the pit and, especially in the winter time, you never hardly seen daylight. You went to the pithead at 6 o'clock, didnae come home tae 3.30 maybe quarter tae 4. It was dark at that time and you never seen daylight. Some people done dayshifts, and the backshift 2 to 10, and then nightshift, and round about here the majority o' the men worked in the pits. This was a mining area."

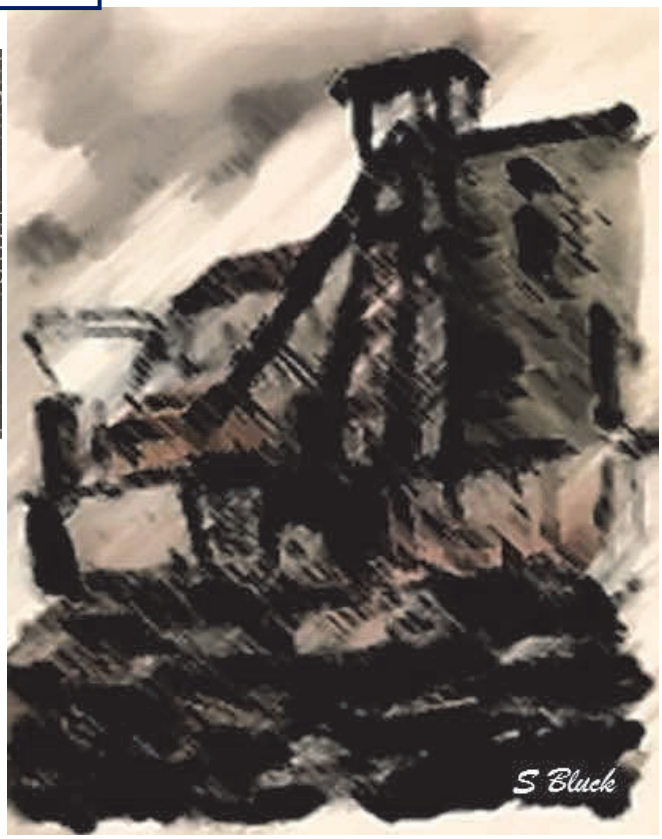
Robert Hardie





Top left: Twechar No.1
Above and below: Twechar workshop workers
Top right: Sam Picken, foreman, Twechar workshop





– Clearing the Bings

"Up there (Gartshore pit) there was a coal recovery plant and that continued beyond the mining period, so they recovered a lot of coal from the bings there. And they basically cleared away all the old bings, taking the coal out of them, but at the same time, they also took the shale out of the bing and mixed that with furnace ash and such-like - made breeze blocks out of it for the construction industry. So, they did a good job up there. One of the actual problems, in a way, is that a lot of, with clearing away all the bings, most of the buildings, and all the rest of it, there's actually very little for people to see and say, "Ah, we were a pit village." And therefore, we're always needing to remind people of that, and that's why I give various talks. In fact, I did one for the Cumbernauld History Society just last week."

Paul Carter

"When I first went down, I wasn't frightened, it was high roofs, I wasn't scare, I was alright. You went into classrooms in the training centre, each classroom was for different thing, then they told you where you would be going. You would be walking to Dumbreck or Twechar 1. After you were down the pit, you did so long in different jobs and if anybody asked you if you wanted to go to the face-line to do your training, you were allocated to a man - he took over you and you worked with him for so long, then go to another job and work with another fella. It was interesting. There would be about 30 of us at the coal face at a time. There was a great sense of camaraderie. I worked with boys from Motherwell, Bellshill, Lesmahagow. They travelled here when I worked up in No.s 9 and 11. Then I went to Bedlay and worked with people from the same places. Then I went to Fife. There were even boys from Ayrshire working – they travelled from Ayrshire to Fife. I liked them, good company, good men. I always worked for the National Coal Board. When I worked down the pit, we just stopped and had our tea where we worked. We had no toilets, we just went to the darkest corner and put our light out. I never saw a rat down the pit. There were mice at Grayshill and we used to trap them with milk bottles then send them up to the pit-head again.

Jim Cowie

"My dad worked in Twechar No.1, he was a miner. He went from there to Dullatur, then to Bedlay, he cycled everywhere to pits. His last pit was Cardowan and he took early retirement at 60. He worked down the pit all his life. He was a methane borer. I remember asking him what a methane borer was and he said that when they open up a new seam and boring their way in for the miners to dig the coal, they had to test the gas and they had to draw some of the coal to see how much gas was in it."

Emily Bamford

– Both Parents Worked in the Pit

"Well, I know mum, she worked in the pithead when she was a young girl. Quite a few women in Twechar worked in the pitheads. She had friends that worked in the pitheads. I never seen a photograph of her, but I know people, when we were young - they used tae come and see my mum, the ones that did work with her at the pithead. The likes o' that, there must have been quite a few of my mum's friends worked at the pithead. My Da, he worked in the pits for years too. In fact, we're all from mining stock, you know, all my dad's family were miners. I think he was, called it a brusher or something like that. He didn't have many jobs down the pit, he didn't have many jobs you know….and then when they finished up, he was sent to do wee jobs, just to get their retirement and all that. You know, it was all change after the coal board took over, to the better, and the unions helped a lot there too; they helped a lot."

Robert Hardie

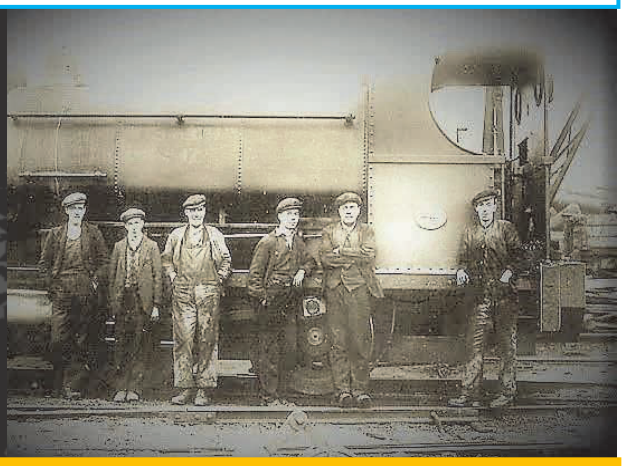
The 'truck' or 'ticket' was a system whereby workers were paid in goods instead of money. The system was made illegal in 1831 when the Truck Act was passed. However, the truck system continued in many areas, particularly in Lanarkshire and Ayrshire, as companies kept the pay offices and the company store separate and argued that they were therefore complying with the Act. Many company owners expected cash advances to be spent in the company store and, as the interval between payments was typically a fortnight or a month, many men were dependent on the cash advances and thus the store. Those workers who habitually waited for pay day were not generally affected by the truck system.

"Twechar Yard must have had a couple of thousand, a thousand anyway, worked in it. Every trade was learned there. All the pit stuff was repaired there, all the machinery, also joiners - when it shut, that was Twechar finished then. There were no pits left, well, the pits started finishing up. You would never have thought that place, the yard, would have shut.

"I don't think they should have shut the pits. It was an industry and now you wouldn't have the conditions that we worked in, it wouldn't be so dusty. I still think there should be pits still there. Health and safety was nothing then, there is now."

Jim Cowie

"My father worked in the pits, No.3 and No.11 - I think he was a fireman. I didn't have my father very long; I was 21 when he died. I knew more about my Mother's second husband, Jimmy McLean, who was a rope splicer down the pit. When my father was down the pit, we used to meet him - I used to run from Whitelaw Terrace to Willie Hamilton's shop to meet him coming off the pit bus. We would run to see who got his piece box first, to get his jammy piece with cheese in it, ah! When I think of it! I couldn't eat a piece with jam and cheese now – we thought it was wonderful. I can't tell you much else about him, he died when he was 59. He died of pneumoconiosis. He was ill for a while and he had arthritis too. He used to do his 'bookies runner' down there at the rent office. Big Pete McCulloch and the Cairns used to do it, there was a few of them sat down there. A 'bookies runner' takes the lines off the punters when they were backing a horse and he done his 'bookies runner' for a bookie at the top of the town in Kilsyth. And he had a bag that had a lock on key on it and when the race started the bag got locked. Sometimes, I had to run into Kilsyth with the bag containing all the bets. It was illegal but the police were good at telling them when they were coming. Sometimes they were along the back line or the Coachie, and they would tell him if they were standing tossing pennies, when they were coming, and they would scatter. A lot of men played at tossing on a Sunday."
Christine Kelly



"The miners' strike, 1984-85. We got £6.70 per week to keep us a family of four. Our William was just joining the army at this time and he needed all this kit - they gave him a big list, we didn't have savings or anything. We hung on to bits and bobs of money to pay our way. Thank goodness, I have good family and they were all buying him a wee bit each. We were also fortunate that the good people of Twechar also came to our aid and they were handing in things to the Club and making up bags of shopping that we got. Each week we got two bags of shopping, we were very grateful for everything. They also had a wee soup kitchen but I didn't like going to it. It was a lovely meal, homemade food, set out lovely, but I didn't like going. It was over in the Bowling Green. That lasted a year and eventually the parcels waned out, people had their own to look after. The council waived our rent for a year, they were fabulous, but the £6.70 that we got every week from Social Security (and my husband had always worked), had to be paid back - a man came to the door from Social Security one day, saying we owed them £320 or something like that and we had to pay that back at £1.00 a week."
Vivien Cowie

Nicky Wilson, President, National Union of Mineworkers (2012-)
Former miner at Cowdowan Colliery

"It was quite a good apprenticeship, I think, you got in the coalboard [National Coal Board – NCB]. Ah mean, one o' the things you learned - every year you had to pass your exam before you could move on to the next year... you'd a practical exam as well as theory and, plus, as I say, further education college. So, I think, rightly so, the coalboard apprentices were deemed as very good….and, I think, we see that when we look at the other industries, people who have moved on and went to other industries, 'specially things like the North Sea industry."
Nicky Wilson, President, National Union of Mineworkers

"It was after the 1974 strike… the miners' pension scheme was crap, tae be quite honest wi ye. I think ma pension fae '67 till aboot '74 was probably worth aboot £2.00 a week… and, ah mean, when we were payin' in up tae decimalisation, it was one and sixpence a week and that's what you were contributing… but, after the 1974 strike, one o' the things we got, we got a number o' things, we got the pneumoconiosis agreement… we got the updated mineworkers' pension scheme, and we got workwear introduced intae the coal mines and that. But, the pension scheme became a reasonable scheme efter that, because for every pound the miners paid in, the employer paid two pound. From 1975 onwards. It certainly didn't help a lot o' the older miners."
Nicky Wilson, President, National Union of Mineworkers

"I mean, one o' the things aboot the pit. It was good, because the men, what I learned very quickly - I didnae come from a mining background - but, what I learned was that miners always look after their sels, you know, they were really good that way. And even when I was a young lad, you know, they made sure you dinnae do nothing silly or dangerous or that. It was always that way in the pits, you know."
Nicky Wilson, President, National Union of Mineworkers

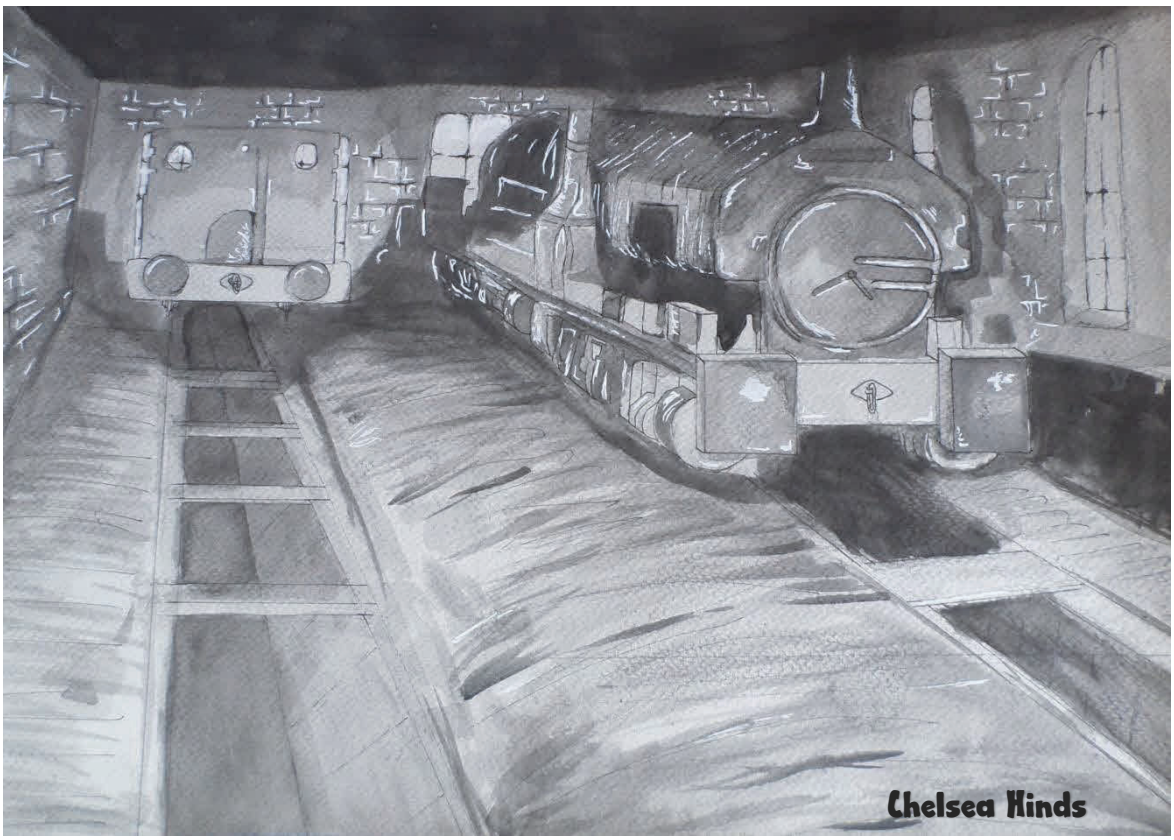
- Mining Accident, 1982
"The mine's rescue came, but the honest truth is that the guys who were down there… went intae that and started getting the men out long before the mine's rescue got there. And I always admired that, because, I mean, when an explosion happened, as I say, speakin' to the men that were down there, it blew all the air doors open, and things like that… and a massive noise… but, none of them had any hesitation tae go intae where it had happened and get the men out."
Nicky Wilson, President, National Union of Mineworkers

"….and another important thing we done in Scotland, in ma time, was the, it used to be pneumoconiosis, that if they said you'd simple pneumoconiosis… you couldnae get a disablement percentage to get you a pension or anything….and it was when oor reps, Mick Lennon, that actually took a case to the commissioner, Commissioner May….and he won it! And May said, it disnae matter what your percentage is, if you've got the disease you're disabled."

Nicky Wilson, President, National Union of Mineworkers

"And that was the power the coalboard had at the time, you know, they could manipulate situations to make a pit look uneconomic… which is what they done at Cardowan. And that was why, eventually, when the strike came in '84, '85, the Scottish miners… we'd already seen 6 pits shut fae 1981… so, we didnae need anybody tae tell us we're oot on strike, because…..actually, Scotland, Wales and eh, the North East, which had five pits shut, Wales had seven, we'd been agitating tae try and get the national union tae enter into a dispute, tae try and save wur pits and wur communities, and it wisnae delivered. And it was only, we know history now, it was only when Cortonwood shut… the Yorkshire men walked out. That is how the strike happened."

Nicky Wilson, President, National Union of Mineworkers



Silicosis in the Coalmining Industry

'Throughout the twentieth century the experience of extracting coal mirrored that in the quarry industries on many levels. Both involved highly dangerous working conditions with each having an unenviable record of accidents and ill health. Both involved the winning of natural resources by means of explosives, drilling and cutting. And both industries exposed workers to very hazardous materials, including silica dust. However, the disease differed in coalminers, most obviously in the colour of the phlegm coughed up by the workers and, critically, in the pathological findings of diseased lungs. The presence of silica, officially recognised as the cause of lung disease, was not always as evident in men whose lungs were pitch black with mine dust as it was in quarriers with white lungs resembling stone. During the 1920s and 1930s, if coal miners could prove that they had worked in high silica-content seams, in processes officially decreed as hazardous, those with evidence of silicosis might be eligible for compensation. Extensive research during the 1940s eventually found that serious pulmonary disease occurred in workers exposed to dust in which the percentage of free silica was low. This was an important step forward but was overshadowed by the recognition that coal dust was, in its own right, a major cause of pulmonary disease amongst coalworkers. Many years had passed before coal dust was recognised as harmful and many more decades passed before low levels of the most hazardous element of coal, silica, was re-acknowledged as a cause of rapid progressive massive fibrosis in coal workers. High silica-content dust was easier to recognise in coalworkers, particularly in the anthracite coal fields of Wales, where investigators determined in 1942 that: 'If the dust contains a high proportion of free silica in a fine state of division, the disease tends to develop rapidly.' In 2003, Buchanan, Miller and Soutar of the Institute of Occupational Medicine, Edinburgh, concluded that the risks of silicosis over a working lifetime could rise dramatically with even brief exposure to high quartz concentrations. The problem for coalworkers was that almost every aspect of work involved exposure to mine dust that was a mixture of coal and silica, with some processes being more hazardous than others.'

Source: Dr Sue Morrison, *The Silicosis Experience in Scotland: Causality, Recognition and the Impact of Legislation during the Twentieth Century*, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing (Saarbrucken, Germany, 2010). Extract shown here with permission from the author.

HOUSING

The village of Twechar had its beginnings in a gathering of homes on the incline of Barrhill. These residences housed weavers, farmers, coke workers and canal workers.

In around 1860, when the pits were sunk by Baird & Co. in Twechar and the surrounding area, there was a migration into Twechar, with people coming mainly from the county of Lanarkshire where Baird owned most of the mines. This created a need for new housing to be built to accommodate the new families. This came in the form of a miners' row, which was built by Baird's along the south bank of the Forth and Clyde Canal. This series of constructions was called 'Twechar Row' and was made up of 35 dwelling places. These miners' cottages had two rooms, each with a large coal fire for warmth and cooking purposes and they were lit by means of paraffin lamps. Water was obtained from a communal pump outside the cottages and toilets were also in outside buildings. Sleeping facilities came in the form of two bed recesses in each room, with hurly beds (boards that could slide under the other beds) for large families. This row was demolished in 1925 due to its poor conditions. John Andrews describes the sleeping accommodation in these rows:

> "My mother was born in Twechar. She was born in Twechar rows. There was a canal row running parallel with the canal in Twechar. There were about 35 miners' cottages there of 2 rooms. The front room, that's the main room, had two bed spaces. The bedroom had two bed spaces with a curtain across. A lot of the families that had large family had what they called hurly beds. It was boards on wheels and with the family, if there was not room in the beds they pushed them under the beds."

As well as the canal side rows described by Mr Andrews, above, there were also some beside the canal at Shirva Road. Seven of these were used as office and accommodation during the time of the existence of The Yard workplace in Twechar. We have it anecdotally that some of these rows were still being used as dwellings in 1904, as the famous Celtic goalkeeper Charlie Shaw is said to have been born there. It is unclear when these were built.

When new pits and workshops opened later in the century Baird's were required to build further miners rows in Twechar. The initial four rows were completed around 1880 and two more rows were added in 1900. In total, there were 160 abodes. The first of the rows, which ran at right angles to the main road, was given the local name of the 'Store Rows', as at the top part of the row the Gartsherrie co-op was situated along with the local public house. The further five rows were made up of single and double storey rows. With six exceptions, these houses were made up of two rooms with recess beds in each room. They had ranges for cooking and warmth and were initially lit by paraffin lamps. These rows had communal outdoor washing and toilet facilities. The rows were demolished in 1957 when enough modern houses were built by the local council.

Much larger houses in Barrhill Road and Barrhill Terrace were built between 1890 and 1910 to accommodate the managerial staff of Baird's. The grandest of these is the red sandstone, five bedroom 'Glenshirva', which was built to house Captain Buchanan, Baird's general manager.

Merryflats, with smouldering bing in background.

In 1925, with increasing population demands, Baird's built what were colloquially known as 'the new hooses'. There were 200 dwellings in total, with the majority y being two-apartment and some three-apartment houses. The houses were set up to take electric lighting (which came four years later) and were kitted out with indoor toilets and bathrooms. The scheme comprised Burnbrae, Windy Yeats, Whitelaw Terrace, Merryflats, Shirva Lea, Annieston and Sunnyhill, and was passed into the hands of the council in 1968 when mining came to an end in Twechar. The scheme was modernised over the years and was demolished (starting in 2014) to make way for new social and private housing. Respondent Jessie Johnston, talks about her family moving back from the "new hooses" to the miners' rows:

> "Oh, I was born at 10 Burnbrae. How ma mother changed fae 10 Burnbrae, o'er tae the raws, we no toilet and aw they weans, I don't know…but she did! Bit more room mebbe?"

MacDonald Crescent was built in 1939 by the county council and was made up of the first houses that were not built by Baird. It comprised 48 houses that were larger than the Baird's houses and had modern facilities and electricity. More council houses were built by Dunbartonshire county council at Alexander Avenue (1948), Kelvin View (about 1955) and Davidson Crescent (c.1965/1966). All these houses, other than the three that blew up in a 1970 gas explosion (which had no casualties), are still standing.

Annieston and Shirva Lee

An award winning affordable housing development is currently underway in Twechar; it is named Roman Fields, built by Places for People and Castlerock Edinvar Housing Association. These are the first new buildings since the prefabs of the 1950s. There are 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties for social rent, shared equity and outright sale. The plot comprises 2 and 3 bedroom semi-detached houses which are energy efficient and said to have a traditional feel. The building continues with the hope of increasing Twechar's population to over 2000 people. This is hoped to bring, amongst other benefits, an improved bus service to the area. The development also has the aim of bringing improved housing for the elderly and the disabled to Twechar.

"We moved from Barrhill Rows to McDonald Crescent, to the 'lollipop'. Our house there was a four in a block and had loads of space. There was a coal fire in the living room and also in two of the bedrooms, and until I was 12 years old, we had a back to back in the kitchen. The heat from the living-room fire went through the wall to the kitchen and heated the back to back, which was a kind of Aga. On one side, it had a kind of boiler where, if you put cold water in it, it heated it to do the washing, etc. You could cook on top of it and it had an oven. My mammy had an electric cooker and a washing machine so she didn't use the back to back. My father used to take a shovel full of coal from the living room fire, (health & safety oot the windae!) and take it through the lobby to the bedroom and place the red-hot coals in the grate and you had an instant fire. I remember lying with the light out, just with the light of the fire. Our neighbours were the Llewellyns - they emigrated to Australia. Their daughter Irene and I are still friends. Other neighbours were the Dochertys and the Kidds. All the mothers called each other by their married name, e.g. Mrs Kidd, Mrs Docherty, Mrs Neill."

Emily Bamford

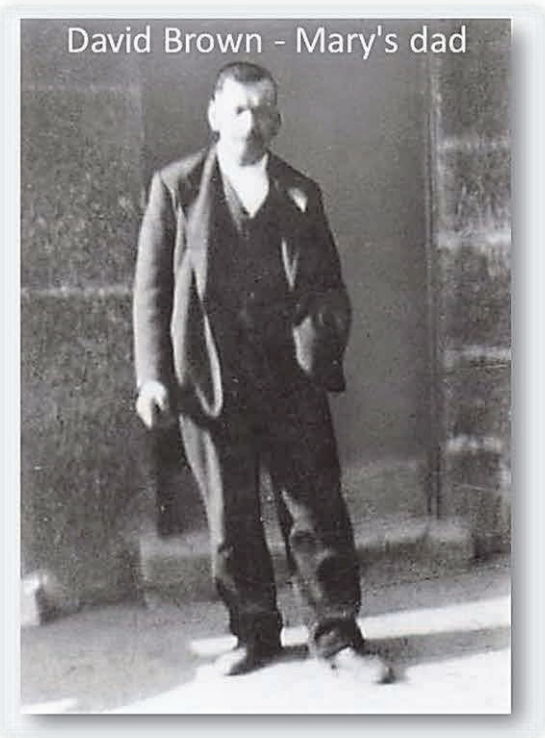
"I was born at 10 Whitelaw Terrace, Twechar. I had three brothers and one sister; my father was Melvin Kelly from Kilsyth and my Mother was Jessie Wilson from Bridgeton, Glasgow. I grew up in a one-bedroom house, with a living-room and kitchen. The children slept in the room and my Mother and Father in the living-room. We moved to another house in Whitelaw Terrace and it had two bedrooms. The house had a big range, a back to back in the kitchen. The back to back was in the scullery and was back to back with the fire in the living-room. My Mother had two wee things on the fire that she kept the kettle on. On our back to back there was always stew on, soup on, there was always something cooking on the back to back. The most horrible job in that house was cleaning the back to back every week with black lead polish. I think there were two sinks for the washing and for the mangle; she had a washing board. When the houses in Gartshore Crescent were let, they had boilers. I used to come in and smell the whites boiling."

Christine Kelly

- House at Windy Yetts

"Well, when it was first built, it was an upstairs downstairs house. Self-contained, toilet and one or two bedrooms; kitchen, that was up the stairs, and down the stairs would be a replica of that but obviously, you didn't have the stairs tae go up. But, when they were first built, there was a coal cellar in the kitchen, as you know it, and that's where you kept the coal, and each room was fired by coal but, the coal was at that time, you were getting the coal almost for nothing, so, they could afford tae have… Again, William Baird owned the coal; he sold you the coal. The money you earnt out the pits, William Baird took back off you for coal, so there wasnae much money crossed the bridge tae go any expeditions or anything like that."

Andrew Bell



"My father was in ill health and couldn't work. The only thing that saved us was that I had a brother called Davy (the same name as my father), and the rent was put into Davy's name and took out of Davy's wages. That's how we were allowed to stay in our house. I remember the Lynch family got put out and nobody could help them. I was only a wee lassie. They had a son in the army, but that didn't matter - the father couldn't work. There was a few people put out of their houses because they didn't work for the Bairds. It was pouring of rain on the day the Lynch family was evicted. Everything was put in the street - nobody could take them in, they could give them a cup of tea but they couldn't help them in any other way. They were warned that if they took them in, they would get put out too. The family went to the Diamond Bridge to a tent, where the gypsies lived."

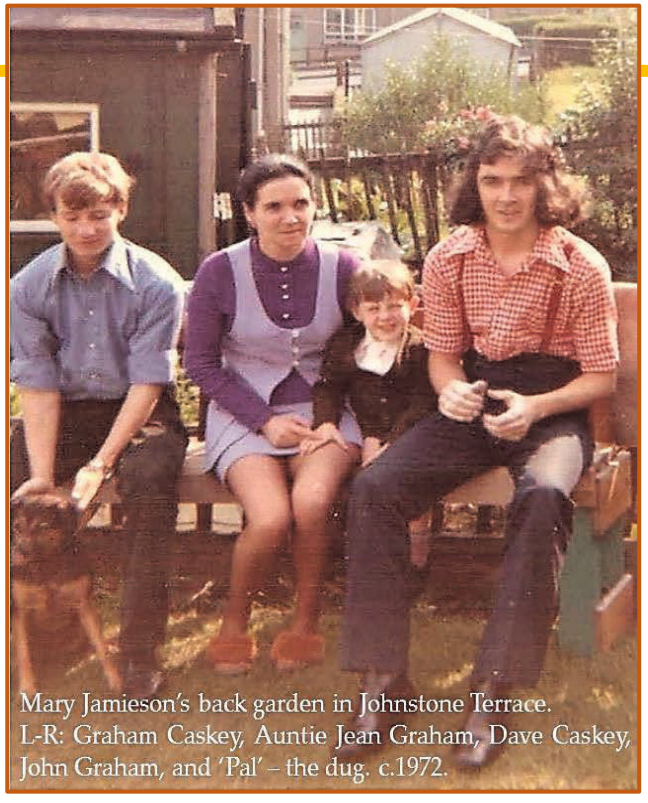
Mary (Brown) Kennedy

I was born in Barrhill Rows and I have lived in Twechar all my life. I left the Rows when I was two years old and moved to Merryflats; I stayed there 'till I was 10 and then moved to 28 McDonald Crescent. I used to go and see my Gran and Granda in the Rows. They stayed in the wee buildings and had 10 of a family; they had just a wee kitchen and a room. They (the children) didn't all stay there. They were all born up in Turneyhill; my Granny and Grandfather had a place up Turneyhill, years ago. It's a way up by the farm, up by the Fort, at the Nazarene; it was a way up there at Turneyhill. There were two families up there. All their 10 of a family was born up there.

They had a smallholding. It was a thatched cottage and someone set the roof on fire. The Martins were all terrified of fire because of that. Then they went to that Auld Row at the canal; they went there, where the Masonic Hall is. My Mother was 18 when she got married and she stayed there and she had nine of a family. Then we went to Merryflats. We had two rooms there - the living-room, a kitchenette and a bathroom; it was a Baird's house. My Dad came from Ireland when he was 16. He came with other Irish men who came to Glasgow, then left to come to work at Twechar. My Dad cleaned the boilers that kept the machines going; he went inside the boilers and chipped the stuff off. He was a young man when he died, it was his chest - it would be that emphysema. The family was working and the fellas were working in the pits, so we got to keep the house. Our neighbours were Mrs Bell, Andy Bell's granny, and Nettie Truten's mother, and a Mrs McCabe and Mrs Park – they went to Dumgrew, and Mrs Kelly who stayed in McDonald Crescent, and Lizzie Weir, the Simmons and the Neills, the Burns.

Some of the houses in Merryflats only had one bedroom. We had a bathroom, with a WC and a bath. We had 2 coal fires; one in the living room and one in the bedroom. All your cooking was done in the living room, in the range. In the scullery, there were 3 brass pipes and the hot water ran through them, that was all the heating you had except when you put the fires on. There was no cooker in the kitchen. The washing was done in the scullery, in a wee boiler and 2 sinks, a wee sink and a big sink. There was a pantry in the kitchen and there was a wee window in the pantry to keep the food cold."

Mary (Brown) Kennedy



Mary Jamieson's back garden in Johnstone Terrace.
L-R: Graham Caskey, Auntie Jean Graham, Dave Caskey, John Graham, and 'Pal' – the dug. c.1972.

"I was born in Lennoxcastle Hospital in 1962. I have lived in Twechar all my life. My mum was from Twechar and my dad was from Kirkintilloch. My mum's own name was 'Timmins', my grandpa's name was Patrick Timmins, my gran's name was Louie Timmins and her own name was Conroy. I think her family had been in Twechar for God knows how long. My gran lived in the Rows in the 'big buildings.' My gran had two boys and three girls, who are now all dead except for one. He went to America 55 years ago. They moved from the Rows to Alexander Avenue, I think when they were built. My grandpa died when all the kids were quite young. He had pneumoconiosis, (I think) that was on his death certificate, and that was a common thing for miners in those days and my gran was left on her own with five kids. My gran got a very small pit pension for my grandpa but no compensation – they didn't get it then."

Sharon Young

- Twechar's Houses

"I born in 1928 at 2 Barrhill Terrace, in my granny's front room. We lived across the road in the 'Store Row'. I lived there until I was 21 then we moved to Alexander Avenue… I was born in my granny's because we only had a wee room and kitchen and my gran wanted my mum over there to have me because they had a better house than us. They had an inside toilet and a wee scullery. We had nothing like that, you had to go outside and round the back to go to the toilet. My grandfather was an under manager at Twechar 3 pit and that's why they were in the terrace… Our house had a big black range, we cooked on top of it, with a wee oven at the side, with a coal fire. We did all our cooking on top of that. There were two 'set-in-beds' in the kitchen with curtains and a bed in the room… My dad worked in Twechar 1 pit. They didn't have baths at Twechar pit then. We had to boil kettles of water for him to get washed. Miners' wives had it hard then, especially if they had a man and two or three sons (who were miners) in the house… There were washhouses down the middle of the rows but you could only us it once a week as it was shared with other families. Maybe when your mither was finished doing the washing and was emptying the tub, you would get your feet washed – we thought it was great! There was five of us in the room and kitchen: Wilma, John, Roberta, Margaret and me."

Agnes Hendry – age 89

"I was born in Barrhill Rows, in my grandparent's house. My dad was away in the army during the war and he and my mum shared the house with my grandparents. Mum and dad had the room, and they slept in the living room bed recess. I can remember the house being upstairs. Alice Colston, she was my granny's next-door neighbours. We had the black-leaded fire, that was my mother's job to polish that, it had the bit you pulled round to sit the kettle on. There was a sink at the window, the fireplace, the bedroom was to the back. There were two bed recesses there too. The toilet was downstairs and outside. Each house had its own wee key, my mother used to whitewash it and make wee patterns and keep it nice. My mother cooked on the range; my granny liked to do the cooking. At one point, she had three sons and two daughters in that house. It was in 'the buildings' - the first one next to the railway line."

Vivien Cowie

THE CAPTAIN'S HOUSE, MAIN STREET

Bonnie: "I was born in 1956, in Suffolk, Virginia, USA. My husband and I married and lived in a two-berth caravan, started looking for a house, and lived in Pearl Cottage in Kilsyth for 6 yrs. We had three children under 4 yrs. old, and one of them was disabled and we needed to get a home that we could separate the children if they became ill. We advertised and were offered this one in Twechar and could just about afford it, and it meant we could separate the children if they were ill, which was just as well as they ended up taking chicken pox, measles and everything. They grew up here and have fond memories of the house. The previous owners were the Shields family, a blended family, as a result of two divorcees marrying - with eight children living in the house. Like us, their children gradually grew up and moved out."

Bonnie: “We knew nothing of the history of the house, we didn't even know we had a back garden when we moved in. We were told that it was known in the village as ‘Captain Buchanan's house’. We discovered that…we used to grow vegetables along the sidewall and an older lady stopped us one day when we were out working in the garden, and told us that she used to be a maid there in the 1920s, and told us what every room was used for in the house. That was the first we learned about it and this had been the mine owner's house and the mine manager's house and Cpt Buchanan's family lived in it after that. One day when my son was a toddler, I ran out because Michael was standing at the front gate talking to a man and it turned out that the man had been evacuated to the village and had stayed in this house during the war. He could tell us that, now, where the cottage is across the road (Daniel McDonald's cottage), that was the tennis courts for the house. There are five bedrooms, a bathroom, a shower room, three public rooms, the kitchen, and in the annex at the back are a utility room, a toilet and the entrance room, which was originally the butler's room, where he could serve drinks out to the garden or into the house.”

Ken: “The original deeds when we bought the house, there was a kind of booklet with the house, the house took six years to build from 1896-1902. In the write-up in the deeds it also stated that it took that period of time just to build the external walls of the house around the garden, at some points the wall is over nine feet high and it goes all the way right round. It must have been quite a building feat in its day.”

Bonnie: “We moved in, in December, and before long the hedge across the back was cut and we discovered that we had this big garden and in no time at all it became overgrown but, gradually, we cleared a lot of the turf and things and we discovered a lot of paths where the garden had been a vegetable garden, we think, because there were old sandstone type slabs 12 inches square, and we've used them in various places around the garden. There was a huge rhubarb patch at the side so it must have been looked after by gardeners for a long time. There were two areas at the front and at the side of the house and apparently, they were goldfish pools. Long before we moved in, they were planted up but that's the way the house was at that time. The railings weren't there; there were railings initially, but I believe they were cut down for the war effort and there were hedges right round at the front but when the council wanted to buy the lane for access to the Centre, they then put railings up round the house for us as part of the agreement.”

Bonnie: “All the cornicing in the main rooms downstairs are still in the house, the window sashes, the floors throughout are still the original floors and the layout is exactly the same. The bathhouse sink’s in the wash-room as well. We enjoy living in the village and don't really want to move.
Bonnie & Ken McKerracher

SCHOOL DAYS & PLAY DAYS

Twechar School opened in 1888 with an Infant Department after The Kirkintilloch (Landward) School Board decided to build a school in the village to meet the educational needs of the mining community. The school build was completed and fully operational by 1889. Older children, many of them already working at the pits, attended Continuation Classes during the evenings. The school roll increased over the years and new classrooms were built in 927, followed by a Junior Secondary Department in 1937, which meant that children could continue to be educated locally rather than have to travel to Townhead School or Lenzie Academy. However, the Junior Department closed in 1966 and pupils then had to travel to Cumbernauld High School or the new Kirkintilloch High School. A 'Mining Room' was also added in 1937 to train youngsters in the skills needed for the coal mining industry; this was partly funded by the Miners' Welfare to ensure their employability.

Twechar School continues to educate young children from the village between nursery age and P.7. The building also houses a Language and Communication Resource which provides support for East Dunbartonshire children with additional support needs in language or communication, and the East Dunbartonshire Council Teaching and Learning Centre is based within the school building.

Many of our respondents have vivid memories of the school:

"Mrs Smith (Doddie) was the headmistress and Mr Brown the Headmaster. When I left Twechar and went to Cumbernauld High and it was the same heidteacher Mr Broon and Big Jimmy Sinclair there, I thought, I cannae believe that we come from Twechar and they're following us here - they're going to haunt us all our days!"
Agnes Byrne

Mr Sutherland's Class, 1932

Miss Neil's Class, 1956

Liz Colston & Friends, School Sports Day

I went to Twechar school - I liked school. I was good at English and housewifery. They had a bedroom at the school and someone would get picked to go into it and dust it, clean it and make the bed. It was teaching you how to do things. We would take washing down there too. They had big sinks and wringers, and the teacher would tell us to bring a white shirt and she would show you how to clean the cuffs and the collar the old-fashioned way, on a washing board. They also had a pulley to hang things on and we went back the next day and were taught how to iron it. We had sewing machines and we were taught how to sew too. I think that was the best thing but now, in the schools, they have taken it all away. The boys did woodwork and played football – we had netball too. They taught us to bake as well. In my opinion, it was a good thing because some of the weans these days don't know how to do things.
Christine Kelly

Photo: The Christmas party for the very first nursery school class in Twechar, c.1971.

'Back row from left: Mrs Stafford, Janet Shaw, Margaret McClue, Margaret McNay, Minister & Priest, front of priest is myself - Helen Law Burns, Mary Fleming, Amy Whyte, Agnes Weir, Sadie Stafford, Jean Porter, Agnes Paterson (Teacher), Kay Brown.

Children from left back row: Agnes McCormick, Brian McNay, James McClue, Jacqueline Shaw(?), John McCormick, Gary Burns, Yolanda Stafford, Fiona Brown. Front row: Neil Paton, Jamie Drain, Scott McCormack, Margaret White, Jamie Fleming, Andrew Stafford, Ian Shaw, Agnes Weir, Jennifer Brown. I don't know the name of the girl sitting on the floor but her mum's name was Christine Brown.

Santa was Mr Jimmy McShane.

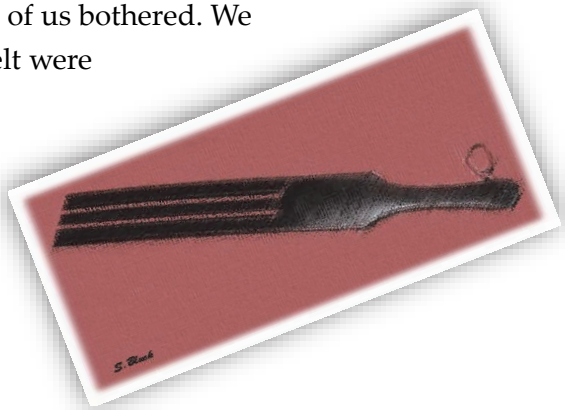
- Courtesy of Helen Law Burns

Mrs Smith's Class, c.1950s

Miss Freeland's Class, 1928

"I went to Twechar School, some of my teachers were Miss Neil, Miss Pettigrew and Mr Sinclair. There were certain boys in my class who never had the belt and one day we were out playing football and the bell had rung and none of us bothered. We were then all lined up, certain boys who never had the belt were greeting before they even got it – before their turn – I won't say their names. The belt was also known as the 'tawse' - a big piece of leather with 'tongues' at the end of it. I can't remember how many times I got it that day - but a thousand time we got it!"

Jim Cowie



These photographs are of a Twechar Primary School sports day. The building work in the background is the Healthy Living & Enterprise Centre being built (between 1988 and 1989). We are sure that Twechar readers will enjoy trying to spot friends and family!

- Photos courtesy of David Abercrombie

"We played at skipping ropes, emptied tins and filled then with dirt to play at beds and made stilts out of tins and string. My pals were Flow White, Jean Neil, Jean Smart and Cathy Lynn."
Agnes Hendry

"When I was a teenager, we used to sit at the rent office on summer nights. When it was 'double summer', you got an extra hour in March and then another extra hour later, maybe in May, and that was 'double summer'. You had two hours and it was clear to 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning."
Mary (Brown) Kennedy

I remember the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, we all got presented at school with cups and saucers. We had a street party and all the neighbours got together, we thought it was wonderful – the Union Jack up and everything. We had a television, we were one of the first to have a telly. My pals Isabel and Julie used to come in to watch it. It was a wee tiny thing and we all used to sit round it on the floor and watch it.
Christine Kelly

Family trapped in Glenshee for 24 hours

One man hoping that the snows don't disappear too quickly is skier Andrew Bell. And that's despite being trapped for 24 hours at Glenshee with his two sons and an 11-year-old boy by high winds and blizzards.

Andrew, of Windyetts, Twechar, has another reason for wanting to revisit Glenshee. His new Mini Maestro is still sitting there, abandoned after it refused to start.

The skiing trip that turned into a nightmare began early on Saturdy morning for Andrew, his sons Drew (20), Robert (18) and the son of a friend, Derek Leeson (11).

Said Andrew: "When we passed through the Devil's Elbow it seemed as if the road was closing in behind us. But although the wind was very strong, it still seemed a pleasant sunny day with no snow falling.

"We skied until about 2pm and came back to the car to find the road closed. The winds in that area seemed to be about 100mph.

"Normally it doesn't take them long to clear the road, but the high winds just kept blowing the snow off the hills to block the passage. The workers eventually just had to admit defeat, although only about 200 yards of road was blocked."

About 2000 people eventually found themselves stranded and forced to spend the night in the cafeteria and ski huts.

Andrew said: "The cafeteria was an area about 15 yards by 25 yards and there were bodies everywhere."

"We tried to sleep in the car for spell, but it was just too cold and we had to give up about midnight.

"In the cafeteria, people were lying everywhere. There was one lad across the top of two space invader machines. We eventually managed to get a small table and one of those large plastic trays for carrying bread or rolls and worked a rota system with the boys so that they could each get at least a little bit sleep.

"It was a very uncomfortable experience and two people were taken from the cafeteria suffering from hypothermia.

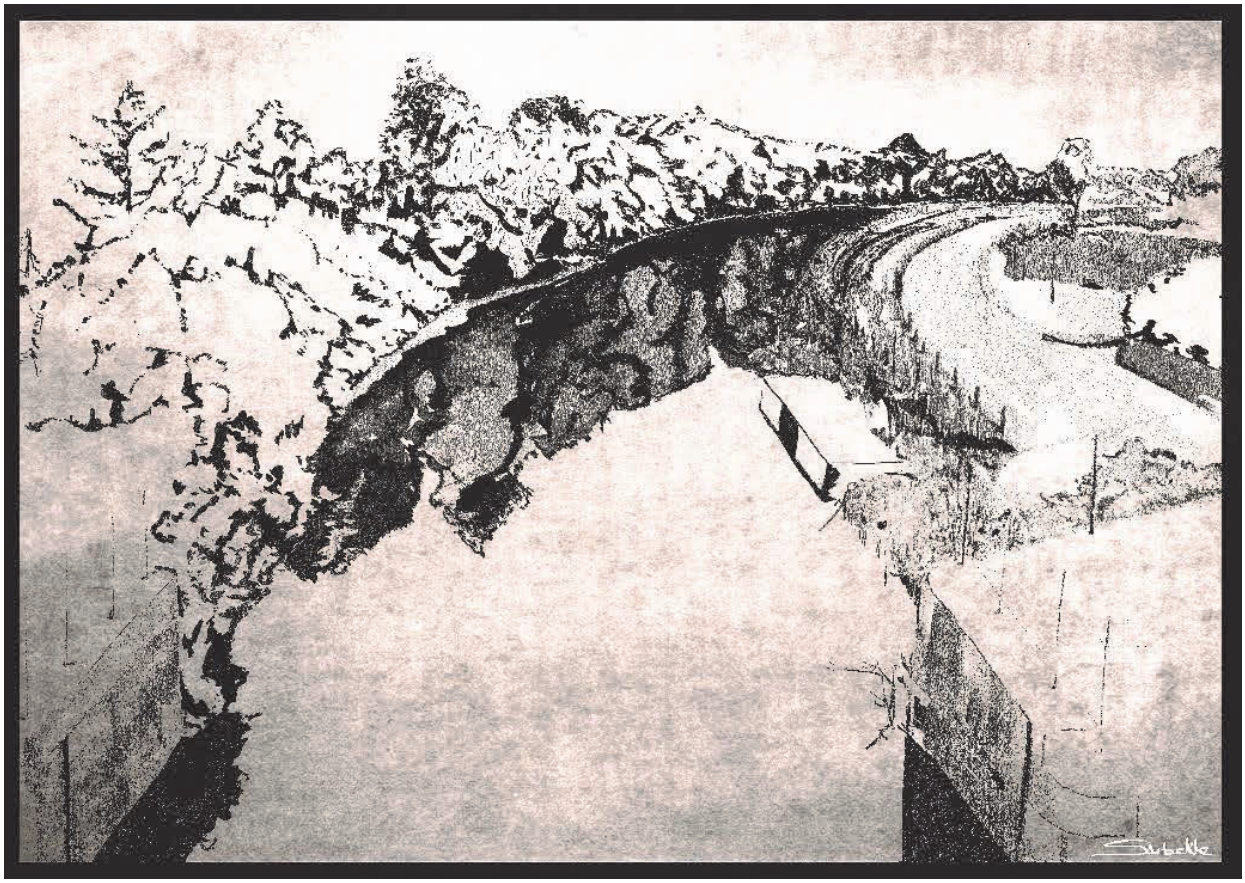
"But most people seemed pretty resolute and determined to treat the whole thing as a bit of an adventure.

"When the road was cleared about 4pm on Sunday we discovered our car wouldn't start, but we managed to get a lift on a bus with a school party travelling to East Kilbride who dropped us off at Condorrat."

He continued: "The people at Glenshee were very good. The only problem was the food supply ran out during the Saturday evening, leaving nothing but packet soup.

"I'm hoping the snow doesn't clear up completely because I'm hoping to get some skiing done this weekend. But I could do without that kind of adventure."

FORTH & CLYDE CANAL



The Forth and Clyde Canal, the world's first sea to sea canal, was surveyed in 1763 by the civil engineer, John Smeaton. Its construction, across the narrowest part of Scotland, started in 1768 after an act of parliament, when the governor of the privately-owned canal company dug out the first bit of soil in what is now Grangemouth. The canal's construction came about as the result of the need for a safer and more expedient method for commercial sea going vessels to reach the burgeoning ports of Central Scotland. It also linked the two main industrial rivers of the Forth and the Clyde. Previously, the boats would have been forced to make the sometimes perilous and routinely time-consuming route around the North of Scotland. The canal, which officially opened in 1790, had to be built particularly deep and wide to accommodate these vessels. It is 35 miles long (with an additional 3.5 miles in Glasgow) and has 39 locks between the town of Bowling, in the West, and the town of Grangemouth in Central Scotland. It links up with The Union Canal at Grangemouth. The canal was not only used to transport goods but also passengers via the goods boats and the faster 'Swift boats', which linked them up with coach services.

The village of Twechar, sits on the south bank of the canal. Twechar's proximity to the Forth and Clyde Canal, as well as the abundant seams of coal there, were major factors in William Baird & Co.'s decision to sink pits in the area in 1860, and mining continued there for almost a century. The

company did tend to favour the railway as a form of coal transportation. However, it had to agree to use the canal for some of its goods moving needs when the canal owners allowed Baird's to build a railway swing bridge over the canal in the 1860s; this was needed to link the Twechar pits with other collieries and wider transport links. The canal was bought by the Caledonian Railway Company in 1867. A sign perhaps that the railways were taking over as the main form of goods transportation from the canals.

The canal was bought over twice in the 20th century and was still being used into the years of the Second World War. The railways had, of course, started taking over from the canals in the areas of both goods and passenger transport. The coming of road haulage and increased car ownership sealed the fate of the canals and the Forth and Clyde Canal closed in 1963, coinciding closely with the closure of the last pits at Twechar.

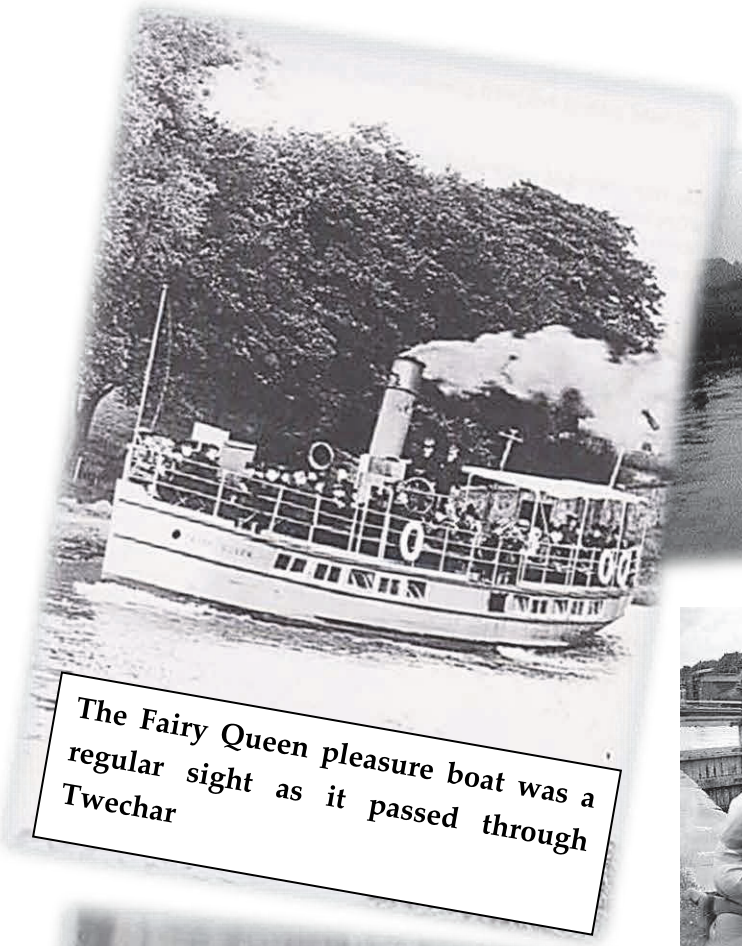
For much of its existence, the canal and its grassy banks were also used by local people as an unofficial outdoor leisure facility, with Twechar folk regularly going there to swim, dive, play and eat picnics. One of our respondent's, John Andrews, remembers spending some of his free time as a child swimming in the canal, both before and during WWII:

> "When you were good enough you graduated up to the canal, and when we got there we didn't have any swimming costumes, didn't bother, we didn't have any towels."

The canal was destined to become a place of leisure again in the 21st century but not before many years of disrepair and what was described in one report of 1974 as 'Almost soul-destroying vandalism'. Some of our respondents have also confirmed the bad state of the canal and the loss of services to the community during these intervening years. In 2001, after much pressure from various groups, the canal opened again after receiving Millennium Lottery funding. It now attracts around 8 million visitors per year who do everything from walk the tow paths (including a recently upgraded section from Twechar to Auchindavie), to fishing, boating, cycling and attending the growing Kirkintilloch Canal Festival.

"I remember when I was really young, it was cold and it was icy and my Mum went in to get her new store card, at the store. We were wi Bella Boyd's weans and we were throwing stanes to skite across the ice and we were saying, "look at that, look at that" and my Daddy said, "what is it?" and we said, "ah don't know but it looks like somebody's heid." So my Daddy said to me, "you get back!" And somebody had been coming from the Masonic Hall and fallen in, and the ice had frozen over them... and it was a deid body. My Daddy went to the store and phoned the polis and the firemen came and cut the ice and brought the body oot."
Agnes Byrne

Robert Hardie remembers Boats and Submarines in the Canal!



The Fairy Queen pleasure boat was a regular sight as it passed through Twechar

Onlookers were said to be amazed to see this most unusual of sights on the Forth & Clyde Canal – a miniature submarine! Built c.1944, this was one of Britain's XE class. It is thought that this one was photographed in 1952 as it was being taken from the Clyde to Grangemouth, and then perhaps heading for decommissioning at Rosyth.

"Jocky Leishman lived down at the bridge and he used to tell us about the boats coming along the canal and if he was lucky, he would shout to one of the fishermen, "any fish the day," and that was him, Jocky got his tea. It was an old wind-up bridge and Jocky used to make sure there was someone at the other side to help him wind it up to let the boats go through. We used to watch a bus go over it and it creaked and come down when that happened. It was a wee single decker bus that went over it now and again. I don't know if that was a mistake, it may have been a private hire. My Dad used to drive the buses, at week-ends, and his run was Twechar, but he never took a bus over the bridge, he always stopped at Stark's farm."
David Truesdale

"We played a lot down the Glen, maybe too much! We walked about there and smoked. I nearly drowned in the canal, I got pulled out of it - I fell in at the swing bridge, there was a triangle there and I was standing on it fishing and I fell right in. There was a fella named Sammy Kidd that pulled me out. Oor John, my brother, got a right row for putting me into my bed with wet clothes on. Twechar was a great place to grow up, a really good village then."
Jim Cowie

TWECHAR'S WARS

TWECHAR DURING WORLD WAR ONE

Coal mining was Britain's largest industry by the 1880s. Coal literally powered the wheels of industry and it was therefore an essential fuel to the economy of the country. Work for miners of the late 19th and early 20th century was brutal and dangerous, whilst their life above ground was marked by very poor living conditions and often by ill health. In Twechar, the amenities provided for the miners and their families were relatively good due to the comparatively enlightened thinking of local landowner and Chairman of William Baird & Co. (the local mine owners), Alexander Whitelaw. In general, though, and without the obstacles of health and safety laws and unions, the goal of the mine owners was to extract coal at any cost. The frequent strikes brought about by these conditions were broken by bringing in people who were prepared to cross the picket lines and do the mining work. These 'scabs' were often people who struggled to feed and clothe themselves and their families and would take any job that would put food on the table.

With the outbreak of World War One, in 1914, came an enthusiastic rush of men to enlist for battle from Britain's mining communities. This is thought to have been partly brought about by a desire amongst the men to escape their poorly paid, dangerous and often precarious jobs for a steady army wage. The army would probably have been seen by some as a more bearable job with an element of adventure thrown into the mix. It must also be remembered that, propelled by propaganda, or 'jingoism', duty to King, country and God were also often strong motivating factors for people of that time and place.

By mid-April 1915, about a quarter of the nation's miners had enlisted for battle. This outflow of mine workers, and people to work in their stead, began to seriously threaten the war effort as coal supplies were running low on the home front, causing there to be little to warm people's homes and to power essential war machines such as battleships. In 1916, in an unprecedented move, the government took control of the mines. They improved miners' pay to help prevent strikes and stopped their conscription into the war.

Almost one thousand lives were lost in the war from what is now East Dunbartonshire, with nearly half of those soldiers coming from Twechar's neighbouring town of Kirkintilloch. Twechar War Memorial lists the names of 12 men from the village, though a total of 27 Twechar men were lost. An entry found in the archives of St Patrick's Catholic Church in nearby Kilsyth, gives an insight into the tragic loss of Edward Differ, aged 20, from Twechar, who was killed in battle on the 12th of October 1917 and whose memorial can be found both in Twechar, and at The Tynecot Memorial in Ypres, in Belgium. The local landowners, the Whitelaws, also tragically lost at least four members of their family in the conflict; the father of the future Conservative MP, the late Sir William Whitelaw, was one of them.

Respondent, John Andrews (born 1928) remembers echoes of the war that sadly would have been repeated in communities all over Britain and Ireland. He recounts that his own father fought in the conflict. He also recalls a teacher at the local school who had lost a leg in battle and that the local minister had been gassed in action. Here John, remembers the Armistice Day parades in the village when he was a child:

> "We paraded at Armistice Day, with the Twechar Pipe Band, and not only were there lots of chaps there from The First World War, but from The Boer War, with their Boer War medals…"

Archie Leishman, front row, far right. Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders

Archie Leishman and his brother

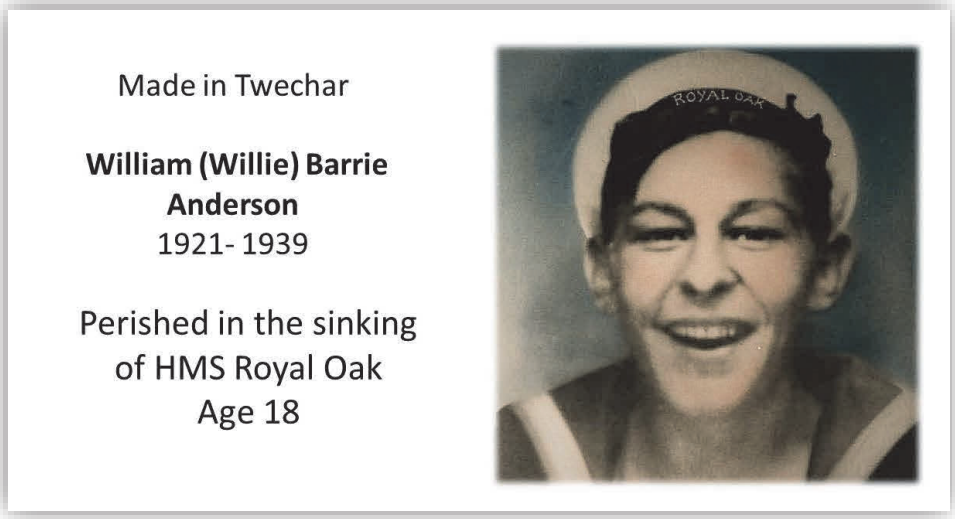
Jean Leishman waiting for husband Archie to return from WWI.
- Courtesy of grandson David Truesdale

TWECHAR DURING WORLD WAR TWO

John Andrews, (born 1928) remembers a distinctive figure, who was tragically to foreshadow the coming Second World War, walking along the Forth and Clyde Canal, at Twechar, whilst John, and his friends swam there on a sunny day in 1939:

> "When we were swimming in the stroan, the canal, when we were drying ourselves, Willie Anderson in his sailor's uniform - he was going to meet his friends who used to swim in another part of the canal, and we used to see this sailor's figure, and this was 1939. And Willie went down with The Royal Oak, in 1939. I think we were the last to see him."

Another respondent, Jesse Johnston, remembers hearing Willie's mum, Elizabeth, often crying after learning of her son's fate.



Seven men from Twechar are commemorated as having given their lives in the Second World War, on the Twechar War Memorial. Men who survived the war often came home with terrible memories and wounds. Ross McClement's great grandfather was one of the latter; he left mining to fight in Africa and returned with sensory impairments.

Conditions were dangerous and working life was unreliable in the mines of Britain at the outbreak of World War Two. There had been many strikes, pit closures and pay cuts during the interwar years. Gradual mechanisation, and increased foreign competition after the First World War, led to a situation between 1928 and 1936, when there were never less than 24 per cent of the mining workforce either partially or wholly out of work at any given time. As in the First World War, it is thought that many miners saw active service as an escape from their perilous and unreliable jobs. Their desire to serve abroad may also have been based on the prevailing sense of patriotism, and a need to be seen as obviously participating in the war. Mining was originally marked out at the beginning of the war as a reserved occupation; one in which men were exempt from joining up for war, in order to keep essential industry going; this was continually reviewed during the war as the need for soldiers increased.

In the latter part of 1943, coal stocks were running low because of a lack of miners. Coal was essential to keep the war effort going both at home and abroad. The then Minister for Labour and National Service, Ernest Bevin, was given the task of increasing the mining labour force. 48,000 Bevin Boys, were drafted into the mines. They were generally between the ages of 18 and 24 and from all social classes. These young men were trained to support the work of the older more experienced miners who worked at the coalface. Twechar No 1 pit had ideal conditions for a training pit and was linked to the local school. It was mostly manned by men from Twechar, and Kilsyth. Bevin Boys from all over Central Scotland were trained at this pit, which was one of many such training collieries across the country.

However, the training films often depicted large seam mining conditions and did not represent the narrow, hazard-filled three-feet deep coal seams at Twechar.

The efforts of the Bevin Boys across Britain, who often faced very harsh conditions with at least one known fatality, were only properly recognised in the early part of the 21st century, when a memorial was unveiled to them. At the time, a lack of public education and understanding often saw them dismissed as cowards for not going to war. These temporary miners were anything but cowardly.

- Sirens

"I remember the start of World War II, it was just after my Dad died. Everybody was talking about it, we knew it was coming. Everybody said it wouldn't last and it lasted all those years. We didn't bother going into the air raid shelter, we just sat on the stair in the house in McDonald Crescent – we were told this was the safest place to go. Everybody did that. When the sirens went off, people were frightened, 'cause they were dropping bombs up at the engine bridge (Drumgrew), but they all went into the peat bogs. They said they were trying to get the railway line at that time."

Mary (Brown) Kennedy

Our respondents knew little about the people in these photographs, other than that they were from Twechar. The two grooms are from the Leishman family, and the best man at both wedding was another Archie Leishman.

Joe Kelly, 1940

Women also played their part

WWII began when Betty Mitchell was about 13 years of age. She remembers picking potatoes with the girls as all the men had gone to war. Betty left school at 15 and did various short-term jobs until she got a job as a telephonist with the GPO; she was then called up to join the army at the age of seventeen. Betty started training at Maryhill Barracks before being sent to Dunblane to continue her training. She then went to several barracks around England. Asked how well she settled into army life, she says:

> "It was a good life, after, you got used to it. You got used to the discipline. The crying stopped, because crying wasn't going to make it any better. You knew you had to get used to it."

Betty was an army telephonist with the Auxilery Territorial Service (ATS), and she also did some courier work, which she isn't allowed to discuss. Nor can she tell us about her war work abroad, though she did mention that some of that work involved "more or less picking people up, by boat, whatever. That's what one of my medals was for." Betty describes her experiences during the war as "an incredible journey, really incredible. Not something I'd ever visualised…. It's not something I would have liked to have missed, because it made me what I am today."

Elizabeth (Betty) Mitchell

Photos – Betty has received several military honours for her war work and continues to be honoured at numerous commemoration events in both Scotland and England. Betty would deny this, but we think that she is a true Twechar heroine!

RELIGION

There is a Church of Scotland congregation, Twechar Parish Church, which shares a minister with Banton. The Roman Catholic villagers are served by St. John of the Cross Chapel in Twechar. There is also a Church of the Nazarene, which was built by Twecharites.

"My mammy, as a wee girl, lived in Twechar and went to the Salvation Army, which was in the hall in the Rows. The Salvation Army was a big part of life in Twechar. My daddy's uncle, Walter, had come to Twechar from Hamilton; my Uncle Walter lived in McDonald Crescent and went to the Salvation Army. My dad was orphaned when he was 12 and Uncle Walter took all of my dad's family in and brought them up together. There was 16 of them lived in four bedrooms. My Uncle Walter had heard preaching that was different from the Salvation Army and thought that we should have a Church of the Nazarene in Twechar. He then went to the Whitelaw family - the estate owners. There was a piece of land next to The Bully, it was all rock, a quarry, so Uncle Walter asked the Whitelaw estate if he could buy that land to build a church on and they gave him it for a nominal fee of one shilling a year. At the Church's 50th Anniversary, the Whitelaw family waived the shilling a year rent. My dad said that they would all work at the pit doing their shifts and then come up, and they would work setting explosives and blasting and clearing (the land), and blast and clearing until they had the space to build the church. They were allowed to use materials from the pit to build the church using their own skills and labour. Nothing was stolen. When they built the church there wasn't a manse, which there is now, next door, but then there was a back hall and a toilet and a kitchen and that's where the minister, Mr Sydney Martin and his wife lived until they built the manse. It was a busy church, they had a brass band. They also had a male voice choir. I just remember it being a very busy church."

Emily Bamford

"I was 16 and working in Lyndsay Maid in Kilsyth, making clothes. I knew there was something wrong, I was just being sick all the time and there was this lassie, who came from Twechar, who worked there at the time, Mary Batchelor (now Mary Clive and living in Kirkintilloch), and she came into the toilet and asked me what was the matter, etc. She made me an appointment at the doctors and she took me there. I was too feart to tell my mum and Mary went with me and it turned out, aye I was pregnant. That night I had to come home and tell my mum that I was pregnant and I was absolutely wetting myself. When I did tell her, she was amazing, she just said, "there is worst things than a wee wean." With us being Catholic there was no question of me having an abortion or anything like that, that just wasn't on the cards. The only problem was, though it wasn't a problem for us anyway, Jim was a Protestant and I was Catholic and in those days, by the time I had reached the teenage years, that there was problems with that. As a wean, I had never seen it but as I got older, I seen it. So I had to phone Jim and tell him over the phone that I was pregnant and he nearly died. He had to tell his mam that night and I had to tell mine. He was18. I told my mum and that was fine and I always remember my auld Kirky granny being there and she just shook her head. I was worried about telling my daddy, so my mum told him and I sat out on the stairs and I thought he would go mental but he just shook his head and said, "ah well, we'll just have to get on with it."

Sharon Young

"Jim had to tell his mammy which was a different kettle of fish, she didn't approve of us because of the Catholic/Protestant thing. I think she would have preferred if Jim had married, as she put it, "someone of his own kind," because that was how they talked in those days. It ended up, it was fine, we got married in Twechar Church because he went to church and I went to chapel but in those days, you always went the man's way. I still went to chapel after it. We got married in April and I had David in August, he's now 38. I have another son Stuart, he's 33. My mum and dad never bothered what Jim was or who he was, or what colour he was. That was just the way we were all brought up. But it was obviously an issue for Mrs Young. Mr Young was brilliant – Auld Sam. Jim used to say that, "I shouted shite and he ran for a shovel". He thought I was the best thing since sliced bread. Sometimes she didn't like that either and would put a wee spanner in the works, but nobody bothered. When it all came out that I was pregnant, it was a case of "that will never last," because of the Catholic/Protestant thing. It was openly said, "don't worry about it, it'll never last," and I've been with him since I was 13, so that's 42 years now."

Sharon Young

This is a photo of Walter Neil, the man responsible for the building of Twechar Nazarene Church. Mr Neil was known and respected throughout the district as a good Christian man'. He produced a calendar every year, containing biblical scenes and references, and sold it door-to-door; practically every house in Twechar and the surrounding mining communities had one on the wall of their living room.

Photo taken from Mary Neil's book
"One Man's Vision"
The History of The Church of Nazarene, Twechar

ALLOTMENTS & VEGETABLE GARDENS

Twechar had a number of several allotment sites, more commonly known as 'hen runs', which were used to grow vegetables and fruit, and to keep chickens, and sometimes pigeons and greyhounds. These lasted until the 1980s, though one was kept until just a couple of years ago. The allotments are reported to have been things of pride, necessity and joy for the miners of the village; providing them with food in times of need and as means to enjoy the fresh air when not forced to be underground in the mines. There was also cultivation in the gardens of the mine company houses and corporation houses that were built in the early to mid-20th century. Residents, there, are said to have grown vegetables out of necessity, and grown fruit for jam and dahlias for unofficial competitions.

- Remembering Dad's Allotment
Jean: "The grapevine, and that came fae one ow the places, is it Kippen? Kippen or Killin, it's one of the villages over that way where they used tae have the largest vine in the country. And my dad knew the people over there and he got, that's where he got his cuttings from, and grew the grapes.
Liz: The roof was covered - beautiful.
Jean: Green -you used tae watch them as they were growing, and you knew when you were able to see through them, they were ready for eating. We used to, you know, pinch a couple when he wisnae looking, and we'd blame it on the dog, you know, it was it wagging its tail that knocked them off!"
Sisters: Liz Murray and Jean Smith

It is unclear, at present, who provided the allotments in Twechar or indeed, when they were established. In some cases, in Scotland, it was the mining company who provided the land and sometimes it was the local authority. There is a feeling amongst our respondents that often people just took on a piece of land and cultivated it. It can be said with certainty that the large gardens were provided by the building of new houses by Baird and Company (the local mine owners) in the 1920s and by the building of further houses by the council in the 1950s and 1960s. The following short exploration of some of the history of allotments and vegetable garden cultivation in Britain may provide some clues as to how the allotments and growing areas in Twechar came about.

Miners in Britain often moved around the country to find work and, because of this, their attitudes and motivations for keeping allotments and growing vegetables in gardens will have been shaped differently across the country. This is relevant because the allotment movements in England and Wales and those in Scotland had different beginnings and, as a result, at times their paths were dissimilar. There were, however, notable instances when these paths converged, such as during times of industrial strife and of world war.

"Ah, the allotments in Twechar, they were massive, right along at the back of Sunnyhill. Sunnyhill there, up the top you had Burnbrae, Sunnyhill, Aniston and Windy Yetts. Down here you'd Whitelaw Terrace and here you'd Shirva Lee and then you had Merryflats and at the back of Annieston - back o' Sunnyhill - there was old Tamson, Sneddon, Jim MacFarlane, the Kellys, they all had allotments that come doon. They wurnae easy allotments, but they were allotments, and they had chickens. they had all sorts ah fruit growing because, you know, as the sun went o'er it went right doon that bank.….and they were young men but they worked in the yard, or they worked in the pits, and when they came home from them, they wanted to go out intae the open air, and that's where they went tae spend their time. And the allotments there was big gardens in the old NCB (National Coal Board) hooses."
Andrew Bell

The allotment movement in England and Wales in pre-industrial rural areas was partly shaped by the actions of the 'Diggers' who fought to be able to cultivate vegetables on common land just after the English Civil War and were one of the many post-land enclosure groups to fight for this down the years. Their aim was to bring about a more egalitarian system of growing and they often took over land for vegetable cultivation to this end. There were various movements towards this cause in England and Wales in the 19th century. Different laws and land rules in Scotland meant that the situation was not the same in rural areas here. Many people were brutally forced off the land and into the cities, or on to ships bound for countries such as Canada during the Highland clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries. Those who remained on the land, in other parts of Scotland, were often indentured workers and it is reported that they were invariably given 'potato ground' by their employers. Farmers in England were known to generally be against their labourers getting land as they thought it would distract them from their work. It is also reported that Scots had higher wages than their contemporaries in England and Wales. There were even claims that the Scots had less of a taste for self-sufficiency than those over the border and that they preferred wage labour. A House of Commons report, written in 1889, described the allotment provision in Scotland as 'patchy and dispersed'. Because of these factors there seems to have been less of an uptake for allotment spaces in 19th century Scotland than there was south of the border.

Along with land right activism, philanthropic and reforming movements in England and Wales helped bring about the provision of allotments for workers. It was often seen as a way to keep workers out of the pub, of keeping them mentally and physically healthy, and indeed to stop them rebelling. They were less likely to get angry if they had a means to feed themselves independently of outside forces, after all. As a result, 19th century landowners and employers in England and Wales, often provided those whom they saw as 'deserving labourers' with allotments. There were sometimes draconian rules attached to these plots, such as a requirement for sobriety and a ban on the claiming of poor relief. There were also occasional rumblings amongst the press that the independence brought about by allotments might give the workers 'ideas above their station'. Nevertheless, under this influence, mining companies and railway companies set up some of the earliest allotment schemes in Scotland. It is unclear whether this was the case in Twechar. Their efforts never seemed to achieve the popularity of the schemes in England and Wales. There are however, witness accounts of successful uptake of allotment schemes in certain places. It was thought that Scottish workers had better access to gardens and that mining cottages, for example, often included attached gardens. Our respondents do not think this was the case in Twechar

(certainly in terms of the cultivation of vegetables), and that the only thing that was grown on the drying greens of the Twechar Rows, was the occasional patch of flowers.

Despite doubts about the population's enthusiasm, the Allotment Act was extended by Parliament to Scotland in 1892 (having been passed in 1887 in England and Wales), and obliged local authorities to provide allotments (defined as 'bits of land no more than forty poles or a quarter of an acre 'in a further reforming act in 1922) for the labouring population, if 6 or more ratepayers came forward with the request. This act was brought in due to the concerns expressed by the philanthropic movement.

The uptake of allotments and growing spaces increased hugely all over Britain during World War 1, as every bit of land available was enthusiastically used by the population to grow vegetables to sustain the country when food was not getting in from abroad. There was also an increased demand for allotments by men who returned in 1918 after serving in the war. Many of these men were miners. A Royal Commission report, 1918, about the housing of the industrial population of Scotland, noted that under favourable circumstances (mentioned as proximity of plot to house, presence of a fence and long tenure) miners showed great skill and taste for gardening. It was also noted that in Mid-Lanark, the demand was rising amongst miners for allotments to work in their spare time.

The use of allotments dropped in Britain generally between the wars, as access to gardens (often modelled on allotments in size and shape) became more common. There were a couple of widespread movements to provide allotments for people who found themselves out of work in the 1920s and the 1930s. The first was the 'Allotments for the Unemployed' scheme which gave seeds, seed potatoes and gardening equipment to the unemployed. The Society of Friends (the Quakers) also raised public funds to buy seeds, fertiliser and tools for unemployed miners in South Wales. Both of these schemes spread countrywide and were active in Scotland. Again, this was variously seen to bring health (both mental and physical) and food to the unemployed, and as a way to prevent them from rebelling and thereby a way to prevent Bolshevism. World War 2 brought about the famous 'Dig for Victory' campaign, which again saw the British public turn, with vigour, to the task of growing food for the nation. They were helped by the provision of new allotments and the distribution of informational leaflets.

After the war, the popularity of allotments waned as other activities, such as going out and going on holiday, became more popular, and supermarket food became readily available. As a result, vegetable gardening did not generally appeal to the immediate post-war generation. The number of allotments in Britain also severely decreased due to land being sold off and, in the case of those near railway sidings, due to new health and safety laws. Allotments were also seen for many years after the war as the preserve of elderly gentleman and suffered from an image problem. It is unclear how many people nationwide kept on vegetable gardens in their own back yard. The fact that the short-lived, chiefly middle class 'Goodlife' movement of the early 1970s was seen as odd, and notable enough to make a fictional programme about, perhaps suggests there were not that many people doing this. Our respondents report that in Twechar the allotments and vegetable gardens kept going throughout this period, as a necessity for feeding families and as a much-needed way for the miners to get outdoors into the fresh air.

In the last 20 years, tending an allotment has become a hugely popular pastime in Britain. This is due to concerns about climate change, food miles and about chemical additives in food. They are also seen as ways for people to relax after working. In some parts of London, it is said that the waiting lists for allotments are 40 years long. There have also been movements such as 'Incredible Edible' to grow food in available spaces all over towns and villages. In the last couple of years, the people of Twechar have been developing 'Edible Twechar', which has seen polytunnels and raised beds set up all over the village. 'Mr Brotherton's Plot' (which is the allotment that was used until a couple of years ago), is also being used as one of the training grounds for young gardeners in the village.

As has been noted, it is unclear how the allotments came to Twechar but the preceding brief look at allotment and vegetable cultivation history in Britain perhaps offers up some clues. What seems certain is that the people of Twechar still have an appreciation for the benefits of gardening and of growing their own fresh produce.

Lily of the Valley, which Catherine Gibson took from the miners' rows nearly 50 years ago and replanted in her new garden. – Courtesy of Catherine Gibson.

Mr Jock Law of 36 Annieston, sitting proudly in his vegetable garden. - Courtesy of Jinny Law, Jock's granddaughter.

TWECHAR FOLK

"My Grandma Kelly lived in the Rows and she was a character. The history was, she was born and brought up in Northern Ireland and she married a David Truesdale; sadly, he was killed as the result of an accident. By that time, they had two of a family, my Dad (William Stern Truesdale), and Louise Truesdale who later went to Canada. Grandma re-married - Joe Kelly, but I don't think she had Joe long until he died. She always said she was never, ever lucky with men. Grandma kept hens, they were down where all the doocots were at the old railway bridge, and she had her hens for many, many years until (I think) the foxes started getting in. She used to take us up into the woods - she never burned coal, she always burned what she could get and used to trail big trunks of trees and branches home – it was an adventure, nobody else seemed to be doing it except her."

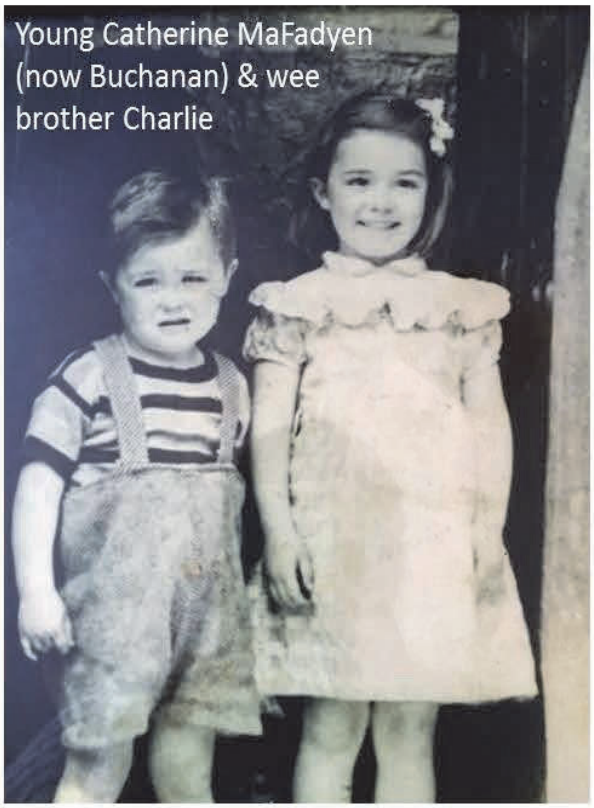
David Truesdale

Archie, Andrew & Alex Leishman
– Courtesy of David Truesdale, Archie's grandson.

My Mother's name was Greta Leishman and her parents were Archie (Baldy) Leishman and Jean Dubourdieu. My other Grandmother (Dad's Mum) was a widow at that time, her name was Lizzie Kelly. My Mother had a book written about her family - *Baby on her Back*, written by the Rev. John Dubourdieu, an American who went to France and traced the family tree right back as far as he could, to the first generation of the Dubourdieu family. My Mum later traced all the Dubourdieu family tree for Scotland and it turns out I am the 13th generation of the Governor of Bergerac. At that time, all the connections were ministers, surgeons, lawyers and farmers in France, and the blood line that came to Scotland was actually the farmer, and that's how the book got its name, *Baby on her Back,* because the woman who was leaving France had a baby strapped to her back. At that time, the French Revolution was going on and people were getting their heads chopped off and the Dubourdieus were some of them. So they ended up in Ayrshire and started a farm there and that's where my Grandmother, Jean Dubourdieu, came from. How my Grandfather met her, I have no idea because he came from Condorrat. His full name was Archiebauld Barton Leishman. They had a family and lived in Twechar - there was my Mum, Greta, who was the oldest, and her sister Grace (she later went to America), then they had twins: John and Wee Netta, who later died as the result of an accident when they lived in Kilsyth for a short time.

David Truesdale

This is my father James McFadyen with his older sister Elizabeth; they had five siblings: Esther, Charlie, Janet, Peter and Cathy. James started working in the pits at the age of 14yrs old and stayed Grayshill shut down. His first wage was brought to the house, to my granny, by the pit manager and I was told that he said, "A man's wage for doing a man's job, Annie." My granny was a widow and my dad had just become the male breadwinner. This picture was taken at the Mulligan's behind their house, which was 37 McDonald Crescent.
Catherine Buchanan



"My Dad later become a RAF military policeman and was sent to Palestine. It was very violent there and when my grandma (Lizzie Kelly) heard he was out there, she burnt all his clothes because she believed that he wasn't going to come back home. When he came home he had nothing to wear but his demob suit. My dad was there when the King David Hotel was blown up, he was right next to that. I have something he cherished quite a bit. When he was on patrol, they came across this flag - it was up on the telegraph wires. He drove an armoured car which had a large aerial, so he unscrewed the aerial and put it on top of the car and unhitched this flag. I've got this flag to this day. One side of it has got crossed rifles and says, 'the British Army go home, get out of our country.' The other side of it is all in Arabic. I also have his police baton, lanyard, belt and everything that went with it."
David Truesdale

BARBARA NEIL

Barbara Neil, affectionately known to family and friends as Bunty was born in 1930, the youngest of seven children. The family was orphaned in 1935 and were looked after by their paternal uncle who had promised their widowed mother that he and his wife would keep them together and raise them. This must have been a challenge for Walter Neil as he himself had six children, but he and his wife fulfilled their promise. Our mom spoke fondly of her childhood which, despite the heartache, was always filled with love and fun. Barbara met and married her husband Keith Fellows from the West Midlands, where they settled and raised their own family, my sister Gillian and me, Jacqueline. During our childhood, we were frequent visitors to Scotland to visit family and be shown the sights. Barbara thought highly of her Uncle Walter and Aunt Emmy. After his death, she planted a lovely red rose bush in her garden to remember him. The rose bush type was called - Uncle Walter.

Jackie Parkes

Barbara Neil - Courtesy of Jackie Parkes, Barbara's daughter

DAVY BUCHANAN

"A local character I remember in particular, is Davy Buchanan. Davy had Down's Syndrome, he used to play and went with the dance bands. He left Twechar and stayed with his brother in Waterside and he used to play at the late-night dancing at Kilsyth. I would be lying in my bed and my mother would waken me up, "Jim, you'll need to take Davy to Waterside" - he got a lift to Twechar from Kilsyth, came to our house, then I had to walk to Waterside with him. He played the accordion but the keys didn't work. Davy, worked at the pit, the men got him the job and the men paid him, the coal board didn't know he worked there. The men gave him a wage packet, they had a collection and he stood in the queue and got his wages. Davy thought it was great."

Jim Cowie

WILLIE BEATTIE

"I also remember Willie Beattie. He lifted the heaviest weight for someone at his weight and was the unofficial World Champion but because he wasn't attached to a club the officials wouldn't accept it."

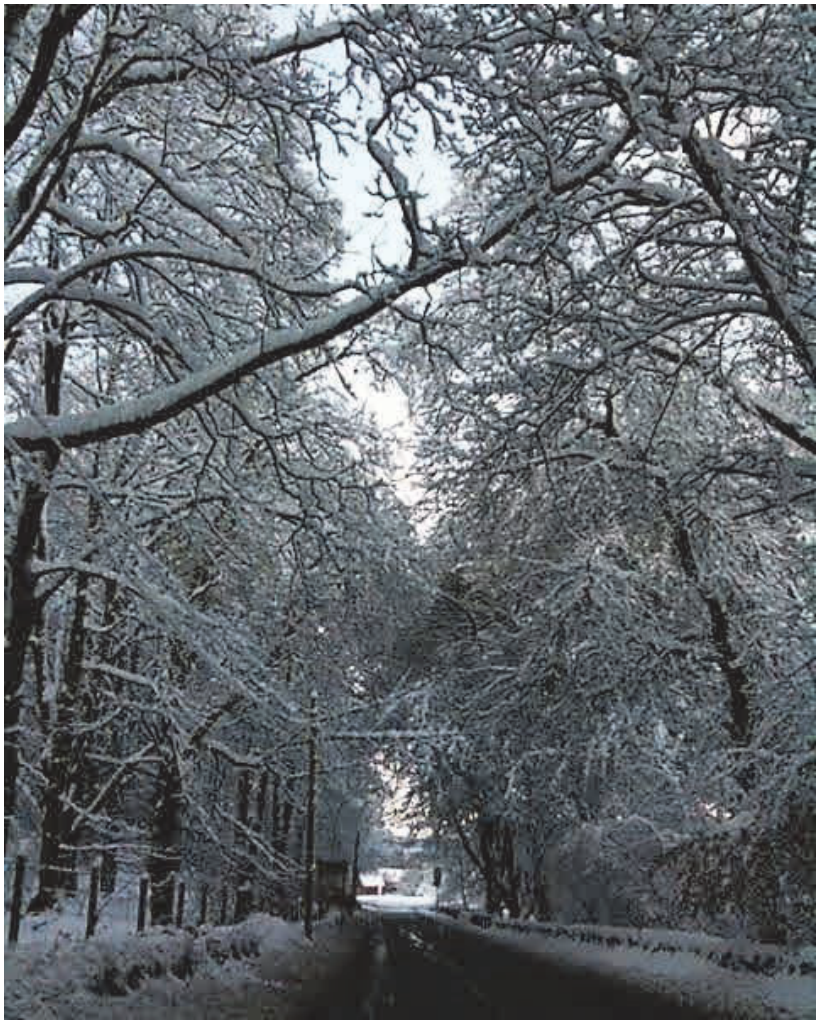
Jim Cowie

Photograph: Women of the Rows

The Barrhill Rows had outside communal wash houses that were shared by the residents. Although the wash houses had piped water, it was cold, and had to be heated by coal fires lit beneath a boiler. Doing a weekly wash was therefore time-consuming, so women did their washing on set-days; once the clothing was done, the women put their children into the tub for their weekly bath!

According to our research, the window cleaner in the photo is Otto Holst, a Norwegian, who came to Twechar after being a rigger on a ship that put into the River Clyde for repairs at the end of WWI. Otto married a Twechar girl and stayed in the village for the rest of his days. Mrs Holst is in the photo – back row, fourth from the right.

The seated lady holding the baby, second from the right, is Mrs Hodge. The baby is Jimmy, her first child; he joined the RAF during WWII and married a Dutch girl named Anna. They later settled in Twechar and Jimmy took a job as an engineer in the brickworks.



''The Road to Twechar': Image provided in memoriam of Jean Porter who died May 19th 2014, and often said "I know I'm home when I see this view."
'- Courtesy of John Stephen Burns.

The Road to Twechar

Residents love this lane! Some say that it 'goes down to God's country', or leads to 'a magical place.'

Others remember walking down the lane every day from their cottage to the village school, while one says that he bumped into the Boor Loch Ghost just about here!

'This has always been my favourite bit of Twechar. I love it when I have been on holiday for a few weeks and come down this stretch of road, whether the sun is streaming through the trees, or as in this photo, with frost or snow on the trees.'
Helen Law Burns

'At the top of that road there was a row of cottages, where, amongst others, the Laidlaw family lived. At the bottom of the hill, our Lenzie school bus picked up a girl called Etta Williams. her father may have worked on the railway. Our bus also picked up Hettie Douglas and one of the Chalmer girls at the entrance to the Whitelaw Estate.'
John Andrews

Jennifer, Elsa, Bobby, Margaret, Jean and Allison Porter

Aitken and Mary Law - Helen Law Burns' mum and dad; he caught legionnaires disease whilst on holiday in Spain and died in August 1973.

In Spain, an unrecognized epidemic of pneumonia struck at least 150 British tourists who stayed at the Rio Park Hotel in Benidorm, a resort town on the Costa Blanca, between 1973 and 1980. The source of the epidemic was proven to be the hotel's potable water system when changes to the plumbing, chlorination of the water, and maintenance of the hot water temperature, ended the multiyear epidemic.

- Courtesy of John Stephen Burns

The Porter family leaving Scotland 30th May 1977

Celebrating Twechar Beach Day – in Calgary, Canada!

The Porter's Canadian Family

Law sisters at a wedding in 1961 - from smallest to tallest: Christine (Law) Forrest; Carol (Law) Meechan; Lilias (Law) Colston; Helen (Law) Burns - aka my mum and my 3 Twechar aunties!
- Courtesy of John Stephen Burns

The Law sisters at my wedding in 2016 - they are all 55 years older but all but one stay in Twechar. Looking from right to left - youngest to oldest.
- Courtesy of John Stephen Burns

Top: Daniel Kerr is a very young actor who in 2013 won BAFTA Scotland new talent award for the 2013 film *The Wee Man* where Daniel played a young Paul Ferris.

Daniel also featured in tv series:
Doctor Who
4 o'clock club
Outlander
Waterloo road
4 o'clock files
Being human
Great Night Out
River City

Bottom: Daniel with proud Twechar born and bred gran Christine Forrest and dad Kenny Forrest.

-Courtesy of John Stephen Burns

"I left school on the Friday and started work on the Monday. It was an office girl's job, working for Kays Catalogues. I was only there three weeks, I was coming home as if I had been out at the potatoes, I was black. I was on my knees filing. I travelled to work with a girl and she told me that her company was looking for an office girl at her work - Fergusson's, a high-class food shop. I went to see them and got the job. I couldn't wait to leave my old job. My first wage in Ferguson's was £2.60. I gave that to my mum, we all did in those days, there was no 'digs'. We gave her our wages and I got 50p back, which was a lot off £2.00 odds. I had to buy my bus ticket and stockings for work off that. If I needed new shoes or a new top to go out, I had to give my mum notice and she would say, "leave it with me and I'll see what I can do," and she would juggle money about to buy me a top. I think most people at that time, like myself and my two brothers, always gave our mothers our wages and they gave us back whatever they could. When the boys got older and going with girls, she would tell them not to bother but they always gave her something. There were a lot of hard jobs that women did then and only got 'women's' pay' but then a man doing the same thing would get paid more. My mother would put on a boiler suit and went out and picked potatoes. Jim went out along with her and Jim got more wages than my mother got; she got a wee tiny bag, 'a boiling of potatoes' every day, enough to feed the family. She would come home with that at lunchtime and peel them for dinner that night. I remember Bethel McPherson was out picking potatoes the day before she had one of her children, then a week later back picking potatoes again. They don't make them like that now."
Vivien Cowie

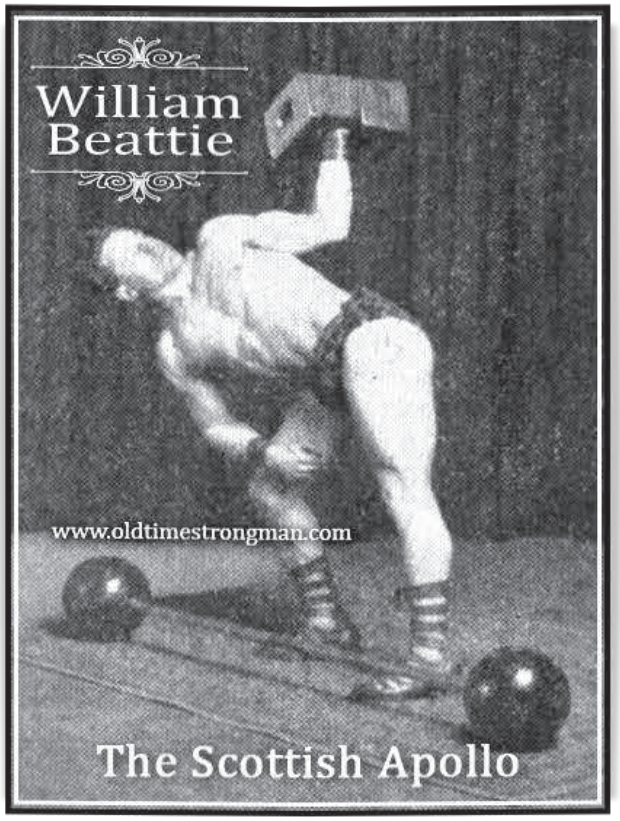
"I stayed at Fergusson's until I got married. I was only married 11 months when Johnnie was born. I left my job then, that was in 1966. It didn't suit me to go into Glasgow to work, then, within a year, I had another baby. I worked in the Miners Club, then in the post office with Miss McFarlane, and then with the Co-op. We had to have a wee extra job to subsidise Jim's wage. You had to do that then as there wasn't benefits like now, you had to make the effort."
Vivien Cowie

Leishman family, 4 Whitelaw Terrace.

"I wouldn't like to live anywhere else but Twechar. I've been here since I was born and I can say I've never had a notion to live anywhere else. I met my husband John at the dancing and after we got married we lived with his mother for eight months, that's the only time, then we came back to Twechar and waited four years for a house."
Agnes Hendry

'The Scottish Apollo'

Twechar born Willie Beattie (1907-1968), also widely known as 'The Scottish Apollo', was a weightlifter and strongman who grew up on Twechar Farm. The son of John Blair and Jean Bell Beattie, Willie was academically bright but he excelled at sports, particularly shot putt, hammer throw, and caber tossing. Though not the tallest of men, working on the farm had moulded Willie's fine physique and he soon became interested in competitive weightlifting, winning numerous titles and holding many weightlifting records over the years. In the 1940s and 1950s Willie performed as a circus strongman – his show involved him completing magnificent feats of strength, such as lifting twelve men seated on a plank of wood, and, amazingly, lifting a Clydesdale horse.



'A gathering of the Beattie/Blair family c.1920 at Twechar farm. My father William Beattie, son of Jeanie Blair, is the boy on the right.
Marion Anderson

Sandra Sutton

Here is the lovely, the indomitable, the ingenious Sandra Sutton – a lady who our respondents believe does a wonderful job of making sure that the spirit of Twechar endures and strengthens.

Artist: Susan Arbuckle

Twechar's Law

Top: Angus with his lovely wife and two sons, Iain and Donald.
Bottom: The former Police House where Angus and his family resided. The Police Station was attached – on the right of the photograph.

Angus Smith – The Twechar Bobby

"Well, as I say, the police station was, there was a particular county architect in Dunbartonshire at that particular time and he was given to rather fanciful buildings. In Twechar there was the police station and a street that was called MacDonald Crescent, which is to be seen there and it's a style of architecture which you see in all the villages of old Dunbartonshire. If you go to Alexandria, Renton, down the far end, you will see houses and you will see immediately that it was that architect who designed those houses. The police station in Twechar was interesting. It wasn't just a straight forward building. There actually at that time were two policemen in Twechar. This shows how differences have happened. There were two policemen in Twechar full-time and the police station, there were two houses and in between the two houses there was the police office, and the two houses were not in any way like each other. The house in which we lived had a turret on it and the stairway up to it went round this turret and there were none on the other end at all … but, it's a very interesting building to have a look at … but, as I say it was of a particular style and it was straight opposite the Miners' Institute, which was a very important part of the village at that particular time, yes."

Donald Smith

Creating a family

Betty and her husband learned from an advertisement in a national newspaper that six siblings in Kirkcaldy required live-in foster parents whilst their own parents were absent from home. The children were housed by Fife Council in a six-apartment house and the foster parents would have to move in. Two children were pre-school age, another two were in primary school and the eldest two had recently moved up to high school. After two years, the birth parents had not returned and Betty and her husband asked if they could take the children to live in Twechar. The Council granted their request and the family moved into a large house in Macdonald Crescent. They've been a family ever since.

When asked what it was like to take on six children at once, Betty said, "Never thought about it, because when my husband and I took them on, it was just like fostering, and we were there to be their parents." Now, with 13 grandchilden, 18 great grandchildren, and two great great grandchildren, what began as temporary fostering became a permanent vocation and a wonderful new, and very large, family!
Elizabeth (Betty) Mitchell

Betty's children, l-r: Alexander (Alec), Elizabeth, Helen, Jane, Evelyn, Iain.

MINING COMMUNITIES & FOOTBALL

Mining communities in the UK had rich footballing traditions dating back to the 19th century. These provided much sought physical exercise, entertainment and community funding for the miners and their families in these towns and villages. In Scotland, the sport was so popular that many of the outstanding football managers and players of the 20th century hailed from Scottish mining communities. Famous Liverpool manager, Bill Shankly, is said to have also possessed a natural sense of socialism as a result of growing up in a community where people had to look after each other in the face of great adversity. He encouraged players to help each other out if they noticed one of their number was having a bad day's play. The now deserted town of Glenbuck, in Ayrshire, is a place of pilgrimage for many Liverpool fans, as it was the birthplace and some time workplace of Shankly, their saviour manager. The village team the 'Cherry pickers', which had a similar population to Twechar (never more than 1700 people), produced 50 professional footballers, including six Scotland internationals and four FA cup winners. This has been said to be the equivalent, per head of population, of a minor non-league team in London producing 250,000 professional players.

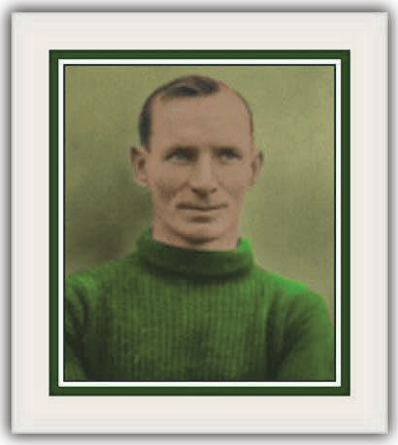
The football teams that were attached to mining towns in Scotland in the 19th and 20th centuries, in various leagues, including juvenile, junior and professional teams, are too numerous to mention. Here our respondent Robert Hardie (born 1938) mentions one of the four Twechar teams (Twechar Rovers, Twechar United, Twechar Thistle and Twechar Rangers) that were in existence at various times over the last couple of centuries in junior and juvenile leagues. He talks about Twechar Rovers, in relation to another of the greats of football management – this one hailed from the mining community of Orbison, near Bellshill in Lanarkshire – the now legendary Matt Busby. A man who, amongst many other achievements and bold innovations throughout his career, had the grit and courage to rebuild a winning team at Manchester United after the tragic loss of eight of his young 'Busby Babes' in the Munich Disaster of 1958. Busby was so badly injured in the horrific plane crash that he was hospitalised for nine weeks, during which he was read the last rites twice. Robert knew all about Busby's exploits but he was amazed to learn of his own mum's connection to the footballing giant:

"In that photo, you can see my mum, and Matt Busby, standing - and my mum was taller than Matt Busby! I doubt if he's maybe 20 at that time…and I used tae say tae ma mum and dad, "Did he play with Twechar?", and sometimes he got a game wi Twechar, but he was always down in Twechar…and then he went and played with… well, my mum told me and my dad - he played wi Dun pace Juniors - the place he started his football career…and he always came down from Bellshill, every weekend."

Robert is not sure why Matt Busby visited his mother's family and regrets that he did not ask his mother. Nonetheless, Robert's photograph and testimony is proof of one of Twechar's many impressive footballing connections. What he does give us a clearer picture of, in the following extract, is of the league system that existed in Scottish football when he was a young man. He also gives us the names of some of Twechar and the surrounding area's talented footballers of the past:

"Well, ah was a football man…used tae play football…played for the school team…and you left school and you played for the youth club then, that was under 15s and 16s. Then you could go fae there tae play juvenile football, then amateur football and senior football. There was quite a lot of good footballers in Twechar, away back then. I didnae actually play senior football or junior but I played the fitba junior trials. I was well known in amateur ranks aboot the area, but there was quite a lot of people in the village, there was great footballers in Twechar. A few names I could give you and they were all really good football players, that's going back to when I was a young boy. You're on about football, that's one oh ma topics, that and politics, and I'm going way back to a team called Twechar Rovers. They played down what they called the Kelvinbridge park, and we used to walk down there in summertimes tae watch the playing through the week and on a Saturday. They used tae work in the pit, they worked a Saturday morning in the pit. It was a 5 and a half-day week then, that was tae try and get a good wage. That was them out of a Saturday morning, coming home at 12 o'clock, half past 12 - 1 o'clock, and they're away playing football way back then. And Twechar was full of brilliant football players, no just Twechar but round about Twechar, Kirky, Kilsyth, Croy and aw they places was full of football players….and quite a lot of football players went senior. Ma brother was one o' them. He played with Third Lanark. He played about 2, 3-year wi Third Lanark. Ma brother, Wullie Hardie, and my friend, Duncan MacFarlane - he played wi Airdrie. There was another fella, Don Glover, he played with Kilsyth Rangers and he played with Dumbarton. Other ones I can remember, John Bryden,

played wi Twechar and he played wi Kilsyth Rangers and he played wi Stirling Albion. And maybe going further back than that - Martin Conroy, that's going back to the early '50s. Martin played wi East Stirling, and there were others who didnae make the grade were good footballers - a boy called Tommy Cowie, and all them. The place was what you would call hoachin wi footballers. Twechar, Kirkintilloch and all that…. coz that was, likes of where we are just now (The Healthy Living and Enterprise Centre), the likes o' they parks oot there…. you couldnae get moving for them. See in the summertime, you came home fae the pit, got your dinner, maybe rest for an oor - let your dinner go doon. Go doon the fitba park. You couldnae see the grass for fitba players, the ones playing fitba. That was oor entertainment…. That was how there was so many good footballers."



Twechar produced several footballers of note along with those mentioned above, including Charlie Shaw (1885), who played for Celtic in the very early part of the 20th century. He still holds Celtic's clean sheet record as a goalkeeper and was the first goalkeeper to become a team captain. He also campaigned for fairer pay for footballers despite it making him unpopular with the Parkhead board room. This determination and sense of justice can no doubt be traced to his upbringing in Twechar pit village.

Charlie Shaw

CHARLIE SHAW is statistically Celtic's greatest ever goalkeeper. And also one of most fondly remembered characters in the club's history, of whom apocryphal stories abound.
David W Potter tells of a man who was a source of welcome mirth at a time when the carnage and slaughter of World War I made for little in the way light relief.

Charlie Shaw is buried in the Madonna Cemetery, Fort Lee, across the Hudson River from New York City. His headstone reads:

'Here's to the Celtic, triumphant today
Here's their consistency, skill and fair-play.
Here's to 'Prince Charlie', of keepers the best,
And here's to Joe Dodds, who withstood Hampden's test.
Here's to our 'Iceberg', of tactics a master
Whose coolness oft saves his great club from disaster'
Glasgow Observer, 25 April 1914

Other Twechar born players mentioned by respondents are William Hodge (1904) who played for Rangers and Brentford football clubs, and his brother Robbie who played for Clyde, and who are remembered by their niece Jessie Johnston in her interview.

That mining communities produced players and managers in copious numbers is without doubt and, as we have seen, Twechar was no exception. What brought this football culture to these communities, in the first place, is less clear. Some theories have it that football was brought in to mining communities by middle class evangelists, football having been a mainly middle-class pursuit at the beginning of the 19th century. Others suggest that it was spread with the frequent migration of miners to other mining towns out of economic necessity. This is thought to have happened, for example, to the Fife town of Cowdenbeath, with the migration of Cumnock miners to the town.

What sustained the passion for and participation in football in these communities is perhaps more clear. It is certainly the case that Baird & Co., who owned the mines in Twechar, funded football grounds in their coal and steel towns and that other companies did similar things. Baird's did this, some would argue, as a way to spread their protestant religious views and as a means to try and control the population. The name of one of the Twechar teams, 'Twechar Rangers', points to this religious bent and a newspaper article from the 1920s demonstrates this team's involvement with the miners' institute in the village, which was also built by Baird's. It is thought that these attempts by Baird to be evangelical and to placate the population were widely ignored. However, football teams being linked to miners' institutes was certainly a way in which the community could benefit from football. The teams were often involved in raising funds for the community and this helped sustain engagement with the local teams.

This enthusiasm for 'glorious game' grew partly from the fact that mining towns and industrial towns in general had good transport links, in the form of railways and canals, which meant that they were placed most favourably to sustain football teams as there was relatively easy access for supporters and players. The advent of cheap newspapers in the mid nineteenth century further promoted the game as it meant that people in these towns and villages could read about the fortunes of their teams. Most importantly, the introduction of the half day Saturday holiday meant that men had free time to play and to support teams. The creation of the new junior and juvenile leagues grew out of these circumstances and encouraged community loyalties to the many local teams that emerged.

What is clear is that miners were ideally suited for the game of football. It has been said that miners at play differed little from miners at work. Qualities such as independence, willingness to stand up for their rights and the maturity to accept the consequences of their actions all stood them in good stead. They were often also very motivated to find new lives outside of the pits. Jock Stein, the famous Celtic manager, who was a miner until he was 27 years old in the Lanarkshire pits and who had men die beside him in the pit, talked about the push of working in the pits and how this inspired men to become footballers: "You don't want to be underground all your life".

What is also abundantly clear is that miners, in general, enjoyed playing football, during their fleeting spare time, to let off steam and enjoy the fresh air. This is clear from the observations of our respondent Robert Hardie, about football pitches full of men just finished their work. Our respondent Robert Douglas (born 1924) who played with juvenile team Twechar Rovers, remembers miners rushing from the end of their shift to play football in a time before the introduction of the pithead baths:

"Twechar miners, nearly aww the miners, we seen them - they used tae come up the pit, straight doon the park - the park's doon by the canal. They came doon there. Up the pit, no even washed, oot in the park, black faces and everything, playing fitba."

The glorious game, eh!

'Barrhill Football Club after winning the league in 2012. A great bunch of guys and great spirited football team, most of players either live in the village or have ties one way or the other.
Team manager Jimuck Ross and second in command Johnnie Cowie.'
- Courtesy of John Stephen Burns

WET TWECHAR!

Although it started in 1829, it took until 1913 for Scotland's temperance movement to gain real success. With the introduction of the Temperance (Scotland) Act, 1913, local areas could hold votes to decide whether to permit or prohibit the sale of alcohol in their locality. To be eligible, at least 10% of registered voters had to sign a 'Requisition for a Poll' form. If achieved, electors could then choose from three options: no change; reduction of licenses to sell alcohol (or continued reductions if already in place); or abolition of all existing alcohol sales licenses. Outcomes were to be decided by a majority count. In the 1920s, many areas held temperance polls and the results proved to make Twechar quite a popular place, as nearby Kilsyth, Cumbernauld and Kirkintilloch voted to go' dry', whilst Twechar remained 'wet'. Last orders were called for the final time in the bars and taverns throughout the Kirkintilloch area in 1920, with the restrictions remaining in force until 1967 – the same year that Kilsyth also voted to revert to being 'wet'. During the intervening period, the roads into Twechar became particularly well-trod as thirsty folk travelled in the village to partake of its alcoholic beverages.

The Quarry Inn, pictured above as the 'Barrhill Tavern', changed hands, and names, several times over the years, but was always known locally as 'The Bully'.

-Grandma Kelly and the 'poorly neighbours!
She stayed up the stairs in the first block in the Rows, just across the road from the Bully (the pub). Outside the house, there was a landing and she used to make that like a wee seat and you could sit and I always used to say, "why are these men lying in the grass in that wood?" My Grandma said, "Oh these men are not well, they've just been in the Bully and they've just come out." There was maybe half a dozen or so at one time. My Grandma had a 'photo of them, a couple of them or so, just lying at the side of the Bully.
David Truesdale

The Bully at Twechar

At the close of the meeting, Mr Dickson secured the supervision orders to move a resolution of protest against the Sheriff Menzies, Dumbarton, in granting a club license to Kirkintilloch Ex-Service Men's Club. The recent decision of the majority of the people for "No Licence" had been upset by the Sheriff's decision and they, especially those working on the Health Committee, knew the effects strong drink had on the child life of the town. As a public body, they should make their views heard in this matter and protest strongly that a club license had been granted in Kirkintilloch.

The Chairman said he would support Mr Dickson. It was an unfortunate state of matters when the decision of the majority could be overturned in this way.

Mr McAlpine: - I would be prepared to support you, provided you keep the Kirkintilloch men from coming along to the Bully in Twechar.

Mr Dickson: - Twechar has the remedy for that in its own hands.

Mr Lynch: - If Mr McAlpine and the other people at Twechar follow our example they will close the Bully at Twechar and they won't come for a drink.

Mr McAlpine: - You have to cater for the people. If the people wish it, and if they have voted that they do, they get it.

Mr Lynch: - If you want to cater for the people you cannot keep the Kirkintilloch men out of Twechar Bully.

Mr McAlpine: - But the Bully is for Twechar and district people, not for men coming from Kirkintilloch.

Mr Lynch: - A public house caters for the public, or it belies its name. If you do not cater for the Kirkintilloch people who come, you are not keeping to your name.

It was agreed to protest to the Secretary for Scotland and Sir Wm Raeburn.

The Kirkintilloch Gazette The 30th of December 1921.

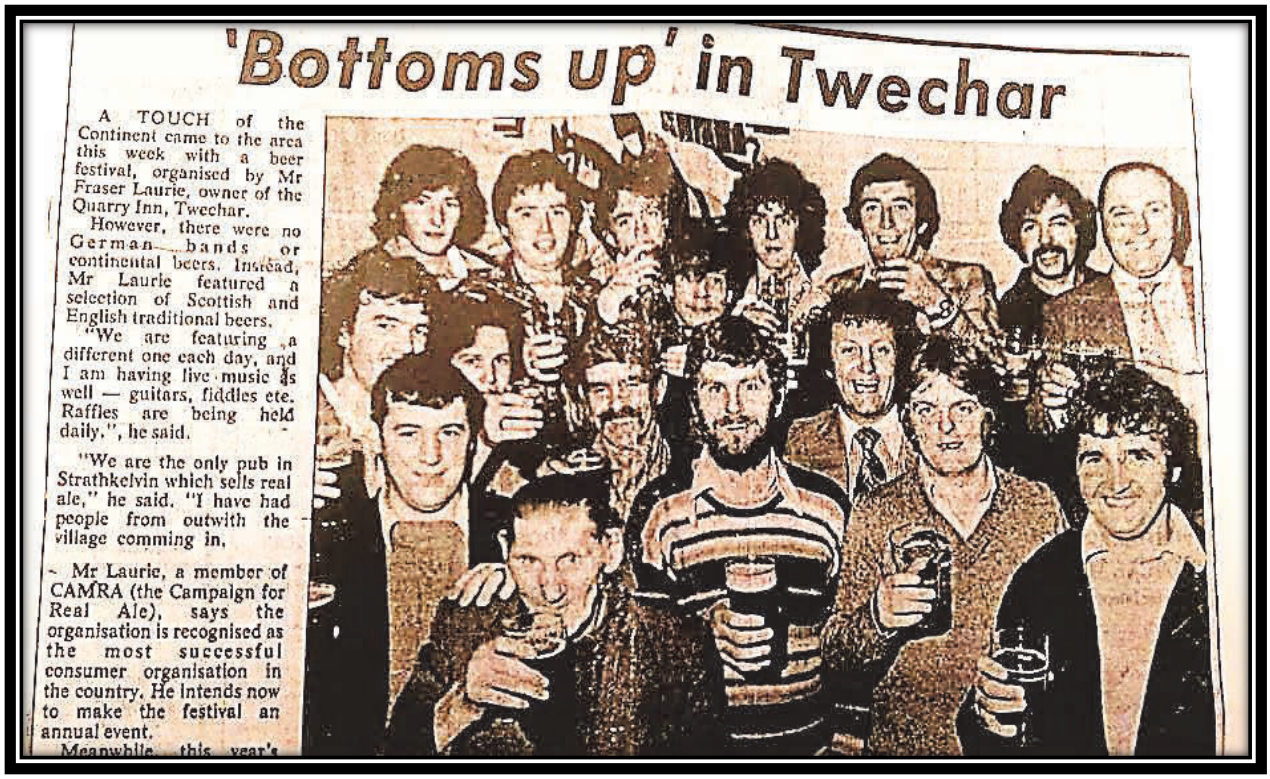
"And Kirky and Kilsyth were dry, and I remember when I was a wee girl, that the Bully… people used to travel. When I was coming back from my work, I worked in Glasgow, certain buses would always be really busy on a Thursday and Friday... and that was men who would come tae Twechar fae their work for a pint. Coz they couldn't get a pint in Kirky or they couldn't get a pint in Kilsyth, so they would come oot tae Twechar and get a drink." ***Isobel Hartley***

"At one time that was a busy canal. The herring boats used tae come down the west coast, cross through the canal and o'er tae the east coast. In my living memory, just after the war, the fishing boats used tae come out through Kirkintilloch. Because it was dry… they would park up down at Twechar and they'd walk up the hill…. Kirkintilloch was dry, you know you couldnae drink, but they could get beer in the Bully, so they would park there, walk up, get their beer, come back doon, park tae a Sunday morning, and then go away through the canal." ***Andrew Bell***

Why 'The Bully'?

'It was owned by the Baird mining company, and it was referred to as 'The Bully' as people were bullied into drinking there and shopping in Baird's store. The company also owned the housing in Twechar, so if anyone was caught buying groceries elsewhere or drinking in another establishment the man was sacked and the family was homeless. The miners had to buy their shovels, picks, etc., from the store, so in reality the men worked in the pit, got wages and money that all went back to company. The backshift in Twechar No.1 were often paid from the till in The Bully on a Thursday night. This was in the days before miners' welfares, and in the East of Scotland, Gothenburg's were established in which the villagers ran the pub and it was not for profit, with all proceeds being used for the benefit of the village. Whilst in many former mining communities you will find a pub called 'The Goth', the only one remaining in Scotland as a community pub is to be found in Newtongrange, Midlothian.'

Pat Egan



'Bottoms up' in Twechar

A TOUCH of the Continent came to the area this week with a beer festival, organised by Mr Fraser Laurie, owner of the Quarry Inn, Twechar.

However, there were no German bands or continental beers. Instead, Mr Laurie featured a selection of Scottish and English traditional beers.

"We are featuring a different one each day, and I am having live music as well — guitars, fiddles etc. Raffles are being held daily.", he said.

"We are the only pub in Strathkelvin which sells real ale," he said. "I have had people from outwith the village comming in.

Mr Laurie, a member of CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale), says the organisation is recognised as the most successful consumer organisation in the country. He intends now to make the festival an annual event.

Meanwhile this year's

On most Saturday mornings, I would sweep out the old sawdust. I would go down to the Baird sawmill, and collect fresh sawdust. Most shops, like the butchers, had a sprinkling of sawdust on the floor.

John Andrews

*****

I don't know the history of the Bully, but Willie Hamilton had the shop beside it and John (McClue's) grandpa Colston had the cobblers shop, and I remember my mother telling me that he was so kind to the miners that he fixed their boots, whether they could pay or not.

Margaret McClue

Ladies Night in the Club

'L-r: Winnie O'Neill, Rebecca Sinclair, Mary Goggins, Agnes Hendry, Ann McDonald, Margaret Bell, and my mum – Helen McGill.'
– Courtesy of Lesley Hoggan

'Mum was born Helen Cairns and was brought up in Twechar. She was the middle of 3 sisters - Margaret and Myra being the other two, and three brothers - Tom, Bill and Archie. She attended Twechar School and Lenzie Academy. Sadly, my mum passed away in Feb 2015. Only two sisters now left in the family. They all lived initially in Burnbrae and then moved to McDonald Cres., and latterly in Differ Avenue. They were a mining family - grandad Archie was manager in Twechar no.1 (I think this is correct). When my mum and dad (Jim McGill from Pollokshaws) married in 1964, they started their married life in 5 Kelvin View, where my brother and I were born. We moved to Kirkintilloch in 1986. My dad only had six years in Kirkintilloch before he passed away in 1992.'
Lesley Hoggan

The Lodge

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JAMES W. CLARKSON	ALEXANDER C. ALLAN
PGL Office-bearer	**PGL Committee Member**
DEREK GRINDLAY	ALEXANDER C. ALLAN

Regular Meetings: 3rd Wednesday at 7.30pm,
September, October, March, April and May

Installation: Saturday November 11th 2017 at 5.00pm

Provincial Visitation: Wednesday March 15th 2017 at 7.30/8.15pm

Music Makers

JOHN OLIVER

'Twechar Man's Success as a Singer'

"The Scottish Chaliapine is the description that has been applied to John Oliver, an ex-miner who returned to his home at Windy Yetts, Twechar, last week after completing his studies in London and Italy. Oliver is twenty-five and the son of a miner [Mr. Martin Oliver], and had it not been for the generosity of a Glasgow man, who took an interest in him, believing him to possess a wonderful voice, he would not have been able to have gone so far with his training. He has sung at the opera in Pisa and in Paris, but, so far, he has not made any public appearances in Scotland. It is very probable however, that he will be heard in his native country before long. He has been "booked" to appear in the male voice concert in Kirkintilloch next month.

Oliver comes from a very musical family, and he and his three brothers have been interested in opera from their youngest days. Their father worked until his retirement in a pit in Twechar but opera is his greatest hobby. When the opera companies visit Glasgow, Mr. Oliver travels up from Twechar, frequently taking one of his sons with him. When John was eighteen and the possessor of a deep ringing voice his father decided it was time for him to give up mining and take to singing. He was sent to Glasgow and though the fees were a sore tax on the miner he paid them cheerily, for he had confidence in his son's voice.

After John had been studying for some time in Glasgow word of his great voice got to the ears of a gentleman of a philanthropic turn of mind. He heard the lad sing, and the result was that John Oliver went out to Italy, where he studied for a number of years in Florence and Milan. He is now back in Twechar and is having a quiet rest among "His ain folk" before making any engagements."

The Kirkintilloch Herald, January 18, 1928

Twechar Miners' Welfare & Social Club - Singing Night

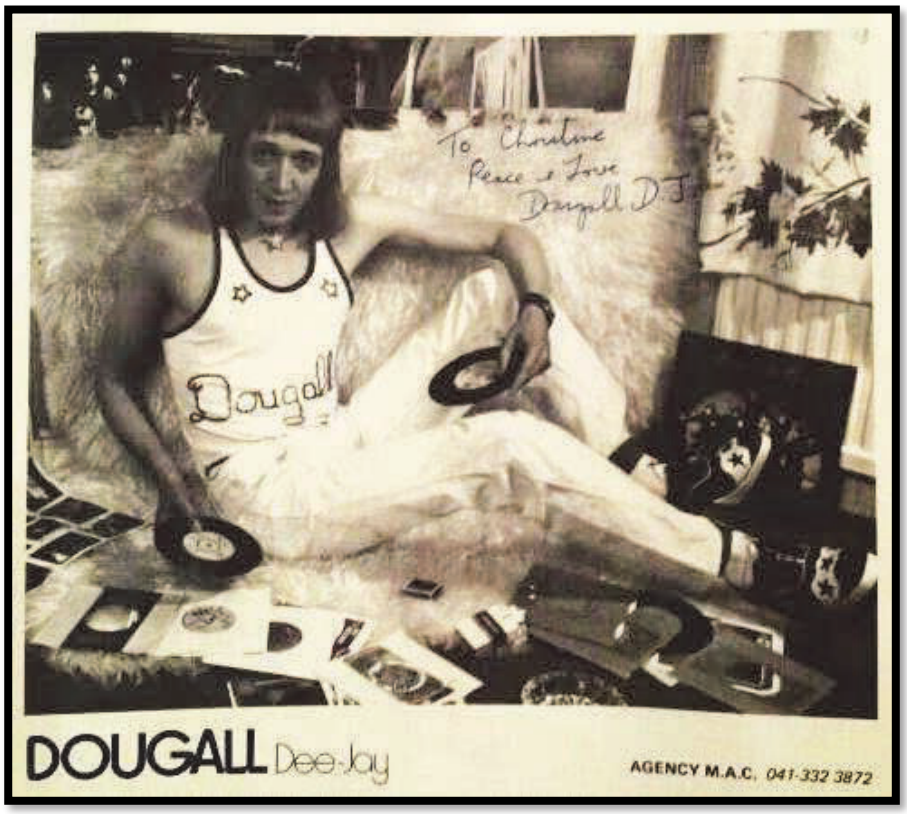
With: Alec Truten, Davey Haughey, Billy McClue, James Conroy, Arthur Truten, Margaret Martin, Maurice Conroy, John McClue, Margaret McClue (piano).

On Tuesday evening, July 11th, the band provided musical selections at the Camp Fire Service held on the Gartshore Estate, to the great delight of the young Scottish Nazarene campers.

The Twechar Band was to play at many functions in the years ahead. Their ministry of music was appreciated in the open-air work, which they maintained in the village.

The Silver Band, c. 1944

Photo courtesy of Mary Neil
Taken from her book: "One Man's Vision" The History of The Church of the Nazarene Twechar



We're not going to give this a title but we're sure that you can come up with your own!

Mary & Alex Truten, Kilsyth Pipe Band

ANTONINE WALL & BAR HILL FORT

The Antonine Wall

At the order of Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius, and following 12 years of construction the Antonine Wall was completed c.154 AD. Known as Vallum Antonini to the Romans, the Wall was a turf fortification on built on stone foundations. It represents the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire, and was originally around 39 miles long, 10 feet high and 16 feet wide. The Wall was further strengthened by a deep ditch on the northern side. Along the top of the turf there stretched a wooden palisade.

The Antonine Wall was protected by 16 large forts with smaller fortlets sited between them; a road, known as the Military Way, connected all the sites and allowed movement of Roman troops.

Plagued by Caledonian raiders, the Antonine Wall was abandoned after only eight years and the garrisons relocated back to the more famous stone-built Hadrian's Wall, which ran from the banks of the River Tyne near the North Sea to the Solway Firth on the Irish Sea. In 208 Emperor Septimius Severus and ordered repair to the northern wall and re-established his garrisons there, which has led to some referring to the Antonine Wall as the Severan Wall. This latest occupation ended after a few years and the wall was abandoned to the elements. Much of the Wall and its forts have been 'robbed' or have eroded over time, though some remains are still visible. Many of these have come under the care of Historic Scotland and the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

Guest Article: Ancient Twechar

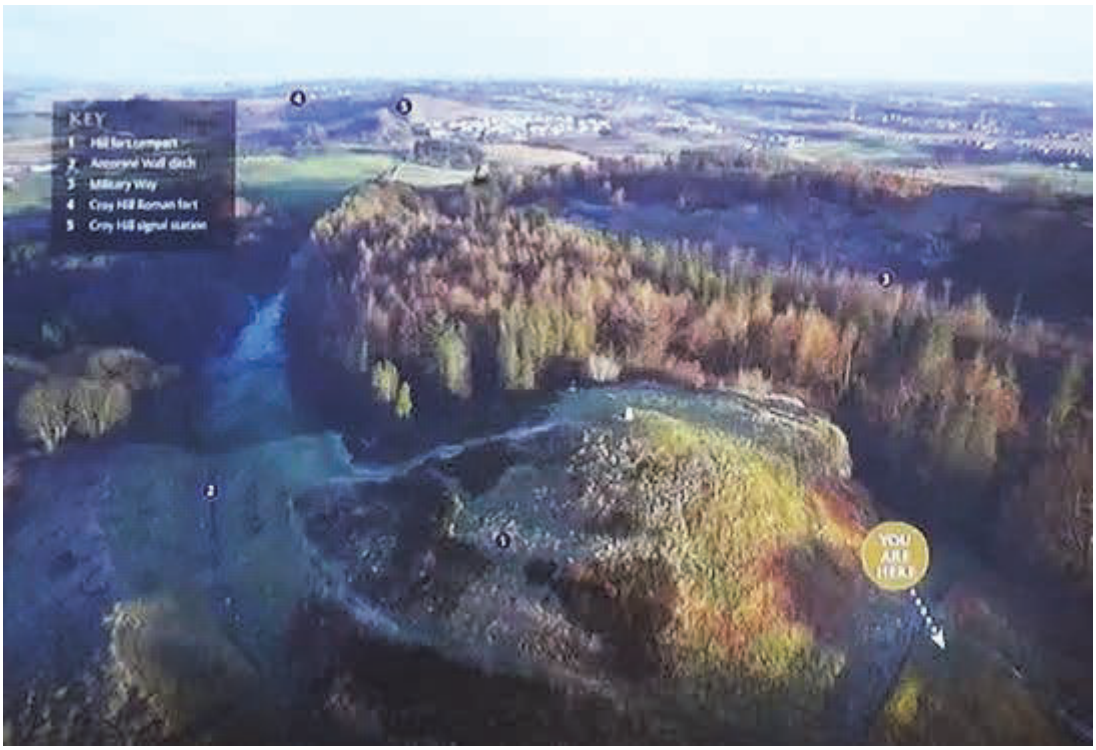
The Twechar Pit Village Oral History Project has revealed and presented a fascinating glance into the local area's industrial past. Whilst on the topic of Twechar's past, let us look further back in time, to investigate Bar hill fort and Castle Hill, both of which overlook Twechar village.

Because the kingdom of Alba was not yet formed, the term Northern Britain will be used. The Romans made quick work of pacifying natives in the south of Britain. Perhaps the fiercest resistance in what is now England came from Boudicca and her tribe, the Iceni. XXth Legion Valeria Victrix (SPQR) feature her defeat on their battle honours. That same legion, on arriving in East Dunbartonshire, constructed Bar hill fort onto the Antonine Wall circa 142 AD. The Roman conquest evidently had limits. That said, these limits of exploitation ebbed and flowed over the decades and centuries.

The Hamian archers were a Syrian regiment who swore fealty to the Roman emperor. Their fighting style was completely different to the rest of the Roman forces. Projectile weapons were common in the Roman army, but more so with regards javelins than bows and arrows. However, the bow was the principal weapon of the Hamian archer. Their bow was a fine product of artisanry. Compositely crafted of wood, bone and sinew, they were superior in terms of both range and power to other archery set-ups of that era. This regiment was one of several who spent time garrisoned at Bar hill. A particularly interesting footprint of their stay in Bar hill fort is a 3-foot high inscribed altar raised by Hamian officer 'Praefect Caristanius Iustianus' in honour of the pagan god 'Silvanus'. Most of the artefacts discovered at Bar hill fort are now housed in the Hunterian Museum (Glasgow), though a number are in the National Museum (Edinburgh).

Bar hill fort is 112.5 x 114.3 metres in size, which converts to 1.29 hectares. One of seventeen forts along the Antonine Wall, it was a palisaded enclosure. It was surrounded by ramparts and ditches, and built on a slope, but contained a 43-foot deep well, and a bathhouse with separate hot and cold rooms.

To the fort's immediate northeast is Castle Hill. Prior to the Roman invasion, Castle Hill was an Iron Age hillfort. Romans used Castle Hill as a vantage point. It offers good views to the north. In more recent times it has been used as a quarry – dolerite stones for cobbled roads were sourced there.



Acknowledgment:
Article and images courtesy of Johnnie William Gallacher (Highland archaeologist).

Bar Hill Fort

TWECHAR'S NATURAL HERITAGE

Twechar is in very close proximity to many areas of natural heritage: Kelvin Valley marshes, including Twechar Marsh, the Forth and Clyde Canal, the River Kelvin, and the Millennium Forest woodlands. These have changed and developed for good and bad over the years, in some cases with the aid of deliberate intervention on the part of environmental groups and lobbyists, and at times due to the rise and fall of local industry.

As elsewhere, these wetlands are well documented as havens for wildlife. Paul Carter, of Friends of Kelvin Valley, who is both a chartered geologist and an engineer, and a wildlife surveyor on Twechar Marsh, describes the varied history of the wetland:

> "Well, the marshland story's fascinating, because the Kelvin Valley was full of marshes. It was just marshland all the way from top to bottom… and this was one of the great things as far as the Romans were concerned. They built the Antonine Wall up there knowing that any invading force from the north would have to struggle through the marshland before it could even get to the wall… so the marshes were there till round about the 1780s to the 1800s. Just after the canal came through, all the local landowners got together and said, "well, if the canal company can build a big canal, what we can do, is, we can straighten the River Kelvin, and drain the whole valley", which is what they did. So, they drained all the marshes. The marshes all went, and they got themselves nice arable green fields, for, you know, part of the agricultural revolution. So, the marshes went, and the green fields came… but nothing lasts forever… And then the miners came along, and working from Gartshore and Twechar No.1 pit, and St Flannan's pit… they worked under the Kelvin Valley, dropped the level of the Kelvin Valley, in some places by up to about four metres. This caused flooding of a lot of the fields that had been so expensively drained in the first place, and resulted in a lot of the marshes coming back again. So, from marsh to agricultural land to marsh again"

Paul goes on to describe the wealth of bird life that can be found overwintering on Twechar Marsh. This includes visitors from as far afield as Scandinavia, the Artic, Iceland and Siberia. He mentions greylag geese, pink-footed geese and whooper swans, as well as several types of duck, including the colourful widgeon. He recently completed a goose count on the marsh, which found them numbering in the several hundred. Native species also overwinter on the marsh. These include up to 40 or 50 curlews at any given time, which are categorised as a 'red list' species by the RSPB. Peewits, otherwise known as lapwings, are also found on Twechar Marsh; these birds are thought to have suffered decline in the past due to loss of wetlands in the UK. Around April and May, all

Email: OSCR - GFAthe birds fly away and the marsh dries up only for them to return the following winter. Bird watchers have also been spotted during the winter at Twechar Marsh and the Friends of Kelvin Valley lead educational walks there.

Photo - courtesy of Dumbreck Nature Reserve

Canals were noted for attracting wildlife pretty much right from their inception in the UK. The Basingstoke canal, in Hampshire, for example, was remarked upon for its rare plants as early as 1830 (only four decades after it was built) and by the end of the century was being described as a 'Mecca' for botanists and entomologists. Like the Forth and Clyde Canal, which runs beside Twechar, it fell into disuse in the latter part of 20th century and became polluted only to be regenerated in the early part of this century. It is now home to several rare species. Like Basingstoke, the Forth and Clyde Canal now hosts an abundance of flora and fauna. It has the features for attracting and sustaining wildlife that are common to many canals. These include grassy verges and hedges, which can play host to lots of different creatures. Abandoned buildings (including the old stables and nearby St Flannan's pit in Twechar), can also form habitats for various creatures and plants; and still water is attractive to otters and kingfishers, both of which are making a comeback both nationally and on the Forth and Clyde Canal. Our respondent, Paul Carter, mentioned that in the early part of 2017, everyone he met on walks in the Kelvin Valley area had spotted a kingfisher. Here he describes the possibility of otters breeding by the canal:

> "Somebody I met when out canoeing, they were also canoeing, told me that they'd heard thin, peep, peep, peeps from otter cubs in that area, so they are obviously breeding as well."

The canal is full of many different species of fish including, roach, tench and bream and this also serves to make it attractive for otters and for birds such as goosanders. Salmon numbers have soared and the river also houses the delicate sea trout. In 2011, local school children were rearing brown trout and releasing them into local burns under the guidance of the Clyde River Foundation. Other creatures to be found along the river include water voles, grey herons, cormorants and roe deer. Amongst the flora to be found on the banks of the River Kelvin, are wild garlic, Himalayan balsam, poppies and meadowsweet.

Anyone who has read the classic *Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, will know that rivers were traditionally great places to encounter wildlife. During the 19th and 20th century, many rivers suffered from the effects of industrial pollution. The River Kelvin, which has its source nearby in the neighbouring village of Banton, was no exception. In the last 25 years or so, however, improvements

have been made in the water quality of the river, due, in part, to the removal of sewage outlets and from litter picks organised by the Friends of the Kelvin and other organisations.

Native trees, such as oak and birch, play an important role in both attracting and sustaining wildlife. The Forestry Commission has been planting native species near Twechar over the past few years. The Scottish Wildlife Trust has erected barn owl boxes and involved local school children in investigating their pellets. The Forestry Commission has also introduced Highland cows to surrounding meadows as they help keep the grass down; this encourages the growth of wildflowers, which, in turn, encourages bees and butterflies that will help to keep all the ecosystems of the area going.

Photo - courtesy of Dumbreck Nature Reserve

THE JOHN MUIR WAY

John Muir, born in Dunbar in 1838, is a founding figure of the environmental movement. He invented the concept of National Parks in his adopted home of the USA. He founded the Sierra Club, which now has around 750,000 members, and has inspired the foundation of other environmental groups, such as Friends of the Earth. He also wrote many books on the importance of appreciating and caring for the natural environment. The *New York Times* described him as one of the greatest thinkers of America. He said that he wanted to save the American soul from total surrender to materialism.

Scotland was very late to adopt National Parks as an idea. The two National Parks in Scotland, the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the Cairngorms National Park opened in 2002 and 2003 respectively. The first National Park was opened in the USA in 1872, and countless others worldwide were created long before the ones in Scotland. This strange fact is perhaps partly explained by the contention that John Muir is much more famous in the USA, and indeed the rest of the world, than he is in the country which he left as a young man.

The extension of the original John Muir Way (along the coast of his birthplace Dunbar) was designed to route through the varied, attraction filled and often beautiful landscape of Central Scotland, taking in a National Park on the way and ending up in Helensburgh, where Muir embarked on his journey to the USA. The route was conceived in 2010 by the chairman of the Central Scotland Green Network, Keith Geddes, and co-funded by various bodies. The route was opened in 2014 (the centenary of Muir's death) with a vision of raising awareness of Muir in the country of his birth, coupled with the aims of encouraging people to become more active in the outdoors and to take more of an interest in the preservation of their natural environment. Its aim is also to bring much needed boosts to the local economies that lie along the Way.

The route is 134 miles long and can be done in 7 to 10 days by foot and 3-5 days by bike. There are sections which can also be completed on horseback. The route is designed so that people may use it to do short walks along sections of the route or do the whole thing on consecutive days, as they choose. A 2015 survey carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage, found that more than 60,000 people

visited specifically to walk or cycle a part of the route. 6,000 people completed the route over consecutive days. 20, 000 people used it for dog walking, commuting and other purposes. It is also notable that a third of all those surveyed said that they seldom visited the outdoors. The route is easily accessible to millions of people in Central Scotland. It contains many of the elements which are growing attractions for both international and domestic tourists. In a 2016 Visit Scotland survey, it was found that 49 per cent of visitors came to Scotland for the scenery and landscape and 32 per cent came for the history and culture of the country.

Twechar sits on the Strathkelvin Railway section of the John Muir Way, that follows on to internationally famous attractions such as the Kelpies, and the Falkirk Wheel. It also contains many of the features that would make it highly desirable to modern day tourists and visitors and it is set in a visually stunning location. Indeed, many of our respondents talk of their love of the surrounding countryside as children.

The village has a nearby Roman fort at Barrhilll, with striking ruins and interpretation points. The Fort is mentioned in many of the guides and articles relating to Roman Britain and the landmark is also skirted by a section of the Antonine Wall.

The Heritage Lottery funded oral history project about the area will result in interpretation materials being created about the fort and about the mining heritage and life and community of the village. These will provide further attractions for people to visit Twechar, which has already been receiving more visitors since the new section of the John Muir Way opened.

The philosophy behind the Twechar Healthy Living and Enterprise Centre, which is undertaking the oral history project and will host the interpretation materials about the village's history, is very much in line with that of the John Muir Way. This could lead to an interesting coming together and mutual inspiration between residents of the village and visitors.

The John Muir Way

https://www.contours.co.uk/walking-holidays/john-muir-way.php

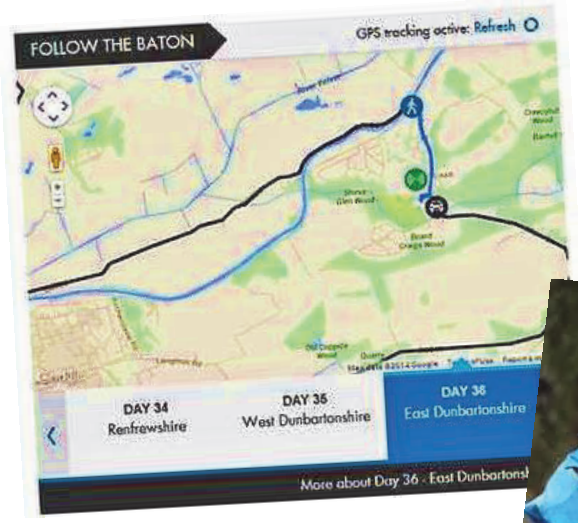
TWECHAR HEALTHY LIVING & ENTERPRISE CENTRE

"The Centre is the heart of Twechar, it definitely is … I'd just be lost without it … Well, I get to meet new people, and it's good to meet new people, it is, especially for me being disabled, and I've, I mean, I've made a lot of friends, that come in and out. Working friends. Like, people that come in working. I mean when they left, I would still keep in contact with them. So, I've got that as well. I dae a lot of classes. I dae the cooking class, I do the sewing class and the art class, the craft class … and I do the youth clubs at night wi the children … and I dae the special needs class with this other girl. She's able bodied but I help her. I, me, I don't see me as disabled I just see me as me, so I like to help."

Patricia O'Neal

'The Centre'; the lovely garden with poly tunnel; the world-famous Coachie Bear with Twechar children, and again with Skip Hopkins – the equally famous author of the Coachie Bear Stories!

The Commonwealth Games' Baton stopped here, along with its carriers and a Roman guard!



Top: Ian Stephenson & Roman guards!
Above: Baton Route
Above right: Ian with fans!
Right: Erin Gilmour with escort
Bottom: Ian with Jan Mulvay

Christmas Lunch 2016

These photographs are of our very first "Community Lunch" last December (2016). Members of the community, young and old, were invited to the Twechar Healthy Living & Enterprise Centre to eat together and share stories and their experiences of living in the village.

We had people who have lived here for generations and individuals who had only just moved in coming together to break bread and build stronger ties with one another. The lunch itself was completely free, having been paid for by some very kind individuals who reside within Twechar and wish to remain anonymous who approached their workplaces for donations. Many of those who attended the lunch also contributed to it, we had everything from traditional homemade Scottish sausage stovies to authentic curries.

This is very reflective of the diverse place Twechar is now. There are lots of people who come from different backgrounds and cultures but they all have that common thread of staying in the village and are passionate about the wee place we all call hame!
Kirsty Ross, Twechar Community Action


Tweechar –
An Oral History of
a Pit Village


heritage
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TWECHAR'S CREATIVE WRITERS

First Day at School

Staunin in line wae ma Mammy. Knitted school jumper and jaggy short troosers. Play piece in ma bag, two slice oan jam and a digestive biscuit.

The bell rang and the big doors opened. There she stood, Miss Neil, a formidable wummin who didnae smile, she jist stared at ye tryin tae figure oot whit tribe ye came fae.

Ma Mammy wisnae allowed in. We were marched intae the classroom and seated. We jist sat there waiting tae see whit was gonny happen next. Then Miss Neil shouted oot oor names. When yer name was called ye had tae staun up. Then she stared at us, tryin tae match up oor faces wi elder brithers an sisters already at the school. Wance she had ye sorted oot she gave a wee nod an wrote sumthin doon in her big book.

Time really didnae mean much tae me, but ah decided ah had been there long enough and it was time tae leave. Miss Neil was attending tae a greeter so ah took the opportunity tae sneak oot the classroom door.

As ah turned tae look fur an escape route ah walked right intae a giant. He picked me up, put me ower his shooder an took me back tae Miss Neil. This probably wisnae the best introduction tae Mr Broon the Heidmaister but we goat oan aw right efter that.

Skip H

A Large Measure of Raw History

A large measure of raw history
Mix with hard gruelling industry
Let this develop into a tight community
Respect for each other will now develop
Industrial decline decimates the area
In time, there is expectation through regeneration

Hope, vision and pride drive the people
This recipe is successful
The younger generation thrive on it
Newcomers join the banquet
Old and new combined sweeten the mix
Differences are forgotten in this mixing bowl

This is a simple recipe which can be used anywhere
The end product must be shared with everyone
Not just in small communities but in the wider world
The success of the recipe has been noticed in high places
It is now used as an example.
But it must go further

When the world leaders gather for the G7 summit
In Taormina Italy on the 26th of May 2017
As they sit down to their extravagant menu
Their starter should be a portion of our recipe
Served by members of our community
With side orders of respect, pride, vision and love.

Skip H

A wee bit reminiscing....

Come hither tae yer Mither
My Mammy called tae me
Hurry up, it's Friday night
I've still to make the tea

Lay this paper ower the table
Sit furrit, lean to me
Sumbdy pass me that bone comb
It's fast I'll need to be

Oh Mammy please, no again
Ma hair is fu o tugs
Ye dae this to us every week
Could we no jist risk the bugs

Dae Wullyum first, his hair is short
Or Sandra, Jack or David
Oh here's oor Linda coming noo
A'hm sure she looks the bravest

Stoap that wheengin, bend yer heid
I need tae check fur lice
Wanst ah've got through awe yer heids
A'll make ye soup and rice

Oh Mammy, this is torture
Kin ye no see that it hurts
Ma scalp is raw ma heid is sair
I'd raither hae the nits

She drew her haun across ma legs
Don't dare say that tae me
Nae wean o mine, will shame ma name
In front o that Nurse Gee!

Lorna Allison

Mr Baird

"Good afternoon Mr Baird, sir" she said as she opened the creaking door. Mr Baird stepped inside the room. He was unsure what the room actually was. It was dark with bare floor boards, there was a bed in a recess in which four children cowered trying hard not to make eye contact with the man.

The smell was something he had never experienced before, a mixture of human sweat and filth mingling with the smell of cooking. At the side of the coal fire was a pot of simmering brown liquid which he assumed was today's meal.

Her husband was working his shift deep down in Mr Baird's coal mine. Mr Baird pretended to look interested for a few minutes then asked if everything was satisfactory. The wife replied, "Yes sir, Mr Baird," knowing full well that any other reply would have serious repercussions. Mr Baird smiled, nodded and left.

The wife and her husband, with several other employees and spouses received an invitation to attend an afternoon tea at Mr Baird's country mansion. They were transported to the venue and on arrival were met by Mr and Mrs Baird, their two daughters and their staff.

After having tea, sandwiches and pastries that none of the invited quests had ever seen, never mind tasted before, they were ushered into the Baird's home.

A marble staircase led to a set of ornate oak front doors which opened as if by magic as they approached them. Inside the doors was a massive fireplace above which hung portraits of stern looking gentlemen and unhappy looking ladies. The room smelled of flowers and polished wood. There then followed a tour of the gardens before everyone was transported back home.

Back in their house the wife asked her husband how one man could have so much. He replied, "By making sure we never have enough."

Skip H

Teeny Boyd

Teeny Boyd
Left oan her ain, whit a terrible shame
She startit a shoap inside her hame
She worked hard night an day jist tae get by
Her story sae sad it wid make a man cry
We've hud plenty ae characters in this special place
But maist huv gone noo, tae Heaven ah hope wi Gods' grace

Skip H

My First Day at School

I remember getting a hard, brown leather bag from my Grandpa and him telling me this was my school bag. This was the first clue that I was going to school very soon.

I didn't like the idea very much of having to go somewhere I didn't know, but I walked with my Mum on that bright sunny morning up to the school, having got dressed in a new blouse, pinafore, top hose and Clark's shoes.

The bell rang and Mum took me inside to see my classroom and teacher for the first time.

I took a seat at a wooden desk near the front of the classroom, all the desks and chairs were separate and in a line, one behind the other. The boy seated behind me kept pulling my hair.

The big blackboard had chalk on it, numbers and words which I would learn in years to come.

There was a sandpit in the classroom and we were allowed time to go and play.

The Headmistress rang the big hand bell when it was time to go home. We all ran, skipped and jumped to get there.

CAM

TWECHAR TO ME WILL ALWAYS BE SPECIAL!!

Twechar to me is where my maternal grandparents lived
my parents and my brothers lived and all my aunts, uncles and cousins lived
we were born and brought up in the greatest wee mining village in the world
most of the first folk we know were Twecharites. they come from far and wide just to cross the bascule bridge or to come in from the tree lined tunnel at the top of village but whatever way we came in like Jean porter said,
"ITS HOW WE KNOW WERE HOME"

JOHN STEPHEN BURNS

DOWN THE CANAL WIE YOUR FISHIN RODS,
GRAMPA COLSTON'S TO STEAL SOME PEA PODS!!

JOHNNY THE POLE'S FILLED YOUR SHOES WIE SEGGIES,
DOWN THE BIG HILL WIE YOUR HOME MADE GEGGIES!!

DOWN IN THE PONDY FISHING FOR TADDYS
COWBOYS AND INDIANS BUT NEVER THE BADDIES!!

WE GOT UP TO ALLSORTS AROUND THE VILLAGE ALL DAY,
KERBIE, FOOTBALL OR CHAP THE DOOR AND RUN AWAY!!

GREAZY LEEZY'S FOR YOUR CHIPS THAT WAS YOUR WEEKLY TREAT,
THE TOSSING SCHOOL AT THE RENTY IS WHERE WE WOULD ALL MEET!!

YOU CAN TAKE, THE MAN OUTTA TWECHAR!!,
BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE THE TWECHAR OUT THE MAN!!

JOHN STEPHEN BURNS

TWECHAR
An Oral History of a Pit Village

Please visit our website to see more Twechar memories!

www.twecharpitvillage.com

Twechar

An Oral History of a Pit Village

Packed full of information, oral testimony, photographs, original art, poems and stories, *Twechar – An Oral History of a Pit Village* tells the story of a former coalmining village in East Dunbartonshire, Scotland. Here we share our history, our memories, and we open our hearts, because our story, like those of so many other close communities, is important to us, to our descendants, and to our heritage. Sharing Twechar's story in this way is our legacy to the future and our duty to the past.

Twechar

ORAL HISTORY
Research & Training Consultancy

heritage lottery fund

MAOINICHTE
LEIS A'CHRANNCHUR
LOTTERY FUNDED