

# **‘Nitshill Memories’**

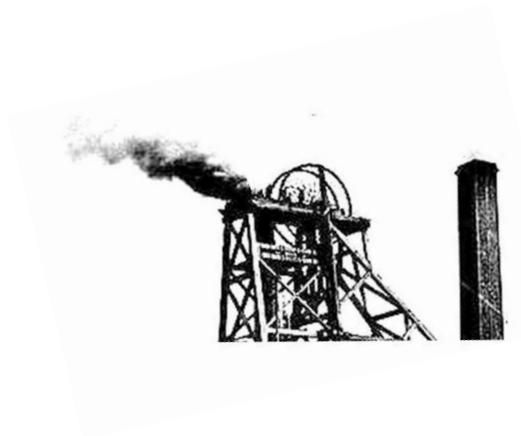
## **An oral history of a former mining village**

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**Glasgow Story Collective**

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# Foreword

‘Nitshill Memories’ is an intergenerational oral history project capturing the rich social history of Nitshill, a former mining village once located in Renfrewshire and now incorporated into the wider Glasgow area. Nitshill has a rich, though little-known history, but, as we are finding out, its current and former residents have wonderful memories of the village and the close community spirit which, it might be argued, still exists, especially through these current troubled times.

Nitshill volunteers have been at the centre of this project throughout. Some worked with Dr Sue Morrison, a professional oral historian to research and write this book or to interview their friends and neighbours, others have shared their stories and memories with us, whilst others have helped us to film events or organise exhibition materials. Youngs people also got involved, assisting with interviews, filming, and events, and coaxing their older relatives to talk to us. Thank you, all.

Iris Larkin coordinated the project activities on our behalf and worked with volunteers to produce written testimony and audio clips for the online oral history archive. These digital products are available to view on the project website.

We are grateful to National Lottery Heritage Fund, National Lottery Players, Oral History Research & Training Consultancy, and Communities Past & Futures Society, for their generous support, and, in particular, we extend our deep gratitude to everyone who participated in this hugely successful project.

Donald John MacLean (Chair)  
Glasgow Story Collective

April 2020

# Introduction

Funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund and supported by Oral History Research & Training Consultancy, and Communities Past & Futures Society, 'Nitshill Memories' focuses on the former mining village of Nitshill, now a district in the ward of Greater Pollok on the south side of Glasgow; this project explores the oral history of the village and its residents.

Nitshill was once a tight industrial hub concentrated around mineral and ore extraction, including coal, and in the nineteenth century, the village had been the site of one of Britain's worst coal mining accidents. A century later, much of the earlier village was demolished as it grew to accommodate people relocated during the Glasgow slum clearances of the 1950s and 1960s. An unintended consequence was that the new housing programme severely disrupted networks of old communities and extended families. Older residents were often dismayed to witness the changes. Meanwhile, new residents often lived far away from their existing places of work, and there were few opportunities for work locally as any surviving local industries and manufacturing jobs were threatened and eventually lost amidst the clamour for housing land. Worse yet, many of the post war tenements were reputedly of poor quality and suffered from damp, condensation, and lack of soundproofing.

However, almost everyone who spoke with us had wonderful memories of Nitshill and its close community, and they shared stories with us about growing up and living in the village. Volunteers and staff received professional oral history training and set about identifying, contacting, and recording the memories of forty people with connections to Nitshill. The resulting oral testimonies have unveiled the rich community spirit which existed during their childhoods up to recent times. Respondents told us about their families, their neighbours, where and how they played, school days and growing up in Nitshill. Their stories are warm, funny, informative, and always sincere.

There has been a sustained effort to improve housing stock in recent years, and many of those post-war schemes and industrial brown sites have been demolished and replaced with modern housing estates. Our respondents have told us that these new houses are great, but they feel that the building of new schemes has led to further family and friend dispersals, and the erosion of that once vibrant community spirit. This may be too harsh an assessment, and maybe that longstanding community spirit will survive and flourish. That is a matter for the new residents of Nitshill, and perhaps a story for another day.



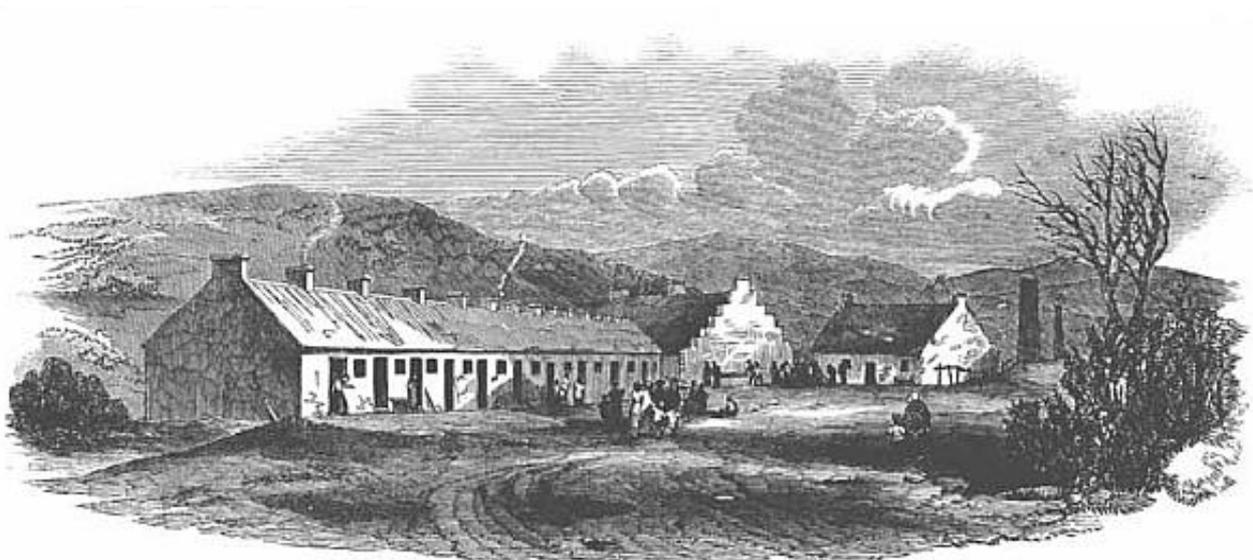
'Old Nitshill'

# Historical Background

## Nitshill and the Levern Valley

In 1882-4, Frances Groome's Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland described Nitshill as:

'Nitshill, a village in the SE corner of Abbey-Paisley parish, Renfrewshire, near the right bank of Levern Water, with a station on the Glasgow, Barrhead, and Kilmarnock Joint railway, 2 miles NE of Barrhead, and 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  WSW of Glasgow. It has a Free church, a Roman Catholic school, and chemical works (1807); and it is largely inhabited by workers in neighbouring coal-mines and quarries. Population (1841) 821; (1861) 1029; (1871) 986; (1881) 1001.'



Pitmen's Dwellings

It is unclear how Nitshill got its name, but legend has it that the village was originally named Nuttishill, due to it being a small hill topped with hazelnut groves. This is supported by a reference documented in the poll tax rolls of the Paisley Abbey Parish records, which states that, in 1695, a Mr Robert Miller of Nuttishill had to pay a tax of 1.17s.2d. to King William III. Anecdotal evidence suggests that people, now long gone, used to pick the hazelnuts from that same wood, until both it and the hill were levelled by bulldozers in the 1920s. During later excavation work to prepare the ground for the foundations of Bellarmine School, engineers discovered an old silted bed of the Brock Burn that contained dozens of ancient hazel-nuts.

Incidentally, the name of Hurllet, now part of Nitshill, is thought to have been Harelea. meaning the field where the hares used to play.

Archival evidence relating to Nitshill is scarce and what is available focuses mostly on Crookston Castle and the Barony of Darnley. However, research has brought to light a few snippets of information about the people from the Levern villages, which includes Nitshill and nearby Hurlet. For example, this wider area has a military past and, in 1138AD, a large body of soldiers, given the group name of 'Levernani' were recruited from the lower Levern villages. Records suggest that the Levernani were formidable fighters under the leadership of Walter Fitzalan, the founder of Paisley Abbey, but they experienced great losses at the Battle of the Standard, near York. The battle, also known as the Battle of Northallerton, was an attempt by King David I of Scotland to exploit the dynastic power struggle in England between Stephen and Matilda, the latter being David's niece, though he was also related to Stephen's wife. Seeking to reclaim some land and to capture additional territory, David invaded northern England in the summer of 1138, but he was fought and defeated by an army raised by the Archbishop of York.

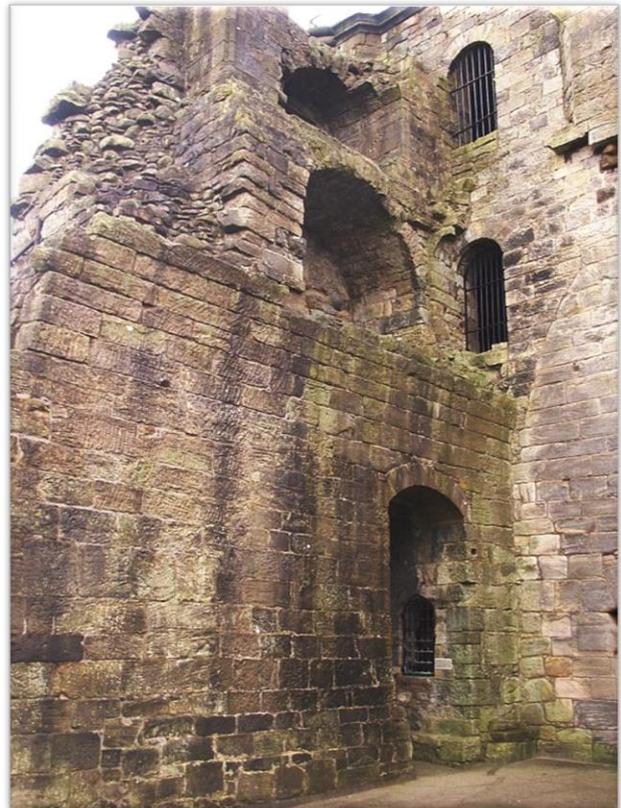


Battle of the Standard, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1138, by Sir John Gilbert

The Levernani lost many men but survived as a unit and years later, in 1164, it played a major part in a battle at Renfrew against Somerled, the Lord of the Isles. Somerled was a military and political leader of the Scottish Isles in the 12th century. He was known in Gaelic as 'ri Innse Gall': 'King of the Hebrides'. Following the deaths, in 1153, of David I of Scotland and King Olaf of The Isle of Man, Somerled took his chance and made offensive moves against both Scotland and Man and the Isles. Somerled eventually manoeuvred his way to extending his kingdom from the Isle of Man to the Butt of Lewis. This brought both Vikings and Scots under a single lord and they came to share a single culture to become a powerful race known as the Gall-Gaidheal, literally meaning 'Foreign-Gaels'. However, Somerled eventually overreached himself when he tried to further extend his powers and came up against the Stuarts, who had made inroads into the west coast. Somerled assembled a sizeable army to repel them and marched into the Stuart's territory of Renfrew, which was defended by the

Levernani, amongst others. It is unclear exactly what happened there but, at the end of the day, Somerled and his son were both dead and his army retreated from the area. After this engagement, the Levernani seem to have disappeared from history.

Another item of historical note took place in 1180, when a hospital for sick brethren was founded by Robert de Croc, the builder of Crookston Castle and a church at Neilston, all built on his lands. This is thought to have been one of the earliest formal hospitals in Scottish history. Named after Sir Richard Croc, Laird of Cowglen, and one of the oldest castles in the West of Scotland, Crookston Castle is reportedly the last medieval castle in Glasgow. Built on top of a hill, the castle is actually a combination of two castles, with one sitting inside the other, and is surrounded by a ring-shaped ditch. The ditch and the original castle, which contained a chapel, were built by Sir Richard in the twelfth century. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Sir Richard's descendants had lost their lands when most of the Levern valley was acquired by a branch of the Stewart family. Sir John Stewart extended the original castle structure after he inherited the lands of Darnley in 1404.



The newer castle had four corner towers and is estimated to have been over sixty feet high and covered a ground area of sixty feet by forty feet. It had a storage cellar, well, kitchen and sleeping quarters on the ground floor, a Great Hall on the first floor, and private stairways and apartments at the east side of the building. At the bottom of the north-east tower was a pit-dungeon. The exterior of the castle was limewashed and the main entrance was barred by a forehouse, heavy doors and a portcullis. All of these features were designed to keep out small armies of lightly-armed men whilst also providing comfortable habitation for the Stewart family and their retainers.

Famous on French battlefields during the One Hundred Years War, Sir John's troops became the mighty Scots Guards - the personal bodyguard of the King of France. In 1429, Sir John was killed in an ambush while trying to steal some salted herrings from the enemy to feed his men.

A descendent of Sir John, Henry Stewart, later became the Lord Darnley who married Mary, Queen of Scots in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is said that Lord Darnley and his wife often sat beneath a sycamore tree when they visited Crookston Castle. Today, that sycamore tree, known as a 'plane tree' in Scotland, stands at the corner of Nitshill Road and Kennishead Road and is a protected heritage site surround by a wrought iron fence.



Eventually, Crookston Castle succumbed to the elements, was abandoned, and fell to ruin. However, it has not been forgotten and both it and the land that surrounds it is now a popular beauty spot and a venue for educational visits and storytelling. The documented history of Nitshill and nearby Hurlet gathered pace during the seventeenth century against a background of mineral extraction (see: Mineral Extraction, p.16). It was not long before pioneering industrialists began to invest heavily in machinery and infrastructure to exploit those seams and the land above them.

Nearby fields were used for bleaching cloth, which was an important process in wool, cotton and linen production, and was often in preparation for dyeing. Before the introduction of chemicals, bleaching was a process whereby cloth was treated with stale urine and then laid out in fields to be dried by the sun. Bleachfields were simple areas where cloth was laid out in the sun to bleach. The bleaching process was later shortened by replacing urine with sour milk, and shortened again by replacing milk with sulfuric acid. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, bleachers started to use lime in the bleaching process, but this was a dangerous process.

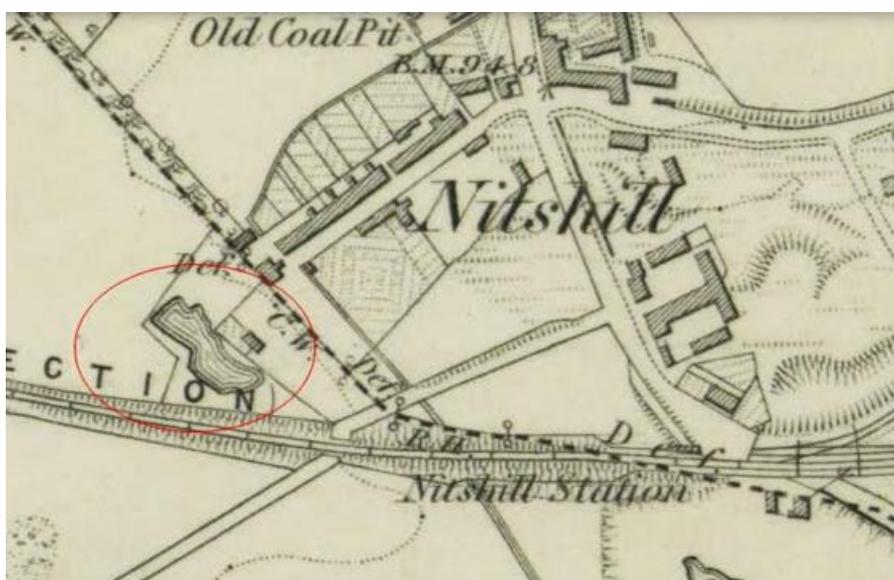
In 1788, Charles Tennant bought bleaching fields at Darnley and experimented with alternative ways to shorten the bleaching time. Tennant came up with the idea of using a combination of



chlorine and lime to produce the best bleaching results. After several failed attempts, Tennant finally came up with a successful method that proved to be effective, inexpensive, and harmless. He was granted patent no. 2209 on 23 January 1798 and continued his research to develop a bleaching powder (patented no.2312 on 30 April 1799). Tennant had formed a partnership with four friends in 1794; his partners were: Dr William Couper, the legal advisor to the partnership; Alexander Dunlop, partnership accountant to the group; James Knox, who managed the sales department; Charles Macintosh, an excellent chemist, was the fourth partner and he also assisted in the invention of bleaching powder. Macintosh had also established an Alum Works on the banks of Lavern Water in what is now Househill, and he was the inventor of the well-known waterproofing process used in raincoat manufacture (the variant spelling of Mackintosh is now standard). Following the granting of the bleaching powder patent, the partners bought land beside the Monkland Canal in an area known as St. Rollox, just north of Glasgow, and built a factory that produced bleaching liquor and powder. St.Rollox land was cheap, was close to a good supply of lime, and the nearby canal provided excellent transportation. Before long, production was moved from the Darnley bleachfields to the new factory, but the bleachfields remained in use.

By 1790, Nitshill and Hurllet had become a prosperous industrial hub. Sadly, such industrial growth was not without consequences, as exemplified by the Victoria Pit disaster in 1851, in which 63 men and boys were killed. (See: Coal Mining & the Victoria Pit Disaster, p.27).

Nitshill also had a chemical works and several quarries but was mostly recognised as a coal mining village throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its legacy of great bings of waste fed the Nitshill Brick Works for many years. Like many coalmining villages, Nitshill was surrounded by lush green fields and farmland, but it only took a short walk to reach areas where miners laboured far underground, lime and fire clay workers toiled, and folk earned a living in any way they could. Nitshill railway station was opened by the Glasgow, Barrhead and Neilston Direct Railway on 27 September 1848. It was later used by the village's mill girls to travel to Neilston, where they worked 12-hour shifts from 6am to 6pm. Although work for Nitshill's workers was fairly plentiful and regular at that time, wages were very low. Nonetheless, Nitshill, with its half a dozen pubs and a few shops clustered around the main street, was the hub of that industrial enterprise.



Winter curling was a popular pastime and local newspapers reported curling match scores, including those of a game played on 'Nitshill Pond' on February 7, 1847. It was won by John Binnie over ten other competitors, with a score of 7 points. Nitshill's curling pond was the envy of its neighbours, as might be observed from

this comment in the *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January 1864:

**CURLING.**—The curlers at Hurlet and Nitshill enjoyed the pleasure of the “roaring game” on Friday and Saturday, on a very convenient pond adjoining the hamlet of Nitshill. The curlers in Barrhead, however, are extremely in want of a proper curling pond somewhere nearer the village than the Walton dam, which is nigh three miles distant, not easily frozen, and dangerous from the great depth of water.

Local historian, JB Hunter, wrote about what life was like around the turn of the century:

‘Anyone born in the age of steam and horse transport as I was, must have memories from schooldays of the changing ways in the world just ready to erupt into another age of surprise and progress, and this was especially so in our village life in ‘Nitshill.’ In the 1890s lighting was by paraffin lamps and by gas in a few places. Dry closets and open ashpits were all over the place. Travelling from the village was only by train or walking. Ruling officialdom seemed to be a bit afraid of new methods because when

a road roller or thrashing mill went through the place, they were led by a man carrying a red flag in case they would exceed five miles an hour. But we boys saw the changes coming when Watty Crebar came shopping in his newly built horseless car, and his son George began experimenting with gliders before we had heard of the Wright Brothers or Bleriot. Around 1870, the Darnley hospital was opened to replace the timber structure in Barrhead Road, opposite Pollok golf course now used as a riding school. A little later, I think in 1909 I remember going to the polling station at election time just out of boy's curiosity. My pal that evening wore red white and blue as his father was a well-known Liberal. The change from that time is that my schoolmate is now a well-known Labour M.P. Seeing a few volunteers off to the Boer War was an event, as nearly everyone was at the railway station to bid them farewell. About this time, it was interesting to hear from someone who remembered the Nitshill Pit disaster in 1851 when 63 men lost their lives, and again from one who had actually paid tolls at Darnley to old roadman Reilly, who collected the tolls.'

Mr Hunter was a football fan and recalled that:

'Football was the popular sport, and it was here the original 'Hi-Hi' man, Jock Taylor, was heard on Saturday evenings when he arrived home after watching the old 3rd L.V.R's. The villagers got their first look at Rangers when they played a friendly against Levern Victoria on Holm Park and now Newfield Square. Football players home from England during the closed season, enjoying their £208 a year, were an attraction for the boys, and none more so than Jock McMahon, wearing his cup medal won by Manchester, prior to the whole outfit being suspended Sine Die by the E.F.A. for paying more than allowed by rule. The local football pitch went back to agriculture about 1905 and anywhere a ball could be kicked was utilized until the Royal Vics started up at Darnley in 1910, and until the great war began, their record was: Renfrewshire Cup – won twice; Paisley and district cup – won twice; R.U. once: Barrhead and district league – won once; Scott Cup – won once; Pollok Tourney Final and Scottish Cup – last eight out of 269 entries. The man behind the Royals was dynamic Jas. F. Montgomerie, now Capt. Montgomerie M.C. O.B.E. Another outfit was Levern Thistle who played at the Hurlet, and who brought out a few senior players, amongst whom was Bobby Templeton who played for Hibs and finished as manager before the McCartney days. Templeton learned his boyish football where the bowling green is now and lives where 'Sam's' shop is at present.'

Although its workers were poorly paid for their labour, they were intent on improving their lot and, during the early 1900s, Nitshill villagers petitioned for a public hall. The building was financially assisted by Miss Dove of the cottages in Glenlora, who later became Lady Congleton in Cheshire.



One of the most famous properties in Nitshill was Househill Mansion, which was built in the early 19th century to replace an earlier house on the lands of Househill belonging to the Dunlop family. In 1477, the lands of Househill were owned by Sir Thomas Stewart of Minto, who was the Provost of Glasgow in 1472. The estate was sold to Thomas Dunlop in 1646 and was retained by his family until 1719, when Thomas' grandson sold the estate to John Blackburn, a merchant who traded with Britain's then American colonies. In 1750, Blackburn's son Andrew sold Househill to Robert Dunlop, another merchant, whose brother was Provost Colin Dunlop of Carmyle. The estate, which now included the grand Househill Mansion, was later home to John Cochrane and his wife Catherine Cranston, proprietor of Miss Cranston's Tearooms, including the Willow Tearooms in Glasgow that was designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. In 1904 Mrs Cranston commissioned Mackintosh to redesign the interior of her Househill Mansion and its furniture. Catherine Cranston was widowed in 1920 and sold the house. It was later badly damaged by fire and demolished in 1930.

The author, C.R.W. later wrote about 'Old Nitshill'; the following is an extract from his notes:

'The people of old Nitshill seem to have called themselves variously Nitshillionians and Nitshillites. Which of these is best is hard to say but as in all villages the older citizens talk affectionately of notable friends who have gone...one of these being Jim Currie, the Gasman, who lived in his cottage next to the gasworks on the west bank of the Levern where it flowed under the Nitshill-Hurlet Road. Mr Currie although he had lived for more than ninety years in the village was an in-comer having been born elsewhere. He had been for many years the manager of the two-man gasworks which drew its coal from the Waterloo and Watermally Pits at Hurlet. The two men worked

about the retorts and the gasholder which was a well-known part of the industrial landscape. Jim and his assistant knew every nook and cranny of the village for every house was regularly visited in the course of their duty. It was Mr Currie who emptied the pennies out of the gas meters into his Gladstone bag for transfer to the two-wheeled money-box outside.

Old Jim died at the ripe old age of one hundred and two. Many were the tales he had to tell of his long association with Nitshill. He remembered the Old Toll Bar at Darnley, where the road tolls were collected. He had helped as a lad at the milling of grain at the Darnley Mill Farm. He had watched the prowess of Sergeant Middleton, the local crack shot rifleman at the Darnley Firing Ranges, behind Darnley Mains Farm. He had seen the building of Darnley Hospital in the eighties and of the Fire station later. He told of the limestone quarries that belonged to the Kirkwood family who lived in the historic Darnley House until it was pulled down. This house and Queen Mary's Tree opposite Darnley Mill Farm are traditionally associated with the wooing of the young Queen by Lord Darnley.

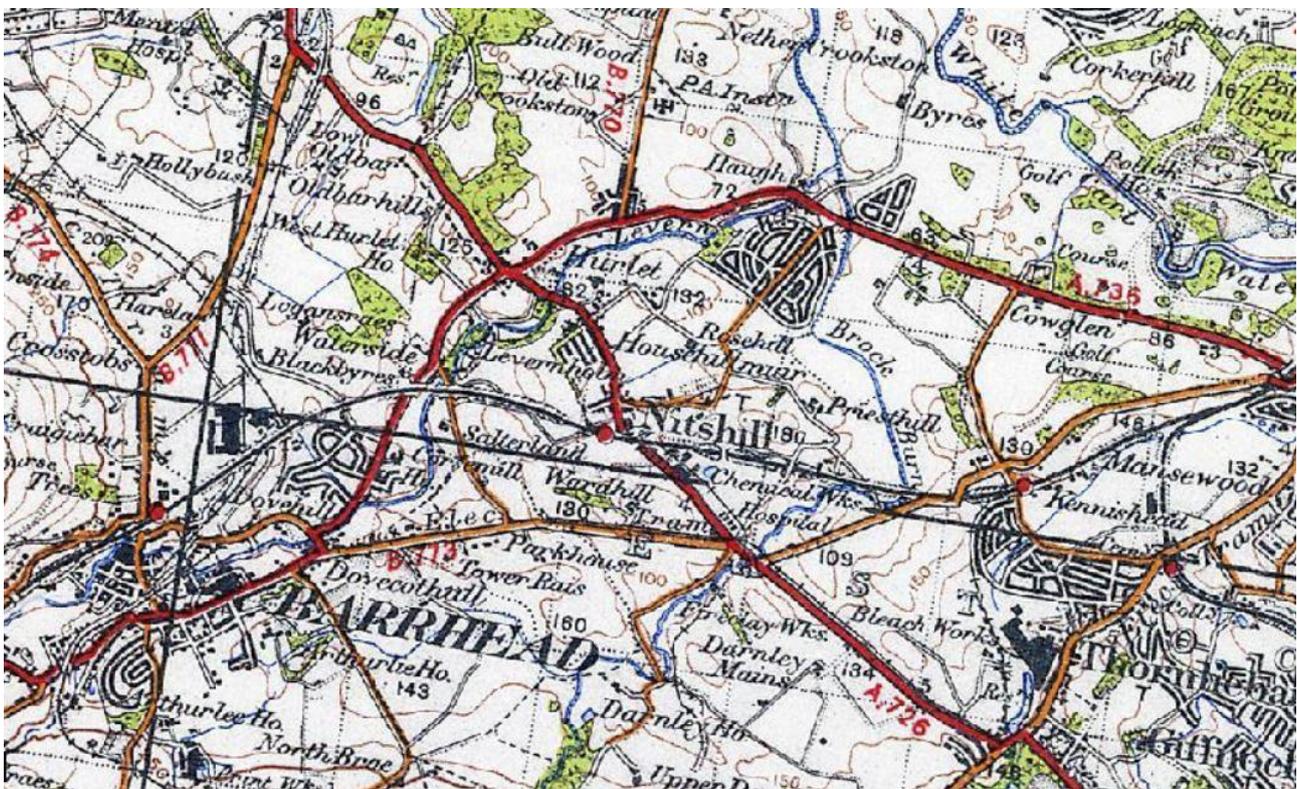
He told also of how the Misses Cranston of Househill were driven daily in their coach-and-pair to Nitshill Station on their way to their restaurant in Glasgow. Mr Donohue their coachman-gardener also had the pleasure of delivering flowers and plants from their beautiful gardens to the restaurant for the delectation of their customers. He related the pranks of the boys about Howdens Lawn and the Tap-o-the-Knowes, round the pitheads and on the railway tracks that criss-crossed the district. He told of the drowning of two children in the lade. This was a small canal which left the Levern near the Levern Church and carried water at a higher level than the falling river. This water was used to supply the Dam, which was used as a curling pond, and to drive the mill-wheel in the alum works whose site is now occupied by the English Electric Company. Thereafter it re-joined the river on its way to meet the White Cart.

On his hundredth birthday, 15th October 1960 Jim was the proud recipient of the Queen's congratulations. To his relatives and friends who gathered in his cottage to be with him on that day, he was reported by the Barrhead News to have asked what all the fuss was about.'

Nitshill was part of Renfrewshire until 1926, when it was incorporated into the City of Glasgow. The change in local government was mainly related to education and community services such as roads, water, sewerage, and housing. At the end of WWI, the village consisted of just a few streets. It grew on a small scale with the addition of cottage flats built prior to World War II; after which it was substantially expanded to accommodate people relocated during the Glasgow slum clearances in the 1950s and 1960s.

# Extraction Industries & Manufacturing

The documented history of Nitshill and nearby Hurllet gathers pace during the seventeenth century against a background of mineral extraction. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, coal and other minerals were becoming important commodities and landowners and industrialists conducted extensive geological surveys to ascertain which minerals were present and at what depths. The surveys revealed that Nitshill and the neighbouring villages of Hurllet and Househillmuir stood on valuable deposits of coal, iron, aluminous schist, bituminous shale, and limestone.



Records show that small-scale coal mining had taken place in and around Hurllet since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Coal was extracted, sometimes by families of men, women, and children, by digging and shoring up small holes in the ground to reach shallow seams; the coal was then used in homes and industrial workshops. Keen to exploit those reserves, pioneering industrialists invested heavily to sink mineshafts, install winding gear, construct roads, and build workers' housing, including miners' cottages that were erected along the banks of the Levern and at Hurllet corner. By 1790, around ten thousand tons of coal were mined every year by more than two hundred colliers. As a result, Nitshill and Hurllet became an economically prosperous industrial hub for nearly two centuries.

The New Statistical Account of Scotland, 1847, reported that Nitshill and Hurlet were at that time 'inhabited chiefly by colliers and other miners employed in the extensive works in their neighbourhood.' However, another major employer was the Nitshill sandstone quarry, which had high quality stone that was 'of such extent as to give employment to nearly one hundred men all the year round.'

Describing the geology, Mr Oatts, manager of the Hurlet Alum Works, reported that:

'This rock has a gentle declivity from south to north, with a dip eastward. It lies over a stratum of coal 2 feet 6 inches thick. The rock is 60 feet in thickness from the coal upwards. In some parts it rises to the surface; in others, it is covered by 3 feet of earth. It contains three distinct strata of coal, besides the stratum underneath it. This coal is quite different in its nature, quality, and value, from the neighbouring Hurlet coal.

In the sandstone rock some remarkable specimens of fossil vegetable remains have been found. Two petrified trees found here are placed as curiosities near the mansion of the proprietor at Househill, the one, 10 feet high, and 5 feet round at the bottom; the other, 5 feet high, and 5 feet round at the bottom, both having the large root fissures, and protuberances equally decided and discernible with any other of the full-grown timber that now adorns the surrounding lawn.

A fossil fern procured at Lavernshields is 3 feet in circumference at bottom, 1 1 feet 4 inches high,—3 feet more in length having been left behind when removing the petrification from the quarry. This specimen was found in the lower or bottom seam of the rock, with several others which were destroyed by the quarriers. All were found lying on a gentle declivity with their tops westwards. The natural pile and porous quality of the rock varies considerably on the different sides of each of these seams of coal, that next the bottom being the finest, that at the surface of the ground much coarser.'

It was stated that the presence of various kinds of seashells gave the name of 'Roughmussell' to the miners' row on the Lavern.

The manufacture of sulphate of iron or copperas was introduced into Scotland by Messrs Nicolson and Lightbody of Liverpool, who established their works at Hurlet in the year 1753. A similar establishment for manufacturing copperas was beg un at Nitshill in 1807, and carried on by Messrs Wilson and Sons, who, in 1820, had bought the old copperas works at Hurlet, which was then converted into an extensive alum works by Mr



Wilson Junior, the managing partner of that company. The manufacture of alum was also first introduced into Scotland by Nicolson and Lightbody at their works at Hurlet in 1766 and 1767. Alum was used as a mordant in the cloth dyeing process to ensure that colours did not run out when the textiles were washed. Other uses of alum included flameproofing textiles, in baking powder, and in medicines to reduce mucus, and to stop bleeding. However, Nicolson and Lightbody's manufacturing was process defective and was abandoned within two years. In 1797, another works was launched at Hurlet by Mr Macintosh and Mr Wilson and the manufacture of alum was successfully established and went on to produce a large and steady annual supply of alum, manufactured on correct chemical principles. Large quantities of muriate of potash and sulphate of ammonia were also manufactured due to the connection with the alum process. The muriate was extracted from kelp, and from the ammonia liquor produced at a gas works in Glasgow, and the resulting chemical was important to the numerous bleachfields and printworks of Glasgow and Paisley, Barrhead and Pollokshaws.

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**MANUFACTURERS OF**  
 Alum (ordinary, lump, ground, and fine sieved).  
 " (Robinson's Patent), for Turkey red dyeing.  
 Sulphate of Alumina. Sulphate of Ammonia.  
 Sulphuric Acid. Muriatic Acid, &c.  
**ORDERS EXECUTED ON THE SHORTEST NOTICE.**  
**Works—HURLET, NITSHILL, and 399 WEST ST., GLASGOW.**  
**Registered Office—401 WEST STREET, GLASGOW.**  
 TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES: {"ALUM, GLASGOW."  
 {"ALUM, BARRHEAD," TELEPHONE No. 1403.

Transportation was central to all industrial and manufacturing with the Levern Valley. Here, the railway and the Paisley and Glasgow Canal were key for transferring raw materials and products to and from Glasgow and Paisley. The whole area in and around Nitshill and Hurlet had become hugely important to the national industrial and manufacturing economy.

In 1905, it was reported that the large limestone bed at Barrhead had long been worked as a 'cement stone', and brick and tile works were scattered across the Levern Valley, including one at Nitshill, where there was also an asbestos works. By the early twentieth century, the workable seams in Levern Vale were almost exhausted and the dependent chemical

industries declined. As unemployment levels rose, the local population began to seek jobs elsewhere, leaving behind thatched cottages along the Lavern, at Hurllet corner and at the Victoria Pithead. Battered by the elements, these houses gradually fell into ruin and the whole was reduced to desolation.



Dunlop Place and Burnside Row in Nitshill, c 1920s.  
The cottages to the right were a miners' row.

## **A Brief Overview of Asbestos**

When it was first produced in the 1870s, asbestos was often called a 'wonder' mineral. Its natural fibre and other useful properties meant that it could be used as a strengthener and as a heat resistant substance. Scottish entrepreneurs were amongst the first businessmen to develop asbestos products, with the first commercial use of asbestos occurring in 1874. It was particularly useful in shipbuilding, where its flame-retardant properties could be used in boilers and the engine room. One company was initially known as the Scottish Asbestos Company, and by the mid-1880s it had purchased substantial mines in East Broughton and Black Lake in Quebec, and by 1886 had instigated a number of large-scale improvements to these properties. The material excavated from these mines was processed at Lavernshields

Works, Nitshill. That company seems to have branched out into rubber processing and manufacture in the twentieth century. The number of companies involved in the production of asbestos products increased and by 1914, there were more than sixty asbestos manufacturers throughout Scotland, though Glasgow remained the epicentre of the asbestos revolution.

The mineral was used in products such as asbestos panelling, which was soon in huge demand in the shipbuilding industries. Before long, asbestos panels were built into every ship that sailed from the Clydeside ports. But demand did not stop there, and asbestos-cement products were used in the construction industry where the products provided heat insulation, at a low cost. Asbestos was quickly used to insulate boilers, pipes, and storage heaters. The product was also rolled out as a cheap alternative for building homes and schools using asbestos insulated boards for walls and ceilings.

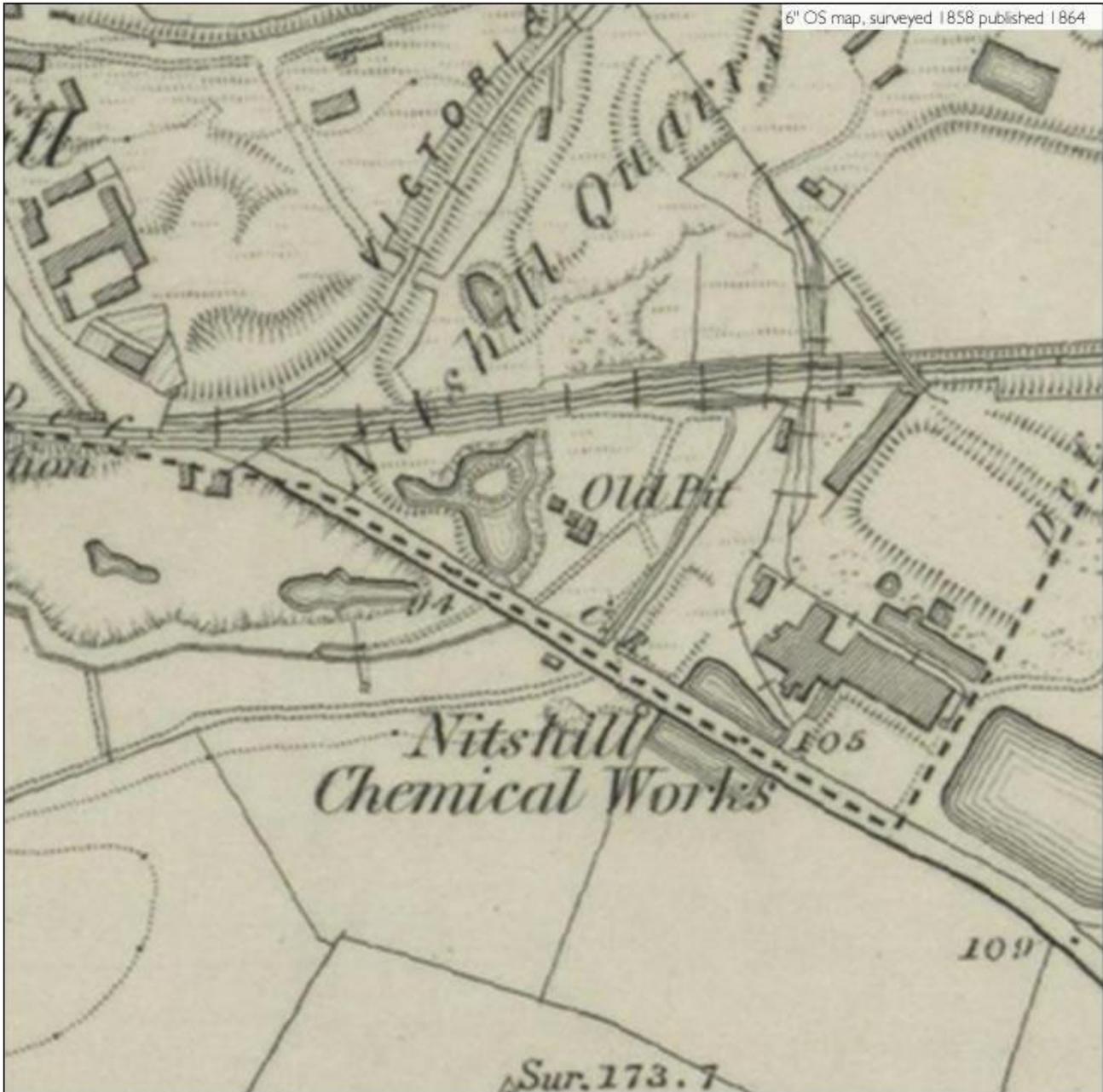


By the 1960s thousands upon thousands of Scotland's trade workers were using asbestos during the course of their employment, in both the shipbuilding and the construction industries. Many of those workers included ladders, joiners, plumbers, plasterers, electricians, and engineers, most of whom were completely ignorant to the insidious nature of the product they were working with.

Tragically, exposure to asbestos was not confined solely to workers. Washing facilities were seldom available at worksites and asbestos-dust covered workers were therefore obliged to travel home, often on public transport, to their families, thus risking exposure to strangers and loved-ones as the dust loosened and became airborne. The first recorded asbestos related death was that of a female textile worker in an asbestos factory, in 1924. Her name was Nellie Kershaw. Despite this sad death, which coincided with articles published in the British Medical journal detailing fibrosis of the lung due to asbestos inhalation, the development of the asbestos industry was allowed to continue.

Regulations were tightened over the years, but the number of asbestos-related deaths rose and continued to increase. In 1999, seventy-five years after the first recorded asbestos-related death of Nellie Kershaw, the use of asbestos was finally banned in the UK.

## Brick Making and Nitshill



Brick making manufacturing was not new, indeed, it was brought to Britain by the Romans and after their departure, brick-making fell into decline, though many of the bricks from Roman buildings were later reused to build new properties. In the early-thirteenth century, bricks once more became fashionable as Flemish bricks were imported into England. This soon prompted domestic brick-making, though these were of poor quality and remained so until the early-fifteenth century, when a

Nitshill Brick Works was located in what was then known as Peat Road, since renamed Cleaves Road, which before the days of coal had led to a boggy area where the villagers used to cut peat for their cottage fires. The existing Peat Road was built in the nineteen-twenties.

large number of Flemish and Dutch craftsmen came to settle in England and the quality of English bricks increased. It is recorded that all brickmakers travelled to building sites to make bricks from the local clays. Bricks varied in size depending on the moulds used by the travelling brickmakers who made them.

Suitable brick clay was dug from the ground and picked clear of any unwanted materials and then mixed to the right consistency for brick making. The clay was tempered by the weather and water and trodden under foot in open pits for two to three days before being thrown into wooden moulds to form the shape of the brick. The moulds were tapped and pricked to ensure that no air was trapped inside the clay, and any excess clay was removed by running a wire over the mould.

The clay bricks were then turned out of the moulds onto flat barrows and taken to a level, south-facing field, where they were laid out to dry for two days and two nights. The damp bricks were regularly turned during that time to assist initial drying, then turned again on edge and stacked in rows, one on top of the other, to dry for between one and three months depending on the weather and time of year. When the bricks were dry enough, they were fettled (trimmed of blemishes) and stacked to form a kiln. Flues were set into the kilns, which were then filled with timber or peat. Once lit, the bricks were 'fired' for two to three whole



days and then allowed to cool naturally; the kilns were then dismantled, and the bricks were sorted and stacked ready for use.

Brick colours depended on the chemical composition of the clay, the type of fuel used to fire the bricks, and the levels of oxygen present during the firing process. The presence of iron oxide gave the bricks a red colour, though very high levels of iron oxide gave a blue colour; limestone and chalk added to iron prior to tempering resulted in buff-yellow coloured bricks, and magnesium dioxide resulted in a deep blue colour; no iron or other oxides gave the bricks a white colour.

Brickmaking was regulated from the 1380s, initially by church guilds and later by specific guilds of tylers (the name for brickmakers). After the Great Fire of London in 1666, Charles I decreed that all new buildings in the city of London must be built of fireproof materials. As the Tylers' Guild did not have enough craft members to undertake the work, it decided to relax its admission regulations and began to train people from the provinces to make bricks. This led to an explosion of brickmaking, with many hundreds of new brick makers and builders setting up businesses around England, usually as itinerant brickmakers. The brickmaking industry was further boosted by the introduction of mechanisation in the 1820s and with improved transport infrastructures, first canals and then railways. At that point, it was possible to establish permanent brickyards which could produce several thousands of bricks per day, and with a smaller workforce than was needed to produce bricks by hand. Variations in brick size were reduced by a statute which required that they should be twice as long as they were broad, normally being 8 by 4.5 inches or 9 by 4.5 inches. Within thirty years, most brickmakers used mechanised brick production. Traditional itinerant brickmakers could not compete with factories and small rural yards could not afford to invest in machinery. With only a handful of exceptions, the industry was now truly mechanised.

The transition from hand-moulding to the mechanized mass production led to the explosion of brick as a modern building material. By the early 1900s, brick had solidified its status as the preferred material for domestic and commercial buildings. In Nitshill, as with many other mining villages and towns, coal mining had resulted in great bings of waste which were used to feed the local brick works for many years.



## Memories of Nitshill Brickworks



"In the 1950s, my upstairs neighbour, Mr Phillips from Haughburn Rd., was the night watchman there and he had a little howff. Mrs Phillips would take me with her sometimes when she was taking his 'pieces' to him. He had a billy, which he boiled his tea in, and a huge big fire. We would sit there sharing them with him, and a few wee bits of home baking, all cosy and warm with only the fire and candle lamps for light. Those were the days."

*Margaret Malloch Walker*

"Used to build large dens, great times there!"

*David Brown*



"The photo was taken in the Nitshill brickwork on Cleeves Road. The person on the far right of the photo is my brother Daniel, the one second from left was his future father-in-law, his name was 'Sanny' (I think it was short for Alexander) Tervit. The other men, I don't know their names. The photo was taken about 1963/64. My brother thinks they opened early 1900s and closed mid-seventies. The owners were a company from Ayrshire called Kenneth's."

*Martin Brady*

"Yes, an important social note about the brickworks. Around 1964, I was walking to Nitsie along Cleeves Rd. Coming toward me, a couple...wee



argument, well more a wummin's rant...he was silent...she was "av got in the messages, swept the flairs, made the bloody beds, peeled the totties, took the comb thru the weans hairs for nits.... Finally, she paused fer a breath...then ...classic Glesga timin, so good it shut her right up...he says... "Did ye empty the ashes?" Never forget that moment...a was 10 feet beyond and buckled! My best memory of Nitshill, brickyard Cleeves Rd., and the quarry...all wrapped up in ashes!"

*William Douglas*



"Played in there many a time. You were lucky if dugs not there! Aunty and Uncle Mick Bennett stayed round the corner from it."

*John Boyd*

"I think we used to nick oil for our bikes from there. Kids playing in it get chased by the old Irish watchie."

*Callum Murdoch*



"I used to go and sit with the watchie, he would bugger off to the boozier and leave us in the site office!"

*Ricky Brown*

*Alex Glass* had some Nitshill bricks and told us:

"They were used to build the houses in South Nitshill. They were found when the house on Whitriggs Road were demolished. There are some on display within the grounds of Cleeves Primary School. Also, there is a part of a flywheel discovered when the new school was being built. A couple of the bricks have been donated to the Glasgow Museum's Resource Centre in Nitshill."



"Me 'n Joe Mullan used to play in the soot house, diving into the soot, going home black! And I remember the brick-arched Killins being a labyrinth to walk in."

*David McPherson*

"I've got a Nitshill brick in my hut, found it on a job I was doing in Elderslie. My mates kept asking me "wits in the poly bag, wee man?" Didn't have the courage to explain."

*Douglas McVey*



"My da worked in it, must have been early [19]60s. He made the bricks, far as I can remember. Granny lived in Househillwood Road and I went up to see dad. You could practically walk in off the street, holes in fences etc."

Health and safety wasn't a thing then." When asked if his dad wore any protective clothing, such as gloves, apron or face masks, Graham replied "Not anytime I was there."

*Graham Dempsey*

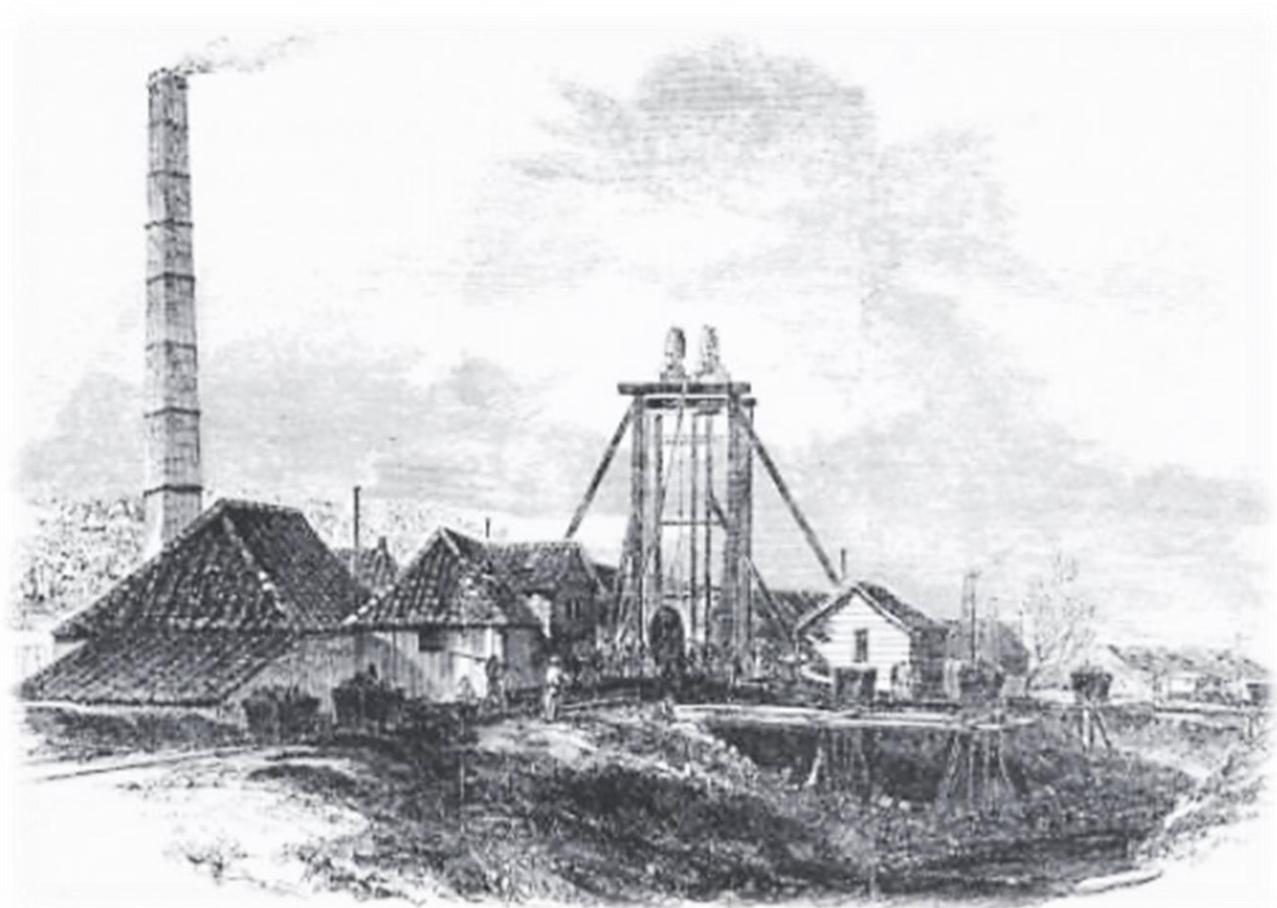


"I lived at 329 Househillmuir Road; my back garden faced on to the bricky. It closed about [19]75'ish. I remember everybody came out to watch them pull down the big chimney. There was people with cameras taking photos, so there must be photos out there somewhere."

*Rab Donaldson*



# Coal Mining & the Victoria Pit Disaster



By 1847, there was considerable competition for jobs in the coal mines, where miners received from 3s.4d to 4s. per day, together with free houses, fires, and gardens. By contrast, labourers earned from 2s. to 2s.3d. per day, without the added benefits of free houses and coal, terms which were considered to be reasonable at that time.

When the coal and iron seams in Hurlet began to fail, pits were sunk in Nitshill. However, the coal seams in were thin and, apart from those sunk to considerable depths, most pits deposits were accessed by removing the upper strata and then open cast mining the coal seams. This process was only economically viable due to the demand for the sandstone, limestone, ironstone and black blaes contained within the extracted upper strata. Remains of some of the horizontal shafts may still be found in the hillsides around Nitshll. The deeper pits were sunk at lower levels and much of Nitshill sits atop pit galleries.

Undoubtedly, the most important of these deep pits were the Victoria Pit and the Free-Trader Pit, which were connected by a warren of abandoned underground workings. Owned

by the famous Coats family of Paisley, the two pits were considered to be the most up-to-date and most safety-conscious in the country. As with all mineral extraction processes, coal mining in and around Nitshill and Hurllet was dangerous. This is evidenced by the following extracts from the *New Statistical Account*, 1847:

‘This coal contains sulphur, and thereby possesses the property of caking when exposed to heat. The miners remark, that sulphur always exists in coal, lying immediately beneath limestone.

The Hurllet mines at one time contained inflammable air, and through the negligence of some workmen in not using the necessary precautions, several valuable lives have been lost. Such accidents, however, are now in a great measure dissipated by the free circulation of atmospheric air throughout the waste, and the numerous pits or shafts communicating with each other.

In May 1818 one of these mines at Quarrelton was overflowed with water, and five of the miners perished. Two of the others were rescued alive, after having been immured in the gloomy dungeon for ten days. A very interesting account of all the circumstances of this event is given in the Scots Magazine for 1819, p. 33 - the statement was drawn up from the accounts of the men who escaped, both of whom, two brothers of the name of Hodgert, are still living.’

Commentators have since suggested that Nitshill collieries ‘featured as a killing ground from the 1830s’, citing an explosion at Doves Colliery on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1832, which killed four miners and injured a further three. The explosion was deemed to be due ‘to middle management pig headedness’. The report goes on to state that:

‘...the overseer would not believe the men [that] there was gas in the workings, believing they wished the day off as it was Reform Jubilee Day in Barrhead, and thus for most a local holiday. Rennie, the overseer, bullied and cajoled the men into going back into the workings and full of bravado he carried a normal lamp. The resulting explosion brought local villages running and the dead and survivors were got clear. Rennie and two others lay dead on the turf; Abraham Thomson, one of the injured, was carried home and put to bed, a lamp knocked over on him as he lay there [and] burnt him again, this time to his death.’

Source: <https://www.nmrs.org.uk/assets/pdf/BM41/BM41-76-98-renfrewshire.pdf>

These tragedies were soon to be overshadowed by a disaster at the Victoria Colliery in 1851, then the deepest pit in Scotland. The Victoria was on what is now the northern part of the big wooded parkland area off Glenmuir Drive, whilst the Freetrader Pit was located approximately 0.7 miles away, somewhere between what are now the Craighbank shops and

the residential streets of Craigbank Drive and Drumbeg Drive. The disaster is estimated to have occurred at a point somewhere between the Victoria and the Free Trader.

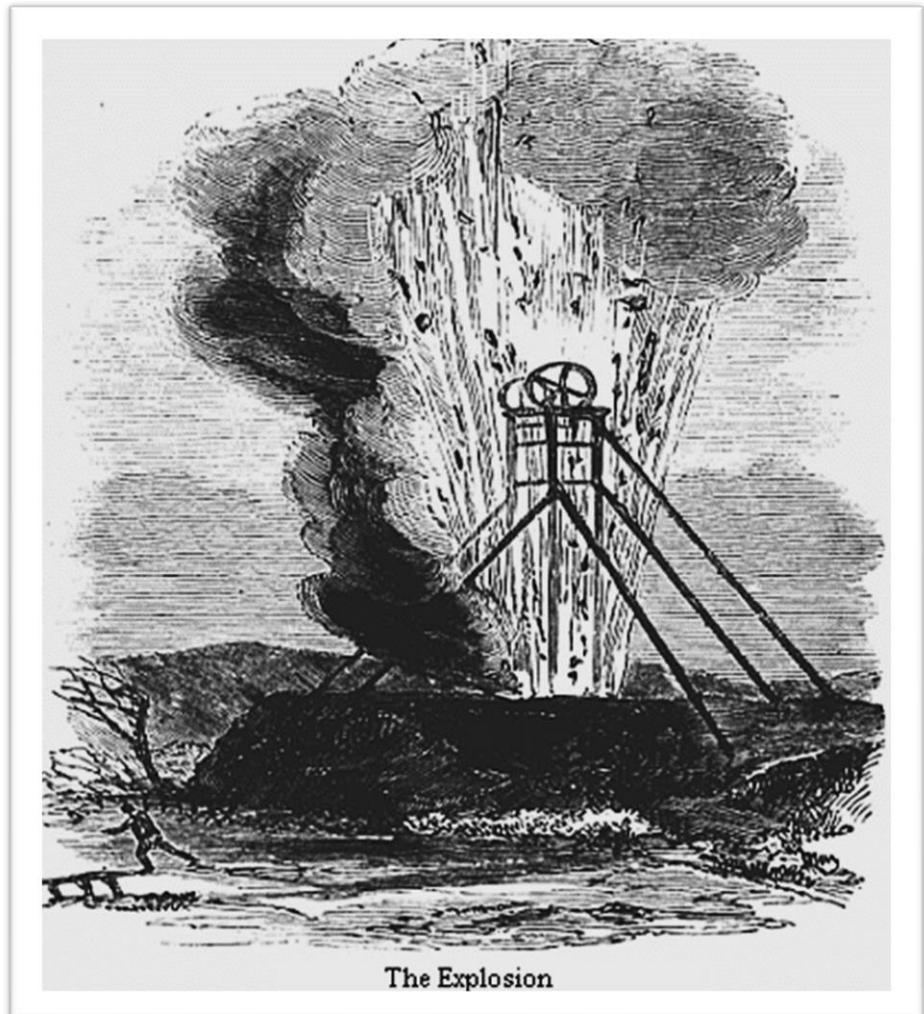
The tragedy of Victoria Pit is, here, recorded in contemporary newspapers and reports from the time.

## The Explosion, Saturday 15th March 1851



'On Saturday morning, a fearful explosion occurred in the Victoria coalpit, belonging to the Messrs. Coatts of Paisley, situated at Nitshill, a few miles from Glasgow. The explosion took place about 20 minutes to 5 o'clock and the report was so loud that it was distinctly heard at Paisley. The whole neighbourhood, of course, was alarmed, and on the people rushing to the

pay-mouth, it was found that one of the cages, which had descended a few fathoms, had been blown up the shaft to probably the height of the pit framing, some 30 feet above ground, and after jerking the rope off the pulley at the top of the framing, fell with a double fold of rope under it. The banksman had not arrived when the accident occurred, and it is uncertain whether any one was in the cage at the time or not. Some said there were two men, but, if so, they must have been precipitated down the pit, as their bodies have not been recovered.



The Victoria pit, in which the explosion took place, is the deepest in

Scotland, being 1,050 in depth at the down-cast shaft, which is situated about the centre of the southern edge of the workings, from whence the inclination of the strata tends upwards to the north, at an angle of about one foot in five, so that at the up cast shaft or pit, which is about a quarter of a mile distant from the working pit, the workings are only 780 feet below the surface.'

(From the *Glasgow Herald*, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 1851)



### ***Colliery explosion - great loss of life***

'On Saturday morning, the most fearful explosion occurred in the Victoria coal pit, belonging to the Messrs Coats of Paisley, situated at Nitshill, a few miles from Glasgow. The place where the blast has evidently been most

destructive it is in the direction of what is called the Free Trade pit, which is about half-a-mile from the mouth of the Victoria. The Free-trade pit, we may explain, is used merely as an air shaft for the Victoria, and from its dense volumes of smoke are still issuing, having the smell which usually arises from burning materials. The report of the explosion was heard at a distance of several miles.

The connecting particulars which we have learned regarding this unhappy affair , may be summed up as follows: - the colliers, to the number of upwards of 60, went down in successive gangs about 3 am on Saturday. They were accompanied by Peter Hammond, the assistant underground overman, who had also the charge of the ventilation of the pit, and whose invariable practice it was to go through the workings every morning, before the colliers commenced. Hammond is spoken of to us as an exceedingly steady and shrewd man, who had been accustomed to mines all his life, and one in whom the workmen had the most perfect confidence. By the return of one of the cages which had brought down at day men, a small number of men who had been working in the pit during the night were conveyed to the surface. Hammond, we are informed, either used or was possessed of a Davy lamp, which he used in his daily examinations, but the colliers carried only the common lamp, and it was often a matter of complaint with them that the current of air in the pit was so strong that it blew out the lights. In this state of matters - 60 men being below and understood to be at work, while a large number of drawers and trappers were standing at the pit head waiting their turn to be taken down, the appalling explosion took place, about 20 minutes before 5 a m.. Many of the people threw themselves on their faces, and the debris showered on their bodies, although nothing came up large enough to hurt them. It is estimated that the explosion continued two minutes and gave several successive shocks or heaves - the first by far the loudest - until the pent-up vapour had expended itself, and all was still.'

*Scotsman*, Wednesday 19th March 1851

## Coal-pit Explosion at Paisley - Sixty-one Lives Lost.



'Shortly before 5 o'clock a.m., a fearful explosion took place at a coal-pit near Nitshill, between two and three miles from Paisley, by which 61 human beings lost their lives. The Victoria pit, in which the explosion took place, is the deepest in Scotland, being 1050 feet in depth at the downcast shaft, and the workings extend over an area of 70 acres, of which, however, a large part were at this time discontinued, and the access cut off by brick walls; so that the air from the downcast shaft was carried past them to the present workings, a distance of nearly one-third of a mile.

Being "pay Saturday," a larger number of the men had commenced work at an earlier hour than is usual on other days. The explosion took place about 20 minutes to 5 o'clock with a report so loud that it was heard distinctly at Paisley. The whole neighbourhood was alarmed; and on the people rushing to the pit-mouth, it was found that one of the cages, which had descended a few fathoms, had been blown up the shaft to the height of the pit framing, about 30 feet. It was now ascertained that 63 men and boys were in the pit, and little hope could be entertained that any of them would escape. Many of the workmen were Irish strangers; but many had wives and children in the villages in the neighbourhood. The distress of these poor people may be imagined.'

[From *the Annual Register*, 1851]



'The works of the interior of the mine had been so much injured by the explosion, and the distance to be traversed from the downcast shaft was so great, that it was not until Sunday evening that two men were able to reach the workings, where they, contrary to expectation, found two living men, almost exhausted by want of food, terror, and bad air, but uninjured in person; all the others, 61 in number, had perished by the terrific blast!

Most of the bodies, when found, were blackened and swollen by the fire, and altogether so much mangled that it was necessary to send down coffins for the reception of the remains previous to their being brought to the surface. Most of the poor fellows had been evidently surprised at their work, or when just about to commence it. A group of eight dead men were found sitting with their tobacco-pipes in their mouths, as if they were taking their morning's smoke, and some of them had just thrown off their jackets, previous to taking the pick in their hands.

The Victoria pit is what is called a fiery one. The coal is used principally for furnace purposes and emits a large quantity of inflammable gas in the workings. Ordinary oil lamps or candles are, notwithstanding, employed by the miners ; and so large an escape of inflammable gas

goes on in the face of the workings, that a candle, held close to the wall when the air-current is sluggish, will cause a sheet of flame to flash along the whole face where the coal is being dug out. No artificial mode of producing ventilation by a current of air is adopted in the pit. The air finds its way down the downcast or working shaft, and after traversing round and through the workings for perhaps miles, finds its way to the up cast shaft, which it ascends, owing to the heat it may have acquired whilst wriggling along amongst the workmen. A very large subscription has been obtained for the relief of the widows and orphans.’  
[From *the Annual Register*, 1851]

## Rescue and Recovery



“The miners’ families stood in little groups, with faces swollen with weeping, and mostly silent from the very exhaustion of grief and despair.”



**Mr George Coatts**, the managing partner, was present shortly after the accident, and did all that man could do to urge on the measures for clearing the shaft and relieving those who might survive. **Mr Rodger**, the county fiscal, and **Mr Hector**, the local fiscal, were also in

attendance, and rendered essential service in maintaining something like order amongst the immense mass of onlookers who seemed all determined to press forward to the mouth of the pit. **Captain Smart** was present to-day (Sunday), and left a detachment of the Glasgow police to relieve the men of the Paisley force, who had been on duty since the preceding night. It had been arranged that a stronger party should proceed from Glasgow, but when they were about to set out, an express came in from Nitshill, announcing that a body of infantry had arrived, which of course, rendered the services of a reinforcement of Glasgow police unnecessary. The precaution was quite necessary.

The operations noticed above still continued and about 6 o'clock on Sunday night, the miners were able to bring up a large portion of the iron cage which had so much obstructed their efforts during the greater part of the day. They were only able to remove it by cutting through the iron at the corners. Several additional descents were made and about 9 o'clock it was definitely announced that the operators were now in communication with the two men, whom they had every prospect of saving. Previous to this, the refreshments noticed above, had been sent down and acknowledged. About 6 o'clock a supply of blankets was sent down, as it was announced that the poor fellows were almost in a state of nudity. After a lengthened period of anxiety and suspense, one of the poor sufferers was finally brought to the surface. He was supported by two men in an adjoining shed, and immediately attended by a medical gentleman. **John Cochran** was in such a weak state that he could not give any detailed account of the actual occurrence of the calamity, further that that two men who were walking with him at the time were instantaneously struck down by the fire. During his long imprisonment of nearly 45 hours, he says that he repeatedly groped about for some of his neighbours and often called on them, but with one exception, no one answered. The miners were about to go down for the other man when our informant left.'

Article from *The Weekly Dispatch*, 23rd March 1851.

### ***Loss of Sixty-One Lives.***

SUNDAY EVENING



'The extensive character of this deplorable calamity has excited a feeling of the most painful kind throughout the whole neighbourhood, and on Sunday it was computed that at one time fully 20,000 people were present. A number of experienced miners from Mr Dixon's of Govanhill, under the charge of Messrs Allan, his managers, reached the spot early on Saturday, and, assisted by some of the neighbouring colliers, proceeded down

shaft - one relay relieving the other at stated intervals - with the view, if possible, of reaching the workings, and rendering assistance should any of the unfortunate men still be alive. The shaft presented a scene of wreck and havoc such as perhaps was never seen on any similar occasion of a coal pit explosion. The woodwork had been blown from the bottom of the shaft, which is 175 fathoms from surface, and scattered for 100 yards all around the pit head in a perfect shower. The woodwork however, has been shattered into many thousand fragments of chips, few of them being above half an inch in length, and large soft masses of it were seen in which the timber had been riven into threads scarcely so thick as whip cord. The same appearances were presented around the ventilating pit mouth, called the Free Trader, and situated at a distance of half-a-mile from the main down shaft. To give an idea of the force of the explosion, we may state that the mouth of this ventilating pit had been covered over flush with the ground, with heavy flooring timbers, and the air and smoke which ascended from it had been led by a tunnel along the surface to the bottom of a tall chimney which had been erected at a distance of a dozen yards, for the purpose of increasing the draft. The force of explosion tore away the timbers already alluded to, as if they had been laths, scattering fragments in all directions and entirely cutting of the connection between the ventilation pit and the auxiliary chimney. During the whole of Sunday there rolled up from this newly-opened mouth, smoke and vapour which had pretty much the kind of smell emitted by gas tar.

On Sunday, it was definitively ascertained that the number of people in the pit when the explosion took place, amounted to 63 - 55 men and eight lads or boys, two of whom might undertake betwixt them one man's work. The total number employed in the pit is usually 140 but as it is the custom for colliers or those who get the coal, to go down about an hour-and-a-half before the drawers or trappers who perform the subsequent operations, none of the latter had descended, although they were all standing at the pit head ready to be taken below when the explosion occurred. Had the event occurred some half-hour later, therefore, the consequences must have been much more calamitous. We have stated that there were 63 men and boys in the pit at the moment of catastrophe. Of these the majority were married, and they have left amongst them 65 infant children - that is, children at such an age as to be unable to provide for themselves.'

[*Scotsman* 19th March 1851]



'The operations were of course continued uninterruptedly during Saturday night, and by 1 o'clock on Sunday the miners from Mr Dixon's works had got down fully 130 fathoms - clearing away the rubbish as they went - that is within about 40 fathoms of the bottom. Here however they met with a formidable obstruction - the cage which had been dashed out of its position by the explosion and was forced vertically across the pit. This

is an apparatus about 13 ft in length by 4 ft square and which, moving in the shaft, conveys three hutches of coal to the surface at a time. With axes, chisels, files, and saws, the men worked at the stoppage in the throat of the shaft most earnestly, but from the limited space, only 2 or 3 could be employed at once, and moreover, their exertions were soon paralysed by the cold, for the wind was sucked down so strongly as to blow out their lights, and the water from the sides of the pit fell copiously on their bodies.

There was all along a hope entertained that if the workings could only be reached, some of the poor fellows would be found alive; for it was evident that after the first convulsive throes of the explosion the ventilation of the pit had readjusted itself, and the fresh air went into the down cast shaft, and after permeating the mine escaped by the up cast shaft, half a mile distance. We were informed that about 10 o'clock on Sunday night, the bell at the top of the mine, which is worked by a cord from the bottom, gave two distinct strokes at intervals of about 20 minutes. Towards the afternoon of Sunday, the men who came up from time to time said they were convinced they heard the sound of voices from the bottom, although so inarticulately that they could not make out what was said. About 3 o'clock two of the miners came up bringing a portion of the cage with them and stating that the main portion of the cage was still jammed. They also gave the important information that they distinctly heard the sound of one or two voices, who asked how long it would be before those above would get at them, and also if they could not send them down a light. This was confirmed by another arrival from the shaft a little before 5 o'clock. The men who came up said that sounds reach them as - "Send down a Davy and some meat". And being asked how many there were, the voice seemed to answer "two" or "2 and 20" the miners could not say which, but, acting upon the first requisition, a little bag was sent down containing some toast and brandy, which, was intended to be dropped, if possible, by a string, through the rubbish. It will not be surprising that the sounds were heard so indistinctly from below when we state that the relieving party was still 40 fathoms, or 240 ft from the bottom of the mine and that the strong downward current of the air would carry the sound from above towards the mine, but would greatly impeded its transmission upwards.

The operations noticed above still continued and about 6pm on Sunday the miners were able to bring up a large portion of the iron cage which had so much obstructed their efforts during the greater part of the day. They were only able to remove it by cutting through the iron at the corners. Several additional descents were made and about 9pm it was definitely announced that the operators were now in communication with the two men whom they had every prospect of saving. About 10 o'clock a supply of blankets was sent down as it was announced that the poor fellows were almost in a state of nudity. After a lengthy period of anxiety and suspense one of the poor sufferers named John Cochran was finally brought to the surface. He was supported by 2 men into an adjoining shed and immediately attended to by a medical gentleman. Cochran was in such a weak state that he could not give any

detailed account of the actual occurrence of the calamity, further than that two men who were walking with him at the time were instantaneously struck down by the fire. During his long imprisonment of nearly 45 hours, he repeatedly groped about for some of his neighbours, and often called on them, but, with one exception, no one answered.

After Cochran was brought up to the surface the bucket again descended and brought up David Colville in a most exhausted state. He was burned severely about the face, neck, and hands. He was removed to the adjoining shed and after application of restoratives, was placed on a stretcher and conveyed home. Cochran though in an equally exhausted state was not so much burned. They stated when brought up, that at the time of the explosion, they were working on the west level and immediately after the noise of the blast had subsided, they ran for the bottom of the shaft, which they reached with great difficulty, the choke damp being so dense. There being a pretty strong current of pure air down the shaft, the pit around its vicinity was kept clear of the after damp. John Maxwell and John Mulholland worked along with them, but were unable to reach fresh air after the blast; Cochran and Colville went back and found them both dead, some hours after the explosion. Cochran and Colville lay on top of each other in turn, to keep them in heat during the time they were entombed.

Between 4 and 5 o'clock on Sunday, a consultation between the miners who had been down the pit took place, the result was a resolution to again enter the pit and explore it so far as practicable with a view of ascertaining if there were any still living and to recover the bodies of those who were killed. Accordingly, a party of 11 picked miners were formed and after having been duly cautioned not to venture where there was likely to be danger, the work of transmission down shaft commenced, and was completed a little before 5 o'clock. Nothing further occurred till about half past nine, when two of the party returned, and reported they had discovered two bodies, and had also seen the remains of two horses, which were employed in the pit. They stated that they had explored the extreme end of the east and west level, and partly into some of the inclines. They could not, however, get near the facings, where, it is believed mostly all of the men were employed, in consequence of the foulness of the air. They were not aware whether the pit was still burning; but there must have been a conflagration as red-hot cinders were seen lying on the roads. A little after 10 o'clock measures were adopted to have the bodies of the two men who were found in the pit removed to the surface. Blankets were sent down and stretchers prepared. The first body brought up was that of John Machan. It was conveyed to his own home, under an escort of the 21st Infantry, followed by a large crowd of men and women crying most bitterly. The second body, John Maxwell, was brought up soon afterwards, when a similar scene to that described occurred. The remainder of the exploring party then returned to the pit head and another party of men took their place.

A consultation of the mining engineers and mineral managers from Govan, Johnstone, Hurler and Nitshill, took place early on Monday morning and the plan of operation was decided on for recovering bodies and putting the pit and workings in order, which is to be prosecuted with as much vigour as the few hands left at this Colliery, and with a few volunteers from some of the neighbouring ones, will admit of.

We Again visited the scene of the disaster on Monday night and regret to state that there is too much reason to fear and believe that 59 human beings in addition to the two whose bodies have been recovered, have met an untimely fate. This accident as regards the loss of human life, is unparalleled in the history of mining casualties in Scotland. There still continue to linger about the pit head the sorrowing relatives of the unfortunate miners, but it is evident that they despair of ever meeting them again, and their demeanour has now assumed a settled melancholy. In addition it to the difficulty in the way as regards the shaft, the air courses have been discovered to be completely destroyed, and these, for the protection of the miners engaged in the work of exploration, must be put in order which will require some considerable time. It seems to be the almost universal belief that all, save the two rescued in the morning, have perished.'

[*Scotsman* 19th March 1851]



"The intelligence up to 8 o'clock on Monday night does not add anything of material consequence to what had been already stated. Owing to the insecure condition of the shaft, there is an unwillingness on the part of the men employed to proceed much further till the necessary repairs have been made. We have heard it stated by some experienced miners

that the pit being on fire, any attempt to alter the present course of the air draught which is now traversing the most direct course between the Victoria shaft and the Free-trade or ventilating shaft, would have the effect of driving the large quantity of fire-damp collected in the various ramifications of the workings upon that of the pit which is at present burning, and produce another and more tremendous explosion. It is quite certain that it will be a work both of time and danger to recover the bodies, and no reasonable hope can now be entertained of finding the unhappy men alive. The attention of the proprietors and managers of the pit has been unremitting. In fact, we believe Mr Niven the manager has not left the scene of this unfortunate calamity since it occurred. The bodies of the two fellow-workers of the men who were taken out alive were recovered with considerable difficulty and the fire-damp, in consequence of the want of ventilation, arising from the explosion, has gained so much that at present it would be quite impossible to approach the spot whence those bodies were taken. The effects of the explosion are very visible round the

mouth of the Free Trader pit, the hedges in the vicinity being covered with soot etc. In fact, the whole face presented a ruinous appearance".

*The Glasgow Daily Mail, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March*



'On Monday night a large party of miners, headed by Mr Tinn, of Glasgow, Mr Niven, and Mr Sampson, belonging to Mr Coatts establishment and Mr Barr, resolved to explore the pit. their first act was to put it in a stopping. They led the air along with them in the most cautious manner, as they went along, and found coal on fire in some

parts, but this they extinguished immediately. In the course of their search they came to the first group of nine dead bodies, which were removed to the bottom of the shaft. They were fearfully burned, many of the bodies presenting the appearance of scorched and blackened masses.

After some little rest, the same shift of men again went down and on Wednesday came upon the second group of 12 bodies, lying in the face of the workings along the west level. The poor fellows had literally been killed while at work with their picks in their hands. Coffins were sent down the pit and all the bodies were distributed through the desolate cottages which the poor fellows occupied while in life.

A working shift of 12 or 14 men descended about 9 o'clock on Thursday morning for the purpose of penetrating the east level, where it is known that two groups of bodies, comprising the entire number in the pit, and now lying. They expected first to come upon a group of 12 lime blasters afterwards upon the last and most numerous group of miners but it is impossible to tell when this result will be effected.

David Colville, one of the two men whose lives have been saved, states that at the moment of explosion, he was working with three others in a stone cutting at the extremity of the west level. The explosion was indicated by a tremendous rush of air, which was driven in advance of the fire blast; and looking forward they heard and saw an immense mass of flame roaring and advancing towards them. Fortunately it took the first open shaft which was a distance of 50 or 60 yards from the men. The flame and vapour rushed up the shaft with incredible fury. But it still partially rushed on and met the men who were also striving for the shaft fairly in the face. Maxwell and Machan, after going half the distance were overpowered and fell down dead. Colville and Cochrane, while in a staggering state, got a puff of fresh air, as they termed it, which revived them and they were able to reach the bottom of the shaft. At this spot after the fiery blast had ascended upwards, a current of air

rushed constantly downwards. However, they suffered from the excessive cold and the agonising suspense for 45 hours while imprisoned in the bowels of the earth.

On Thursday afternoon the bodies of six lime blasters were discovered and brought in coffins to the surface.'

[*Scotsman* 22 March 1851]



#### The Coal-Pit Accident- Further Particulars –

'On Friday morning, Mr. Bennie, of Mr. Dixon's works at Govanhill, who has frequently rendered efficient service since the accident, arrived with a party of his men at the Victoria pit. They immediately proceeded underground for the purpose of making an extraordinary effort along

with those who have been engaged in the work of search during the past few days, for the recovery of the remaining bodies. After great exertion, and overcoming many difficulties, about three o'clock in the afternoon they discovered a group of bodies all of which were shockingly disfigured by the explosion. We understand that Mr. Dunn, the Government Inspector having dressed himself in his pit-dress on Friday, descended into the pit, along with Mr. Brown and Mr. Alexander, engineers, for the purpose of examining the working, and, if possible, discovering the cause of this fearful calamity. On Saturday, the miners under Mr. McRaith's charge were again at their labours, and before nightfall 22 bodies were incoffined and brought to the surface, as the result of the two days' research and discovery. These were mostly found on the east side of the pit; but those got on Saturday were not so fearfully mangled as some of the bodies which had been brought up in the earlier part of the week, from which, it is probable, they were further removed from the immediate scene of the explosion. Fifty-one bodies have now been recovered, leaving ten still in the pit; but it is to be hoped these will be got in the course of to-day.

Recovery of the Remainder of the Bodies, Nitshill, Sunday Evening. - During the whole of this day a large number of miners prosecuted the search for the bodies of the unfortunate men, which were still known to be in the pit, and by nine o'clock in the evening they had all been recovered and brought to the pit head, making 61 in all. The Messrs. Coats and Mr. McRaith remained at the pit head the whole day, and the underground search was conducted under the superintendence of Mr. Niven. The bodies were incoffined in the pit, and, after being brought to the surface, were carried to the homes of the relatives. They were very much disfigured. All the miners who were engaged exploring the pit were brought to the surface in safety, but some of them were considerably exhausted.

It will be observed from an advertisement in this day's paper that Messrs. Coats have generously headed a subscription for the widows and children of the sufferers with the sum

of £500 ; and they have also taken the initiative to the extent of £100 in another subscription to reward the men who have been engaged in rescuing the survivors, and recovering the bodies. To these laudable objects the Earl of Glasgow has contributed respectively £300 and £50. We also observe with much satisfaction from an advertisement in this day's paper that a benefit is to be given to-night in the Princes' Theatre, for the families of the sufferers.' [Glasgow Herald 24 March 1851]



## *The Victims*

Thomas Allison, unmarried, grandson to James Kerr

James Baxter, married, brother of Joseph Baxter, born Pollockshaws, age 23

Joseph Baxter. unmarried, brother of James Baxter, born Pollockshaws, age 17 1/2 years

John Bell, married, born Ireland, age 35

Robert Black, married

Joseph Brighton, married, born England, age 22 years 6 months

James Buchanan, son of Neil Buchanan Snr,

Neil Buchanan Jnr.

Neil Buchanan Snr.

John Campbell, unmarried

Neil Carlan, unmarried

Andrew Carson, married

John Cochrane, married

David Colville, married

Felix Connolly, son of Thomas Connolly

John Connolly, married

Thomas Connolly

Dennis Crossan, unmarried, son of Patrick Crossan

Patrick Crossan, father of Dennis Crossan

James Dodds, married, born Hurlet, age 31

Andrew Gebbie Jnr., brother of David Gebbie, born Hurlet, age 9

Andrew Gebbie Snr. father of Andrew and David Gebbie, born Hurlet, age 40

David Gebbie, son of Andrew Gebbie Snr, brother of Andrew Gebbie Jnr., b. Hurlet, age 11

Henry Gibbs, married

James Hammond, brother of John Hammond, son of Peter Hammond

John Hammond, son of Peter Hammond, brother of James Hammond

Peter Hammond, father of James and John Hammond

Francis Hughes, unmarried, brother of Thomas Hughes

Thomas Hughes, unmarried, brother of Francis Hughes  
Michael Irving, unmarried  
Patrick Keenan, unmarried  
Connel Kerr, married, brother of James Kerr  
James Kerr, married, brother of Connel Kerr, grandfather of Thomas Allison  
Bernard Martin, married  
John Maxwell, unmarried, born Paisley, age 40  
Samuel McDowell, unmarried  
Joseph McIlwam, married, born Ireland, age 45  
Joseph McIlwam, nephew of Joseph McIlwam, born Ireland, age 11  
Samuel McIlwam, nephew of Joseph McIlwam, born Ireland, age 14  
James McLachlan, married  
John McMachlan, married  
John McMillan, married and son of William McMillan, born Paisley, age 13  
William McMillan, father of John McMillan, born Invernessshire, age 40  
John Mulholland, married  
Felix O'Neill, unmarried  
Patrick O'Neill, married  
James Poole, widower (listed as Powal or Poole in Abbey Parish OPR, Paisley), born Ireland, age 34  
Thomas Samson, unmarried  
Thomas Scott  
William Scott, son of Thomas Scott  
Charles Shields, father of James Shields, brother of John Shields  
James Shields, unmarried, son of Charles Shields  
John Shields, unmarried, brother of Charles Shields  
John Smith, married  
John Smith, married, brother of Richard Smith  
Michael Smith, unmarried  
Richard Smith, unmarried, brother of John Smith  
Matthew Speirs, unmarried, born Hurlet, age 46  
Peter White, father of Thomas White (listed as Peter Whyte in Abbey Parish OPR, Paisley), born Hurley, age 39  
Thomas White, unmarried and son of Peter White (listed as Thomas Whyte in Abbey Parish OPR, Paisley), born Crossmill, age 16  
George Whiteside, unmarried, son of Robert Whiteside  
Robert Whiteside, father of George Whiteside  
John Williamson, unmarried



## Inquiries and Memorials



### *Inspector of Mines Report*

#### **Nitshill explosion in Scotland - 61 killed**

'This colliery had an abundant downcast and up cast shaft, with a tube fitted for a furnace; but so well satisfied was the manager with the ventilation that the furnace had been discontinued for some months. Many of the principal stoppings were of brick, and many of slit deal, to carry the air round the extremities of the workings; but there were no sheath stoppings in the waste. The accident was attributed to the damage of one of these stoppings, whilst the want of internal stoppings allowed the air to pass straight to the up cast shaft; and as the men were permitted to begin work without the examination of an overman, the gas discharged from the waste fired upon their naked lights.'



Messrs Coats' colliery was known to be fiery and precautions had been taken to brattice work areas and put up deal stoppings to channel the air to the faces. Messrs Coates were proud of their mine, confident in the ventilation and happy that a model be made for the Great Exhibition of 1851 that it might be seen how good they were. Confidence bred contempt and with cold weather, they put out their ventilation furnace to save on fuel. They had therefore chosen to rely on natural air current, which in theory was adequate to feed the working faces. But it did not cover 70 acres of waste; there methane gas very soon built up. This filtered into the impaired air feed of the pit and as the pit was not subdivided fully, it was only a matter of time before methane gas wafted to working areas and ignited on the miners' lamps.

Source: <https://www.nmrs.org.uk/assets/pdf/BM41/BM41-76-98-renfrewshire.pdf>



Many of the victims were buried in a mass grave in the yard at the old St John's Church on Darnley Road, and although they were later exhumed to



other cemeteries, some may still reside at St John's in an unmarked grave.



'Among the victims were two pit ponies whose Stable had been blown up and whose bodies had been carried by the explosion a distance of fifty yards along on of the underground roads.'



'Round the scorched entrance to the pit were scenes of harrowing distress. The bereaved women and children had hoped against hope that their menfolk would be brought out alive. But during the three black days of 22nd, 23rd, and 24th March a succession of bearer parties and hearses carried the bodies to the churchyard of St Johns Church in the Darnley Road at Barrhead. The mangled corpses of fifty-three men and eight lads had to be laid out awaiting identification. Some of the poor widows

had to identify not only their husbands but two of their sons... The *Glasgow Herald* drew attention to the plight of the men's widows and families and expressed the earnest hope that the Public would not forget that these poor men had left widows and sixty-five orphaned children in a state of utter destitution. Very considerable sums were collected after The Lord Provost of Glasgow and the owners, Messrs Coats had put up substantial sums. This may have been some consolation but only those who have experienced such tragic losses can appreciate the magnitude of the horror of such a disaster.'



'It will be observed from an advertisement in this day's paper that Messrs. Coats have generously headed a subscription for the widows and children of the sufferers with the sum of £500 ; and they have also taken the initiative to the extent of £100 in another subscription to reward the men who have been engaged in rescuing the survivors, and recovering the bodies. To these laudable objects the Earl of Glasgow has contributed respectively £300 and £50. We also observe with much satisfaction from an advertisement in this day's paper that a benefit is to be given to-night in the Princes' Theatre, for the families of the sufferers.'

Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 24th March 1851.



#### **Colliery Explosion at Nitshill**

'The widows and families of the unfortunate sufferers by the late calamitous Accident at the Victoria Coal Pit, Nitshill, having been left in a state of great destitution, it has been resolved to raise Subscriptions for their relief and also for rewarding the exertions of those intrepid individuals who have, with so much risk and danger to themselves aided in rescuing the survivors, and in recovering the bodies of those who have been killed.

Subscription Lists will be found at the Coffee Room, Paisley the Royal Exchange, Glasgow, and at the Offices of the several Banks in Glasgow and Paisley, and the amount of Subscriptions will be received by John Scott, Esq., Union Bank of Scotland Paisley, who has kindly consented to act as Treasurer. A meeting of the Subscribers will in due time be called, to determine as to the application of the Funds.

The following sums have already been subscribed:

For Relief of the Families of the Sufferers:-

Messrs. Coats..... £500

The Earl of Glasgow..... £300

For rewarding the Persons engaged in rescuing the Survivors:-

Messrs. Coats..... £100

The Earl of Glasgow..... £50'

Source: *Glasgow Herald*, 24th March 1851.



'A public subscription was suggested and was headed with a generous donation by Mr George Coats, the Managing Partner, who expressed the wish that others would join him in subscribing to the fund to help widows and children without fathers as a result of this terrible calamity.

The following year, The House of Commons set up a select committee on coal mining and produced many recommendations which hopefully made the Industry a much safer place to work. However, it was reported that as there was no coroner's inquest in Scotland and that there seemed to be no one alive who was to blame, no public trial was likely to take place. The sum of £1326 has been subscribed for the families of those killed and £187 for the workmen employed in rescuing the survivors and recovering the bodies.'

Source: *Scotsman* 16th April 1851.

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**NITSHILL MINING DISASTER  
15TH MARCH 1851**

**In memory of the Nitshill Mining Disaster  
and the 61 miners from the Victoria Pit  
who lost their lives.**

**Donations from the local community,  
traders, trade unions and Glasgow City Council.**



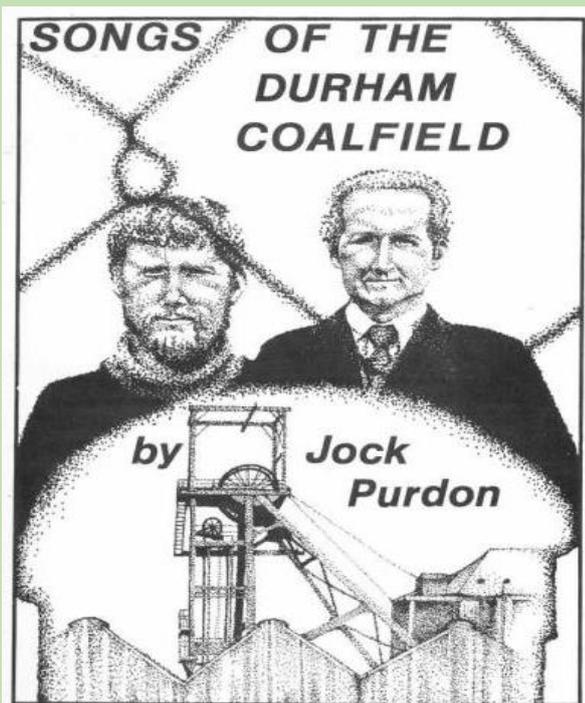
## Jock Purden

Many people we spoke with mentioned a former resident of Nitshill, Jock Purden, but they knew little about him. For those interested in learning about Jock, otherwise known as 'The Miners' Poet', read on...

One of Nitshill's most famous sons was George 'Jock' Purdon (1925 – 1998), who was a poet and folk singer. Jock Purdon left Nitshill, a former mining village, to spend most of his life as a coalminer in Chester-Le-Street, County Durham. Mining shaped his poems and songs and gave him the moniker - 'the miners' poet'. At the age of thirteen, Jock saw the start of World War II and his older brother, Robert, enlist in the Royal Scots regiment. Robert served as a commando and was killed in France after the Normandy Landings in 1944. By a quirk of fate, Purdon was not destined to join his brother in the army but was conscripted into the coal mines instead. He later married and continued working in the County Durham pits after the war. Jock and his fellow miners dug coal from three-foot seams, often working in

In the UK, coal mining was not a reserved occupation at the start of WWII, which led to a great shortage of coal miners. Consequently, starting in December 1943, one in ten men conscripted had to work in the mines. These men became known as 'Bevin Boys', after the creator of the scheme, Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour and National Service. Jock Purdon was one of the very first contingent designated for the mines on 14 December 1943.

water reaching up to their knees. Their shared hardship influenced Jock's poems and music, many of which reflected the sense of community that he experienced whilst living and working in mining villages. The Easington Explosion laments the deaths of eighty-one miners and two rescuers in a single accident that happened in 1951 – exactly one hundred years after the Nitshill Colliery disaster.



For Jock, mining and politics were inseparable, and his words encapsulated his contempt for those who put profit before people. It was he who coined the word 'Pitracide', meaning 'to murder a pit for economic reasons'. During the 1984-1985 miners' strike, Jock became known as the 'Miners' Poet' when he began to perform his songs for the benefit of striking miners and their families. Jock died in 1998 but his songs and poems still resonate with mining communities.

## Nitshill's War Heroes

Nitshill experienced sad changes with the outbreak of WWI as the village was stripped of its young men, some of whom then perished. Many of those losses are registered on the local war memorial, which is sited at the bottom of the entrance to Nitshill Railway Station. According to research, one in six of those men who enlisted won honours, with 31 awarded either the Victoria Cross, the Military Cross or the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Friends of Nitshill War Memorial, a local constituted voluntary group, is currently researching the history of many of the brave men listed on that memorial stone and are gathering information about Nitshill's war dead whose names have yet to be added to the monument. You can learn more about their discoveries as they emerge by viewing the 'Friends of Nitshill War Memorial' Facebook page. Alex Glass, chairperson of the group, has kindly shared with us extracts from the Friends' database. **Please see pages 56-62.**

### Sergeant John Meikle, V.C.

Large families, such as the Law clan from Nitshill, are known to have suffered many losses. Some families continued to lose relatives due to wartime injuries, this included individuals like former head teacher and first president of the Nitshill and Hurler Bowling Club, John Patterson, who died from his wounds two and a half years later. One name that is fairly well known in Nitshill is that of Sergeant John Meikle, who was the recipient of the highest British medal of honour – the Victoria Cross.

John Meikle was born on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1898 at 34 Freeland Place, Kirkintilloch. He was the second (eldest surviving) son of John Meikle Snr and his second wife Annie Meikle (née Hollywood). John's first wife, Jane, died after giving birth to a daughter who survived. Records state that young John was the fifth of 12 children born to the Meikles. Four of his siblings died in infancy and only three of them lived beyond the age of 30. The family moved to Nitshill in 1901, shortly after John



Meikle Snr's employer, Perry & Hope's Forth and Clyde Chemical Works, moved its factory to the village in 1900-01. Now living in No.1 Office Row, Nitshill, Glasgow, John completed his education at Levern Public School and attended Pollokshaws Primitive Methodist Chapel. He was known as a popular lad who enthusiastically supported the local junior team, Royal Victoria FC, and often acted as their hamper boy. In 1913, he became a clerk at Nitshill Station, on the Glasgow, Barrhead & Kilmarnock Joint Railway.



On 8th February 1915, when he was only sixteen years of age, young John Meikle left his job at the station, lied about his age, and enlisted with Glasgow's Seaforth Highlanders in Maryhill (No. 200854) to fight in the Great War. An estimated 250,000 'boy soldiers' under the age of 18 signed up to fight in the Great War. Meikle's personal military service record, along with many others, was destroyed in an air raid during the Second World War. However, researchers have managed to piece together the following account of John's military life:

'During his time in barracks as he waited to be sent to France, he was trained on how to use the Lewis Gun, a weapon he became highly proficient with and on the 30th July 1916, he was sent to join his battalion in France, taking part in the attacks on High Wood, The Battle of the Ancre and he was promoted to Corporal. His time with the frontline unit was short lived after he was wounded by a bayonet and was withdrawn from front line duty for a period before he could re-join them. He served in the Battle of Arras in April 1917, where the battalion captured numerous enemy trenches and took many prisoners, and then took part in the fighting of 1917, including the First and Second Battles of the Scarpe, the capture and defence of Roeux, and the Battle of Pilkem Ridge and the Battle of Menin Road Ridge, both part of the Third Battle of Ypres. It was during the Battle of Menin Road Ridge, that Meikle was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery and leadership near Langmarch . During the battle, Meikle was wounded again and this time sent back to hospital in Glasgow to recover from his injuries.

While in Nitshill in November 1917, he was presented with a gold watch on behalf of his fellow villagers in the local public hall. The watch, engraved with his initials, remains with the family as a treasured heirloom and when Meikle returned to France, he had been promoted to Sergeant. It is recorded that he would always carry a heavy walking stick wherever he went and he took it onto the battlefield with him but when

he left home to return to the Front, his sister realised that he had forgotten his stick and ran to the local railway station to reunite it with him.

The Second Battle of the Marne was the turning point for the Allies in the War, and by the 20th July 1918, Meikle and his unit, No 2 Company, 1st/4th Battalion, were with the 154th Brigade, 51st (Highland) Division in the French Aisne-Marne Sector, to defend the Ardre Valley. In the early afternoon, the 1st/7th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, also of the 154th Brigade, moved forward alongside the 1st/4th Seaforth's, and both units were heavily engaged by enemy machine guns which held up the British progress. At 4:30pm, the enemy launched a counter-attack, which was beaten back by the British troops, but two hours later a very heavy bombardment began to fall around Rectangle Wood and prevented the 154th Brigade reaching their objectives and suffering heavy casualties.'

(Source: 'Great Wars VCs' Facebook)



Young John Meikle lost his life that day, but no before completing acts of the highest bravery, leading to him being posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. When the fighting had ended, Meikle's comrade, Company Sergeant Major G W Sturrah, who was himself only twenty-three years of age, wrote to Meikle's mother Annie, and explained the circumstances surrounding her son's death:

'It is with the deepest regret that I write to you to inform you of your dear son 200854 Sgt Meikle, J, of his death, (killed in action) on the 20th July. We were on this day attacking a strong enemy position, and your dear lad behaved as gallantly as ever Britisher did. He single-handed knocked out an enemy machine gun post and its crew. Knocking out with a walking stick he always used to carry and was afterwards rushing another similar post when he was killed by Machine Gun fire. His death was instantaneous.'

(Source - [www.firstworldwarglasgow.co.uk](http://www.firstworldwarglasgow.co.uk))

His citation reads:

'For most conspicuous bravery and initiative when his Company, having been held up by machine gun fire, he rushed single handed a machine gun nest. He emptied his revolver into the crews of the two guns and put the remainder out of action with a heavy stick. Then, standing up, he waved his comrades on. Very shortly afterwards another hostile machine gun checked progress, and threatened also the success of the company on the right. Most of his platoon having become casualties, Sgt Meikle seized the rifle and bayonet of a fallen comrade, and again rushed forward against the gun crew, but was killed almost on the gun position. His bravery allowed two other men who followed him to put this gun out of action. This gallant non-commissioned officer's valour, devotion to duty, and utter disregard of personal safety was an inspiring example to all.'

Source: London Gazette, 13th September 1918.



The Meikle family could not afford the combined expenses of new clothes and accommodation in London and were therefore unable to attend the official presentation of John's VC at Buckingham Palace. Instead, they received the decoration during a local parade at Maryhill Barracks on the 28th October 1918, where the medal was presented to John Meikle Snr., by General Sir FWN McCracken KCB, DSO, General Officer Commanding Scottish Command, at Maryhill Barracks, Glasgow on 28 October 1918. Young John's mother, Annie, later donated funds from her son's VC pension and soldiers' pay to two local churches.



In 1920, John Meikle's former colleagues erected a seven-foot granite memorial to his memory outside St. Enoch's Station, Nitshill, which was unveiled by a Lady Lorimer. The memorial was moved in 1971, after fears about vandalism and re-erected outside Dingwall Station, and unveiled by a Mr. Simon Caldwell, who had fought alongside Meikle.



Right: A new memorial stone was unveiled at Nitshill Station in 2016.

In November 1972, John's family presented his medals to the 1st/4th Seaforth Highlanders Reunion Club; the club decided to put the medals on public display in the Military Room at Dingwall Museum, Scotland. The artefacts include John's Victoria Cross and Citation, Military Medal, British War Medal 1914-1918, and his Victory Medal 1914-1919. A bronze memorial erected to John in Nitshill public hall and subsequently moved to Levern Primary School, is also now in Dingwall Museum.



In 1992, Dingwall Museum Trust published John's story: 'Portrait of a Soldier – Sgt John Meikle VC MM, 4th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, 1898-1918'.



There is a headstone to John Meikle VC in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery at Marfaux - Plot VIII, Row C, Grave 1.

John Meikle, VC, is the only Scottish railway employee to have received this award for valour. Of the 628 crosses awarded during the WWI, only twenty-five went to men under the age of twenty.

## Nitshill War Memorial Register – compiled by Friends of Nitshill War Memorial

Surname	Forename	Rank	Service No.	Regiment	Date of Death	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Father	Mother	Medals Awarded
Kirkwood	Matthew	Private	2455	14th (County of London) Battalion (London Scottish)	25/01/1915	1878	Neilston, Renfrewshire	Allan Kirkwood	Margaret Kirkwood	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Berry	Patrick	Private	10786	1st Battalion, The Kings Own Scottish Borderers	04/06/1915	1892	Maryhill, Lanarkshire (Drumchapel, Dumbarton)	William Berry	Margaret Berry	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Halford	Hugh	Private	9990	1st Battalion, Kings Own Scottish Borderers	05/06/1915	1890	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	Edward Halford	Ellen Halford	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Berry	David	Private	2396	7th BATTALION, Cameronians	30/06/1915	1892	Coatbridge, Lanarkshire	David Berry	Elizabeth Berry	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Roy	James	Sapper	79605	176th Coy., Royal Engineers	09/08/1915	1896	Pollokshaws, Lanarkshire	John Roy	Joan Roy	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Clark	David	Private	16021	9th Battalion, Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)	21/08/1915		Paisley		Agnes Berry	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Faulds	John	Lance Corporal	12601	10th Battalion, The Highland Light Infantry	25/09/1915	1886	Nitshill, Renfrewshire		Fanny W Maxwell	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Forsyth	James McHaffie	Private	S/10513	9th Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders	25/09/1915	1888	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	Francis Forsyth	None	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Halford (Alford)	James	Private	S/3132	8th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders	25/09/1915		Nitshill, Renfrewshire			British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Maxwell	James	Lance Corporal	S/2710	8th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders	25/09/1915	1890	Barrhead, Lanarkshire	Samuel Maxwell	Fanny W Maxwell	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star

Murray	Robert	Private	S/6564	(Ross-shire Buffs, The Duke of Albany's ) 9th Battalion, Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)	26/10/1915	1896	Trinity Gask, Perthshire	Alexander Murray	Jeanie Murray	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Law	Andrew	Private	S/2661	8th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders (Ross-shire Buffs, The Duke of Albany's)	15/11/1915	1890	Nitshell, Renfrewshire	George Law	Margaret Law	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Clark	Robert	Private	13478	12th Battalion, Royal Scots	17/11/1915		Barrhead, Renfrewshire		Agnes Clark	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Young	William	Private	1156	Lanarkshire Yeomanry	17/11/1915	1895	Cathcart, Carmunnock	William Young	Jeanie Young	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Wyllie	William	Private	1210	3rd Scottish Horse	15/12/1915	1893		David Wyllie	Johanna Wyllie	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Goodwin	James	Lance Corporal	3088	6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's)	26/03/1916	1896	Barrhead, Renfrewshire	Neil Goodwin	Annie Cameron Goodwin	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Hunter	Robert	Private	4885	C Coy. 1st/6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders	26/03/1916	1896	Nitshell, Renfrewshire	James B Hunter (59)	Catherine Hunter	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Stirling	Alexander	Private	5143	1st/6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's)	26/03/1916	1885	Barrhead, Renfrewshire	Robert Stirling	Janet Stirling	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Forsyth	William	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant		6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's)	01/04/1916	1893	Nitshell, Renfrewshire	Francis Forsyth	Jessie Forsyth	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star

McWilliam	James (Hamish)	Lieutenant		2nd Battalion, Black Watch	29/05/1916			Alexander McWilliam	Elsie McWilliam	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Ward	John	Private	18982	6th Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borders	04/07/1916		Govan, Lanarkshire			British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Monaghan	James	Sargent	2936	9th (Glasgow Highlanders) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry	16/07/1916	1891	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	William Monaghan	Georgina C Monaghan	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Johnston	Thomas	Private	12167	9th Battalion, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)	22/07/1916		Linlithgow	James (Father)		British War and Victory
Nicol	David	Private	5022	1st/6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's)	28/07/1916	1897	Levern, Renfrewshire	James Nicol	Margaret Nicol	British War and Victory
Hone	William	Private	20950	2nd Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers	30/07/1916		Levern, Nitshill, Renfrewshire			British War and Victory
Taylor	George	Private	80189	31st Battalion, Canadian Infantry	05/08/1916	03/04/1890	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	William Taylor	Janet Taylor (nee Faulds)	Victory Medal and 1914-15 Star
Johnston	Robert	Private	M2/149996	622nd M.T. Coy., Royal Army Service Corps	26/08/1916	1891	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	Thomas Johnston	Helen Johnston	British War and Victory
Malloch	James	Private	S/4977	1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders	29/08/1916	1898	St Rollox, Lanarkshire	James Malloch	Jessie Malloch	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
McHaffie DCM	James	Sargent	13409	7th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers	13/10/1916	1890	Neilston, Renfrewshire	Richard McHaffie	Rebecca McHaffie	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
McBride	Thomas	Private	460353	44th Battalion, Canadian Infantry	18/11/1916	23/08/1889	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	James McBride (Bricklayer)	Mary McBride (nee Welsh)	

Henderson	William	Private	4666	B Coy., 1st/6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders	29/12/1916	14/11/1897	Levern, Nitshill, Renfrewshire	James Smith Henderson	Annie Henderson (Stepmother)	British War and Victory
Wood	Frank	Sergeant	G/7714	11th Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)	24/03/1917	1886	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	John Wood (Glenarm Dunoon)	Agnes Wood	British War and Victory
Rennie	James	Private	785156	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry	09/04/1917	23/10/1893	Rothesay, Isle of Bute	Robert Rennie	Jean B Rennie, 264 Main Street, Barrhead	
Smith	Robert	Sapper	420355	406th Field Coy., Royal Engineers	09/04/1917	1895	Dungannon, Co. Waterford, Ireland	Thomas Smith	Margaret Smith	British War and Victory
Armstrong	John	Lance Corporal	252242	6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders	18/04/1917	1893	Levern, Nitshill, Renfrewshire			British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Hotchkis	Gilbert	2nd Lieutenant		8th/10th (Service) Battalion, the Gordon Highlanders	23/04/1917	29/12/1893	Crookston, Renfrewshire	Richard James Hotchkis	Mary Ann (Young) Hotchkis	British War and Victory
Scott	Walter	Private	201013	10th Battalion, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)	24/04/1917	1894	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	Allan Scott	Mary Scott	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Strain	Thomas	Able Seaman	Clyde Z/7114	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve	24/04/1917	28/01/1891	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	Neil Strain	Annie Strain	British War and Victory
McKean	James	Private	862910	123 Battalion., Canadian Infantry	25/04/1917	15/12/1889	Renfrewshire	Joseph McKean	Mary McKean (Johnstone)	
Kelly	James	Private	25433	1st Battalion, The Royal Scots Fusiliers	03/05/1917		Barrhead, Lanarkshire			British War and Victory
McGoran	Thomas	Private	6379	II Corps Cyclist Battalion, Army Cyclist Corps	31/07/1917	1894	Ballynahinch, Co Down	Joseph McGoran	Sarah McGoran	British War and Victory
Steven	David	Gunner	117242	277th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery	28/10/1917	1889	Dunlop Street, Nitshill, Renfrewshire			British War and Victory

Law	James R	Private	S13329	7th Battalion, Cameron Highlanders	27/03/1918	1889	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	James Law	Maggie Law	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Forrest	Robert	Private	S/11978	1st/7th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders	11/04/1918	1896	Levernshields, Renfrewshire	Thomas Forrest	Agnes Forrest	British War and Victory
King	Robert	Private	44250	9th Battalion, Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment )	12/04/1918	24/03/1899	Barrhead, Renfrewshire	John King	Mary King	British War and Victory
Clark	John Robertson	Sapper	400730	55th Div. Signal Coy. The Royal Engineers	29/04/1918	1886	Glasgow	Robert Clark	Elizabeth Robertson Clark	British War and Victory
Gilmour	David	Private	4884/252059	1st/6th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's)	30/05/1918	1898	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	William Gilmour	Margaret Gilmour	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Meikle	John	Sargent	200854	4th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders	20/07/1918	1898	Kirkintilloch	John Meikle	Annie Meikle	British War and Victory VC and MM
Law	Matthew	Private	41287	10th Battalion, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)	19/08/1918	1894	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	Robert Law	Jane Law	British War and Victory
Doherty	Michael	Private	203554	1st Battalion, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders	18/09/1918		Donaghmore, Donegal, Ireland			British War and Victory
Alexander	John	Gunner	145554	199th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery	19/09/1918	1897	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	James Alexander	Jemima (Jessie) McCulloch ( Waverley Place, Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire)	British War and Victory
Keenan	Edward	Private	S/25855	Princess Louise's (10th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders)	10/10/1918	1898	Nitshill, Renfrewshire	Francis Keenan	Marion Keenan	British War and Victory

Quigg	John	Private	34719	Royal Scots	13/10/1918	1880	Pollokshaws, Lanarkshire	John Quigg	Margaret Quigg	British War and Victory
Alexander	John Macfarlane	Private	50954	2nd Battalion, Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment)	09/03/1920	1899	Campbelltown, Argyllshire	George S Alexander	Margaret T Armstrong	British War and Victory
Paterson MA	John	Private	41987	Highland Light Infantry	15/02/1921	1879	Ayr, Ayrshire	John Hunter Paterson	Margaret Sutherland Muir	British War and Victory
Jarvis	Alexander									
Faulds	Thomas C P	Private	25891	11th Battalion Cameronian (Scottish Rifles)	18/09/1918	1888	Nitshell, Lanarkshire	David Faulds	Jamesina Faulds	British War and Victory
McQuatter	Henry	Private	22175	18th Battalion (4th Glasgow) Highland Light Infantry	31/08/1916	1897	Nitshell, Renfrewshire	John McQuatter	Margaret McQuatter	British War and Victory
McGettigan	William	Private	15070	2nd Battalion Royal Irish Regiment	16/08/1917	1874	Nitshell, Renfrewshire	William McGettigan	Margaret McGettigan	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Fox	John	Private	8530	1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers	10/02/1915		Nitshell, Renfrewshire			British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Sharp	George	Private	28575	10th Battalion Cameronian (Scottish Rifles)	01/08/1917	1889	Nitshell, Renfrewshire	David Sharp	Jane S Sharp	British War and Victory
Alexander	George T D	2nd Lieutenant		2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders	11/04/1917	1895		George S Alexander	Margaret T Armstrong	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Conlogue	Patrick	Private	1882	1/6th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders	26/03/1916	1890	Pollokshaws, Eastwood	Andrew Conlogue	Mary Ann Conlogue	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Chapple	James	Lance Corporal		Royal Scots Fusiliers	14/03/1919					British War and Victory
Cluness	John Mason	Corporal	63194	13th Battalion Canadian Infantry	05/09/1916	30/03/1872	Nitshell (Abbey Landward) Renfrewshire	George Cluness	Jessie Cluness (nee Jack)	

McShane	Daniel	Private	884	13th Infantry Battalion Australian Army	02/05/1915	30/06/1890	Hurlet, Abbey Parish, Renfrewshire	John McShane (Ironstone miner)	Catherine McShane (nee McGaffney)	
Smith	Joseph	L/Sgt	7493	1st Battalion, Cameronian (Scottish Rifles)	04/11/1914	15/08/1884	Nitshill (Abbey) Renfrewshire	John Smith (Mason's Labourer)	Catherine Smith (nee Regan)	British War, Victory and 1914-15 Star
Carlaw	John									
Conlogue	John									
McGuire	Peter									
Slater	James									
Stoddart	Robert									
White	John									
Costello	Vincent	Lance Corporal	2829475	5th Battalion, Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)	10/06/1944	1923		Maurice Costello	Ann Costello	

**Source: Friends of Nitshill War Memorial. Courtesy of Alex Glass**

## Nitshill's Community since WWII



Nitshill has changed much over the twentieth century. The extraction industries disappeared long ago, as did brick manufacturing in the 1970s, and social life also changed. A century ago, there was a football ground not far from the station, and villagers regularly watched or participated in events such as wrestling, boxing, dog racing, tennis, golf, and clay pigeon shooting within the village boundaries. The village housed at least five pubs, including the Volunteer Arms, the Railway Inn and the Royal Oak, and there was also a pub called the Nitshill Inn. The Railway Inn organised miniature bowling for the locals, which was said to be very popular with miners during the pre-WWI miners' strikes.

Nitshill fell within the county of Renfrewshire until about the 1920s, when it was incorporated into the City of Glasgow for reasons related to education and community services such as roads, water, sewerage, and housing. From then on, Nitshill grew from being just a few streets, to include cottage flats during the interwar period, followed by substantial expansion to accommodate people relocated during the Glasgow slum clearances in the 1950s and 1960s.



The Hurllet junction, 1905. Some of the houses on the left are still there today. In the 1950s there was a garage and petrol station where the field is in the background – looking towards Paisley.

Photograph by Robert McGlone



1920s-built cottage flats on Nitshill Road

As with other postwar housing developments across Scotland’s central belt, this expansion was not entirely successful and Nitshill experienced multiple socio-economic issues that lead to some notoriety. However, there have since been moves towards improving the district with the demolition or regeneration of much of the postwar housing and schools and towards increasing awareness of Nitshill heritage, which includes a focus on the village’s monuments and memorial stones to miners and war heroes.

Around the end of WWII, two hugely influential studies explored Glasgow’s mass overpopulation and slum housing problems and attempted to provide robust solutions. The

Bruce Report, published in March 1945, led to an intensive programme of regeneration and rebuilding efforts which took place in the city and its surroundings between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s. However, in 1949, an alternative plan was put forward by a team led by Sir Patrick Abercrombie and Robert H Matthew. This Clyde Valley Regeneration Plan recommended an overspill policy for Glasgow and the rehousing of much of the existing population in new towns outside the city. Glasgow at that time had a population of around 1,130,000, and the authors suggested the rehoming of 550,000 Glaswegians into New Towns at East Kilbride, Cumbernauld, Bishopton and Houston. The Bruce report preferred rebuilding and rehousing within the city boundary. In the event, much of the slum clearance involved the relocation of people to outer Glasgow rather than outside the city. The building of high-rise flats was planned for the inner zone, whilst the outer zone would involve the creation of new housing estates at Castlemilk, Garscadden, Nitshill and Priesthill, and part of Pollok. Town planners have stated that the ensuing friction and debate between the supporters and spheres of influence for these two rival reports led to a series of initiatives designed to transform the city over the following 50 years.



Courtesy of Elaine Duerden, 'The Gorbals, 1950s'.

Perhaps inevitably, many of the old buildings in Nitshill were demolished as the village grew to accommodate those people relocated from Glasgow during the 1950s and 1960s, many of whom came from the Gorbals area. An unintended consequence was that the slum clearance programme severely disrupted networks of old communities and extended families. Nitshill's new schemes had few shops and businesses, and no cinemas or leisure facilities. JB Hunter noted that:

'After the WWII, the new building schemes went ahead, and the last signs of a village community floated into the past. We lost the old names like Wellington Road, Waterloo, Turnberry Road, Victoria Road, Paisley Road, Thornlie Road, etc. When I was first able to count, I managed to tally five pubs and one licenced grocer, from Levern School to the railway bridge, for around 1,000 of a population. Today I count the same number for 30/40,000.'

New residents often lived far away from their places of work and there were few opportunities for work locally. Worse yet, the post-war tenements were of poor quality and suffered from damp, condensation, lack of soundproofing, and budgetary cuts imposed by central government resulted in Glasgow Corporation, later Glasgow District Council, being unable to adequately maintain the properties at even basic levels. Across Glasgow during the past forty years, many surviving local industries and manufacturing jobs were threatened and then lost amidst the clamour for housing land, with many jobs being gradually outsourced to overseas countries. Unemployment in and around Nitshill rose expeditiously during the late twentieth century. Crime was an issue. It has been said that "those who could, left the area". In general terms, the remaining population often endured poverty, ill-health, and lower life expectancy, though it must be stressed that this description would not apply to everyone in Nitshill, nor to those people living in the surrounding conurbations. Indeed, many people have only good memories of those times.

There has been a sustained effort to improve Nitshill and the wider area in recent years, and many of those post-war schemes have been demolished and replaced with newer housing stock. The same thing happened elsewhere, with many of the post-war housing schemes in Greater Pollok, Red Road and Easterhouse having now been demolished. Nitshill is now predominately a housing area and only one pub remains, though there is still a variety of shops. Three new school have been built in recent years and there are open spaces for people of all ages to enjoy. Nitshill is changing once more.

# Nitshill Memories

Forty former and current residents were interviewed for the 'Nitshill Memories' project, and many more shared their memories and stories via social media and emails. Those communications explored a myriad of topics and, taken together, illuminated what life was like for people living in this former mining village. This next section reveals the history of Nitshill as told by the people who knew it best – the residents.

## "Housing"

The flat the family moved to was 'one up', on the first floor. They had a veranda facing the communal back court that had washing poles and a bin area – the 'midden'. The house had three bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom, and an outside coal bunker. The living room had a coal fire, with a hidden boiler at the back that supplied the hot water. The larger bedroom had a gas fire in a tiled surround. The living room flooring was linoleum, but they had a rug in front of the fire that her Mum had made out of old clothing strips. She had a wooden frame with canvas in the middle, and she weaved the old clothing strips to make a very thick rug. The kitchen had a twin 'wally' sink with a wringer in the middle.

"I remember the day when my Mammy and Daddy got the keys for the Corporation flat. I was eight years old and, as I mentioned, I was born in Ibrox, and I lived in Ibrox with my Mammy, Daddy, my three sisters and big brother, and we all shared the one bedroom. And that flat was on the top floor of a tenement in Ibrox, and it was rented by my Granny. So, although it was cosy living with my Granny, in a kind of a way, that move was a big exciting thing, we could stop being so squashed up with no room to swing a cat, so I'd say that was my earliest memory."

*Janette Aitken, East Renfrewshire*



Janet Love with her daughter Betty and the cat 'Tipsy', 1959

Carol lived in the first block (a red sandstone that overlooked the woods) at 56 Pinmore Street, on the first floor. This was a two bedroom flat with a sitting room, kitchen, and bathroom. The heating was from a coal fire in the sitting room (the flat was later fitted with a gas fire). The kitchen had two porcelain sinks, with a mangle inbetween. The coal fire also heated the water in a back boiler. The larger of the two bedrooms had a coal fire in it.

“I remember especially, you know, when my Dad would have, kind of, stoked the fire, and I always remember him putting the newspapers up, to get the flame... I used to love when it would go on and I would just sit in the dark....cosy.”

*Carol Borland, Glasgow*



Aerial photo of Nitshill - courtesy of Robert McGuire

Martin’s family lived in a 3-bedroom house, with living room, kitchen, and bathroom. There were six children in the family, but an older brother was in the Army, so he lived away. Martin remembers this big soldier coming home to visit – his brother was 18 years older than him. His parents moved to Nitshill from Port Dundas and were the first people to move into the houses in Househillwood Road. His elder brother had a job in the Co-operative butcher’s shop at Craigbank shops. He was then conscripted into the Army at age 18 and when he came back, he didn’t like being in Nitshill as it was so different from his Army life, so he went back into the Army. Martin’s family lived in a ‘4 in a block’ house. The kitchen

had two large sinks with a wringer in between for doing the washing. Next to it, there was a large boiler, which was great for washing his brothers' working clothes in – they worked in the brickworks. The boiler was also used for making the 'cloodie dumpling' at Christmas. The coal shed was outside the back door and they took turns bringing in the coal. The whole family has since moved away from Nitshill. His sister moved to Jersey to work, met her husband, and stayed there.

*Martin Brady, Cumbernauld*

“It was a three apartment; it was a corner house. It was two bedrooms, right, but they were bigger bedrooms than the other houses in the street. There were four families in the close.”

Margaret said that their heating came from a back-to-back coal fire. In 1959 the Council upgraded the heating system by fitting a new smokeless fuel fire in the sitting room, a small gas fire was fitted in one of the bedrooms, and a new small electric fire, with tiling around it, was fitted in the second bedroom; a new gas cooker was also fitted. Margaret said that her sister still lives in the house, and the small electric fire with the tiling is still there.

“They were cold houses, obviously, really draughty, two beds and a single bed in the girls' bedroom and the window came in. And it was January, gales blew the window right in, right across the bed and on to the floor. We were all in bed. We had such good neighbours; they all came, and everybody in the street came with their clothes poles to shore the window up from inside the house.”

*Margaret Cameron, Barrhead*



In the 1950s Glasgow Corporation removed all the coal fires and replaced the bedroom fires with these tiled electric fires. This fire is still in the bedroom and is still in use to this day.

“We stayed in 8 Dove Street, in a small room and kitchen, and my Uncle Harry stayed with us for a wee while; then we moved to 366 Nitshill Road. We had a range and you cooked at the side of the range. We didn't have a cooker or anything until a lot of years later. When I left the school at fourteen, I went into the house to look after the house, and I did all the cooking and washing. I used to go into the wash-house with

my Auntie Annie Wilson, my mother's sister, and she taught me how to do the washing and the boiler, and all the rest of it."

*Catherine (Rena) Carlton, Glasgow*



Tenement houses at Pinmore Place, 1970

"Coming up to Pinmore was a massive difference, just the fresh air alone, because where we were was almost on the Clyde, and of course they were digging the Clyde Tunnel and the place was alive with rats and mice and what have you, they were jumping all over the place... The house in Nitshill was a kitchen, bathroom, three bedrooms and a veranda... If you go up to Pinmore Street today, they've chopped the landing we were on, off, and made it two stories high."

*Joe Cassells, Glasgow*

"It was a four in a block, three bedrooms, big bedrooms with high ceilings, homely, a big garden. It was a Council house that were all the same, most of the houses in the street were the same, and everybody seemed to look out for each other back then. We had an inside toilet with a bath, and a black toilet seat that everybody seemed to have. The toilet was at the end of the hall and had a frosted glass window. We had a gas fire with a back boiler that heated the water as well. The cooker was gas, and the washing machine was a twin tub, and it was the best washing that was ever done. To this day, I stand by a twin tub."

*Victoria Corstorphine, East Renfrewshire*



Former Glasgow Corporation  
Parks Department - opposite 'Red  
Hills' on Barrhead Road

“Well, we came from a room and kitchen in the Gallowgate. There was eight of us plus my mother and father, that’s ten, and when we got to the Househillmuir area we thought it was a palace, with three bedrooms we ran about, and a bath and toilet.”

Alex said the house had a coal fire in the sitting room, and his mother cooked on a gas cooker in the kitchen. They had a metal boiler, and two sinks with a mangle between them; the boys had to turn the mangle handle to squeeze out the water from the clothes.

“There used to be an old boiler to do the washing. You’d put the washing in, and it would boil it up for you, that was until you got a washing machine. You’ve got to remember this was the 1960s/70s and nobody had a machine. There was ten of us in the house and it was a lot of washing for his mother. My mother, actually, she actually won a washing machine in the wee chapel hall.”

*Alex Dodds, Glasgow*

“Stayed in a tenement in Nitshill Road, and outside we had the wash-house where all the washing was done with the mangle and all that, and during the summer it had curtains up on it, and that’s where we went for baths. We had an outside toilet. We had a coal fire, and the cellar was outside where the coal was kept, and when you went to the toilet you made a noise to make sure the rats and all that were away. We had an air raid shelter and we used to play in it. We had pots of soup, my mother was good at making pastry and we’d have apple pie and rice pudding.”

*Marjorie Taylor, Glasgow*

The family moved to Nitshill from Drumoyne, as they had been living in a tenement flat and had been offered a larger house with a garden, which suited them better. Lillian’s maternal aunt had already moved to Nitshill with her family and lived nearby. Lillian talked about the kitchen in the house, which was not a fitted kitchen but had a stainless-steel sink. Her mum had a twin tub washing machine, which was an improvement as she had gone to the ‘steamie (wash-house) when they lived in Drumoyne. She remembered her mum using a mangle attached to the sinks, so there must have been two large sinks in the kitchen at first. The family moved from Nitshill to a villa-style house in Mossspark because they needed more room for Lillian’s brother, who had been born with severe disabilities.

*Lillian Gaughan, Glasgow*

Sandra grew up in a flat on Househillwood Road, Craigbank. The house had three bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen and living room. The kitchen had a gas cooker but was later changed to an electric cooker, and they had a single washing machine with a wringer attached at the top, which was later changed to a twin tub washing machine. Her mother was one of the first people in the area to have an automatic washing machine, called a Hoover Keymatic. The family later moved to a new house in Cleeves Road, Nitshill.

“We were lucky because it was centrally heated back in those days, because I was about two when we moved into it. We moved into it when they were built, and you had central heating and hot water all the time, and you had a heated towel rail.”

*Sandra Dunbar, Melbourne, Australia*

“My parents Nan and Joe Ashforth moved to Maybole Street, Nitshill, in 1941 - with three kids Rena (7), Joe (6), myself (1). Leonard, the last child, was the only one born in Nitshill. The house in Nitshill had a coal fire in the living room, a gas wall fire in the smaller bedroom, electric fire on the wall in the other bedroom. Kitchen had a large water tank above the sink. If there was no fire, there was no hot water. However, my electrician father put in an electric water heater. It was used sparingly because it was expensive to heat the water. A gas meter in the kitchen provided gas to stove and oven. In the early days, a penny meter, later converted to a shilling, provided gas for cooker. We also had an electric meter for the electricity. Every quarter the ‘meter man’ came to empty the meters... Bathroom was a bathtub, sink, toilet, with a water tank high above the bowl. My father boxed in the bathtub. No heat, but father installed a lamp on the ceiling that generated heat... We had a stove and a free-standing oven, which I think was cast iron. Wash board and wringer between two sinks. That all changed in 1953, when we got a modern cooker, with oven with top rack to heat the plates! That same year we got a Hoover washing machine, semi-automatic. The kitchen had a pulley for drying clothes.”



Ashforth family sitting in the spare ground at the Orchard, in Pinmore Street

“We had a stove and a free-standing oven, which I think was cast iron. Wash board and wringer between two sinks. That all changed in 1953, when we got a modern cooker, with oven with top rack to heat the plates! That same year we got a Hoover washing machine, semi-automatic. The kitchen had a pulley for drying clothes.”

*Marie Hackett (Ashworth), New Jersey, U.S.A.*

Catherine's had a lovely big five apartment house in Nitshill, with four bedrooms, living room, kitchen, and bathroom. The house had three bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. There was one small bedroom downstairs, a living room and kitchen. There was a big garden at the back, and quite a big garden at the front with a hedge all round it. The water was heated by an immerser and there was a coal fire. There was a gas cooker in the house with four rings, an oven, and the grill on top. Washing for the family was done by Catherine's mum in a twin tub machine, and there was a mangle attached to the sink for wringing the washing.

*Catherine Logue, Glasgow*

"I was born and brought up in Darvel Street. It was four in a close, and it was a two bedroomed house, one bathroom and a small kitchen. We ate very well, it was simple things like mince and potatoes, stew, all that kind of thing. I can remember, the kitchen was so small and there was a boiler in it and my mother used to put a towel over it, and that's where I sat because there wasn't any room."

*Ann Martin, Barrhead*

"We were at the top of a close, it was a three-storey building, we were at the top, it was three bedrooms. When you came in the door, the first bedroom was mine and my two sisters, the next bedroom was my four brothers room, and then the top bedroom was my mum and dad's, that was the one that was beside the living room and when you came down the other side, it was the kitchen and the bathroom."

They had a gas fire and a gas cooker. Fiona's mum used a twin-tub washing machine; however, she did have double sinks with a wringer in the middle that she used.

"The reason I remember the sinks better, is because that's where me and my sister, my next sister from me (I'm the youngest), that's where we were put in for our baths."

*Fiona McCrae, Glasgow*

"We lived upstairs with a house below. It was a four apartment. There was three bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom, but because there were so many of us and then Brian came along, my Mam was doubling us up, so we had bunk beds. My Mum and Dad had their room. Aye, it was fun times up there. The kitchens were big, a fitted kitchen with a gas cooker. We had central heating. We had a gas fire. Mum had a twin tub washing machine and the back was filled every day, rain or snow."

*Theresa McLaughlin, Glasgow*

Mary moved to Nitshill from McLean Street, Kinning Park, when she was 6 and a half years old. Her earliest memory of Nitshill, is of having and playing in their garden. The family had lived in a tenement flat and having a garden and an indoor bathroom was wonderful. The

family consisted of mother, father, two sisters and two brothers. The house had three bedrooms upstairs and a small bedroom downstairs, which her big sister was given as she was the eldest.

“We had a huge big garden and a front garden, which my mum loved, as she just adored putting flowers in and what have you, as she didn’t have that opportunity previously.”

There was linoleum on each floor of the house, including the living room, with a linoleum around the outside of a square carpet on the floor. They moved in on a Friday and her mum had to go out the next day to buy material to make curtains, as there were no curtains on the windows. As it was a Council house there was nothing in it when they moved in. The family thought it was amazing, as they had not had stairs in their house before.

*Mary McNeil, Glasgow*

“[We had a] three bedroomed house, four in the block, with back and front garden. My Dad was a great gardener; he grew vegetables in the back garden and rose bushes in the front. It was a lovely house, each room had a coal fire, but we didn’t light each fire. The bathroom had a bath, basin, and toilet. We had a gas cooker, and a boiler to wash clothes and a mangle to wring them out.”

*Theresa Mulheron, Jersey, Channel Islands*

Their home in the Gorbals was a ‘single end’ with a recess. Liz described her house in Priesthill as “living in luxury”, as it was a four apartment with three bedrooms. Heating was supplied to all the flats from a central system. They had a gas cooker and they did not have a washing machine when they moved in.

“It was like a tin boiler in the kitchen, in the corner of the kitchen, and I can remember the smell of the bleach when my Mammy used to do her towels, you know what I mean? And this wee boiler just boiled all the clothes up, and you had a wringer that sat between the two sinks, a Belfast sink on the one side, and the wee sink on the other.”

They lived in Shilton Drive for four years and when her mother had a new baby, born with a hole in her heart, the family were rehoused to Househillmuir Road, Nitshill, and that was better because they had a back and front garden.

*Elizabeth (Liz) Murray, Glasgow*

“My Dad worked in the Victoria Pit and there was an accident and he lost part of his leg, and therefore had to give up the mining. He stayed in the wee Miners Row. Between where the new houses are, there was a space with a hill, and my Dad was in the wee miners cottages with his family, his whole family, and they called that hill between the new housing estate at the top and the bottom, they called that Mutrie’s Brae.”

*Alistair Mutrie, Glasgow*

Isabella was born in Govan and moved to Pinmore Street in the Nitshill area when her husband, a docker in Grangemouth, died, and her youngest child was 3 years of age, as her house in the Tradeston area was very small, with an outside toilet, and she had four children over ten years of age. All of her children were born at home. Her house in Pinmore Street was a three-bedroom top floor flat. After living in Pinmore Street for 23 years, she moved to Seamill Street, another three bedroomed flat with a living room, kitchen, and bathroom. The house had coal fires.

*Isabella Pert, Glasgow*

Susan was born in Lennox Castle Hospital. Her mother said that she was born during the 'baby boom' after the war. As so many women were having babies at that time, her mother was sent from Kinning Park in Glasgow, where the family lived, to Lennox town, to have her baby. The tenements in Kinning Park were "pretty derelict" and were being pulled down. They lived in a room and kitchen up three flights of stairs, and when they were being demolished, her Mother took the chance of asking for a house in the Nitshill area, and they moved there in 1967, when Susan was aged 12.

"It was fantastic, my Mum said it was sheer luxury moving to a house, because we moved from a three stairs up, room and kitchen, with only an inside toilet and no bathroom, to a five apartment semi-detached house with a big back garden. It was fabulous."

The house had a living room, kitchen, and a small bedroom downstairs that was for her, as she was the eldest, and there were three bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. On having a bathroom, Susan said that when they lived in Kinning Park they had to go to the steamie for a bath once a week, and to now have a bathroom inside the house must have been such a relief to her Mum.

*Susan Rasdale, Kilsyth*



Susan, Mary, George,  
Neil & Catherine  
Rasdale in their back  
garden, Peat Road.



Jimmy, Carol & Mary Osborne, courtesy of Susan Rasdale

“We lived in a four-in-a-block, we had the front door, up the stairs, and it had two bedrooms, a living room, bathroom and a kitchen. They didn’t have an awful lot of money, my Mammy and Daddy, but it was always kept clean and tidy. Me, Robert and Anne all slept in the one room, and my Mammy and Daddy had the other room, and when Robert was a bit bigger, obviously he got my Mammy and Daddy’s room, and they slept on a couch settee in the living room until Robert went to live in England, when he was 18, and they went back in to a bedroom.”

The house had a coal fire in the sitting room and the rest of the house was freezing. Later, Caroline’s mother bought a paraffin heater for the bedroom and they had to walk to Jackie Conner’s garage on Nitshill Road to buy the paraffin for it. The hot water was supplied by a back boiler in the coal fire. They had a gas cooker in the kitchen and two sinks for washing clothes, with a wringer in the middle of them. When her mother had pleurisy, her sister bought a small single spinner to make washing easier. They later had a ‘Snow Queen’ fridge with a small ice box. Caroline remembers her mother having a supply of coins for the meter, and they looked forward to the electricity man coming to empty the box and seeing how much he would leave for them.

*Caroline Reid, Glasgow*

“We lived in a tenement, or close as they were called in those days, in a three bedroomed flat on the first-floor landing of a four-storey building. It had three bedrooms, a kitchen and bathroom. My mum didn’t have a washing machine in the early days, she used her two ‘wally’ sinks with the wringer in the middle. How she

managed all that washing I'll never know; I certainly couldn't do that now. We didn't have a fridge, but we had a pantry cupboard that stored the food. The cooker was gas, and the living room had a coal fire, with a back boiler that heated the hot water."

*Elizabeth Walker, Sydney, Australia*

Letty remembers that there were two sinks in the kitchen, with a wringer in between to do the washing. Then there was a twin tub, and there was a boiler in a kitchen cupboard for doing the washing too. They also had a veranda, which was 'the thing', especially living up a close. Letty and her sister shared a bed for many years, until they were given single beds. This would have been when they were bigger. The flat was heated by a coal fire in the living room, and in her mum and dad's bedroom. These were eventually replaced by Dimplex heaters. The houses across the road were houses which they called the 'gas houses', because they had gas central heating. Letty thought that perhaps those had been built in a different phase, and so had different heating. Washing was dried on a pulley in the kitchen, and there were also clothes poles in the back court, with lines to dry the washing. Letty remembers swinging on them when she was wee.

"There were six flats in the close and you had to make sure you were up early to get your washing hung outside, as there was no rota for using the clothes lines. People were up early in those days, so you just had to be organised."

*Letty Smith, Glasgow*

Carol's family moved from a tenement flat in Govan. Their Govan flat was a top flat, 'single end,' and had an inside toilet. It was a one roomed flat, which had a fireplace, a recessed bed, a sink at the window, and was also the living room. There was a tiny hall with a toilet. The family's new house in South Nitshill had a living room, bathroom, two bedrooms and a separate kitchen. This had double Belfast sinks, a boiler in the corner, a cabinet for storing shopping, and a table and chairs. The houses were all electric and had no gas, so the cooker would have been electric. The house had no coal fire and was heated by a 2-bar electric fire in the living room. There was no central heating. They should have had a coal fire in the living room, but it was taken out and an electric fire with surround was put in. The bedrooms were not heated, and there were metal framed windows, which would have been very cold in winter. Carol's mum did not have a washing machine at first and washing was done in the boiler, then into the sink, and then put through the mangle. Her mum bought a second-hand twin tub washing machine, which took up the whole kitchen. When Carol was 16, her mum went into hospital and Carol told her dad that he should buy an automatic washing machine for her mum. Carol's boyfriend's mum had an automatic machine, and this was the first one she'd ever seen. She and her dad went out and bought the washing machine and an upright vacuum cleaner.

*Carol Stewart, Glasgow*

Susan's family's house in Kinning Park had no hot water, just a cold tap in the kitchen, and only a toilet. The family had an inside toilet, which some others did not have, so they were fortunate. The house in Peat Road was a five-apartment consisting of four bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and bathroom, and a big garden. The family was comprised of five children and two adults. The family thought it was wonderful, just having a bathroom and having a bed to themselves, rather than having to share one. "Nowadays you just don't realise just how cramped up people were living." Susan said that:

"It was quite a difference moving to the house in Nitshill as Peat Road was really very nice, and still is to this day. Quiet and respectable, at least the bit where my family lived. As you got nearer to Nitshill Road, it was not as tidy. People throwing things in the street, cans, and such. We lived in a semi-detached house. The next-door neighbour, Mrs Carmichael, also had around five in her family. It was all big families in these houses. She was very nice, and the other neighbours were all really nice people. When we moved there at first, there was an older couple living next door and they weren't very friendly when they saw that there were five children!

*Susan Stewart, Glasgow*

The family moved from a tenement flat in Bridgeton to Nitshill. They had a 3-bedroom house, with a kitchen, living room and bathroom. "That was like Downton Abbey to where we came fae. We'd had two rooms with recesses for the beds." The new house was heated by a coal fire, which had a back boiler to heat water. There was no separate immersion heater, so they could not have a bath unless the fire had been lit. All of the washing was done by hand in the two sinks in the kitchen. There was a wringer for the clothes, and eventually they got a twin tub machine.

*Albert Wallace (Bert), Glasgow*

## **"Family, Friends and Neighbours"**

Margaret thought that the best things about growing up and living in Nitshill were the friendships she's made. Recently, she has renewed contact with a group of friends from school, including the Interviewer, which has been great. Family life was good with both of her parents in work, so they did not want for any necessities. There was a good balance in her family life, with her dad keeping them right as to which path to take, and her mum giving a cuddle when needed. In general, she just remembers good times and no bad times, and she'll always remember them.

*Margaret Arnott, Glasgow*



Source: Martin Brady: "This photo was taken in the back yard at our family home, which was 309 Househillwood Road, Nitshill. The date is approx. 1955/1956. In the photo are, top row, left to right: Tony, Daniel, Bernadette; bottom row: Martin (me ) and our father James Brady. The other person you can just see in the photo, in the house, is my other big sister Theresa; I think she was ill and not allowed out."

"I'm the youngest on the bottom step; on the top row are my sister Bernadette, my Mother, I don't know the other lady. Next row: my brother Tony, my sister Theresa (hiding), my oldest brother's future wife – Ivy, wearing her Wrens uniform. The date is approx. 1956, and the occasion was my oldest brother James and Ivy came to Glasgow to get married."

Source: Martin Brady:





Source: Martin Brady: "This is my oldest brother James and new wife Ivy's wedding reception held in our living room at 309 Househillwood Road, Nitshill, approx. 1956. I'm just to the left of the centre of the photo."



Source:  
Martin  
Brady.

Right:  
Martin, age  
3, taken at  
the top of  
Peat Road,  
Nitshill,  
1956.



Left: "My first holy communion taken in the old St Roberts Church, Peat Rd., 1960. The building is still there but I don't know if it is a community hall or some kind of church."

Martin's father was, for a time, the park-keeper at Househillwood park. He wondered if the 'stone trees' were still there. These are fossilised remains and are still in the park. His father was also the night watchman at football pitches in the area and he went down to see him at night to drink tea from a tin can! They went to the social club at St Bernard's Church at



South Nitshill. One of the priests was Father Dunn, who was related to the Dunn's soft drinks makers. At Christmas they gave small bottles of the drinks to the primary school children.

*Martin Brady, Cumbernauld*

Rena said there was quite a lot of people from Nitshill who went to fight in the war and who died fighting. Her father was the Fire Warden during the war and No. 2 Dove Street was used as their base. People used to say, "If Jimmy Hunter's on, we'll be safe". Rena's older brother was in the Navy serving on minesweepers during the war.

"My Daddy was one of the founder members of the Bowling Green and Secretary and Treasurer for over forty years. I'm the longest member of the Nitshill and Hurlet Bowling Club. I've been a member for fifty-three years. They called my Daddy "Mr Nitshill", because everything was about the village and the people in it."

*Catherine (Rena) Carlton, Glasgow*

Margaret remembers the neighbours in the close. Next door was a Mrs McGhee and her son, Frank. Mrs McGhee had a daughter, whose children sometimes stayed with her. Downstairs was Mrs McDonald, who had quite a few children who were already older and out at work. The other neighbour was Mrs McEwan, who had three children, and also a cat which Margaret hated, as she was terrified of cats. Her family never had any pets. No-one really had pets at that time, possibly because they lived in flats.

*Margaret Arnott, Glasgow*

Catherine mentions the family's neighbours: Mrs Campbell, next door; Mrs Green, downstairs from her; their houses were 4 in a block. Catherine's family lived in a house attached to another, and Mrs Carmichael was through the wall from them. Mr Ross, a

schoolteacher, lived straight across the road from the family. He was a real character and taught most of the family. He was described as “a great teacher”.

*Catherine Logue, Glasgow*

Right: This photo of Catriona and Kevin Stewart, taken in their back garden, in Peat Road, was submitted by Susan Rasdale



Left: Susan Stewart holding baby Kevin Rasdale, with Pamela McNeil and Catriona Rasdale, at Peat Road

Carol also remembers lots of neighbours: the McMorlands, a man, his wife and their two adult children; Joe and Jean, a middle aged couple who were a bit hard of hearing and played their music very loud, though the respondent said she enjoyed the music they played. Next door was the Burns family, who separated; upstairs was Pat Sweeney and his mum - Pat continued to live there after his mum died; and the Summers family. On the top floor was Mr and Mrs McTaggart, an older couple.

“Mr McTaggart didn’t keep well. I actually remember he fell into the coal fire, and he was a big man, and he used to be a farmer or something like that and, och, he was a poor wee soul, but Mrs McTaggart she went on for years and years. So that’s that, I can actually remember quite a few of my neighbours... My Uncle, my Dad’s brother, stayed in the next block from us on the bottom, but he eventually moved across the road and up.”

*Carol Borland, Glasgow*

Margaret talked about her neighbours. She remembers listening to the upstairs neighbour singing. She said that all the neighbours looked after each other; they were dependable in a crisis, looking after each other’s children.

*Margaret Cameron, Barrhead*

“Through the wall at 44 Maybole were Mr. and Mrs. McGauley, Con and Mary. They were ‘Simply the Best!’ We were friends with them until they died. Mary came to visit us in NJ. After she died, Con sent me a letter saying how sad he was. I still have that letter. Upstairs were the Boyd’s. They were a big family and were neighbourly. We all played together. In the same shared gate were the Hardies, and upstairs from them, the McDonough’s. They were lovely families. Great gardeners, shared their ‘greens.’ An elderly lady, Mrs. McCullough, who lived above McGauley’s, didn’t get out much. When she needed something, she’d open her window, call out to one of us kids saying: “I need you to go to the shops.” She’d throw the list on a piece of paper with the money wrapped inside. No child ever refused.”

*Marie Hackett (Ashworth), New Jersey, U.S.A.*

Coreen and Rosaleen remember living across the landing from an elderly quiet couple, Mr and Mrs Black; and Mrs Dornan, a very kind elderly downstairs neighbour, who helped the their Mum; and a neighbour called Joan, who had a big black cat who had made its way into her home and was quite scary:

“Made it under my Mum and Dad’s mattress, we thought it was some sort of poltergeist because the mattress just kept moving and then my Mum and Dad got out and had a look. We didn’t have any pets, so I didn’t know what was making their bed move. The cat was one of these cats that used to hiss at you, so I used to be terrified if it was in the close and you had to pass it. It used to take a swipe at your legs and obviously, we had these wee ankle socks, so we were frightened it was going to scratch your legs...”

“The mattress moved in the middle of the night and he [her husband] thought I was exaggerating and said, “go back asleep”. So, I was lying back, and then my husband lifted up the end of the bed mattress and there was the cat. The cat had gone missing earlier and we were talking, her door was open, my door was open. The cat went “ssshhhh”, so we tried to take it out from under the mattress, and we had to call her up at one o’clock in the morning and her brother to get the cat out. I was standing on top of the bed....Mrs Dornan was a very, very good neighbour. When I was pregnant and came out of hospital, she came up every day and left a pint of milk and scones outside my door, every single day. So, the neighbours were very good, if you were decent to them, they were decent to you.”

*Coreen McKechnie and Rosaleen McCann, Glasgow*

“I think it was the neighbours made the place. We all stuck by each other, so we did, and the parents all stuck by each other, and if you had a fight with your next-door neighbour, it was done on that day, it wasn’t carried on or anything. And when I say a fight, I mean when somebody put the washing out on a day they shouldn’t have put the washing out.”

*Theresa McLaughlin, Glasgow*



Left: Darvel Street neighbours: Marie Smith, Ina Tierney, and Jean McCormick.  
Submitted by Rosie Tierney



Right: Janette Love pushing the swing with her sister Margaret holding on to the side, and baby sister Iris sitting on the swing, Bellahouston Park, 1953.  
Submitted by Janette Aitken.

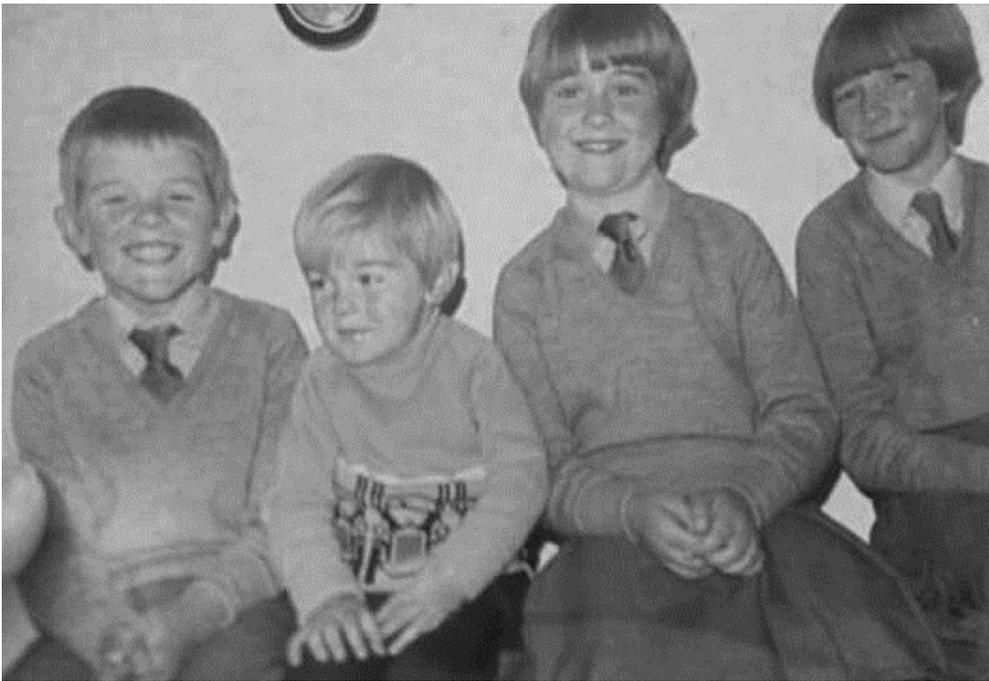
Letty remembers all of her neighbours. From the bottom of the close they were: the Osbornes, the Paterson's, her family – the Kerr's; on the other side of the close, from the top were: the McKenzies, the Bennets, and the Robertson's. She also remembers the families in the next close:

“Because you were all sent out to play, so you got to know everybody, whereas now, kids are in their rooms, playing computers, watching video games, whatever. Things were more sociable then because you went out and spoke to people. It was all families in the closes round about. It was all Council housing, so single people, widowed people, or young couples, wouldn't have been given that kind of housing. A lot of the people came from areas like Castlemilk, the Gorbals, and the Govan area. When you spoke to people your own age, they would tell you that their grandparents had come from those areas.”

*Letty Smith, Glasgow*

“I can remember Mrs Boland coming into our house at New Year and singing *The Birth of The Blues*. I was only a wee lassie, but I can remember that because that was her party song.”

*Elizabeth (Liz) Murray, Glasgow*



Above: The McKernon children, 1982, Nitshill

“The neighbours were good neighbours, there was Jay Barrett who lived down the stairs; the Mains through the wall and Esther McPhee who lived diagonally down the stairs. They were neighbours for a long time.”

*Michael McKernan, Glasgow*

## “Community”

When Janette was growing up in the area, people knew all of their neighbours and it was a close-knit community. Her parents socialised with some of the neighbours but mainly with their extended family. They had accordions and drums and would have a good singsong at parties. Everyone would have their own ‘party piece’ to sing. One of the favourite songs for the younger ones to sing was *Edelweiss* from *The Sound of Music*. One of Janette’s most favourite memories was of their neighbours, Boyd Greer and his wife, playing records and dancing to *Revolution* by *The Beatles*. They were teenagers at the time, and the younger family members thought that they were amazing. That is Janette’s first memory of anyone dancing to pop music.

*Janette Armour, East Renfrewshire*

Kathleen recalled that, on Hogmanay, a neighbour took his radiogram to the foot of the close so that everyone could enjoy the music. She has no bad memories of living in Nitshill.

“You knew everybody in the whole village. We called it a wee village then, which it was really; there was only these couple of streets in it, but we knew everybody.”

*Kathleen Cassidy, Glasgow*

Lillian said that the best thing about living in Nitshill was having great pals. A treat on a Friday night was dinner from the chippy. Lillian loved living in Nitshill and felt part of a community, as everyone knew everyone else. She could not remember the names of her neighbours but said that they were good neighbours.

*Lillian Gaughan, Glasgow*

“It was territorial, but in our own wee bit everybody knew everybody, and I would say there was more community spirit when I was growing up than what there is compared to now. People looked out for each other and you had family everywhere. My Da’s cousin lived right across the road and people just went in and out of people’s houses. People didn’t chap doors back then either, they just walked in. Back then they just shouted, “Right, it’s me”, and walked in.”

*Kathleen Larkins, Glasgow*



Danny Brady & Friend - 1967  
309 Househillwood Road  
Submitted by Martin Brady

“We had a community. I’ll give you an example: the night when Anne-Marie and Brian were born, the whole lane waited up to find out what was happening with my Mum, and then when the word got out that Lila had a boy, the whole lane were out cheering, “Oh, she’s had a boy. Lila and Billy have had a boy.”

*Theresa McLaughlin, Glasgow*

“The community, the friendship, the freedom that we had. Every neighbour knew who you were, if you were bad you always knew that it would be reported back to your Mammy and Daddy.”

*Caroline Reid, Glasgow*

Carol remembers that there was a close-knit community in South Nitshill then, and she would go to the shops for older neighbours. The neighbours would keep each other's key to let in the meter man and such like. Carol's mum was the first to get a telephone and colour television, so everybody came to them to use these.

*Carol Stewart, Glasgow*

“The camaraderie, the friendship, neighbours. A lot of nice people. A lot of nice people have moved out, and a lot of nice people have moved in.”

*John Williamson, Glasgow*

Ann remembers Mr Cameron, the policeman, who would clip the children around the head, and a man that they called Teddy, who helped the children to cross the road to school. Teddy was a former Polish POW who remained in Nitshill after the war. Teddy would also give the children a clip on the ear also if they misbehaved. The respondents also mentioned the bookmaker's runner; he had red hair. It was illegal to bet outside, but he would go into Clark's field, where the men would meet to place their bets, and he gave kids a coin to look out for the police coming. The policemen took off their hats and would start crawling along the field, and the men would all scatter.

*Ann Martin, Marjorie Taylor & Anne Orr, Glasgow*

Karen remembers the fairground coming to the meadows in Nitshill when she was around 9 years old. This was between Hartstone Road and Barrhead Road. There was a good park there, with swings and monkey bars. Her mum took her to the fairground and let her go on the big swings but nothing else. When Karen was older, the fairground was at Bellahouston Park; she loved this and found it really exciting. She loved the Waltzers and the Motorbikes but did not like anything that went high into the air. In the meadows there are petrified trees. And Karen also recalls that there was a gypsy camp along Nitshill Road, but all of the men there got into trouble for stealing. When Karen went to the discos at Christmas time, gifts were given out. One of these was giant beads and another was a little glittery handbag. She did not get much in the way of gifts at home and did not have anything that was really fashionable, as her mum did not have much money. Karen said she loved getting these gifts. She also loved the Community Centre at the Congregational Church, and her daughter's Christening was held there. It has now been demolished. Karen also went to bingo with her neighbour in St Robert's in Haughburn Road, where she won a wall clock. St Ignatius Church

had a majorette club where Karen went when she was around 9 years old. She also went to the Girls Brigade at the Congregational Church, but that has also since been demolished. She remembers an annexe across from them, in Haughburn Road, which was deliberately burned down. Karen loved going to her friend's house, the Fitzpatrick family, as there was a mattress that they used to jump down the stairs onto. She had a lot of fun outdoors with her friends.  
*Karen Stewart, Glasgow*

Both Sylvia and John recalled the miners' strike, where the electricity went off and people were put on a three-day working week. They also remembered the Army's 'Green Goddesses' covering for the Fire Service during the strike.  
*Sylvia & John Williamson, Glasgow*

## “Events & Celebrations”

Speaking about the original Nitshill Parish Church, Margaret said:



“Yes, it was on Pinmore Street. The early locals called it the Kirk Brae. There was a minister's house on that property when I was a child in the 1940s. It was referred to as ‘The Manse’. Next to it was a decent sized hall. In earlier times it may have been the church. Up through the 1950s it was known as the Boys' Brigade (BB) Hall. Occasional BB

Friday night dances were held. For the younger boys, there was a yearly gymnastic display, it was always well attended by locals. It was like the Nitshill Olympics! They

also had a band, brass, I think. Each year in their uniforms they would march to (and play) at the War Memorial at Nitshill Station.”

*Marie Ashforth Hackett*

Lillian did not really remember any Christmas parties being held at school. The only one she could remember was the leaver’s disco, which was held in Minsky’s in Shawlands. Everyone went to it, including the Priest.

*Lillian Gaughan, Glasgow*

“I was not quite five at the end of WWII. My only memory is that a bonfire was built and lit in the middle of Maybole Street. Many people celebrated. The back greens had two air raid shelters; one was an Anderson (underground) shelter, covered in grass; the other was a 6’ or 8’ high concrete structure, with cement seats inside which ran the length of the shelter.”

*Marie Hackett (Ashworth), New Jersey, U.S.A.*



Catriona Rasdale & Ann McDonald celebrating a birthday at 306 Peat Road. Submitted by Susan Rasdale



A family party in the Tierney household, Darvel Street.  
Courtesy of Rosie Tierney

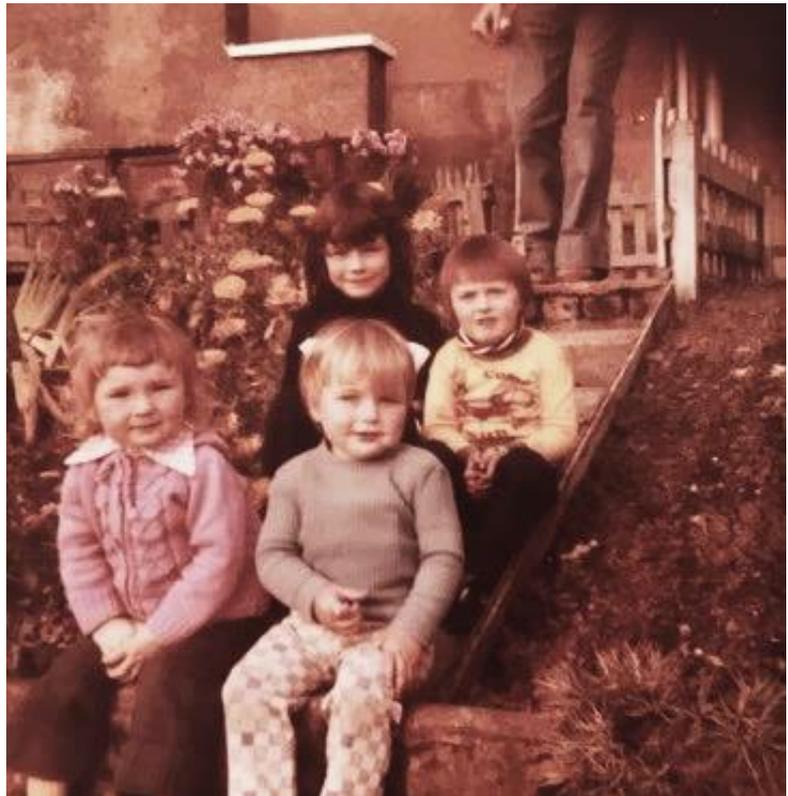
A wedding in the Tierney household, Darvel Street.  
Courtesy of Rosie Tierney



## “Childhood & Teenage Years”

Janette remembers playing outside playing most of the time. They played hide and seek, rounders, peever, skipping ropes, Chinese ropes, hitting a ball in a stocking against the wall, and they played shops and put on concerts. She went to the Brownies and Girl Guides in the Baptist Church at the park, which runs along to Crookston Road. She cannot remember what that area was called but it ran all the way up to Nitshill Road. There was a youth club at Craigbank for a while. There was a swimming pool in Shawlands and also in Craigbank Secondary, which was used by the public on a Thursday night. However, Janette commented that, if you did not have a swimming costume then you could not go swimming, and she did not have one. When she was a teenager, a dance was held at the old Chapel on Peat Road, which was run by the church. She remembers her new duffle coat being stolen from there. Her dad was still alive then and he was watching from the window for her coming home. She does not remember going to the discos at the Scout Hall in Nitshill, but the Interviewer remembered going there with her. Janette remembers going with her mum for a new coat and she wanted one with a tapestry style. She bought it but never wore it, as her mum had been correct – it was horrible.

*Janette Armour, East Renfrewshire*



The next generation of the Love family,  
1976, in their Gran's back garden in Pollok -  
Tracy, Jim, Cheryl & Steven  
Submitted by Janette Aitken

“Ropes, skipping ropes, peever – a crowd of us out in the middle of the road, because there wasn't any traffic, and doublers [bouncing two balls against a wall]... Now and again, we'd go to Barrhead to the pictures, the Pavilion at the Centre, or we would just walk through the park from the back of Darvel Street and walk through to Barrhead into Cowan Park. It took us forever. It was a field, 'Clarks Park', that belonged to some farm, but we just used to cut through it to Barrhead.”

*Jean Barnes, Arden*

Carol remembers that nearly all the children in her area were around the same age and in the summertime everyone played together. They played games such as kick the can, ropes, Chinese elastic ropes, rounders, balls, hide and seek, building dens. Sometimes, in the summer, a group of them would go to the swimming baths in Barrhead, cutting through fields to get there. They would go out and sometimes not come back until late. Carol knows that Nitshill did not always have the best of reputations, but she never felt as if there were any dangers:

“I had a wonderful childhood in Nitshill and the people that I played with they were all just, they were all just nice, we were all the same... We used to have wee concerts, so we did, in the close, and peever. But the close concerts were fun because our close, with no security entrance, so the close that I stayed in, well, all the closes were flat at the front. You went up and you had, like the doors to the cellars, but that was your stage. To get dressed before you came on to perform, you would be on the stairs and then that was you coming round to do your turn.”

When asked what her act was in the close concert, the respondent said, *California, Here I Come*, and she remembered all the lines of the song. Some of the other children told jokes. Carol also said that they played in the woods and played in the burn, although she was not allowed to go into the burn. She recalls wearing her lovely ‘First Sunday in May’ outfit, with white sandals and white socks, and when she returned home, they were no longer white! Even when her mother accused her of being in the burn, she said she had not.

*Carol Borland, Glasgow*



Morag McMillan, Janette Love (centre) & Margaret Love, 1968, Pollok

As a boy, growing up in Nitshill, Martin got up to the usual things, getting into mischief. It was a good place to stay; they were out all day. His two brothers worked in the brick works in Nitshill, and they bought a bike between them, so Martin would 'borrow' it and he and his friends, some of whom had second-hand bikes, would cycle down to Irvine. They would take a bottle of water and "two jeelie pieces".

*Martin Brady, Cumbernauld*

"We played down the orchard because there was a big swing there, and we had a big see-saw made out of a big tree that fallen, and there was apples and brambles and everything in it, and we played out in the street, and we'd play rounders and kick door, runaway!"

In her teenage years, Kathleen would go to the Pavilion cinema in Barrhead, and 'The Elephant' in Shawlands, and she went dancing in the Nitshill Hall and in Paisley.

*Kathleen Cassidy, Glasgow*

Victoria said she had a doll called 'Dolly'. She also played Battleships, Connect 4, Guess Who, Monopoly, and Kerplunk. The outdoor games she played were Hide and Seek, Kick the Can, Cocarustie, Tig, Chap the Door Run Away. She remembers that there was always a crowd of children playing together.

"I went swimming, because there was a swimming pool just built soon after we moved in, so we all went swimming, because we all had a pass, because we lived locally, and it was cheaper to get in. When it first opened, the queue was right around the whole building for days, and you had to queue for hours to get in... It was different to what kids do now. I'd say if kids now lived the way we did back then, they'd be a bit more streetwise, because we had to learn very quickly, because we were out in the streets. Having to learn that money isn't the key to everything, happiness is."

*Victoria Corstorphine, East Renfrewshire*

"The Red Hills, we played there a lot. It was up at the Hurllet; it was all Red Blaes. There was a cycle track there, and I used to get scared watching them [the cyclists], because when they came round that, there was only about a foot around it and they would've been in the river... I played on my bike and we played football, morning, noon, and night. There wasn't a great deal of organised things to do, very few youth clubs. There was nothing round about Nitshill really, you made your own fun, played Hide and Seek, Tig. The girls would draw beds on the street."

*Eddie Foy, Paisley*

"I was a bit bad. I went on adventures, got a stick, and went somewhere. Sometimes I would have a match and set fire to the grass, but the thing is you'd get to a bit of dry grass and it was already burned, somebody had got there before. So, it wasnae just

me who done this; it was a hobby finding this bit of dry grass and burning it and smelling it, but you'd put it right out with the school bag and then go home... I was in the Cubs. That was great, because you actually learned how to use a knife, because carrying a knife was kind of normal then, everybody had one and it was all about whittling, making tent pegs, carving your name on a tree. A menchy, or taking sap out of a tree that was a big one, you'd collect the sap and set fire to it again because it was flammable."

*John Paul McBride, Glasgow*

"There were two cinemas in Govan, the Lyceum and the ABC Picture House. There was the Imperial, which is now The Grand Ole Opry, and then there were another one further on up, I can't remember the name of that... I went to the Govan ones, or the ones at Shawlands, the Waverley or the Embassy. I've never been in the Elephant; there were three pictures in Shawlands."

*Michael McKernan, Glasgow*

Theresa and her friend Angela Watters, as children, loved Elvis, and whenever they heard his music they would dance about in the lane.

"You had to find your own entertainment. You never had a chance to have a hobby, you were too busy doing other things. You and all your pals would be outside playing. Nowadays, it's like kids don't know how to play. I say nowadays' kids are getting more infections and everything because people are so clean, too clean; whereas years ago, a bit of dirt, you didn't worry about because it was good dirt... Mum always took us to swimming in Eastwood Swimming Pool. If we were lucky, we would go to Rouken Glen Park, it was a family thing. We had a great childhood in Nitshill. We had a lot of freedom, but you had to be home at a certain time. My Mum wasn't the quietest person, so when it was time for you to come in, she was hanging out the window, shouting. The first ones to go in were Susan and June. It was, "Susan and June, up!", and then it was "Terry Irvine, up!"

*Theresa McLaughlin, Glasgow*

"I was lucky to have a Mum at home, and I'm not saying this because she's here, because I've told her this as well, I did enjoy that, knowing my Mum was there. I just remember having a happy time. We had a stable home, my Mum and Dad were there for us, we were happy, fed and clothed, not everybody had that."

*Coreen McKechnie, Glasgow*

"Looking back, it was really the happiest days of my life, the happiest days of my life! It was carefree, just open fields, there was the wee woods, and then up at the Hurllet there was the big woods that took you through to, in those days it was called

Hawkhead, but it's Leverndale now. You just roamed all over the place, there was nobody bothering you. There was no swing park, but you used to walk right up Pinmore Street and they called it 'Clark's Park', for whatever reason, I don't know, and we used to walk over there, and it took us into Barrhead to Cowan Park, and that's where we'd go for the swings."

*Alistair Mutrie, Glasgow*

Susan remembered that when growing up, there was not any cinemas in the area, and her Mum was of the opinion that if you could get up, you could get out, so they played in the back garden. Her Grandfather, Neil McDonald, worked as a bin man in the West End of the City, and he would bring things home from the bins. On one occasion, when she was about 12 or 13, he brought home a cricket bat and gave it to her. Cricket was not popular in Scotland, so they used the cricket bat to play rounders.

"So, our back garden was big enough that we could play rounders, my brothers and sisters. And my brother Neil, who was two, no three, down from me, he's the second youngest, he was just a pain when he was young. He's the loveliest, quietest, gentlest person you could ever meet now, but when he was young, he was a pain in the neck! He got it all out his system then. So, we were playing rounders, and he was winding me up, so if I was twelve, Neil would be seven, so he was only a wee boy. I don't know what he was doing, but I threw the cricket bat at him, and I took it by the handle and I just fired it all the way down the garden, and hit him smack in the head with it. I thought I'd killed him, he dropped like a stone. I thought my Mother's going to have my guts for garters, but he was fine; he had a head like a rock! He just had a big bump on it. So that's the kind of thing we did... We



Above: Susan Stewart, Jimmy & Carol Osborne - Holiday snap, Blackpool  
Submitted by Susan Rasdale

used to walk the streets, believe it or not, that sounds really bad! We had our Gloverall Duffle coats, we were passionate about these Gloverall Duffle coats, and our brogues; we thought we were just something else, fashion-wise, and my friend Maggie McLaughlin lived at the Bundy, and she'd walk up to mine and then we'd walk up to South Nitshill."

Susan recalls a disco in the Scout Hall in Pinmore Street that was held once a month, when she would dress up in her latest "gear" and it was always busy. This was a big occasion for the teenagers.

*Susan Rasdale, Kilsyth*

"Kerby, hide and seek, kick the can, marbles, cocarustie, you were always out; everybody in the street played. When I was a bit older, they built the adventure playground around the corner from me. We had Mrs Lafferty, who ran the 'Hut', she did everything with us. The Hut had tennis rackets, footballs, table tennis, and then you had the wee classes they had for us, and we had the asphalt, and you would do, like, exercises and things, that you would do at school sports day, like jump through the hoops, get the bean bag, throw this or do that. That was all outside. We had wee discos on a Friday night, and then the park was huge, you had two slides to the park."

*Caroline Reid, Glasgow*

When she was young. Letty remembers playing Chinese ropes, playing with balls up against a wall, much to the annoyance of Mrs Osborne in the ground floor flat. She could not understand why this caused so much annoyance but would probably be the same herself now. She loved her hula-hoop and had a bike, which was an expensive item, and dolls, and she played games such as tiddlywinks and ludo. These were indoor board games and only for rainy days, and every house had them.

*Letty Smith, Glasgow*

Margaret went to local dances in the Scout Hall in Nitshill, or to the wooden huts at Peat Road roundabout, where they had great dances. They also went to the Congregational Church in Househillwood Road where people came from all over the local area - Craigbank, Priesthill and Nitshill - to their dances. Lavern Primary School used this church for their Christmas and Easter services. There were clubs in Nitshill Primary, including a girls' club and sewing clubs. Gowanbank Primary School had a country dancing class, and there were loads of things like Brownies and Guides. These were held in the local halls and schools. Margaret attended Guides until she was about 14. There was no swimming in the local area, and she does not remember any particularly special events at Christmas.

*Margaret Steele, Glasgow*

As a teenager, Neil played in the woods at Nitshill on a tree swing, which went over the burn.

“Sometimes maybe 12 of you on this rope swing, and the bloody thing would snap, but you didnae bother. Sometimes you didnae get over the water and it would snap. You just grabbed onto somebody and hung on for life; and that was us sober as well! It was just bonkers. That was us 13 or 14 [years old], with platforms on!”

*Neil Stewart, Glasgow*

When Karen was a teenager in Nitshill, Househillwood Community Centre used to show films, and that was their cinema. Viewing was either free or very cheap. They showed two films, with an interval inbetween. On Friday nights, discos were held in the same Community Centre. Karen’s favourite dance song was Boogieland, and then the film Grease came out and they danced to that music.

*Karen Stewart, Glasgow*

“We used to go out on our bikes. I really loved cycling, and one time my brother and myself, we cycled to Ayr; I think we were probably about eleven. To Ayr from Househillwood. My father couldn’t believe it when we came back, and he was waiting saying “what on earth happened to you?” That’s where we went cycling, to Ayr. I’ll never forget it. Never did it again, mind you. Of course, there was no traffic, very little traffic, it was a long time ago, sixty-five years ago. We drew beds, and played rounders and all sorts in the streets, because there were very few cars around. It was good for children growing up, particularly there, and a lot of freedom. I also ice skated; I went ice skating with another friend to Crossmyloof or Paisley. On a Saturday night, we would go to her house, put on the music, and then we would dance. It was really good.”

*Ann Sword, Glasgow*

Bert and his friends made their own fun. They did not attend clubs but liked making ‘bogies’ from old pram wheels, in the summer holidays. These were carts that they sometimes raced against each other. Bert was not into football.

*Albert Wallace (Bert), Glasgow*

“You’ve got the Pollok Centre now; you’ve got the cinema; you’ve got swimming baths. You had to go to Pollokshaws or Govan if you wanted to go swimming. You had to go to Shawlands, Govan or Barrhead to go to the pictures. There was nothing here. There used to be an army camp, down there on the Corselet Road, and we used to play in that. We played on a big swing over the burn.”

*John Williamson, Glasgow*

“I thoroughly enjoyed Nitshill when I lived there. When we were young, we had great fun playing outside with our friends. There were about two cars on the street, so loads of room to play. My best friend was called Isabel Hart; she always had new nice dresses. One particular dress was a brown candy-striped dress. I was so pleased when she finished with it and gave it to me! We used to have sewing and knitting nights with my friends; we would take turns in the houses and always had tea and biscuits.”

*Theresa Mulheron, Jersey, Channel Islands*

“As I say, all the weans, we played with in the street. We were all poor weans, we just never knew we were poor weans, you know what I mean. It’s like, there was none of this, like, keeping up with the Jones’s, and flash gear. Everybody went oot in their sannies and their wee pinny dresses. You got something new for Easter and something new for the First Sunday In May...then you were a toff!”

*Elizabeth Murray (Liz) Glasgow*

“I remember, we would collect newspapers, and you would take them up to the Gorbals and you would get money for them; yes, because they were going to make them into something, obviously. I remember this cupboard in the living room, and we used to keep all the newspapers and build them up, and build them up, and then we would take them up, and you would get money for them. Also, what we used to do in that cupboard was make sugarolly water. It was liquorice, put into water in bottles; shows how poor we were, liquorice into water in bottles, put it in your dark place, and of course you would have sugarolly water. So, you would drink that as well, and also, we would make perfume, all wee girls did that.”

*Ann Sword, Glasgow*

## “School”

“Not every school holiday, I wouldn’t know the exact year, but the old Corporation of Glasgow opened up a local school, and the dinner-hall ladies served us free dinner ticket weans. The kids in our stair all went marching up to it. My sister Betty, who wasn’t old enough even to be at school, couldn’t go, and this is the funny part of it.... One day, the dinner-hall lady said “Have you got any brothers or sisters at home and couldn’t like, attend, they were ill or whatever, because if we did then we could bring pots and pans and they’d send home a meal.” So just about everybody shot their hands up and said they had a sick family child member, and they asked who the family

member was, I said Betty... Betty wasn't even at school yet. So, I'm thinking, we could've used any name, because I'm guessing they knew from the start that us scallywags were at it. However, up the street we all went, every day during the holidays, rattling our pots and pans and came back holding carefully the goodies we'd brought home."

*Janette Aitken, East Renfrewshire*



Old St Bernard's School

Margaret did not go to nursery school and did not remember anyone else going to nursery. There were two intakes to Primary School then, with one in the summer and one after Christmas. She wondered if she had even started school at Easter. This system was later changed to only one intake. Margaret was always one of the youngest in class. She started school in Harmony Row Primary in Govan, then moved to Hills Trust, before finally moving to Gowanbank Primary in P.5. Her P.5 and P.6 teacher was Mr Ross, and she has good memories of that time. One of the memories is of going to Galloway House Residential School with her class. Margaret went there twice and thought it was a great experience. They went for one month and she remembers feeling homesick when writing home to her family. She remembers getting up in the morning and, if you had long hair, having your hair braided or put in a ponytail. Then, going to breakfast before having some lessons. Lunch followed lessons, and then the children were allowed outside to play and have adventures. In the evening, sometimes, they would play records and sing along; one of the favourites

was *Hold Tight* by Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Titch. Sandy Shaw singing *Puppet on a String* was another popular song, which won the Eurovision Song Contest. That was probably in 1967. At Galloway House, the boys and girls were in separate wings, with the teachers in between. Margaret remembers being given the slipper once, for talking after lights out! She and Helen Carney, who lives on Peat Road, were both given the slipper across their bottom, and put into a bathroom downstairs so they wouldn't disturb the other girls.

*Margaret Arnott, Glasgow*

Jean attended Shawlands Academy where she learned Domestic and Housewifery, which entailed laundry, cookery, housekeeping and bathing a doll.

“I made my own apron for cookery, and I was making a skirt when I left school, so I took that with me, and my Mother finished it for me. The skirt was a dirndl skirt and was blue and white checked in colour.”

*Jean Barnes, Arden*

Martin went to school in Nitshill but does not remember there being any nursery provision. He remembers primary school being part of St Robert's, in Househillmuir Road, and it was called Muirshiel Primary. It was a very small school, just an annexe; this was before St Bernard's Primary was built. He then went to the old Bellarmine Secondary, this was beside the old St Robert's Church on Househillwood Road. The new St Robert's Church was then built in Peat Road and they were made to attend. The priest wore a different coloured robe every week and their father would quiz them on what colour the robe was to make sure they had been to chapel. Father Burns was one of the priests and if he saw the boys out playing football on a Sunday, he would order them to go to mass in the evening. He would know whether or not they had been to an earlier mass. Father Burns was later made a canon, which was an enormous honour for the parish.

*Martin Brady, Cumbernauld*

“We were in Househillwood for two years and then we went over to Muirshiel for two years, and then we went to Overtown for two years, and then the last couple of weeks was St Bernard's, because it was only a wee school and it only had a couple of classes. The class that I was in, in Househillwood, was the dining hall; they used to come in and we were out in the playground, and they would put wax cloths, wax, oil cloths, table covers, and that's where the kids ate their dinner. Well, we would have ate our dinner. The grey van would come with big tins; they would heat them up and they would make the dinners, heat them up in the school.”

*Margaret Cameron, Barrhead*

Alex said there were no nursery schools in the area, if you needed looking after it was your older sibling who did this. He attended St Roberts Primary School. He did not like school, but

he knew he had to go there to be educated. At the age of twelve he attended Bellarmine Secondary School, and he left the school at the age of fifteen. He had a lot of friends in both primary and secondary schools, though they have all lost touch over the years.

*Alex Dodds, Glasgow*

“My first school was at age 5; the wee tin school at Househillmuir Road, just at the back of the brickworks, and from there we moved to Muirshiel. That was down in Priesthill, and from there up to Overtown Avenue, which was just across from Gowanbank School. Secondary after that, I went to Bellarmine. There were some great teachers, you know; dedicated teachers, they wanted you to do well.”

*Eddie Foy, Paisley*

Kathleen started school at Gowanbank Primary and continued on to Craigbank Secondary. She only remembers her P.1 teacher, Miss Purden. She laughed as she told how she did not want to go to school and screamed the place down! She does not remember any teachers from secondary school as she did not often attend. She did not like school. There was more laughter as she described how her mother sent her to school, but she ‘bunked off’ and went to the park with some other friends and they stayed there most of the day. They were caught a few times by Mr Ross, a primary school teacher and their neighbour, who told her mum that he had seen her, so Kathleen was ‘kept in’ a couple of times; she was never hit. Kathleen’s family received free school meals at both primary and secondary school, as her dad was self-employed and her mother was not working at the time. She did not like school food or the idea of going, so she used to give someone her ticket and went home at lunchtime, where her mum would give her a sandwich.

“Well, I was only five minutes from the school, and I used to cut through Mrs McGuire’s and jump over the fence!”

*Kathleen Larkins, Glasgow*

Colin remembers that the pupils at his school had to move between different annexes for lessons. They could have one lesson in Nitshill and then have to walk down to Househillwood for the next lesson. He remembers that the headmaster at Craigbank was Mr Buchanan, and he also remembers the names of most of the teachers and what subjects they taught. Colin liked Maths and English. One of the English teachers, Mr Hudson, had been a prisoner of war in Burma, and they would persuade him to talk about the war. There was a lot of sectarian rivalry between Craigbank and St Bernard’s schools. One day, Colin’s class was belted by the headmaster because of the sectarian song they had been singing when they walked past the chapel. St Bernard’s school name was changed to Bellarmine because the school had such a bad name.

*Colin McEwan, Glasgow*



Old Levern Primary School, Prestwick Street

“I went to Levern Primary School, and there was three of us from Darvel Street went there; we all played together because the people from Newfield Square looked down their nose at people from Darvel Street. I remember when I was about six or seven, there was this girl from Newfield Square, Martha Tennant, and my auntie stayed in Newfield Square, and I’d be playing about there and Martha Tennant asked if I could go to her house after school, and my mother said “That’s fine, go to your Auntie Jennie’s when you’re finished and she’ll see you across the road”, to my Granny’s across the main road. So, I duly goes there after school and Mrs Tennant said, “So where is it you live in the square, I said no, no, I live in Darvel Street.” Oh well, Martha can’t play today, you’ll have to go home. I remember feeling quite scummy.”

Ann said that the people who lived in the Newfield Square tenements, had central heating, and a bowling green and tennis courts, and were teachers and professional people who looked down on the families from Nitshill.

*Ann Martin, Marjorie Taylor & Anne Orr, Glasgow*

John attended a private secondary school called St Aloysius College for three years due to being a ‘gifted child’. He had to sit an entry examination to be given entry to this college. Whilst there, he had no problems academically, but did not like the strict regime. In his fourth year he attended Holyrood School, although he did not spend much time at school due to ill health. However, he did manage to go the city centre most days, and have lunch with his friends, visit his sister at her work in Boots the Chemist, visit the Apollo and all the record shops. He became very familiar with every part of the city centre.

“That was my education, I learned about music, I got into being a roadie with bands. I was hanging about the Apollo, I used to be able to get in and see all the bands for

nothing because I knew how to skip in and also, I hung about with posh boys from Bearsden and that kind of thing, and they were more riotous than I was. So, it was almost like a holiday going to school every day in town, but it was hard because, with my father being away at sea a lot of the time, the family was under a lot of pressure. So, I worked in an ice cream van, I delivered newspapers, and my brother's army wages, and everybody else's money paid for my fees. I did quite well, I got all my 'O' grades."

*John Paul McBride, Glasgow*

"I went to St. Bernard's, that was behind Nitshill Road, but I was only there for two days and then got moved to St. Ignatius. St Ignatius was right in front of Gowanbank. St. Bernard's had moved up to St. Ignatius because the school was closing down. Mr Doyle was my Primary 7 teacher; he was good at giving the belt out."

*Theresa McLaughlin, Glasgow*

Alistair remembered attended Lavern Primary School and his old school friend called Ian McGrowth who travelled from Old Pollok to the school every day as this was the nearest primary school. He had two favourite teachers – a Miss McNee and Miss Henderson. He enjoyed reading at school. He recalls cases of apples being sent from Canada for all the pupils at the school. Kennedy's from Pollokshaws delivered small bottles of milk for the pupils every day.

"St. Roberts at the bottom, that was just a wooden building and they hadn't a dinner hall, so what happened was we were to get our dinner first, the Lavern Primary would get dinner first and then we would go out and play and then St. Robert's would come up and they would queue up and they would get a second sitting in Lavern School in the dining hall, and then there used to be a game of fitba against the Catholics and Protestants and it was really high octane stuff"

*Alistair Mutrie, Glasgow*

Ann attended Househillwood School until aged 8 and she then moved to Gowanbank School. She recalled a teacher, Mrs Auld, who threw her duster at the pupils, or if they did something wrong, she would clip them on the back of the head. She sat her 'Eleven Plus' in the final year at primary school. Her high school was Sir John Stirling Maxwell's at Pollokshaws. There was no high school in the Nitshill area at that time. Ann enjoyed her time at primary school and high school. She was made class captain at high school. She left school at age 15 and attended night school to learn typing.

*Ann Sword, Glasgow*



Class 4G1 Levern Primary. Submitted by Susan Rasdale

“Mr Ross, he was just a natural teacher. He was a bachelor, and at the time when, you know, you’re eleven, and thought he was quite old because he was going bald, you know, he must’ve only been a man in his thirties, when you think about it, looking back... He did wear a bow tie, very dapper, very upright. He was a wonderful teacher, absolutely terrific, made everything so much fun for the kids and he used to take us out at the weekend; he used to take a wee group, I remember once going to Gleniffer Braes. Now, he took us on the bus from Nitshill on his own, a group of maybe about ten kids. I mean he had a big heart... He loved the Barras. He would go to the Barras at the weekend and he would buy single records, you know, the discs, and they were out of a juke box, so they didn’t have the middle bit to fit a record player, but you could buy clip in’s; this is like the dark ages... He would sell them to you for, like a penny or something, or he would do competitions, mainly around word games, as part of the class. He made things fun and you got something as a prize. It was amazing.”

*Susan Rasdale, Kilsyth*

Many of our respondents remember corporal punishment being used in their schools. Sylvia and John both remembered the belt. Sometimes the teacher would keep the belt in their drawer, and sometimes it would be placed on the desk as a warning to pupils.

*Sylvia & John Williamson, Glasgow*



Craigbank Secondary School, class photo, c.1960. Submitted by Susan Rasdale

Margaret had to go to Gowanbank Primary in Househillwood; she then went to Lavern Primary before the new school was built in South Nitshill, and attended from the age of 7 to 8. Children from South Nitshill were sent to various different schools, even as far away as Carnwadric. There were lots of children in the area, as the housing was all new and lots of families moved there. There were as many as 40 children in each class. A chapel was built in South Nitshill and also two schools, one of which was across the road from the chapel, but the Catholic children had to go to the smaller school in Nitshill, and the non-denominational children went to the one at the chapel. Her school is now gone, and children have to go to either Darnley or Cleaves Road, which Margaret feels is not very convenient. After primary school, Margaret attended Craigbank Secondary School. She travelled there by bus as she got a bus pass, but she usually walked home as it was a social time. Miss Oliphant was her registration and geography teacher. Margaret remembers most of her teachers at secondary school and Miss Oliphant was her favourite, as she was good at geography. Her least favourite teacher was the P.E. teacher, but she cannot remember her name. Margaret was good at the high jump but was excluded from this as she had forgotten her kit one day, and she never did it again.

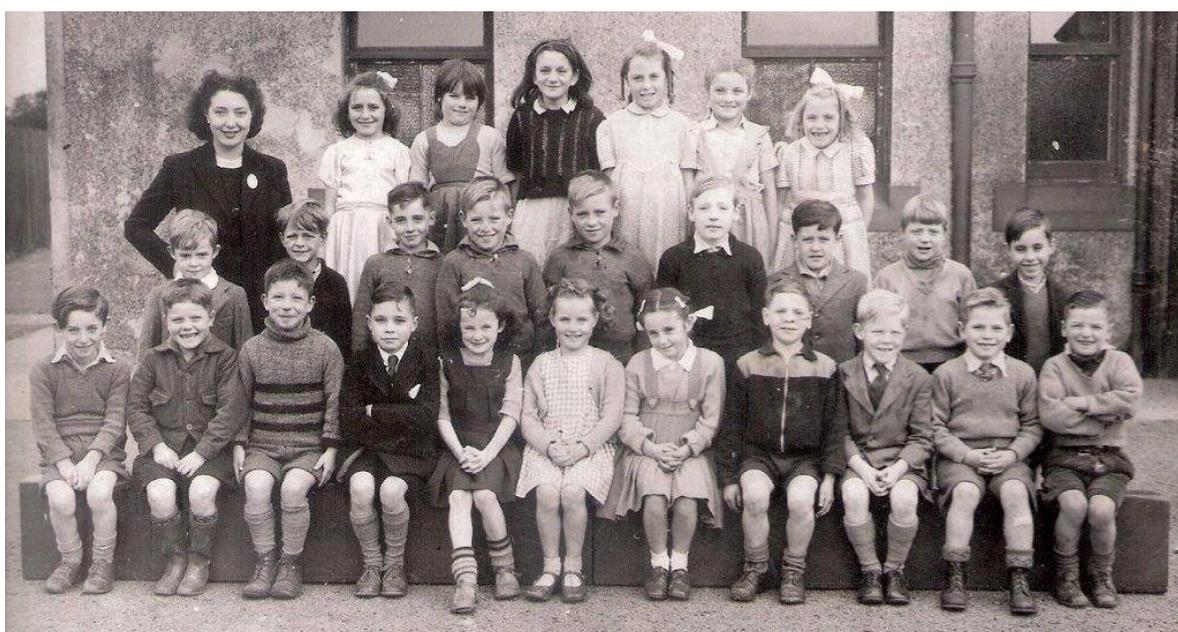
*Margaret Steele, Glasgow*

Bert talks about attending St Robert's Primary School, at the top of Househillmuir Road, which only had four classrooms. He then went on to St Bernard's before moving to Bellarmine Secondary school annexe, which he describes as being like " a western town with walkways". All of the schools he attended have since been demolished.

*Albert Wallace (Bert), Glasgow*



Source: Marie Ashforth Hackett. Top: "I'm on the right, sitting on a bench in front of teacher. My friend Jessica (now living in Toronto), we're still friends, is the tiny girl at the other end of the bench. It was 1946. The photo was taken in the old No.4 room in St. Bernard's Primary School on Nitshill Road, across from what was then Doyle's newsagents. It later burned down." Below: Marie Ashforth Hackett is wearing a checkered dress.



## “Shops & Pubs”



Shop at the top on Pinmore Street, now gone.

“Where Brannan’s is now, there was shops there, really old, and you could go up the stairs and there was a café up there run by a dad, two brothers and a sister. There was also a hairdresser and a Co-operative draper that was there. When they got knocked down, they built new shops next to Peat Road. Donnie Johnstone moved down, he was the barber, and then he opened a laundrette, and the people from the café went down there, and the paper shop that the Doyle’s had – Betty, John, and Henry Doyle. Next to that was a wee grocer, Wullie Currie had that, and another café, Vic’s. Next to Kirk Brae there was a house that had a wee shop, run by Annie Wallace.”

*Jean Barnes, Arden*

“We had a poacher who used to come round the houses selling chickens, fish, rabbits, which, well, we all ate well, put it that way.”

Kathleen’s mother also bought fresh meat from the butcher In Nitshill and eggs from Clark’s Farm, which was across the field towards Barrhead. She recalled a shop run by Annie Wallace, who “sold everything”, and also a shop at the corner of Prestwick Street owned by Sam Mullen, who sold sweets.

*Kathleen Cassidy, Glasgow*

Alex also talked about the shops in the area: Galloways the butcher, Galbraith's, Co-operative, chemist, and Mackie's the newsagent. There were also two ice cream vans that came round every night, one was called Jaconelli. Alex mentioned the Househill Tavern, the Royal Oak, the Cavendish, Lavern Water Hotel (where his sister had worked for 26 years), The Railway Inn and the Volunteer Arms. There was one bookmaker called 'Kings', and a little row of shops on Nitshill Road. There is only one pub in the area now; that had been named the 'Cavendish' but is now called 'The Hazelwood'. The area now has four bookmakers, some shops and a couple of fast food takeaways.

*Alex Dodds, Glasgow*



Original Shops, Pinmore Crescent

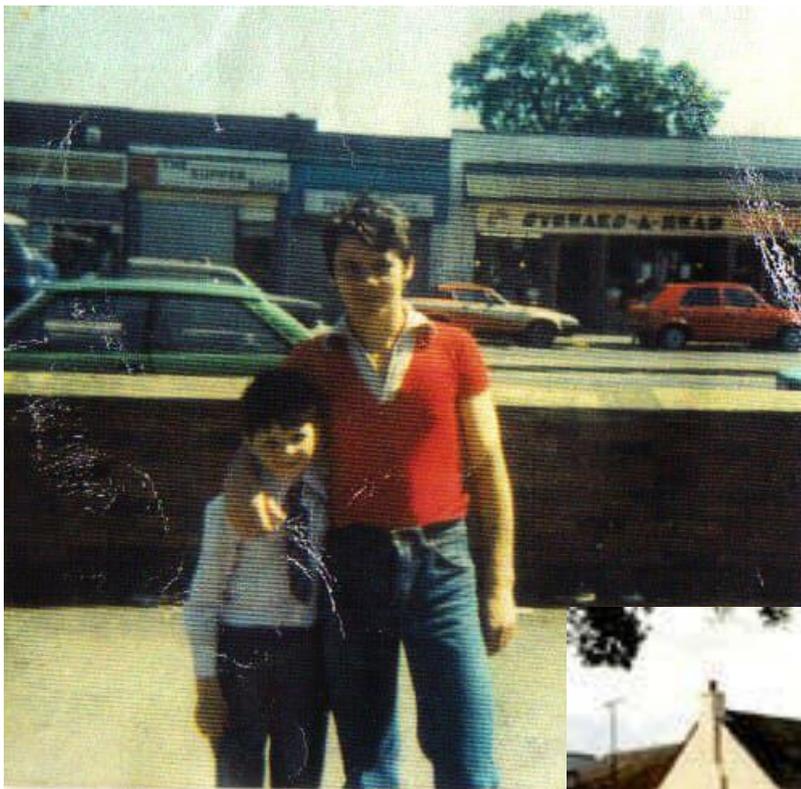
The Househill Tavern, the Royal Oak, the Cavendish, the Lavern Water Hotel, The Railway Inn, and the Volunteer Arms were all mentioned by Eddie.

*Eddie Foy, Paisley*

“ I had my wee list; you'd give him a wee note from your Ma, and we could get fags then, and my Ma would get ten 'Club'. He would put everything in the bag and hand you the bag, and then your Ma would go round and sort it out when she got paid... We had the Pollok Centre, and me and my brother, now and again, would get sent to go and get some stuff, bigger things that my Ma needed, but it would be a walk down

that burn path. I used to love it because I used to think it was responsible. We would get sent but my brother would always bring a trolley back. He would push the trolley all the way back right along that burn path. I'd be dragging it and he'd be pushing it. We had an ice cream van and I'm sure there was a wee grocery van used to come round... We had a ginger van, Solripe, who used to come round and deliver the ginger, and all the weans used to go mental when that van came round. I remember all the weans climbing on to the back of the van to try and steal the ginger and getting a hudgie on the van. All the weans used to jump on the van; honestly, I'm surprised none of these weans were ever run over."

*Kathleen Larkins, Glasgow*



Brian Mongan with his nephew Thomas Scott after his communion. Photograph taken outside the Royal Oak (see image below). Submitted by Liz Stewart



Colin remembers that there were several pubs in Nitshill. He sometimes socialised in the Railway Tavern and the Nia Roo. He also remembers the Volunteer Inn, the Cavendish, Levern Waters Hotel, and the Royal Oak. Some of those pubs had not existed when he was growing up. The only one he remembers being there, then, was the Househill Tavern. People who wanted to drink alcohol on a Sunday had to go outwith the Glasgow City boundary, due to local licensing laws. They could go to Eastwood Mains or the MacDonald Hotel at Giffnock Toll, which would be full on a Sunday with people coming in from Glasgow. There was also a fire station in Nitshill, opposite the Darnley Hospital.

*Colin McEwan, Glasgow*



Cavendish



The Railway Inn

On the subject of shops, Michael said that there was a row of shops on Nitshill Road, at the top of Peat Road, and the vans that went around the area were a butcher van, a bread van, ice cream vans, and Alpine juice van.

“Strang’s, fishmonger, dairy, Henry Doyle newsagent, a chip shop; Donnie Johnstone the barber, he came from Maybole Street, his mother’s name was Capaldi, but he was always known as Johnstone. Maguire opened up a butcher shop in Nitshill and I worked in there for a while. There was a Co-operative building past the Cavendish. You had a Co-operative butcher and a Co-operative grocery, and then across from it, just at Cleeves Road, you had the Co-operative drapery, and then you had the shops at Craigbank.” On pubs, Michael said: “The Househill, The Royal Oak. the Cavvie, the Levern, The Railway Inn, the Volunteer Arms, and up in Dove Street you had he Masonic, and you also had the Nitshill Bowling Green. You didnae go thirsty!”

*Michael McKernan, Glasgow*

For those youngsters out there who thought that recycling was a new invention:

“Co-op, vans, Italian shop, Galbraith’s. The vans used to come round selling ice cream. We had milk delivered in big churns. I loved the glass bottles of orange; nothing beats that. We used to take empty jam jars back to the shop for money.”

*Theresa Mulheron, Jersey, Channel Islands*



“There was a row of houses where my Dad was born, maybe three or four; sort of, a miners’ row, and then there was a wee shop, a wee sweetie shop. It was a woman from Barrhead that ran it; her name was Annie Wallace, and we used to get sweeties out of Annie’s. And then, just on that building there, was two doors right on to the main street, and the first door was a man we called ‘Sergeant Tait’, and the next door was the Thomson’s, and their boy was Jim; and then you walked into Pinmore Street and walked about twenty yards, when you came to the upstairs houses, and that’s where we stayed. There were two staircases, so we were up a few stairs and into the house, and that was the kitchen with the old black range. Through, was the lounge, where my Mother and Father slept in. I always remember a beautiful big coal fire. Then, upstairs was an attic where me and my brother slept.”

*Alistair Mutrie, Glasgow*



“The Co-operative and a baker. When we made our stew for New Year, we’d take our dishes over to the baker and he would put a pastry on the top for us. It was on the corner at Peat Road, the baker... They built a hotel, the Lavern Water, I worked in it. There were a lot of pubs, I worked in them all bar one that was all men, the Househill Tavern. It was just men that worked in it, there wasn’t a barmaid. The Volunteer Arms, that’s near the railway, I worked in that, I worked in The Royal Oak. I worked in the Cavendish as well. I was fed up travelling for work, so I just went in and asked. The man said he wasn’t looking for anybody, but I’ll take you on. I was there for a few weeks and then I was transferred to the Tradewinds near Darnley, and then to the Rowallan at Thornliebank, I had to get away from it, it was all prostitutes that went into it, so I left, handed in my notice and left. I went back on the buses again.”

*Isabella Pert, Glasgow*

On Nitshill Road there was a Co-operative draper shop, where the Lavern Water Hotel was later built, and a Co-op grocer across the road. There were shops at the top of Peat Road, which haven't changed very much. There were others at Craigbank Drive where Margaret worked. These included a Galbraith's, Co-op grocery and butchers, Clan Chemist, and a company called H&M, who ran a dairy and a newsagent's shop. You could buy butter in the dairy from the barrel, and the assistant would cut you a portion of cheese from a huge block. There is still a row of shops there. Although there is now a big shopping centre with a large Tesco, where Margaret works, at Silverburn. She thinks that some people still like to shop at small shops. A lot of customers that they had in the old Tesco say that the new superstore is too big for them to walk around. Margaret thinks that the new store lost a lot of their older customers because of that.

*Margaret Steele, Glasgow*

Neil says that there were not many shops in the area, just the ones on Nitshill Road. There was an Italian shop, which also sold ice cream, and was open at night too. There were no Asian shops at the time but there was a butcher, fishmonger, and paper shop. Neil's mum mainly did her shopping in the butcher and fishmongers. A small supermarket opened in Nitshill in the 1970s. He thinks it was 'Templeton's', and it was the first shop that you could walk round. There was also a Co-op at Househillwood where you could walk round too. He remembers queueing up for bread, which he thinks was during a bakers' strike, as you were only allowed one loaf per person. As he came from a big family, he remembers all of the family queuing up at different places in the queue. His mother must have used a lot of bread, as she had five children.

*Neil Stewart, Glasgow*

The Lavern Water Hotel was built on Nitshill Road around 1970, before Susan went to work in Crookston Home. Prior to that, the men had to go to Barrhead or somewhere like that for a drink on a Sunday, because the pubs were shut. Hotels bars were able to open after 12 noon, so they built the hotel.



Lavern Waters Hotel

"It was like a stampede [when the Hotel opened]. They were 6 six deep at the bar trying to get a pint, you'd have to see it to believe it. They were like animals; you'd think they'd never seen a drink in their lives. Every Sunday was the same till they got their order."

The staff were kept busy as the hotel opened from 12 noon to 2.30pm, then closed for the afternoon. It then re-opened at 6.30pm at night, and it was the same, they were clamouring at the door to get a drink.

*Susan Stewart, Glasgow*

“I used to work in the Househill Tavern, and my father worked in there with my grandfather and three of my uncles, not all at the same time. I started when I was nineteen, I was actually saving up to get married so I'd taken a part time job. The pub itself was a great pub, it wasn't much to look at inside, the décor was terrible. Paddy Maguire was the manager and he kept a really good shop. Everybody knew everybody in there; at five o'clock on a Friday they were chapping at the door to get in. Anyway, when I started, all the old fellows used to wind me up something terrible about various things. They told me that Clark Gable was in there during the war and I said oh come on, what's Clark Gable doing in here? They said he was in there for a pint during the war. I never bothered about it, but years later I saw a letter in a newspaper there was this girl, who stayed somewhere down in Ayrshire, said that when she was about eleven or twelve she was in at the cinema, and during the picture a group of American servicemen came in and they sat behind her and were making a carry on. She turned round to tell them to be quiet and she said, “I swear to God, one of them was Clark Gable!” Later on, in the 1970s, she wrote a letter into a newspaper saying I've told everybody it was Clark Gable, is there any possibility it could've been? The reply from the newspaper was that Clark Gable was stationed at Prestwick Airport for a short time and he attended the military hospital at Cowglen. So that would have brought him through Nitshill to get to Cowglen, so it just could be true, you know. I checked it on Wikipedia and he definitely got shot through the foot in the war. So, there you go, Clark Gable in the Househill Tavern; he was the biggest star in Hollywood at that time! So that was the story of Clark Gable in Nitshill.”

*Eddie Foy, Paisley*



Respondents have told us that the rag & bone man was a familiar sight in Nitshill when they were young.



Source: Martin Brady: “This photo was taken in the Railway Inn pub across from Nitshill railway station. It was my brother Daniel and some friends, date approx. 1965.”

## “Transport”

Lillian remembers that buses had an open platform at the back, and often she and her friends were late going back to school, so they would run behind the bus trying to jump on! They loved getting the bus home but could not afford to pay the fare every day. The family lived too close to the school to be considered for free bus passes.

*Lillian Gaughan, Glasgow*

“Before there was Craigbank, Priesthill, South Nitshill or Arden, three buses ran through Nitshill. The green bus, McGill’s), ran from Nitshill to Paisley; the red bus, SMT, ran from Glasgow, through Shawlands, Thornliebank, Nitshill, Barrhead, final destination Neilston; Glasgow Corporation’s No.14 bus terminated on Cleeves Road. From there it ran on through Nitshill, Hurllet, Crookston, Pollokshaws, Shawlands and Glasgow. Once all the new housing was finished, the No.14, and its route, was discontinued. It became No.48, starting at Cleeves Road, down Peat Road,

Househillwood, into Glasgow... I used to catch the Nitshill train to St. Enoch's when I started working in Glasgow, and also after leaving the Glasgow dancehalls. Sometimes we'd miss the last train and/or bus. When that happened, we'd walk to Pollokshaws Toll, where there was a taxi rank. We'd pool what money we had left and get taxi to Nitshill."

*Marie Hackett (Ashworth), New Jersey, U.S.A.*

Regarding transport, John said that his grandparents lived near the bus terminus at Priesthill and his grandfather was well known to all the drivers because he would alter their trousers to give them the 'Teddy boy/drainpipe' look. The drivers would drop off their trousers on the way to the terminus and collect them when they passed on their return journey.

"The No.26 driver would stop across from my grandfather's house, the driver would alight the bus, as you did, you alighted a bus; he'd go up to my grandad's house and hand him a pair of trousers and say "Can you do them for me Pat?" Now, by the time they went up to the terminus, my grandad would've given them a time, and when they came back down the road, my grandad had taken in or repaired or Teddy-boy'd his trousers. So, every driver in Pollok were wanting to get that bus so that man would do their trousers and it didn't mess with their shift. So, I think they were on time. They were essential!"

*John Paul McBride, Glasgow*

Both Sylvia and John agreed that the No.57 bus service is one of the worst things about the area now.

"They've changed it all and you can stand around for nearly an hour waiting on it to arrive. Transport for locals beyond Silverburn is terrible."

*Sylvia & John Williamson, Glasgow*

## "Healthcare"

"When I was a wee girl my Dad actually got T.B., in the 1950s, when we lived at Ibrox, and he was hospitalised for it, and he was treated successfully. But there was a national campaign that you would be screened for T.B., but before all that happened, our whole family got screened for it, because my Dad had it and because we were all cooped up in that one room."

*Janette Aitken, East Renfrewshire*

“Years ago, Dr Corbett used to come down from Barrhead every day, and Mrs Frew, who lived in Nitshill, if somebody had come to her and asked for the doctor, she used to put a tin up on her window and if the doctor passed in a horse and cart, he knew if he saw the tin that he had a house call, and he went in and got the address.”

*Catherine Carlton (Rena), Glasgow*

Elizabeth remembers there being a GP, Dr Gerber, and a couple of dentists in Nitshill Road. However, she attended a dentist in Shawlands as the dentists in Nitshill didn't have a good reputation... Many children were born at home and Elizabeth was born at home in the Gorbals, but the Southern General Hospital was the most local hospital for maternity care. It was also the closest Accident and Emergency provider.

*Elizabeth Cook, Erskine*

“Dr Wattsman was our doctor and he, up in Glenlora Drive up going on to Prestwick Street, up that way, there was the back of Newfield Square, there was two roads, one road going that way, one road coming this way, with a tree-lined border going down the middle, and that's where he had his surgery and that's where he had his house. When he started practicing, he wasn't married or anything, so he had his practice in the house, I'm talking sixty-eight years ago... When he did get married, he moved up to Newton Mearns way, but where the dentist is now, he built a building and that was his practice.”

*Sandra Dunbar, Melbourne, Australia*

John talked about local doctors. He was delivered by Dr Kivlichan, who was the wife of a local doctor, Dr Boyle. Dr Boyle lost several fingers during the Burma War. Dr Boyle diagnosed that John had problems with headaches and this should be explored. In later years this was diagnosed as M.E.

*John Paul McBride, Glasgow*

Colin played football all of the time but there were no real sports facilities at Craighbank. He used to ride his bike to school and on one occasion, he lost control on black ice and fractured his skull and had to be hospitalised in the Victoria Infirmary. He and his dad travelled home from the hospital on the bus, as his dad did not have a car and people were looking at him. He did not realise that his face was very badly skinned by the fall.

*Colin McEwan, Glasgow*

The nearest hospitals would have been the Southern General Hospital or the Victoria Infirmary. When Coreen's brother was diagnosed as a diabetic at the age of 12, he was taken into Yorkhill Hospital. Her mother had to stay with him, and her dad got the other two kids to school. It was a lot of travelling, staying to late evening. This upset her mother because,

not only was she looking after her son in hospital for three and a half weeks, but her other two children were missing her and thought she had left them. When her son was released, Coreen's mum and dad had to learn how to give injections. They had to buy the needles from Nitshill Chemist, they were not free.

*Coreen McKechnie, Glasgow*

“Dr Corbet, I remember my mother crying “he charged me half a crown”, that was for him to see me. When the N.H.S. came in, it was a Dr MacGregor. It was up at the top of Crookston Road and that's where we went to the doctors when the N.H.S. came in; before that you had to pay money to see a doctor.”

*Alistair Mutrie, Glasgow*

Letty was taken back to her GP in Kinning Park for a short time after moving. Then it was Dr Gerber on Nitshill Road, until a surgery was opened in South Nitshill. Her dentist was Mr Whitby on Barrhead Road: “If you had an extraction you didn't get the bus back but walked to get the fresh air at your face!” The nearest hospital was the Southern General in Govan or the Victoria at Battlefield. Maternity care was at the Southern General and Letty does not remember any home births at that time.

*Letty Smith, Glasgow*

“Our doctor was Dr Todd, who had a practice on Paisley Road West. Our dentist was near the roundabout. I remember my Mum taking me to get my tooth removed and my Dad took my sister to get a tooth removed. It was the only time my Dad ever allowed us to spit! He said, “It's okay, you can spit this time.” My sister and I were feeling very sorry for ourselves and were tucked up on the bed-settee in the living room, watching our black and white TV.”

*Elizabeth Walker, Sydney, Australia*

## **“Employment Opportunities”**

Janette's mother told her, on the last day of school, to go into Glasgow and find a job, and not come home until she had one. After trying lots of different shops, Janette went into Woolworth's store on Argyle Street, and told a girl at one of the counters that she was there for a job. She was directed upstairs to the office and was wandering around looking for the right office. A woman appeared and asked what she was doing there, and was told she was there looking for a job. When Janette was told there was not one available, she burst into

tears. She explained about not being able to go home until she had work, and the woman said she would give her a job. Janette started work on the stationery counter and was paid £10 per week, which was quite a good wage. However, she was threatened into stealing from the store by her supervisor. This person had been doing this for some time. Letty's mother told her she would need to get another job, and she went to work for an engineering company in Hillington Industrial Estate. That job did not work out and she then went to work in the National Savings Bank at Cowglen, which was a big employer in the area. It was easy to get work then, and girls mainly went into offices. The boys found it easy to get work too, and Letty's brother went to work for Rolls Royce in Hillington. This was also a big employer, and work was obtained through knowing someone who already worked for a company.

*Janette Armour, East Renfrewshire*

"I had decided "I'm leaving", and my mother was saying "No, bad idea", but I left and me and a pal of mine got jobs as van boys, because he said "If you got the right van, the driver will teach you how to drive." Three weeks I lasted, getting up at five o'clock was a joke... Went up to Hillington Estate to their wee employment office, told them what the situation was and they put me into a place called 'Precision Springs', which was the first engineering shop I'd been in... Before I was 16, I left, and went back to night school in the September – three nights a week at Govan High and one day a week at Stow College, and then I started my apprenticeship."

Joe said that he finished his apprenticeship and went to work for McLelland's Engineering. After a year, he went to Rolls Royce as a 'centre lathe turner', learning different aspects of the trade. He worked for Rolls Royce for over forty years, until he retired.

*Joe Cassells, Glasgow*



"You could walk out of a job on a Friday and get another job on the Monday." Elizabeth remembers it being easy for most people to get work then and there did not seem to be any shortage of apprenticeships, such as there is now. The National Savings Bank at Cowglen employed many people in the area, as it was local and easy for commuting. A lot of people from Craigbank went to work there when they left school. Others went to work in the shops at the Pollok Centre, or went into Glasgow city centre to work. Some of the boys went to work in the Rolls Royce factory in East Kilbride, but that wasn't easy to get to from Nitshill.

*Elizabeth Cook, Erskine*

Sandra knew that she wanted to be a hairdresser when she was at school. Her parents wanted her to stay on at school, and her history teacher also wanted her to remain at school. She started work at a hairdressing salon in Shawlands and her Dad said that she should ask to be 'indentured'; when the respondent raised this with her employer, they said it was not possible for them to do this with all the employees and they had to let her go. From there she worked in Giffnock, until this salon closed down, and she later returned to another salon in Shawlands called 'Embassy Royale', and then she moved to a salon in Maryhill. She worked at hairdressing in salons until she had her daughter and then carried on doing some hairdressing at home. A neighbour told her that Donnie's hairdresser in Nitshill badly needed help and she stepped in, leading to a Friday and Saturday placement there. When she divorced her husband, she went back to live with her parents in Cleeves Road and she started working as a school cook, later school kitchen supervisor, in Sandwood Primary School, near Hillington. Kitchen staff were moved around to cover absences, etc. Working from both Lourdes Secondary School and Sandwood School involved cooking for neighbouring schools. Everything was cooked from scratch; the vegetables were prepared and cooked; the meat was minced and cooked; and the desserts were all freshly made every day and distributed to the other schools.

*Sandra Dunbar, Melbourne, Australia*

When asked about local employers, Eddie remembered Muir's Scrapyard, Murray Pipework's, the Quarry, Nitshill Brickworks and Caterfrost.

*Eddie Foy, Paisley*

When Lillian left school, it was very easy to get a job, which is why she thinks a lot of people did not stay on at school. She did not know what she wanted to do on leaving school, and went to work as an accounts clerkess with a company called 'Cameron's Communications'. She earned £25 per week when she started work, which was quite a good wage. Everyone from school managed to get work and there were apprenticeships to be had for the boys. The main employers were Govan Shipbuilders and Lillian's dad worked there. People either loved or hated working in the shipyards. Most of the girls went to work in offices or hospitals as there were a few in the area. It was easy to move from job to job.

*Lillian Gaughan, Glasgow*

"I started as a hairdresser and then left when I was 17. I worked in a nursing home for a bit, and then I went to college to study social care, one of the best choices I ever made in my life! And that got me into social care, which brought me back into this area to work, because then I started working with young people in this area on the streets, which was a massive eye opener. At the start, it was a research-based post, it was about finding out what was in the area, finding out what young people could access in the area, what sort of things they would've liked in the area. It was just going

out and talking to young people in their crowds, out in the streets, going up with a wee questionnaire and just talking away to them. It was the best job I ever had, I loved it.”

*Kathleen Larkins, Glasgow*

“After school I worked in Henderson’s, the jeweller in the Pollok Centre. I worked there for a good few years, then I took my diabetes and I was very, very ill, so I was off for a good while. Then I went back to work and started with British Telecom, BT, went through quite a few different departments through my time in there. I think I had done sixteen or seventeen years going through departments. I became a Team Leader and then my health went back downhill again.”

*Fiona McCrae, Glasgow*

“I got a job as a YT [Youth Trainee] in Bath Street, and then with a local dentist, Mr Whitby. And then he retired, and Mr Milton took over and, so I took a job with him, so that was kind of local and it was a wee bit of a promotion as well, because I wasn’t a trainee anymore.”

From there, Coreen moved to a practice in Paisley and became interested in oral health, and that was how she came to work in health and hygiene.

*Coreen McKechnie, Glasgow*

“There was a brickworks on Househillmuir Road, where my two brothers worked. I worked in Hillington Estate, Littlewoods Pools. My brother-in-law worked for Rolls Royce.”

To get work, a lot of people from Nitshill went to the industrial estates at Hillington, the coupon company ‘Littlewoods Pools’, or the raw plug factory at Thornliebank. Cohen’s factory in Shawlands. which sewed clothes for shops like Marks and Spencer, was a main one for the girls. It was regarded as a sweat shop. The National Savings Bank at Cowglen was another main employer in the area. This very large office is now gone, and new housing is being built on the site.

*Theresa Mulheron, Jersey, Channel Islands*

Karen got a job in a cardboard box factory in Kinning Park. She wanted to have money. Her mum had gotten her a part time job as a teenager, selling goods round doors. She found this embarrassing because of some of the things they sold. They had to knock on doors and ask if people wanted the goods. Her mum always had part-time jobs, although she was also claiming benefits as she was a single parent. A neighbour reported this to the authorities and her mum had to repay all of the benefits. This was very hard for a single parent. Her mum always made sure that Karen had a good birthday and Christmas, and she bought things from catalogues on mail order. This meant that the payments could be spread out.

Lots of people did this at that time. Karen has done a lot of studying since leaving school and has been able to get good jobs. She is proud of the fact that she obtained an HNC and graduated from college. Karen did not want to be in the same situation as her mum and always scrimping, so she did not go to university as she would not have been able to work at the same time. She regrets not going to university, but she wanted to live and could not do both. She did a medical secretary HNC but found it difficult to get that kind of job with the NHS, so she took a job in the booking centre, taking calls all day. She has also gained an HNC in legal services, and done an office technology course, and she started an accounting course but hated it and left. If she could go back in time, she would have stuck with the legal secretary option. Karen's favourite job was with the Royal Mail, dealing with claims, and she covered for the assistant manager when they were on long term sick leave. That was when she realised that she was a better manager than a worker. She loved the responsibility, extra hours of work, and the extra salary.

*Karen Stewart, Glasgow*

Susan worked in Govan, mainly in part time jobs, moving to better jobs when they came up. Then she worked as a care officer in 'Crookston Home', which was a residential geriatric home, and was there for around 24 years until she retired. She travelled by bus to all of her jobs and had to take two buses to Crookston Home. It was handy as the kids were at school and she could work night shifts. On Sunday morning there were no buses, so they had to walk home after their shift finished. They walked along to the Hurlet, along Nitshill Road, then down Peat Road, although sometimes they were lucky enough to get a lift. When she started working in Crookston Home, Susan worked part-time, day shift, and worked five days, from 8am to 1pm. Her first wage was £9 for the five days. She then managed to get on to night shift and worked Sunday and Monday nights and got an extra 10 shillings, so her wage went up to £9 10s. She thought that this was a good wage for only working two-night shifts. She was working roughly the same number of hours, but only out working two nights. The rest of the week she had at home. After a few years she moved to working three nights and had to work over weekends. This was in the late 1960s, early 1970s.

*Susan Stewart, Glasgow*

"I went into 'Collins' the bookbinders, in the High Street. I worked a week and handed in my notice and then went into 'Grafton's' in Argyle Street. I was in there from November until the following September, and then I left there and went into 'Cohens' because all my pals were in Cohen', and I worked a Saturday and they were all out and about. They were good employers. I was there from just before I was 16 until I was 19 and then I left and went to Canada for three years. Three years I was there, and came back, and went to Germany for about a year and a half. Then we came back, and I worked in Tesco at Pollok and then went back into Cohens again."

*Sylvia Williamson, Glasgow*

“When I left school I went into a heating and ventilation firm where I did my message boy and tea boy for the first year, and then I started my apprenticeship when I was 16, and I left there and went to the shipyards to finish my apprenticeship. I went to ‘Alexander Stephens’ and got transferred to ‘Fairfield’s’ and then, when my time was out and I finished my apprenticeship, I went down to England to work. And then I went to Holland for three months. Came back from there and went to Germany for two years. I came back to Nitshill, worked for a wee metal shop in Nitshill called ‘Southside Windows’ for about a year, then I went to Barrhead ‘J & W MacAulay’ for two years. I then went to ‘Proctor and Schwartz’ in Thornliebank to 1980, then I went offshore to the oil rigs for about two years.”

John had a few other positions and later succumbed to ill health.

*John Williamson, Glasgow*

## “Holidays”



The Love family with the Marshall family on holiday to Rothesay, 1960.

Submitted by Janette Aitken



Above: The Love family at the Rothesay Ferry, 1960 - Janette, Granny Lindsay, Margaret, Iris, Betty, Marion, Janet Love, Billy Marshall.  
Submitted by Janette Aitken

"I think, actually, compared to other families, we were really really okay for holidays. My Granny had a house in Rothesay, in Bute. So despite us not having much money, and we didn't go every year for a fortnight or anything, because she let it out to

earn her some money, we'd have a day here and there and sometimes a week at the most. Looking back, it would've been a cheap holiday but only in terms of accommodation, but I guess the rail and

ferry fare, considering there's five kids and a Mammy and Daddy, that wouldn't have been cheap... We also went to Seamill and Fairley, camping with tents. The tents are great now, but see the tents back then, they'd a separate ground sheet and, oh, it used to annoy me, because all the beasties crawled up the tent... I was eleven and my youngest sister was three; we went on the train to my Grandparents' house in the north of Scotland for a holiday for a few weeks, and it was heaven. I'd been there as a toddler and I'd seen photos of it, but I didn't remember it. My brother, he went every summer and stayed with my Granny and Granda, because he was a poorly child with a bad chest all the time, and he'd been ill loads of times, It was thought the clean air up north would've been good for him, because of the air in industrial Glasgow. I knew my Granny and Granda really well because my Granda worked on the railway; they visited us a few times a year because he would've had free travel. So, we knew our grandparents on both sides really well."

*Janette Aitken, East Renfrewshire*



Above: Mum, Janet Love and her daughters standing outside their grandmum's flat in Port Bannatyne, Rothesay, Isle of Bute, 1961.  
Submitted by Janette Aitken

Carol's family always had their holidays during the Paisley Fair fortnight and not the Glasgow Fair fortnight. They went to a caravan site in Girvan, and because Carol did not have any brothers or sisters, she was allowed to bring her friend Allison. The caravans did not have any toilets in them, so they had to use a communal toilet block, which meant using a torch at night to find their way. Carol remembers that there was one little shop that sold papers and rolls.

*Carol Borland, Glasgow*

Elizabeth remembers being aged about 10 or 11 years old when she first stayed in an hotel. They had stayed in boarding houses previously when on holiday. She describes going to Liverpool in her uncle's Ford Cortina, and there being seven of them in the car. This would have been before cars had seatbelts, and the five adults would have been sitting on the seats with the two children on the floor. They tried one boarding house, but the landlady did not want to dirty sheets for seven people for only one night, so they went elsewhere.

*Elizabeth Cook, Erskine*

"We went away camping in either a tent or a caravan. We went to Lossiemouth, beside Elgin, right up on the coast. We went to the same place every year and sometimes twice a year when I was a young girl. Later, my parents bought a static caravan at Berwick on Tweed, and that's where I spent my teenage holidays."

*Victoria Corstorphine, East Renfrewshire*

Alex said they went to Saltcoats for the day with their Mother and went paddling in the sea. His Mum would bring a kettle and they would boil water for tea on the beach and eat chips. He recalls a coach from Silverburn roundabout that used to take them to the seaside. There were quite a few of his neighbours and their families who went at the same time on the coach to Saltcoats.

*Alex Dodds, Glasgow*

On holidays, "We were very, very lucky because my Gran and Grampa, I suppose they were quite well off, not a lot of money but they did have money, and every May we used to go down to Millport on holiday. And then we would have two weeks away at the Glasgow Fair, because that's when the shipyards had their holidays. We would go away for two weeks then, and quite often we would go away at September weekend as well."

*Sandra Dunbar, Melbourne, Australia*

"We used to buy family tickets and go down to the coast, just bring our sandwiches, lemonade and crisps, and just go down the coast... We went to Perthshire once a year, to a big house that the Government helped to pay for. We paid a bit and the

Government paid the rest. Dennis couldn't come but I went with the kids.... We used to bring the kids down to Blackpool when they were younger, not many times as we couldn't always afford it, but when we did, we got the bus from 'Southern Coaches', I think they were called, down at Peat Road. We never went to Spain; we only went there when they were older."

*Rosaleen McCann, Glasgow*



The Love girls with their grandparents they lovingly called Mam and Dad, because that's what their Mum called them, 1962

All photos submitted by Janette Aitken

The Love girls with 'Mam and Dad' at their home in Rothes



Janette, Iris, Betty & Margaret Love at their Great Aunt's farm in Garmouth, Morayshire 1961



Janet Love with two of her daughters Margaret & Betty 1961. Walking over the station level crossing at Land Street, Rothes Their grandfather was Station Master for many years until his retirement and he was presented with a gold watch for his over 50 years' service to the railway, even travelling to France through the second world war to help troops home from the war. Submitted by Janette Aitken

Fiona's grandfather had a holiday home in Millport, and this is where the family spent their summer holidays.

*Fiona McCrae, Glasgow*

The McEwan family used to go to Saltcoats and Ardrossan on holiday, though they also went to stay with a friend of his uncle in Perth. They travelled by steam train on holiday. Colin used to be a train spotter and would spend the day at the railway sheds, looking at the engines. He would go to Glasgow, Carlisle, and other places.

*Colin McEwan, Glasgow*

"We didn't have holidays; we couldn't afford it. We went on a couple of day trips to Ardrossan, Largs. We picked whelks on the beach and when we got home my dad would boil them. My Dad did take my brothers camping."

*Theresa Mulheron, Jersey, Channel Islands*

When asked about holidays, Elizabeth said that her Mother would sometimes take the children to Saltcoats for the day, and she remembers her Gran taking them to Dublin and travelling on the ferry. She also spent holidays at Port Seaton in St Andrews. Her Aunt would also take them for long walks, and she often took them to Cowan Park in Barrhead. Elizabeth also went for walks to Darnley Dams, where there was a little stream; her mum would make them sandwiches, and they would take juice with them.

“My Da saying to me put your hands under that and catch that water, ‘cos you’ll never taste water like that again, and it was a wee spring, and he had us all drinking the spring water.”

*Elizabeth Murray (Liz), Glasgow*

Susan said that her family went away for days, but they also went a few times to Port Seaton to stay in a holiday hut for a few days. Her Auntie Lilia and her four kids, her Mum and her brothers and sisters, all stayed in this holiday hut. Her Dad's aunt had a house in Pitlochry, and they had holidays there for a week every summer. To travel there, they got a taxi to Central Station and then boarded a steam train to Pitlochry. At that time, the trains had single compartments and as there were so many of them, they always had the compartment to themselves. Her Dad would accompany them to Pitlochry and stay for a day or two, and then he returned to Glasgow for his work. The whole family still visits Pitlochry regularly.

*Susan Rasdale, Kilsyth*



*Susan Rasdale submitted these holiday snaps of her and her friends on holiday in Blackpool as they grew older.*

Left: Davy Stewart & Carol Osborne



Above: Carol Osborne, Jimmy Osborne & Susan Stewart



Left: Carol Osborne & Andree Hendry

## “Favourite Memories”

‘Spending my pocket money at Cafe Deluxe or Betty Doyle’s on a Saturday when visiting my Grandparents on the Peat Road. Happy Times. It was in the 1970s- 1980s. I’d buy a comic from Betty Doyle’s and 1/4 of sugared almonds or midget gems or a toy from the café.’

*Angie Magoo McGuire*

‘I remember the Doyle’s very well, John, Betty, and Henry who was a schoolteacher up in Castlemilk. I think the school was Glenwood. They used to stay in with their parents in a tenement on Nitshill Road near the corner of Cleaves Road; they stayed upstairs from the Co-operative drapers, where the hotel was.’

*Eddie Foy*

‘My Dad had a fruit & veg shop between Remo’s Chip Shop and Donnie’s hairdressers. that was in the 1970s, then he moved the shop to Barrhead. I can’t remember the name of his shop, sorry. My Dad was Patrick (Pat) McGuire. He was from Priesthill/The Auld Scheme and Mum was Sheila Gourlay from the Peat Road.’

*Angie Magoo McGuire*

Whilst discussing their memories of Nitshill’s shops, Rab Donaldson told us: ‘I remember the fruit shop was a laundrette before the fruit shop.’ Colin Smith remembers ‘Esther’s up at the square beside the Levern. Sure, it was a wee Jewish woman that owned it. The bakers was beside Ansari’s (I can’t remember its name), I think it was where Chilli’s is now. I used to get sent up for rolls on a Saturday morning (stayed in Peat Road beside Peat Road Motors) and could smell the bread all the way up. My mum’s pal worked in it and we’d get sent back up for 10p ends (leftover cakes) and come back with full apple and rhubarb tarts.’ Drew Murray joined the conversation, saying ‘Victor’s bakery was also where the Turkish barber’s is now.’

*Rab Donaldson, Colin Smith and Drew Murray*

‘My favourite memories are visiting my aunt Margaret and uncle Tom, especially at New Year; we had great parties in Peat Road, Nitshill.’ The parties were very sociable, ‘...it was mostly sixties records and dancing, and aunts and uncles singing - always a great atmosphere.’

*Ann Marie McDermott*

‘Playing football on the red ash park in the Levern school. I stayed opposite it on Nitshill Road, and we got chased by the police quite often. I played with all the local boys, too many

to name. They are all in the four corners of the world now, some have passed on now to play in the big park in the sky.'

*Eddie Foy*

'Going down the woods, rafting from the Kennomeat factory to the bundy. Also, Johnny Walsh's wood yard. We built the rafts from thick sheets of polystyrene out of the Kennomeat factory. The rats in the burn were more scary than the rafting!'

*Callum Murdoch*

'I remember jumping from piles of planks to play tig in Walshes...boardies on the Tarzan and Nitsie swing. Playing on the roundabout at Jimmy Hunter's - the times I banged my head on the ground trying to look under it to see the stick some smart xxxx had put too far under. We had a great childhood.'

*Frank Sloan*

Eddie Foy and Callum Murdoch told us about playing at the 'Ironie', a pipe bridge across the River Levern. Colin Smith told us that he remembered: 'Playing fitba and building dens up 'the field' behind Househillwood Road, Glenlora Drive and Newfield Square. As a kid it always seemed massive. Also crossing the 'Ironie' when going to school (Crookie) every day. Crossed it in all weathers, even snow and ice. Fell in once when the burn was quite high, came out in pain to discover a rat biting into my leg. Feart of them ever since...The remains [of the Ironie] are still there. It was a water pipe running from the factory across the burn, two girders either side joined by a few metal straps.'

*Eddie Foy and Callum Murdoch*

'Going to the wee play park next to the Cavendish or the Levern Hotel to play with my cousins whilst their mum Jean Mackay went to play the arcade bingo with Grace Coyle. We just loved that park. There was a wee newsagent in the square that we got sweets from. My granny lived in Marvel Street and you took your life in your hands when driving up or down the road as all the dogs would chase the car tyres...Going to the bakery on the corner of Peat Road, asking for any brookies and handing over 2p. I lived in England and spent all my holidays there as my dad and all his family are from there. A lot of them still live there. Ahhh memories.'

*Kathy Coyle Roy*

'We stayed in Pinmore Street when I was younger and I used to love it when it snowed and everyone from all the closes used to come out to build snowmen and igloos, and have snowball fights. Isobel Ross and her sister Tina used to help us kids. Then we all moved to Nitshill Road.'

*Jane Mcbride*

'Favourite memory of Nitshill? Playing in the wood at back of Pinmore St. and rope swings over the burn. I lived in Pinmore till I was 17, great times, great neighbours.'

*Drew Murray*

'I remember the wee newsagent was called 'Beatrice's', and playing in the bricky and going to the orchard in the Nitshill woods in the summer, going up the dams. Telling all my mates about the Nitshill mining disaster before the monument was put up. I had seen it on a TV programme where they made a reconstruction of the disaster and nobody believed me, then a couple of months later they put the monument up. I was about 18 or 19 when I watched the Tv programme. It was on a show called 'Windmill', in 1985, hosted by Chris Serle. I have tried looking for it but no luck.'

*Rab Donaldson*

'Aye, I can remember all of us goin up the dams,,,sometimes in our numbers, it was brilliant'

*Rab Scott*

'And guarding yer boniwid. Wood you collect for your bonfire. That was a round the clock job!'

*Frank Sloan*

'Visiting my auntie Mary Anne and cousin Emily in the Co building in Dove Street, then my auntie Emily and uncle Eddie and cousins Emily and Barbara in Seamill Street most Sundays. Loved those days.'

*May Gleed*

'When I was at Levern Primary, there was an empty house at the bottom corner of Pinmore Street on the Nitshill Road that we had been told was haunted. Me and James Dawson and a few others sneaked over at playtime and peeked through the letter box, only to see a coffin and what looked like a wedding dress draped over it covered in blood! So we told our teacher and the police were called in. Turned out to be an old sideboard with an old lace curtain covered in red paint!'

*Rab Donaldson*

'Going to Jimmy Hunter's van and the old yin's wanting tick, telling you to go before them saying they want to speak to Jimmy about something.'

*Stevie Docherty*

'Catching bees over the bricky, playing "soldiers" over the bricky and then when the school was built there I can remember games of football of upto 15 a side on the red ash pitch.'

Loved all the street games in house hill muir road (top end) Kirby, hide n seek. it would have been around 1976 onwards. I was eight. We had a great community spirit. Great memories.'

*Rab Scott*

'One summer, during the school holidays, I was up there on my bike and bumped into a couple of lads playing in the street. I hadn't known them before but they were friendly enough and we started playing every day of that summer. After school went back, I never saw them again, but I never forgot the family name. It's weird how things like that stick in your mind.'

*Tony McGuire*

'Going to the Railway Inn for a carryoot... Plenty o' pubs then. Great memories in Nitshill, yes, the Volunteer Arms, the Lavern Water Hotel, the Cavendish Bar, the Royal Oak, the Househill Tavern... great memories in all of these pubs. Taking the fifth on some stories!'

*David Brown*

'I went to Lavern Primary and, in the winter, we would make slides from the grass inside the railings down onto the gravel. I remember using my school bag to sit on and ripped it to bits! My Dad, John McDowell must have frequented every pub in Nitshill but his favourite was the Royal Oak. He would get dressed on a Saturday morning (suit and tie) and come home at 2pm when it shut, pie-eyed. My Mum and I would watch for him coming down Peat Road and we would cross the road for the bus up the town! Happy days.

*Christine Mcneill*

## Final Words

'There is so much more I can recall, but it would require a lot of ink and paper, but suffice it to say, I set out to note changes in the district, and there have been many. We liked the old village life, but we did not see ahead the amenities we would have laid on at this time. We have new people around now of various moods and various types, but people matter, and considering all things, 'Yes' must be the answer to 'Is Today better than Yesterday?'. What the new folks will never hear is the noise of the pit wheels whirling, the clippity-clop of the horses, the lowing of the cattle in the meadow and the pleasantest sound of all – the laughter of the children on the village greens, unworried about safety rules, because the fast traffic had still to come.'

– JB Hunter

**Project Website:**  
**[www.nitshillmemories.uk](http://www.nitshillmemories.uk)**

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Staff at The Wedge, Pollok  
Pollok Post  
Pollok Museum, Civic Realm  
Open Museum  
Susan Rasdale  
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Robert McGlone  
Elaine Duerden  
Robert McGuire

## Respondents

Janette Aitken	Marie Hackett (U.S.A.)	Elizabeth Murray
Janette Armour	Kathleen Larkins	Alistair Mutrie
Margaret Arnott	Catherine Logue	Isabella Pert
Jean Barnes	Anne Martin	Susan Rasdale
Carol Borland	Marjorie Taylor	Caroline Reid
Martin Brady	Anne Orr	Letty Smith
Margaret Cameron	John Paul McBride	Margaret Steele
Catherine Carlton	Fiona McCrae	Neil Stewart
Joe Cassells	Colin McEwan	Carol Stewart
Catherine Cassidy	Coreen McKechnie	Karen Stewart
Elizabeth Cook	Rosaleen McCann	Susan Stewart
Victoria Corstorphine	Michael McKernan	Ann Sword
Alex Dodds	Theresa McLaughlin	Elizabeth Walker (Australia)
Sandra Dunbar (Australia)	(Jersey)	Albert Wallace
Eddie Foy	Mary McNeil	Sylvia Williamson
Lillian Gaughan	Theresa Mulheron	John Williamson

And all the Friends of 'Nitshill Memories' Facebook page who shared their memories and photographs

# **‘Nitshill Memories’**

## **An oral history of a former mining village**

Sincere thanks to everyone who supported and participated in this wonderful project and its activities!

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