

CURRIE & DISTRICT LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY
(founded June 1970)

CURRIE CHRONICLE
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Currie Toll 1897

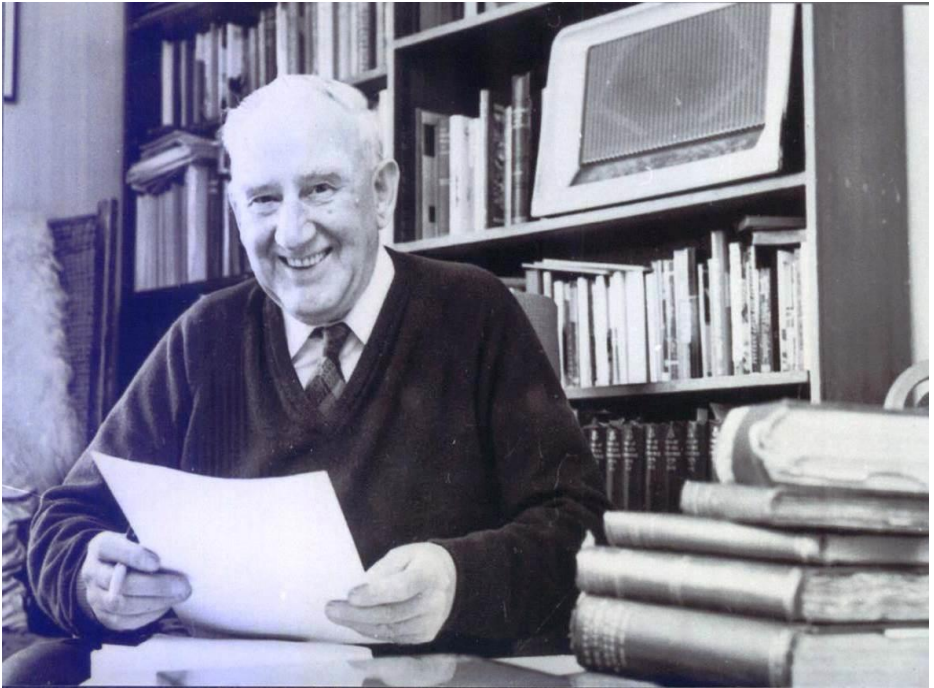
Hello Folks,

This is the second edition after the passing of our long time Currie Chronicle editor, Ronnie Dickson in June 2022 and the passing shortly afterwards of Mrs Ishbel Dickson. Although Ronnie was the editor Ishbel, for many years , played a major part in typing the Chronicle. I have taken on the task of Currie Chronicle editor (temporarily) assisted by my wife Enid as we both worked closely with Ronnie on producing the Chronicle in the last few years.

One of our members , Mrs Liz Beevers, has written an article on John Tweedie, our founding father. This followed research she did in preparation for events at the Pentlands Book Festival and in consultation with John's son Andrew and daughter Caroline.

Douglas Lowe , Secretary .

John Tweedie 1906-1984



Without John Tweedie we would know very little of the history of our local mills, indeed very little of the history of our area. His three main books.... *Our District* (1975), *A Water of Leith Walk* (1974) and *Currie in Old Picture Postcards* (1983) are the starting point for anyone wanting to research Juniper Green, Currie and Balerno.

The Currie and District Local History Society, which has continued his work admirably for over fifty years, was also one of his creations. In 1970 *The West Lothian Courier*

announced: *The first open meeting of Currie History Society was held on Monday evening 7th September, in Curriehill School. Chairman, John Tweedie, in a talk illustrated by slides called "Looking at Currie " fascinated his audience.* The idea for a local history society grew out of Jack Howdle's evening class at Currie High school in which John had taken enthusiastic and knowledgeable part.

John spent long hours in the National Library and the National Archives deciphering old documents and their very difficult language. He wrote out, and his wife typed up, the Langwill papers a very important local source. But he was not just an academic researcher. He had lived his life in the community, worked locally in Kinleith paper mill and listened endlessly to his friends' and neighbours' stories about their lives. His archive, on his death filled an entire room of his and Mollie's home. All, now, has been collected by his family and lodged as the Tweedie archive in the Heriot Watt Library in Riccarton. CDLHS have done a great deal of work to make it accessible to all at

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/is/heritage/museum/local-history-photographs.htm>

John was the eldest of the seven children of George Tweedie, a railway clerk of Currie station, and Rachel Melrose the Station Master's daughter. He was born in the station house. The growing family moved among small local

houses in Currie and Juniper Green suffering the loss of two children. The picture below, also in *Our District*, shows John on the right at the back, as a small shrewd eyed ten-year-old at Currie school



A CLASS IN CURRIE SCHOOL IN 1916

From there he went to George Heriot's , financially supported and encouraged, it is believed, by Dr Stewart the Currie minister. However, at 14 his wage was needed and he left school and entered the mill.

John was never wealthy: never owned his own house. He started in Kinleith mill, the biggest in the area, stayed there apart from brief war service and rose to overseeing the finishing processes and helping to market the famous Kinleith papers.

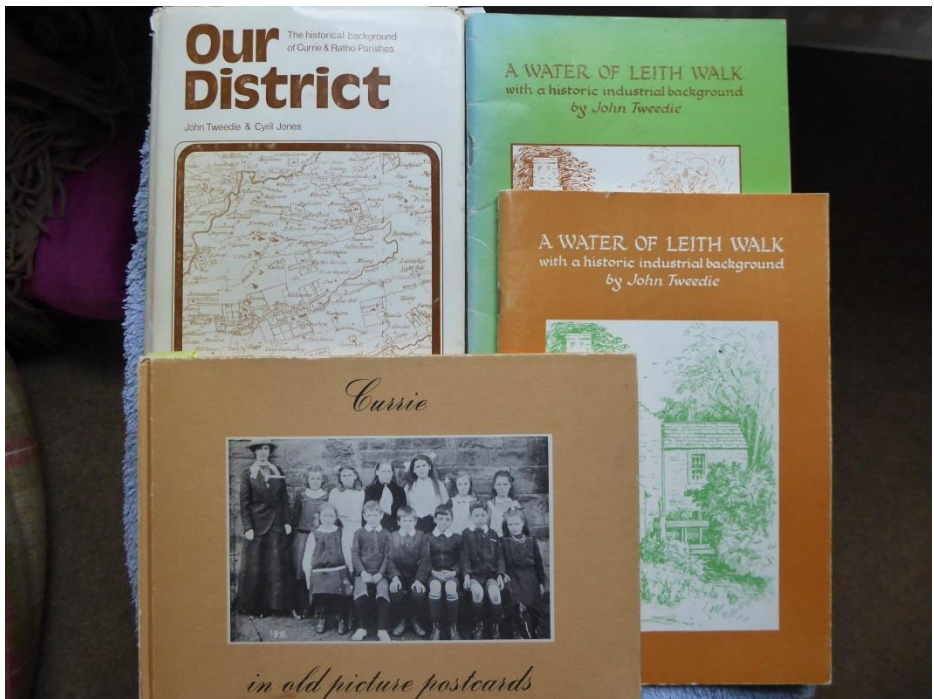
John's place of birth, school, workplace and family home all lie within a few hundred yards of one another. He was absolutely rooted in his community, unlike his uncle William who moved around Britain rising high in the paper industry. Much of John's spare time was dedicated to the kirk, of which he was an elder, or to supporting community activities, painting backcloths for amateur dramatics, designing cards and programme-heads for the village Horticultural Society. He married Mollie (Macpherson), an office worker in the mill, and they brought up their four children frugally and strictly in Blinkbonny (no washing machine, no television and definitely no drink) but well-nourished with Mollie's excellent baking

John came from several generations of local Tweedies, many of them buried in Currie Kirkyard. His forebears were no strangers to hard work on the land, (first in Carnwath, then at Whitelaw farm in Currie), in the local paper mills or on the railways. Historian John was one of seven, his father, George (1888-1943) the same and his grandfather, another John, (1863-1945) was the youngest of ten. Helped by compulsory Scottish education spreading literacy among the population, John's forebears' journey from the mines and the land to rural industry then to clerking and white-collar and managerial work would be mirrored in many of our own families: at least for the male population.

When, at last, John Tweedie retired, his local research work blossomed, his contacts in the paper and publishing world were cultivated and John set out to tell the story of his community and its mills. And we are very much the richer for it.

Thanks to all the Tweedie family, Hamish Coghill and Douglas Lowe for information.

A selection of books by John Tweedie available from CDLHS Library and from local libraries



For the C & B News I did a “Local Personality” article on John Tweedie which appeared in June 1984. Unfortunately John passed away just a few months later on 6th August. The article covered a whole page of the C & B News. Some short points from the article that might interest you are;

John’s pet hate was inaccuracies in writing historical books and articles. He felt that if it was written down people tend to believe it.

I drew John out on what future directions he would like to see local history research taking. He answered saying he would “like more research done on how ordinary people lived whereas much of the history concentrated on battles, nobles and the like”.

On local history in the area John said that he would “like to see a centre developed in some suitable place where the people could have access to local historical records such as photos, maps and documents.”

In closing my article I asked John if he had a favourite spot in the area that encapsulated for him our historical past. Without hesitation he plumped for Currie Toll. “From there one could see the kirk, the Croslet, Currie Brig, the Kirkgate road, the site of the station and the Water of Leith – artery for the many mills in the area.”

John was always helpful to us budding historians in pointing us in the right direction of research. He also helped in my family research. I approached John at a photo exhibition in Currie and asked if he knew my Grandfather Bob Williams and Great Grandfather John, who were born in Juniper Green and had both worked in Kinleith mill. John said that he remembered both, and other family members. He said that there was a picture of my Great Grandfather John in the exhibition - had I seen it? I was pulled through the crowd to an 1883 photo of The Rights of Man Fishing Club. He indicated a chap in the middle of the photo. “That is your Great Grandfather John Williams”. This was the first time I, or any of the family, had seen an image of him. Thank you John.

Douglas Lowe

CURRIE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

SYLLABUS 2023-2024

Date	Topic	Speaker
2 nd October 2023	A Local Talk (provisional Title)	Douglas Lowe
16 th October 2023	The Nelson Monument and Curiosities of Calton Hill	Jackie Sangster
30 th October 2023	Ghostly tales and Sinister Stories of Old Edinburgh	Bruce Jamieson
13 th November 2023	Aspects of Mining in Scotland and the arrival of the twin tub.	James Waugh
27 th November 2023		
11th December 2023		
8 th January 2024	Water of Leith (Provisional title)	Hamish Coghill CDLHS
22 nd January 2024		
5 th February 2024	A Photographic Walk through Old Edinburgh	Fraser Parkinson
19 th February 2024		
4 th March 2024	Are We Nearly There Yet? Scottish Milestones	L. Bruce Keith
18 th March 2024	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING plus wine snacks and entertainment	