

telling tales

trails + tales

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this sample collection of stories told by people from across East Dunbartonshire as part of the Trails and Tales Programme, which kicked off earlier in 2014. It is my job as creative writer for the project to visit the different towns and villages and encourage people to write about their memories or create new stories about the very different places that make up East Dunbartonshire. Some people wrote these individually, other people worked as a group with myself, listening to one another's tales recording in writing the local stories about people and places. These tales will feed into idea banks to help inform the trails and the local heritage they will represent.

I hope you enjoy the small selection of stories you will read within these pages, maybe even remember an old acquaintance or recognise a forgotten place.

For me the whole process of travelling round listening to the story-tellers has been educational, fascinating, emotional and at times incredible. The lives of working people in the not too distant past, whether through the sheer physical effort required to carry out and pour tons of molten iron in the Lion Foundry in Kirkintilloch, or the prospect of Twechar miners working in pits for 12 hours at a time, already seems unimaginable to us today. The Trails and Tales project hopes to capture these realities so they are not lost for generations to come. There has also been a real sense of community in many places, not least in the smaller villages of Harestanes, Twechar and Campsie. Shared experiences of growing up in new estates, mining communities and during the Second World War make for strong collective memories, and I hope you enjoy recognising some of what is described in the stories that follow. There have also been many laughs along the way, not least when I was duped by Coachie Bear in Twechar. There was a real sense of sadness too about people moving from Springburn and many of the residents of Kirkintilloch and Bishopbriggs talked about the destruction of their old community with roads driven through the middle of it, whilst also appreciating the

improved housing and healthier lifestyles they came to know. So I hope you will have a laugh with the “Lenzie Ladies”, learn some of the history of Campsie, find out about first impressions of Bearsden, and remember the pleasure of shopping in the Co-op with the cash whizzing about in canisters on wires above your head!

If you want to find out more check out the Trails and Tales website where there will be more stories and details of other events throughout East Dunbartonshire.

Annette Allison
November 2014

HARESTANES TALES

When I moved here in 1965, there were no roads, no shops and the cows used to look over the back fence! I remember going down to “Langmuir Stores” which was run by two of the Henderson sisters – they were the daughters of the landowners – to get 2 empty bottles filled with milk. The fresh milk tasted different in the summer than it did in the winter because of what the cattle were eating at different times of the year. Winter feeding must have been turnips because you could taste it through the milk, the sweetness of it.

To get to the shops in Kirkintilloch was quite a trek – especially as there were no buses, which meant you had to walk. I had twins and another two children so we had to walk all that way with this double pram! I will never forget walking along Hillhead Road and seeing the cows coming

running towards us in the field – I had never seen a cow ‘till I moved here and the sight of them charging towards us was as frightening as if we had been caught in the middle of a stampede! Needless to say, we took to our heels and ran!

Dawn Grey

I remember moving to Harestanes in the early days and people saying you always knew who came from Glasgow because their doorsteps were always clean. I think it came from people living in closes and following a really strict rota for taking your turn at washing the stairs there! There was also a rota in the tenements for using the washing line.

Rose McMullan

HISTORY OF HARESTANES COMMUNITY CENTRE (HCC)

The group which I belong to, “The Friends Group” meet weekly on a Sunday at the Baptist Church, but the Community Centre is used extensively throughout the week.

The two halls were built as school huts probably in the 1970’s. Then as school rolls fell again, and the school building was again big enough, the huts were not in use. The Residents Association managed to get access and developed the premises for use as a Community Centre.

I was involved along with other people in a six-year period of work fighting to try to get a permanent community centre built. We paid for architects’ drawings, complied with legal requirements to have the site drilled and tested, as it was mining land, and we managed

to secure £100,000 of government funds.

However, after a lot of work by a lot of people – we still have all the plans, application forms and the associated paperwork – the people of Harestanes were gravely disappointed not to secure extra funding we needed from the lottery. I think people put so much into the application because for Harestanes to get a proper, permanent community Centre would have meant so much and given the local people a community building to match their community spirit. The proximity of other council funded centres may have gone against Harestanes, but we are not certain, but there is huge disappointment that Harestanes cannot secure lottery funding or local government funding; central government funding itself is not enough to provide such a community-spirited area with a community centre.

Ian Anderson

Continuing with the theme of gardens from last week, it was very true that the people from Glasgow developed a reputation for being very keen gardeners. When the people in Harestanes were all council tenants, the gardens were very well maintained, but this decreased as the houses were taken out of public ownership and sold to private buyers.

However, at the beginning when we moved here, we all learned to garden together. We learned from each other's successes and mistakes, we shared our experience and learned as a community.

In terms of allotments, Springburn was the closest place to have any. However, allotments came about in Harestanes about 2-3 years ago.

Jean Stewart



Harestanes Reading Group

TWECHAR TALES

Sunday at ma Grannys

Sunday at ma Grannys wiz a special day

Opening the big heavy front door
ye were greeted wi the smell

A pot ae soup simmerin on the back tae back

Ah filled up her teapot and sat it next tae the fire

The digestive biscuits and a box ae
malteasers sat oan the table next tae her

The auld valve radio wiz playin sleepy music

She read the Sunday Post and ah read
a book while we baith waited

Then they started tae arrive

Sisters, Brithers, Cousins, Uncles, Aunties

Uncle Jack wiz a great storyteller

Adults an weans alike wid sit glued tae his
every word, believin every fantastic tale

that poured oot fae his vivid imagination

Granny sat there beamin, lovin every minute

Uncle Alex entertained us aw wi songs like
The Wee Cock Sparra and Coulters Candy

Then we got fed in relays. A plate ae
broth an two slice ae breid

Uncle Alex showed us how tae fish oot the
peas, put them in a saucer an cover them

in vinegar fur later

Then we heard the front door openin an
there he stood, ma Uncle Booster

He bent doon an kissed ma Granny oan the cheek

Naebody kissed ma Granny but Uncle Booster

She loved every wan ae us bit she
wizny a kissy wummin

But it wiz Booster, an he wiz special

Booster goat his soup and we aw waited fur
whit we knew wiz gonny happen next

He came in tae the livin room, against
the back wa' wiz a pedal organ

The couch goat moved an Booster sat
on the stool in front ae the organ

He pumped the pedals an played tune
after tune, we sat there mesmerised

Then came whit ah hud been waitin
fur, ma Uncle Booster singing

He hud the maist wonderful, powerful
voice ah've ever heard

His voice sent vibrations right through
yer boady and settled in yer soul

Ah never tired ae listenin tae him, he wiz truly gifted

Ah still sumtimes lie doon and take mase
back in ma mind tae they Sundays

Ah kin still hear him singin, ah kin see
ma Granny sittin in her chair.

Skip H

My Father & Grandfather with Buller, the Pit Pony

The pit ponies lived all their lives down the mines. Eventually they went blind with the coal dust. The pit owners did not feed them, it was the men themselves who fed them out of their own piece. The two men in this photograph are my father and grandfather, and the pony was called “Buller”.

Liz Smith (nee Murray)

The Annual Seaside Trip

...I remember the annual seaside trip when all the weans went away for the day. It was always a Saturday because the men from the Miners’ Institute came round on the Friday night with two half crowns for every child. That was 5 shillings each – a fortune then to a child! I remember too, taking all the things to cater for the trip – we took banana boxes because 6 rows of dinner plates fitted perfectly, and we had breadboards for carrying the food – rolls and cakes in waxy paper bags. It was a real occasion with so many buses for each street and all the weans putting their streamers out the windows and waving to everybody!

Contributions by Twechar Writers & Residents



Top: Buller the Pit Pony / Bottom: Barhill Row

CAMPSIE (AKA LENNOXTOWN!)

The place where I grew up in has a somewhat schizophrenic way about it. Let me explain, it has two very different and seemingly unrelated names it is known by. The reason for this is that the original name which is shrouded in the mists of time is Campsie, and then for some reason the Earl of Lennox who was bequeathed land by rescuing from the dungeons of peril on a winged bird of hope Robert the Bruce, which was over half a century from the railways coming to the village and in his infinite wisdom, probably maintain his prestige and the last vestiges of real power he decided to call the village after himself when a station was set up here in 1867. Now due to the radical nature of the villagers they baulked at the idea of a name being imposed on them by their so-called Lord and Master who got the idea from being inculcated in the Feudal System which fame

into prominence at the time of the Act of Union, as opposed to the more egalitarian clan system which was prevalent before then, and due to the radical nature of the villagers as espoused in one of the first Co-ops which was set up in 1812, a time when the favoured starting of the movement was just a twinkling in their grandparent's eyes, and the first to introduce the dividend system in 1826, the name of Lennoxtown never really caught on and among the locals as it is to this day known as Campsie by them, of course it is also a remembrance of the radical history of this village, which is another reason why it is not called after somebody who wanted to increase his prestige at a time when his real power had waned due to the dark satanic mills of the Industrial Revolution.

Also the oldest Catholic Church outside a major city was established here in 1846, initially called St Paul's but then in 1905 with the opening of the church in the next village along the Glazert, incidentally the highest variable water course in Europe and then around the time of the railway the town hall was built in 1867, then just after the change of name of St Machan's who was buried up in the clachan, along with the perfidious James

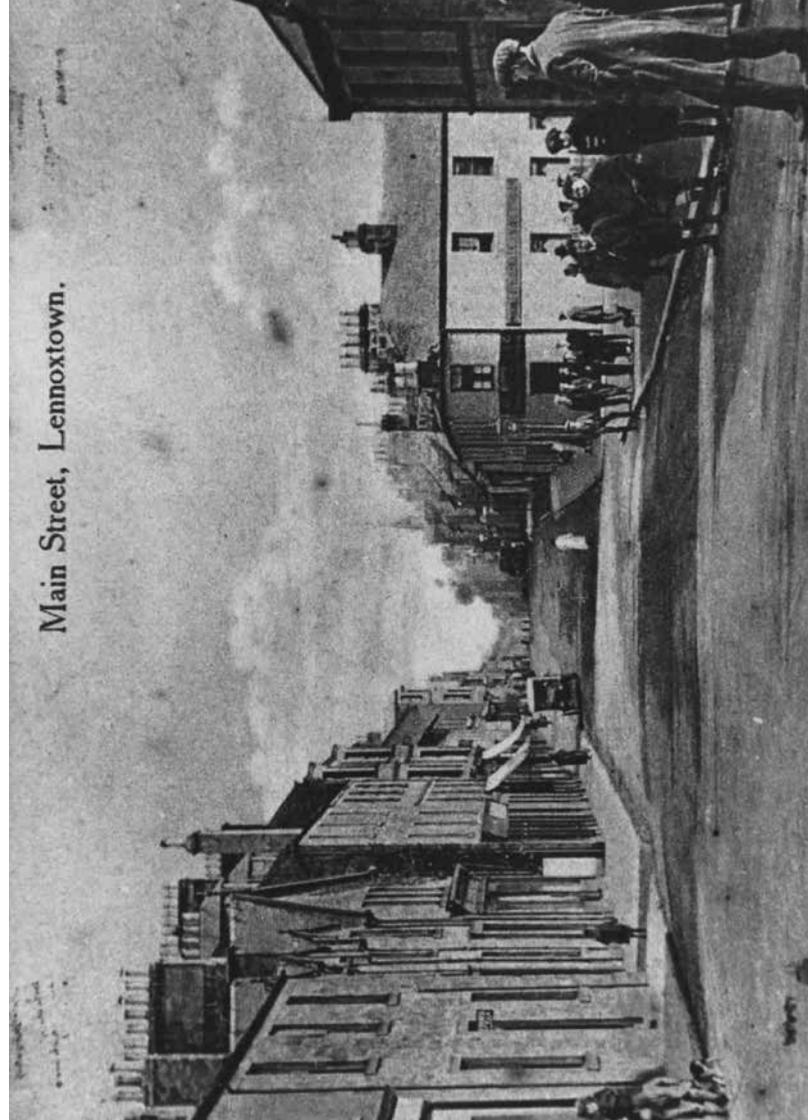
Lapslie, who testified against Thomas which the pathway through the area is named along with more rightly, the Strathkelvin railway which eventually closed in 1967 due to Beeching, but for the last 16 years of its existence only carried freight, and just to add more to the confusion that it seems to be the *raison d'être* for the place there is a third name for the pathway that runs through the village, that is John Muir, thus reflecting the three sides of the character of the entire country, this is, the radical, the internationalist and the industrial heritage of the entire country of Scotland.

Mark Callaghan

Field of Blood

There is a field known as “The Field of Blood” and it relates back to the time of Rob Roy. His men were known to be stealing cattle so the drovers in this area arranged a party, got them drunk and then killed them. There was one escapee however, and he survived by hiding in a bush. There is still a bush there to this day and it is the custom to walk round it 3 times for luck.

Isobel Cartwright



KIRKINTILLOCH THURSDAY AFTERNOON READING GROUP

The Lenzie Ladies

Lenzie used to be known as an area where people thought of themselves as quite “well-to-do”. It was the custom when anyone new moved into the neighbourhood to invite them round for what was meant to be hospitality, but could end of up being a bit of a palaver! Social etiquette which should have facilitated such a social occasion became a bit of a burden. If you invited anyone to your house in the morning it had to be for coffee, whereas if they came in the afternoon, it had to be for tea. The afternoon question was “India or China?” which was not really a question at all, because the only acceptable response was “China”!

Added to this set of hurdles, was the dilemma of food being served which meant juggling teacup, saucer and possibly sandwiches, cakes,

biscuits or other socially acceptable offerings appropriate of course, for the time of day.

Other activities of the Lenzie Ladies included being a presence on the Woodilee Hospital Board. From a student nurse’s point of view, a visit from these women at that time (*c 19..*) was akin to watching a royal tour of the hospital! The women themselves were always dressed in the latest affluent fashions, and typical dress included gloves, felt hat and wool coats.

The other side to the coin of this story though was often seen in witnessing the local shops and businesses in Lenzie. One story is told of how a wealthy woman went into the fishmongers and asked for salmon, only to be told by the young lady serving her that she had been given into trouble for giving her haddock the week before while she still had a large outstanding bill. Oblivious to opinion being formed behind her by other customers present in the shop, the bold Lenzie lady proffered the response “well, if I pay you for last week’s haddock can I have this week’s salmon?”, with the matter of the large outstanding bill casually overlooked! The poor fishmonger was not alone in

the difficulty of settling bills, as it was reputed that when the local newsagent closed, some people had newspaper bills totalling around £200!

Contributions from members of the reading group

Growing up in Torrance

While many people moved from Glasgow to Kirkintilloch and the surrounding area for better housing, that was not always the case. One lady who went on to have a successful professional career herself moved to the area when her father had to find a way of earning a living and bringing up his two children back in the 1940's on his own. As a child, this lady had lived in a very nice house in Scotstoun with all mod cons, but her father had to move to Torrance and take over a piggery to support his family. The house there had no electric light, a dry toilet and one cold tap in the house. However, undaunted, the family soldiered on and made more than just a go of things, eg on a Saturday morning the man would drive into Kirkintilloch and drop the children at the library where they read widely and purchases of magazines were made at the local newsagent.

Another great help with the children's education was in the form of books loaned to the children by friends of their father in the 'Young Communists'.

As far as schooling at this time was concerned, boundaries and catchment areas were factors then as much as they are today. Because the family lived in Torrance which came within Stirlingshire Council at that time, Lenzie Academy would not accept the children as pupils. However, one notable feature in the development of private schooling is worth mentioning here. Whilst Lenzie Academy had a very good reputation, it benefitted from having no social discrimination. Private schooling was really developed for those who did not perform well in state schools and where the parents had the funds available to pay for them to be educated "privately", i.e. in smaller classes, where 1:1 additional support was required.

But back to our two resourceful youngsters in Torrance! The enterprising pair happened to live there at a time when there were three pubs whilst neighbouring areas were "dry". This meant people coming into Torrance for a drink, and the youngsters would keep a watchful eye

out for those coming out of the pub at night. Courting couples would go for a stroll along Kelvin Bank, and the next day a good scour of the river banks could produce a few dropped coins which funded a trip to the Black Bull cinema!

Jennifer Campbell



Lenzie Post Office and Shops



Top: Lenzie Main Street / Bottom: Torrence

KIRKINTILLOCH THURSDAY MORNING VIRGO READING GROUP

Kirkintilloch and Bishopbriggs Workers at Cowlairs

The railway line that fed into Cowlairs brought in workers from Kirkintilloch, when there was a station at Eastside, and also from Bishopbriggs. Of course the railway line that existed then also had stations at Milton of Campsie, Blanefield and Strathblane too. The number of people working at Cowlairs was vast and when they went in and out of work, it looked like football match crowds. Cowlairs made and repaired rolling stock for the railway company that owned it, similar work went on at St Rollox, while Hyde Park and Atlas built engines to sell to the rest of the world. Looking back over the years, that railway line figures in a lot of our history and it was also used to bring back some of the wounded from the First World War to Springburn Hospital.

I remember the sight of the railway engines that

had been built in Springburn coming down our street on the way to India. The tram wires had to be taken down to let them through because they were huge machines that were coming through this small town, they completely dwarfed it! They had to be moved on an articulated lorry after midnight because of course, the wires being taken down meant the trams had to stop running. I remember it was always Pickfords that had the job of moving them and they took them down to Finnieston where they were sent out to India.

The original Cowlairs belonged to the North British Railway, but it later became a store and the new works was built on top of it. It was a system of tunnels and really dark down there and you had to put the lights on and stamp your feet and make a bit of noise to chase the rats! It was said that some of the workers used the system of tunnels to get in and out of work and go to the pictures during the shift! In this area, somebody from almost every house worked on the railway and I know of a block of 4 houses where 10 people were employed across a wide range of jobs in the offices, engine drivers, wagon builders.

William McDermid

History of the Talking Newspapers in Kirkintilloch

The idea for the talking newspaper, an edited audio version of the Kirkintilloch Herald, was first acted on by Myra Bailey, Alice McKenzie and Pat McKinley and a few other like-minded folk. They began by meeting in the staff room of the William Patrick Library and would read aloud from the newspaper and record using 1 microphone and 1 recorder. The next stage was moving to the P & O Building on Eastside and working in a Portakabin inside a warehouse. For soundproofing we lined the walls of the cabin with old egg boxes, but we still picked up the noise of footsteps and the kettle clicking! We had more recorders by then, but it was still a really basic way of doing things with the technician sitting outside the window and giving the thumbs up when he was ready! However, we have since gone digital in the past 2 years, have grown to 4 recording groups and have an audience that stretches across Campsie, Kilsyth, Twechar and people beyond the local area. There are now around a hundred recipients.

Pat McKinlay

KIRKINTILLOCH TUESDAY EVENING READING GROUP

Moving into Kirkintilloch

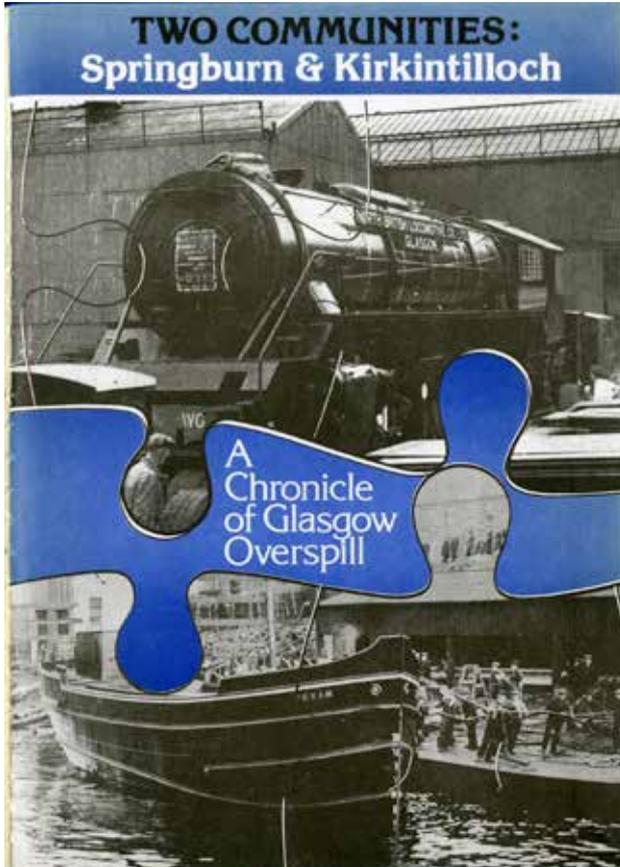
In the late 1950s and 1960s, many people moved to Kirkintilloch from Glasgow. While there was a great improvement in housing and a healthier, more open environment, there is no doubt that there was loss as well as gain felt by the people who moved.

It was not easy to leave behind friends, family and community in Glasgow, and especially with Springburn there was a great sadness because it felt like the area was being ripped apart. To this day people feel that Springburn was really destroyed with the council putting roads right through the centre of it and physically tearing the community apart. The community you were moving to was also being changed with a lot of new housing being built, and there was some resentment about that. However, on a one to one basis, people

generally got on with each other and over time the sense of loss eased and to a greater or lesser extent people settled into life in Kirkintilloch.

New estates like Harestanes had housing which was really a great improvement, but there were difficulties because there was not much infrastructure. Transport into Kirkintilloch and Glasgow was by bus and there was only one an hour, complicated by the fact it was a limited stop! There was only 1 shop in Harestanes at one stage and the walk into Kirkintilloch was lengthy and in bad weather with children, was quite an undertaking! At this time though, Kirkintilloch had really good, individual shops and the High Street was a pleasure to go round.

Contributions from Kirkintilloch Reading Group



Two Communities Book

KIRKINTILLOCH THURSDAY EVENING GROUP

The Lion Foundry

I worked in the Foundry offices and was really aware of the confidential nature of the work carried out. The Lion Foundry made large scale items and their decorative cast iron work is known and famed throughout the world. While I worked there they were the major employer in the local area. They also made telephone boxes, electric boxes and did both floor and machine moulding. One of the most iconic objects the Foundry made must be the telephone box, and the style of the last one was shrouded in secrecy. The Star Foundry made smaller things items and components.

The location of the Foundry was due to the position of the canal which brought coal in on barges and sent it down the chute to the Foundry, and also the railway which was nearby.

The skill of the workmen was really something to behold and I remember the craftsmanship of the hand moulders in particular. The intricacy of the work they carried out was based on drawings which came down from the Drawing office and were in themselves works of art. The sheer physical exertion that most of the jobs in the Foundry required was overwhelming. You could always identify former Foundry workers in later life because of the toll the work had taken on their bodies. One elderly man walked almost bent double, he had been a floor moulder and this required him to carry extremely heavy buckets of molten iron and then bend over with the weight to pour them into the moulds which were laid out on the floor. In those days health and safety was a completely different world than it is today. It was difficult to see in the Stoor Shop where the dusting and polishing was done and yet the men did not even wear masks. Throughout the Foundry men had to work with their trouser legs tied with string at the bottom because of the rats.

Anonymous



Lion Foundry Workers

The Kerr Street Sweet Shop

The shop was two but and bens knocked together, and the counter was probably laid across a doorway with ha'penny trays of sweets set out on it. As well as these there were the sweets in jars which you could buy in 2oz and 4oz measures, coveted bars of chocolate and other delicious things.....

Candy balls, macaroon, tablet, lucky potatoes, rosebuds, Parma Violets, cola cubes, wine gums, liquorice fountains, sugarolly, Pontefract cakes, black jacks, fruit salads, ha'penny, penny and tuppenny caramels, Fry's 5 Boys and sweetie cigarettes...

Contributions from Kirkintilloch Thursday Evening Group



BISHOPBRIGGS READING GROUP

Food is a big theme!

Co-op – Auchinairn Road, Bishopbriggs and Springburn.

Springburn was where you got your dividend and spent it in the large Department Store. Money was not handled by the staff- there was a cashier who put money in a container that went into a chute.

My mother went to Springburn to spend her dividend on goods like clothes and wool. She collected her dividend by shopping for groceries in the Auchinairn Co-op. Everyone shopped there as the dividend was very important for working class families.

When I was a wee girl I remember being awed by the Co-op. All the cabinets were in a dark

wood with white marble topped counters. The cashier sat at a desk in a glass booth which was raised above the counters almost like an altar.

The food was large too- butter in barrel shaped lumps, cheese in huge slabs and bacon came in a large shoulder. Customers got their messages at the counters; your order of butter was made into a pat using wooden paddles, cheese cut to order with cheese wires and bacon sliced on a slicing machine to the thickness you wanted. Everything was put into greaseproof paper and then a paper bag.

Dry goods like rice, lentils, peas and beans were also weighed to order.

To supplement the local shops there were also vans that came round our scheme selling fruit, rolls, and fish. I remember the Dalziel's van they shouted "Dalziel Rolls". There was also a van that sold general groceries I remember climbing into the van and ordering my messages at the counter.

Bishopbriggs was quite fragmented in the 1950s, the village areas of Bishopbriggs, Auchinairn and the mining villages of Mavis Valley and

Jellyhill so I suppose food retailers took to vans to get custom in the schemes and villages.

I remember Bishopbriggs as a farming area. When I was about five I moved from Bishopbriggs to Auchinairn. Just down the road was Gilchrist's farm I have a very strong memory of being sent to the farm for milk, this was terrifying because of the size of the animals, the cows in the byre and the dogs running around the farmyard seemed huge to me. My mother had no fear of sending me to the farm because she worked on the local farms. She used to pick a squad of women and they were picked up in a lorry to go tattie picking. When the tatties were picked an even smaller select squad went to work in the local market garden. I remember being embarrassed because my mother wore trousers and a man's shirt to work on the farms.

When we went for a big shop dad would go too and carry my mum's bags- in the 50s this was unusual as men did not carry shopping bags. It was a very formal time Dad wore a collar and tie when shopping!!

Josephine recalls the constraints within the classes. Women did not wear trousers and even as a child you did not wear trousers, maybe shorts on the beach.

Liz Emans



Bishopbriggs shops

BEARSDEN READING GROUP

In the 1960s, before the Clean Air Act, I remember travelling through Westerton in the smog with my father in the car. At some point he would have to ask me to get out of the car and walk at the side of the road so he would know where the grass verge was and not drive into it!

The history of nurseries and pre-school education in Bearsden is interesting. In the late 1940s nurseries were generally used by economically poorer families where both parents had to go out to work. This has all changed now of course, and I remember a particular feature of Bearsden nursery/playgroup places in the 1980's and 1990's. After the discovery of oil in the North Sea, BP set up an office in Glasgow and a lot of Americans came to work here. They were given a list of suitable places to live by their company and Bearsden was on this list. This meant a high demand for nursery places

and a system known as “the lucky hat” was devised with children’s names being drawn from it...needless to say a pattern emerged of luck running through certain groups and not through others! Later, the families were absorbed into the community, but at first they formed a distinctive group, known as “The BP Wives”!

Contributions from the Bearsden Reading Group

First Impressions of Bearsden

We arrived in Scotland in springtime on the last ever Air Zimbabwe flight, which surprisingly enough was also one of the best we had ever flown on. We really should have moved out of that desperate country earlier, but because of one elderly Jack Russell and the fact that we honestly imagined that ‘things would improve’, we hung on and on! However once our pet had died and our grandchildren had followed their father to Scotland, we knew that the time had come for us to leave Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe – a country in which we had lived for nearly all our lives, and which was once known to be the bread-basket of Africa. The last two years had been hard ones for us as there was little food; no municipal water and electricity

came on and went off with a mind of its own.

Arriving in Bearsden was certainly a cultural shock, for although we had travelled extensively, the last years in Zimbabwe had deadened our memory of the outside world. So here we were in this delightful and pretty town, where everything 'worked' – water came out of taps, lights shone when switched on, the telephone worked and proper food and clothing was available in shops. I vividly remember our granddaughter taking us to ASDA, and I could not believe the fact that we would be able to BUY what was on the shelves, and more than ever that the same things would be there next week. Hoarding tins of food became a habit during those first months, and we have since found out that other people fleeing Zimbabwe have experienced exactly the same problem.

But the best surprise of all was the Scottish people – and their wonderful kindness to us from the moment of our arrival. Neighbours and their friends brought warm clothing for us to try on – and to actually keep if they fitted! The people of Scotland are a breed of their own, and we are so very privileged to now be part of them and this

country. When asked if we miss the warmth of the tropics, all we can say is that we have found a far more important and lasting warmth here.

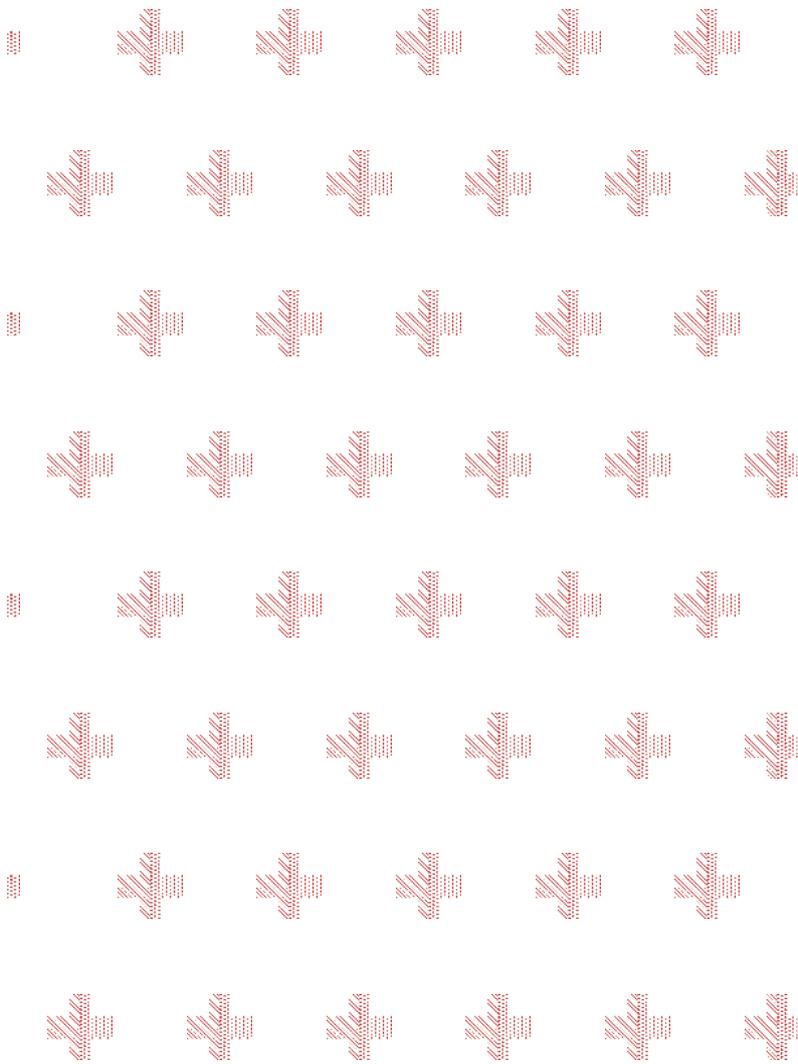
Daphne Kidd

Bearsden picture?

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Telling Tales is an anthology of local writing, undertaken as part of *Trails and Tales*.

Trails and Tales is a 3 year arts and heritage learning programme which will engage artists with communities to explore their local history and heritage. Each of the creative projects will generate research, conversations and creative responses to learning to inform the design and creation of a series of outdoors sculptural arts and heritage trails, across 11 local communities in East Dunbartonshire.

www.trailsandtales.org

