

# CURRIE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

(founded June 1970)

## CURRIE CHRONICLE (Journal of the Society)

September 2022 No 94



*Currie Toll 1897*

### **Ronnie Dickson 1932 – 2022 – End of an Era**

This was to be the first Currie Chronicle produced after our long-time Editor Ronnie Dickson stepped down from the post. However this has been given greater poignancy with Ronnie's unexpected passing on 28th June this year.

As well as being the long term Editor of our bi-yearly Currie Chronicle, Ronnie had over many years served as Chairman, Secretary, Committee Member, had given many well-researched and entertaining talks, led walks and outings, helped other members with research and their talks, and entertained us at AGMs or Christmas festivities, alongside his wife Ishbel, with his legendary quiz nights. The Society will miss his enthusiastic presence at meetings and get-togethers. Inside you will find an article submitted by one of our long term members Robert Whitton. Robert also provided the above photo of Ronnie and Ishbel at their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.



A copy of our syllabus for 2022-23 is enclosed. I hope that you will find the talks we have organised entertaining and informative. Remember this is your Society. If there are any particular topics you would like to see included as a talk, or a particular speaker, please let me or any of the committee members know and we will try to have these included in a future years syllabus. For clarity, I have included details of the new annual subscription rates on the syllabus.

I hope to see you at our first meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

Douglas Lowe

Secretary

Website – <http://www.curriehistory.org>

## **BONA- FIDE TRAVELLERS – OR NOT ?**

Robert Whitton has unearthed some interesting articles on the subject of the “demon drink” and problems arising locally from the 1903 Licencing Act. This Act introduced the legal position that “Bona-Fide travellers” could purchase alcohol on a Sunday in hotels. Public houses were closed.

### **SUNDAY DRINKING IN CURRIE**

Midlothian . 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1926

Opposition by a Currie Minister to an application for the renewal of a seven days’ licence for the Riccarton Arms Hotel, Currie, was a feature of the annual Licencing Court of the County of Midlothian, held in the county Buildings , Edinburgh , yesterday.

Brigadier-General Gordon Gilmour presided, and the application was made by Robert Wallace Bruce the present occupier of the hotel. The Reverend D.C. Stewart, who opposed, said that he appeared on behalf of the people of Currie and the immediate vicinity against the granting of a Sunday licence. He had been under the impression at one time that , a Bona-fide traveller had been one who went out for another purpose than to secure intoxicating liquor. Since then he realised that he had been under a delusion. Nowadays a man had only to take the bus out to Currie, walk some 20 yards, and transform himself into a bona-fide traveller. In his early days in Currie bona-fide travellers went out to Currie, but never in that time did he see a drunk man or woman. If they took a bus time-table for Sunday they would see that 30 buses arrived in Currie during the time that the Riccarton Arms was open. He wanted to be absolutely fair in his statement. Mr Bruce had had an honourable career in the Navy, but he maintained that the Riccarton Arms Hotel was a nuisance and a scandal on a Sunday. He admitted

that he had never seen a man or woman lying incapable, but he had seen people emerge from the hotel manifestly under the influence of drink. He had heard words that should not be suffered in the ears of innocent children, and the feeling against that conduct in Currie was rising like a mighty wave.

**HALF THE VILLAGE SIGN:** Out of a population of 600, 311 had signed the petition against the granting of the licence.

21<sup>st</sup> April 1927

### **SUNDAY DRINKING AT CURRIE AND BALERNO**

The Rev. D. C. Stewart, Currie, and the Re. D.B. Turner, Balerno, appeared in support of the petition objecting to the continuance of the Sunday licences at the Riccarton Arms , Currie and the Malleny Arms, Balerno. Mr Stewart commented on the vigilance of the of the police in the district, but, he said no amount of efficient devotion could do away with the sinister things incidental to the immigration of undesirables from the city. The petitioners asked that they should be free from the incubus of a weight most grievous to be borne. An argument was submitted a year ago that these licences existed for the convenience of people who were travellers across the hills. The great majority of the people who came never saw the hills. They had no interest in the hills. They came by bus , and they left by bus after a few minutes. He had to ask that if the court did not suppress both of these Sunday licences they should suppress one of them. He submitted that within a distance of one and a half miles there was no need for the duplication of licences. The licence holder of the Riccarton Arms , in making a statement opposing the petition, remarked that the Sunday licence at the Riccarton Arms had been established for a hundred years. An

agent, on behalf of the licence-holder at the Malleny Arms also spoke in opposition to the petition . The Court considered the matter in private. The decision was announced by the Chairman , who said that they had come to the conclusion , that they would continue the licences for another year under police supervision as before. The backdoor of the hotel at Currie would be closed in future. Back doors of other places would be under the recommendation of the Chief Constable.

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### **Riccarton Arms shortly after 1903 “New” School in middle distance**

The concept of “BONA FIDE TRAVELLER” was established in Scotland by the Forbes Mackenzie Act 1853, and was intended to provide liquid refreshment for a Sunday traveller arriving at a hotel, which was ostensibly going to be his home for the remainder of that day and night, or until he continued on his travels to reach such a place or his actual home. There was nothing, after all, to prevent non-travellers

enjoying a drink in their own homes. The fact that the law applied only on a Sunday was more about respecting and protecting the Sabbath which was the fashionable thing to do at that time.

It wasn't a good piece of legislation however, and resulted in hundreds of legal arguments as to the definition of "a traveller", and gave rise to the popularity of shebeens. At the end of the day, the only way an individual was likely to be charged with contravening the legislation was if they were caught in licenced premises on a Sunday fairly and squarely within three miles of their home address.

The "Bona Fide Traveller" had to sign in a book at the hotel they were visiting confirming their home address.

In August 1941 Secretary of State for Scotland Thomas Johnston introduced an addition to the law under war-time Emergency Powers Legislation Regulations where the "bona fide traveller" had to purchase a meal. This was an attempt to curb the abuse of the existing legislation. Mention was made of disorderly conduct, including assaults on police in the execution of their duty. Another consideration was the additional burden on transport services. Reports mentioned that essential war workers had been impeded in getting to their work in the evening owing to the large scale use of buses by Sunday drinkers.

The terms of the Licencing Scotland Act 1962, repealed "BONA FIDE TRAVELLER" conditions.

Your secretary remembers his mother and grandmother talking of groups of men from the village meeting on a Sunday at the Balerno school wall prior to walking over the Pentlands to visit hotels in Penicuik and elsewhere. They met with like-minded folks in the hills

walking the other direction towards Balerno and Currie. Many of these were paper mill workers from these three centres of papermaking so having common ground they often stopped to chat to fellow workers.

The secretary's granny was more scathing on these trips describing them as any excuse to avoid going to the Kirk! Although she said, they were all sober by the time they tramped back and were ready for work the next day!

### **BITS AND PIECES** from the Secretary

I found some pieces in the West Lothian Courier on the early days of our Society .

The first dated 28/8/1970 as follows; **History Society**: for the past two years there has been an evening class on local history at Currie High School. Members of the class have now formed a History Society. Office bearers are president Lyndsay G Langwill , OBE. M.A. : vice president R.C. Tennant: chairman John Tweedie: treasurer A Wight. Anyone interested should contact the secretary Olive Taylor. First venture will be an illustrated talk on Currie by that indefatigable local historian , John Tweedie on September 7<sup>th</sup>.

The WLC duly followed this up on 18<sup>th</sup> September reporting on the first open meeting of Currie History Society held in Curriehill School on 7<sup>th</sup> September. Chairman John Tweedie in a talk illustrated by slides called "Looking at Currie" fascinated his audience. Oldest of the slides shown was 1874. Hon President Lyndsay G Langwill in an interesting and informative talk on his connections with Currie. His grandfather was Rev. James Langwill Minister at Currie from 1859 – 1898.

It is interesting to note that two of the streets north of Currie library are called after John Tweedie and Rev James Langwill.

## CDLHS 2022-23 SYLLABUS

Date	Speaker	Topic
3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2022	Bruce Jamieson	Charles MacLean's War; - The Life and Times of a Coastal Command Airman
17 <sup>th</sup> October	Eric Melvin	The Royal Mile; The Canongate to Holyrood Palace
31 <sup>st</sup> October	Fraser Parkinson	A Walk through Old Leith in Photographs
14 <sup>th</sup> November	Robert Whitton	(1) Currie Railway Station and Goods Yard – Then and Now
		(2) Currie Village Centre Road Alignment. Why?, When?,How?
28 <sup>th</sup> November	Kenneth G Williamson	Balerno Branch – Balerno Junction to Ravelrig Junction
12 <sup>th</sup> December	Ruth Boreham	Christmas During the Two World Wars
9 <sup>th</sup> January 2023	Jackie Sangster	Edinburgh through the Archives of the 1920s
23 <sup>rd</sup> January	Flora Johnston	What you call Free – Historical Fiction and two local 17 <sup>th</sup> Century women
6 <sup>th</sup> February	Hamish Coghill	Edinburgh's 256 –Year-Old New Town.
20 <sup>th</sup> February	Val Wilson	Wester Currie Farm and Riccarton Arms/Inn – a history of the area.
6 <sup>th</sup> March	Douglas Lowe	General Thomas Scott, The Soldier Laird of Malleny
20 <sup>th</sup> March		Annual General Meeting; plus wine, light snacks and entertainment

The meetings are held in the Gibson-Craig Memorial Hall, 156-158 Lanark Road West , Currie. The meetings commence at 7.30 p.m. prompt. A limited amount of parking is available in front and at the rear of the Gibson-Craig Memorial Hall.

Full membership for the 2022-23 session is £35 . Guests admitted at £5.00 per person per meeting, payable at the door



