

CURRIE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
(Founded June 1970)



Currie Toll 2007

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CDLHS GOLDEN JUBILEE

It is hard to believe that in three month's time on 16th June 2020 Currie & District Local History Society will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee.

The President Muriel Adam and the committee are arranging a celebratory event to be held in the Gibson-Craig Memorial Halls on Saturday 20th June 2020. Arrangements have not been finalised, as yet, but the accommodation has been booked with Currie Kirk to use the facilities at the halls on that day.

At the moment we plan to mount a major photographic exhibition covering all aspects of the local history of the area. We are also hoping to arrange two musical items during the afternoon. At the beginning we also hope to have speeches from Local dignitaries, etc.

As we are still at the early stages of planning the day we will include full details of the programme and times when each member receives their official invitation to the celebrations on the 20th June nearer the day. Our Honorary President, Hamish Coghill has agreed to act as Master of Ceremonies on our "Big Day".

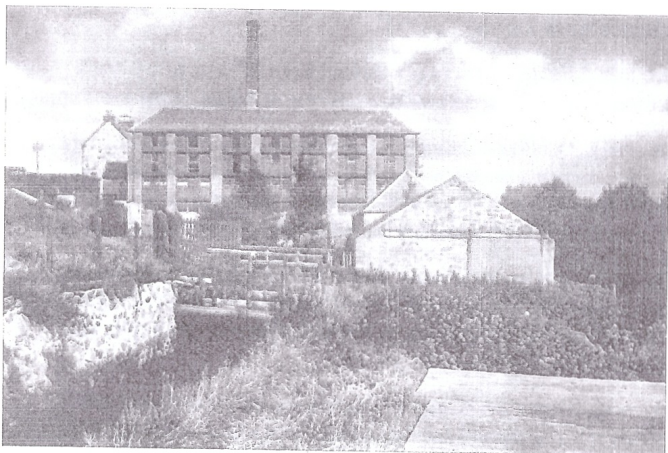
As the main content of this Chronicle Douglas Lowe, our Secretary, has taken time to research the history of Balerno Mill, in Currie. The contents of his excellent article reveals the reason for putting "pen to paper". The draft syllabus for the 2020/21 Session is also included in the Chronicle for your perusal.

Remember and put the date of our "Big Day" in your diary now. All the best till the 20th June!

Ronnie Dickson , Editor.

BALERNO PAPER MILL AT KINAULD

Before the busy Rivermill housing development at Kinauld completely blots out our memory, I thought that we should record what was on this site beforehand.



Most will remember the Kinauld tannery and leatherworks owned by J Hewit and Sons. This company operated on this site from 1913/14 to 2010 .

However, more than a century before, in 1776, John or Robert Douglas owned the mill on the site as there is a record of Robert Douglas insuring

Balerno paper Mill.. In 1788 or 1792, depending upon which book you read, Nisbet & McNiven were owners of the mill and were expanding. Why was it called Balerno Paper Mill? It could be because both it and the nearby Waulk Mill of Ballernoch (Balerno) were anciently within the Barony of Balerno.

The 1793 Old Statistical Account gives a glowing account of the mill. It refers to "The mill of Messrs Nisbet and MacNiven.... Is, perhaps , the most extensive , on one waterfall, of any at present in the island ; and, since it's erection it has increased the population of the parish by 200 souls." The OSA goes on to say that those, in particular who employ the very young and the aged, should meet with every encouragement. The paper trade employs children from 10-12 years of age, a period when they can do nothing very laborious, and when their morals from idleness and neglect , are very apt to be corrupted." " It also employs in some departments , people who are good deal advanced in life" and unable to work outdoors that require much exertion. The annual wages earned are £1000 - £1200 (for the whole workforce), and this is "mostly spent in the parish, and chiefly in purchasing the "very necessities of life". The population of the whole Parish at this time was around 1300.

Hopefully the children employed at the mill received some basic schooling at the Parish school (1699) as well. However child labour was normal and as yet unprotected by the Factories Act 1833 and later Acts.

Ressurrectionists 1821

An interesting event occurred in 1821, widely reported in the Caledonian Mercury and Glasgow Herald newspapers at the time. Basically the story as covered in the press was that a number of bodies had been taken from Lanark churchyard and that two roadmen who had been working on the Lanark Road west of Balerno had been suspicious of an apparently light cartload of peats that passed them, it being hardly enough to warrant a cart. They had followed this to the Ravelrig tollhouse, this was also an alehouse and was situated a mile or so west of the Ravelrig House entrance. They realised that there was a "putrid" smell coming from the cart. Inside whilst

having some beer they heard a disturbing conversation through the thin partition walls, there appeared to be five men involved. The roadmen then hurried on to Currie and alerted the inhabitants of their suspicions. Luckily they advised James Craig the overseer at Balerno Paper Mill who had with him in the mill at that time William Elliot an Excise Officer, who was carrying out his excise duties. Craig and Elliott, who was armed, plus a number of villagers stopped the cart and searched it by force, the resurrectionists put up strong resistance.

As our local poet James Thomson put it in his poem; "On Raising and Selling the Dead" (which he published as a pamphlet costing 6d)

" Near Currie town brave Elliot met them
And ae fit farder wadna let them.
Fast by the reins he seiz'd the horse,
Craig searched the cart an a' by force."

Elliot as an Officer of Excise had authority to stop and search carts looking for contraband, although not usually dead bodies. They overpowered and arrested two of the men and having tied them up they were marched the six miles into Edinburgh by the villagers and handed over to the Sheriff. There was no country police stations at that time, these didn't come into being until the 1840s. The three who escaped were taken into custody soon after "in a house in the suburbs". All were eventually transferred by coach under restraint to Lanark in custody of Sheriff's officers.

The recovered bodies were cleaned and redressed in winding sheets put in coffins and lodged, under guard, in Currie Kirk. On authority from the Sheriff the corpses were returned to Lanark the next day by a party of Currie villagers, who were welcomed and entertained to a meal by Lanark officials.

Excitement over, the mill continued. Messrs Kilgour and Paterson appear on the paper mill lists in 1825 as now operating Balerno paper mill. The **New Statistical Account of 1834-5** mentions "three extensive paper manufactories all at present in the most flourishing condition, circulating a

considerable sum of money amongst the shopkeepers in the villages of Currie and Balerno." The three "extensive paper manufactories" were Balerno mill, Kinleith Mill, both in Currie, and Balerno Bank mill at Balerno.

In the list of paper mills of 1852 **James Durham** now owns Balerno paper mill, as well as another mill (Springfield) at Loanhead. By 1860 on the paper mill lists we now have Jas. Durham & Sons owning Balerno Mill.

There was a creditors meeting in 1862 for James Durham & Sons papermakers at Springfield Mill, Loanhead and Balerno Mill. I also found an advert for the lease of Balerno Paper Mill, with machinery etc. for £700 p.a. Perhaps following the creditors meeting above. However the Durham's were still there after this. The Post Office Directory for 1870 shows J & W Durham, Papermakers, Balerno Mills. It also shows that W Durham was in Balerno Mill House (now Kinauld House).

FIRES.

In August 1875 there was an extensive fire at the mill. Fire engines from Kinleith, and Balerno Bank mills were summoned and a telegraph sent about 1.00 a.m. to Edinburgh requesting assistance. Two "steamers" (fire engines), from Central and Fountainbridge were despatched from the city pulled by teams of four horses each. But by the time they arrived, around 3.00 a.m. the roof of the main part of the building had collapsed. They worked on into the afternoon damping down and saving the two wings of the building and most of the stock. This was important as although the building was covered by insurance the stock wasn't. The loss was estimated at £2000-£3000. The mill had been very busy and was working constantly 24 hours. The junior partner W Durham was in Dundee at the time and senior partner J Durham, who was a city councillor for Broughton, only found out about the fire in his morning paper. Fires appeared to be a regular hazard in mills as only 3 months previously Woodhall Mill in Juniper Green had been completely destroyed in a fire.

Balerno Paper Mill was sold in Dowell's Auction rooms in Edinburgh in 1877 for £8,000.

A partnership of Messrs Good, Scoular and MacKenzie leased the mill under the name of Balerno Paper Mill Company. The owners at this time were shown to be the Commercial Bank. However this appeared to be a bit of a disaster. Following another fire in 1881 we find a court case in 1882 where MacKenzie was sued by Good for slander for asserting that Good had caused the fire by spreading paraffin oil on the paper rollers. Good felt that MacKenzie was trying to blacken his name in any future business ventures. In a second court case in 1883. MacKenzie had apparently collected monies owing to the company from creditors (£1,400) but had failed to pay it over. He was taken to court and ordered to pay it within 14 days, but failed to comply and was jailed in Glasgow. He was later released.

Balerno Mill and Kinauld House were sold on 7th November 1900 for £2,600. The mill was in a ruinous state following the fire in 1881. Included in the sale were stables, caretakers house and cottages on Lanark Road, ten acres of ground. Kinauld House had 3 Public rooms, four bedrooms and servants accommodation.

Paragraphs in *The Home Country of RL Stevenson. Being the valley of the Water of Leith from source to sea* by John Geddie 1898 give an idea of the state of the mill buildings immediately prior to this sale. "More melancholy is the plight of its contemporaries – the once busy distillery and paper mill over against Lennox Tower. Of the former, long silent, only the foundations are left ; the latter threatens to follow. The gangways are rotting, the tanks and the boilers are masses of rust; the pipes are a tangle; the wheels are at rest."

This bears out why the price in 1900 was so low! The once busy distillery became Kinauld Piggery (The Waulk Mill of Ballernoch) and has in recent years been redeveloped.

The next proposal for the mill was by John Darnley and Son as a glue works. There were a lot of objections to this, owing to the potential smell and pollution and ultimately restrictions on what material they could use to make glue were imposed. The mill/factory had all been rebuilt with modern glue manufacturing machinery in 1902/3. After the glue factory it was for a time a label manufacturer, presumably sticky ones!

The previous paper mill owners, the Durhams, had been great supporters of the Balerno Branch railway and had asked for a rail siding to be constructed for their mill in 1874. However it was not until the early years of last century that a siding was constructed, long after Durham's Paper Mill had ceased to exist. .

The next company to enter the site was the aforementioned J Hewit's Tannery and Leatherworks in 1913. Hewit's went from strength to strength. Buying pigskins, calfskins and sheepskins and turning them into fine leathers and achieving worldwide sales; the leather being used in high quality bookbinding, handbags and, so I was told by someone who worked there, for actress Elizabeth Taylor's boots. They achieved the Royal Warrant in 1975 owing to their history of supplying leather for the Royal Library in Windsor Castle The railway siding was used by Hewit's in the early days bringing the deliveries of raw skins , preserved in salt, and coal for the furnaces. However times change, the Balerno Branch line was closed finally in 1967 but before that road transport was being used. James Hewit and Sons Ltd , Leather Manufacturers, closed the Currie Tannery in 2010 and relocated to Livingston.

Kinauld House is still with us. It was the managers house for Balerno Mill and was included in the sale in 1900 as Kinauld House but, presumably, moved into private hands shortly after this. In the 1930s it appears to have been a convalescent home and now it is a private residence surrounded by the Rivermill development.

Douglas Lowe

CURRIE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

SYLLABUS 2020-2021

5 th October 2020	Mary Queen of Scots (Part Two)	Bruce Jamieson
19 th October 2020	The Royal Mile – St Giles to the Netherbow	Eric Melvin
2 nd November 2020	The Battle of Dunbar Campaign of 1650	Arran Johnston
16 th November 2020	Scotland's Radical Rising 1820 – the last armed uprising on British Soil	Val Wilson CDLHS
30 th Nov. 2020	“Wale o’ Ilka Toun”	Hamish Coghil CDLHS
14 th December 2020	Christmas Quiz or short local talk plus wine, cheese etc	CDLHS
11 th January 2021	Short local talks (Prof. John Sharp on history of his house) , plus others	CDLHS
25 th January 2021	Women , Work and the First World War	Ruth Boreham
8 th February 2021	History of Edinburgh's Hospitals	Eddie Shaw CDLHS
22 nd February 2021	General Thomas Scott- the Soldier Laird	Douglas Lowe CDLHS
8 th March 2021	The “Y” Service at Cockburn Farm	Malcolm Fergusson CDLHS
22 nd March 2021	AGM plus Food Drink/ quiz or short talk.	CDLHS