

LOCHORE

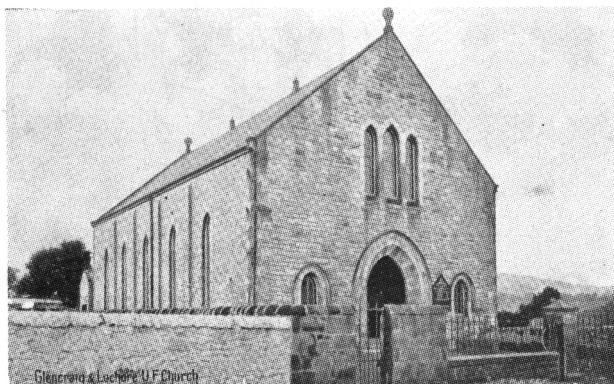


A. Aileen J. Mason

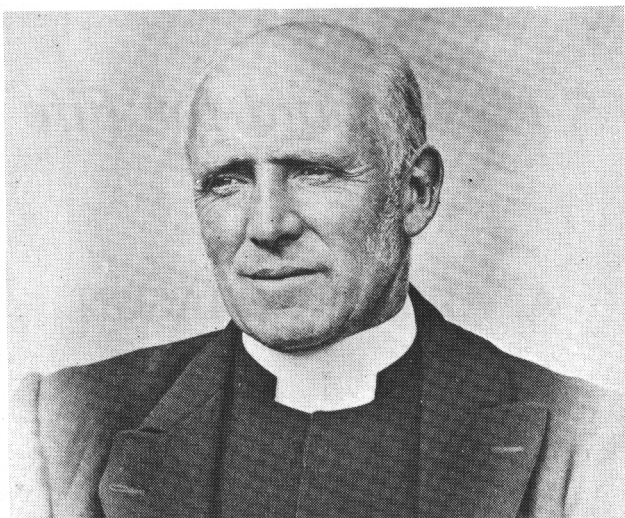
LOCHORE

A Playground for Fife

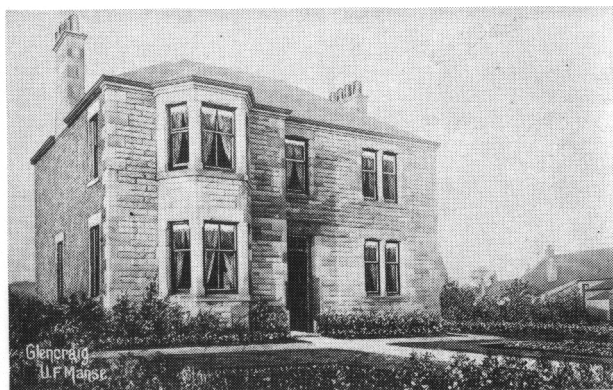
A. AILEEN J. MASON



Lochcraig Church, 1904



*Rev. Charles Mason, the first minister
of Lochcraig Church*



Lochcraig Manse, 1908

THE MOVE

The Roman causeway, long and straight, and sometimes dreary to travel on, was not so on that day, for we were on our way to our new house. My older sister went first, on her bicycle. My father came next, with my little sister, who was perched on the seat fixed on his handle bars. I followed proudly wobbling on my tiny first-sized bike, for cycling, to me was an accomplishment very recently acquired. My mother brought up the rear with frequent halts, for she, who was as brave as a tigress in defending her children when, once, a drunk tramp invaded the lonely manse, was terrified if, while cycling, she had to pass a horse and cart. Truth to tell, she was more than a little apprehensive about this move to the new district. Because of the dangers encountered while sinking the new pits, some of the men were a bit wild in behaviour, and the place had gained a bad reputation in the National Press, being named "The Battlefield". Her friends in the west had said "Don't go! You will have everything stolen." but my father knew better. For many years now, he had first trudged, and then cycled along this very road, to attend to the needs of the miners who had come to work in this new mining area. First there was only the Flockhouse Pit, but when the Glencraig Pit was sunk, houses sprang up round that, followed by the Mary Pit which was soon to become the deepest pit in Scotland. First the congregation used to meet in the little mission halls, or in rooms in the houses, but with much hard work and sacrifice the congregation built first a church, and then a manse. This was the manse we were going to, and in it we spent **16** happy, and very busy years among kindly people. Never once had we anything stolen.

What a surprise we had when we first saw the manse! Some time earlier we had been taken to see the foundations, and here now was a beautiful house in the middle of a field with no road to it - only the ruts made by the carts. There was no garden, and we had left a very well-clothed garden with all kinds of fruit and vegetables, which had been cared for through many generations of careful gardeners. Now we were in a rocky field, and for the first few weeks we used to be told "Go into the other side of the house. We are going to blast the rocks". We were lucky. Only one window was broken. Then came the building of the six-foot-high wall round a large area of the field, with faced stones and railings in front of the house. On this area of field my father planted rows of potatoes with sods laid on top, which he called "lazy-beds". The growing potatoes broke up the soil and made it easier to dig up the following year. Next came the paths which he dug deep, lining them with wood which he had prepared. Large stones went down first, then smaller stones, and on top the blaes from the burnt-out pit bings, of which there were many.

Gradually, with much hard work and planning, a fine garden emerged. The produce not only fed the manse family, but many left the

garden with baskets full of fresh vegetables. The little boys and girls enjoyed a strawberry or two, or raspberries, or even a white turnip, peeled for them, with stalks left as a handle, by the hands of the minister — the early version of the frozen lollipop.

But the manse children were growing up and needed a tennis court. What fun we had preparing this! No other tennis court was like it. The centre courts were grass — the washing green; the outer courts were of red blaes. The net was a herring net on a rope. We had to roll it often and cut the grass and mark it off before we had our game. Many people played on it. On Friday evenings my mother kept open house for any teachers or others who lived in lodgings, and many battles were fought on the tennis courts.

When the new houses were built in Garry Park many of the new gardens began with plants propagated in the manse garden. Until then the Manse Road was a cul-de-sac and many drives or picnics set off from there in horse brakes or wagonettes, for a day at the sea-side at Burntisland, or Kinghorn, or nearer at Loch Leven. Even the lads or lasses of the Catholic trips often had a buttonhole from the manse garden.

EDUCATION

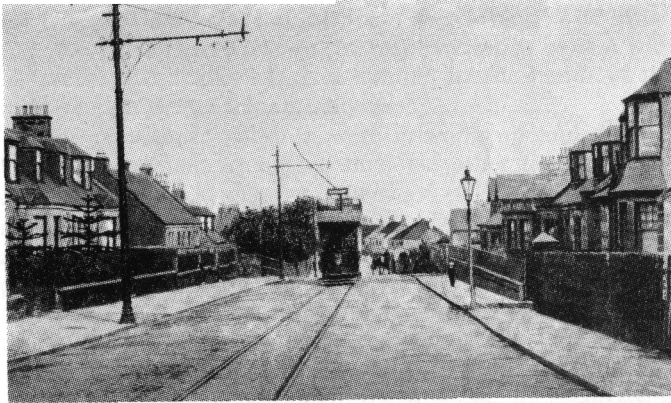
My first vivid memory was of being taken to a new school. The village school I had just left had had three rooms, but in the new buildings, I was first taken along a corridor to a huge hall with a high glass roof. There a kindly headmaster left me with some papers and a pencil to do addition, subtraction and multiplication sums of a standard suitable for an eight-year-old. I suppose I did them, but my attention was taken up with observing my surroundings. The huge hall had many rooms leading off it. The wood of the doors and surrounds was polished and gleaming. At one end was a platform, very well-finished, a large clock, a relief map of Fife enclosed in a case, and large photographs of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. There was also a display cabinet along one end of the hall. This was filled with many interesting and fascinating exhibits. This school had become a beautiful building thanks largely to the interest and co-operation shown by the General Manager of the Coal Company, a man who was of the greatest assistance to the efforts of the Ballingry School Board. In later years, when the Staff dance was about to take place, we children delighted in making roses of coloured “crinkled” paper to help decorate the hall. When it was hung with lace curtains, it really did look beautiful. But meantime, when he returned, I don’t think the headmaster thought highly of my answers to the problems he had set.

This district has had reason to be proud of its schools. The Ballingry School Board was well-known in the country for its keen interest in Education. The students in the colleges were eager to be taken on by this Board for in that area were paid the highest salaries — £80 per year,

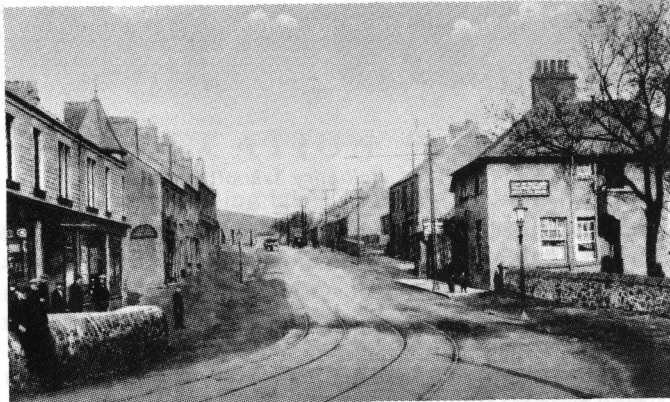


Ballingry School Hall, 1909

when other districts and towns were paying only £60, £65, or £70 per annum. Ballingry and Crosshill Schools were praised, when Fife Education Committee was formed, and it was said that these were the best schools in the country. This district has always shown its interest in education. Some time after the formation of the Fife Education Committee, Junior Secondary Schools were being started and centralised. It was proposed that the pupils from Ballingry should go to Lochgelly School after attaining the age of 12 years. The representative from the area objected to this, and proposed instead that Ballingry be made the Junior Secondary School. The remark was made by an official that the parents really would not care which school was chosen, but this was challenged by Rev. Charles Mason. A meeting was arranged, at a time to suit the officials and some members of the Committee, and it took place in Lochcraig Mission Hall at 5 pm. The hall was full and a very lively discussion took place, many people giving their views in a most forthright manner. The Church bells rang across the way, for a special church soiree was being held at 7 pm., but the protest meeting was still going on. People interested in both meetings kept crossing from one gathering to the other, perhaps to see whichever seemed the more interesting or entertaining, and it was not until 8.30 pm. that the Education officials felt they could safely leave. Never again did they say the people of this district were not interested in the education of their children! The Junior Secondary School was started in Lochgelly - partly



*Station Road,
Lochgelly*



GlenCraig



Lochore

because of the tragic burning down of Crosshill School one stormy night, but as the years passed, it was found that Ballingry needed a Junior Secondary School. In later years the house-building was extended towards Ballingry Village. The new Benarty School was built — one of the first to be built after the Second World War — and before the axe fell with the resulting restrictions on the size of school buildings. Benarty School has three halls — assembly, drill and dining halls — luxuries not now allowed. But to build the school at all, a huge culvert had to be built over the Lochty burn. Why was not more attention paid to the warnings of the older local people? This river in the pre-Christian era was called Nigra Dea — the Black Goddess — and it was greatly feared by the people because of its unpredictable flooding. Very soon after the much-acclaimed opening of this large school, the Black Goddess had her revenge. Very heavy rain caused the streams on Benarty to overflow and with the aid of an old mattress which someone had thrown out and which blocked the culvert, the floods poured right through the main corridors of the school.

NEW SURROUNDINGS

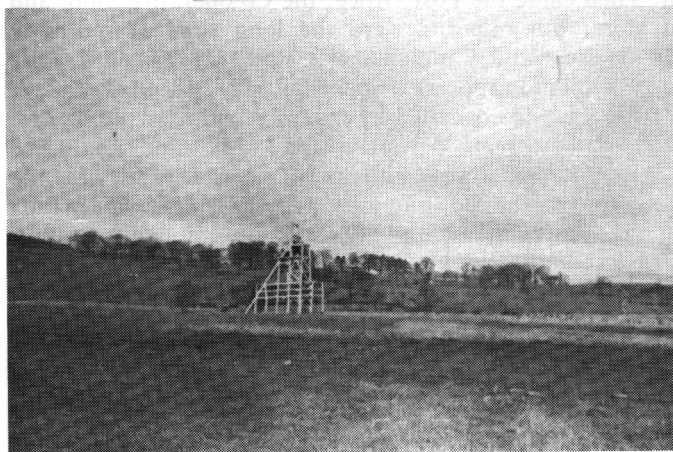
The road to the Ballingry School had many distractions new to **us**. There was more than a mile of new places to explore — the bridge over the River Ore, the shops, the bridge over the mineral railway — these were only a few, and we enjoyed meeting with other scholars on the way. But occasionally, if we were not in time to join the long lines of pupils, the kindly headmaster stood behind the half-closed door and administered a sharp “palmy” with the tawse to late-comers. The pain of the tawse did not last long, but at least we learned not to dawdle on the way to school! But going home from school was different. First we saw the cross-roads, near the Rosewell Bar — a modern public house on the site of the ancient Rose Well. Then came the Post Office, the Co-operative Store and D.C.I. a modern store; but opposite were the long rows of red-brick houses — Loch Leven Row and Candlemaker’s Row, built back-to-back with neither through ventilation, nor even water laid on. Behind that came the more modern houses in streets called by names taken from Sir Walter Scott’s novels — Montrose Street, Waverley Street, Marmion Road, the Monastery, then Tushie Law Cottage, with its lilac bushes and later the new Miners’ Institute with the bowling-green (from which the B.B.C. recently broadcast two programmes) and the big red Gothenburg public house which we learned to pass quickly, especially on Saturday afternoons. Further on was the hillock (near the present school) which once had had on it a very ancient **cross**. From this the place got its name “Crosshill”. In 1511 Sir Henry Wardlaw procured a charter from King James IV erecting “Corshill above Inchgall” into a free burgh of barony with a market cross and a weekly fair. I wonder which “generation of vandals” removed that relic? Was it the destructive enthusiasm of the Reformation, or could it



*Ballingry
Village*



Lochore Castle



*Concrete
Framework for
Winding Gear of
Mary Pit*

have been Cromwell's soldiers who were once stationed at Kirkness Palace? Perhaps the broken pieces will yet be found.

But the place which delayed and delighted us most was the little park in Crosshill, between that immaculate and efficient grocer's shop run by two men called Paton and Turpie and the little old shop called "Norman's" where one seemed to be able to buy everything ranging from papers and paraffin to household goods. Its Aladdin's caves at the back seemed to hold everything. The little park between was let out to men offering many kinds of itinerant entertainment. Perhaps there would be a circus, a tent mission, or Dr Wilfred Bodie with his beautiful kilt and Balmoral bonnet who hypnotised and mesmerised the locals; but on one occasion a menagerie with lions, tigers, monkeys and an elephant stayed there for a few days. We children managed to get in there, and stood mouths agape, as the lion-tamer entered the cage. One old man, who used to go around the houses selling eggs and butter, was also fascinated, but his expression changed when he found the big elephant was helping himself to his butter and eggs. The tent missions also had big attendances. One local lad called John McTurk often took part and used to hold his audience spellbound with his eloquence. Many years afterwards he was a well-known and much-loved Minister in British Columbia.

The way to school never seemed too long to **us** except when we were climbing the steep hill at the end of the journey. The roads were rough — no finished pavements here, except in front of a few of the shops. The middle of the road was covered with rough road-metal. We all wore heavy shoes, well reinforced with steel protectors, and even those were soon worn down. In summer the children ran barefoot to school. Our mother insisted that we wear sandshoes — now called plimsols — but whenever we were out of sight of home, these shoes were off, and we, too, ran barefoot like the others. One must be in the fashion, even if it hurts, but at the end of the day it was difficult to tell an incredulous parent how you had lost one shoe!

TRANSPORT

There was no means of transport in those days except by "shanks's mare". An occasional bicycle was to be seen, and, for funerals and marriages there was "Henderson's Cab". This was especially busy during Miners' Gala holiday. One weekend we had six weddings at our manse! Seven a.m. was a popular time, for that left time to catch the 8 a.m. train in order to have an early start for the honeymoon of one day — in Edinburgh.

An enterprising young man called Crawford bought a wagonette and horse and ran would-be travellers to Lochgelly Station. About 1912 the tramway lines were extended to Lochore and afterwards we travelled in

Lochore House



*Church and
Manse
of Ballingry*



*Lochore
Meadows
Pavilion*

comparative luxury to school. Previously we children had walked the two miles to Lochgelly Station to go to Dunfermline for Secondary education. We were always *so* ashamed of our very dirty shoes, but when we travelled by tram we could be respectable. Boarding the tram at 7.15 a.m., we had plenty of room, but on Mondays our fellow passengers were often two policemen and the collection of “drunk and disorderlies” who had been taken to the Police Station on the Saturday night. They were going to the Court trial in Dunfermline. As the tram filled up first the prisoners had to mount to the open-top-seats and then “**You** bairns upstairs!” was the order. Hail, rain, or snow, up we had to go. We had to freeze there for the next hour, for there we had no shelter of any kind. It never occurred to **us** to object. Now the travellers are whisked along in buses in comfort in a very short time — often grumbling at the infrequent service.

THE GROWING COMMUNITY

Coal had been mined in this district for hundreds of years. First the Romans then an early French community which settled on the lower slopes of Benarty Hill called “Inchgall” — (now the Chapel Farm) — are said to have used the coal, but more recently Flockhouse pit, sunk about 1870, brought into existence a new community who came there for the work. Until then Ballingry Village with its ancient church and, eventually, school had been the centre of the community life for hundreds of years. An ancient well called Gruoch’s Well was there and Gruoch (wife of King Macbeth) lived at Kirkness Palace nearby. With the new community coming into existence at Flockhouse a new school was built with a schoolhouse next to it. For hundreds of years all schooling had taken place in meagre accommodation near Ballingry Church. The heritors intended to build a new school, but could not agree as to where it should be built. With the increase in the number of children the delay angered the parents and they built their own school and schoolhouse at Flockhouse. This caused rivalry and on one occasion the school door was nailed up by the laird — one of the heritors. Sir Malcolm of Lochore — an eccentric baronet who pronounced this oracular couplet in his old age when troubled by talk about the French Revolution:

“Happy the man who belongs to no party

But sits in his ain house, and looks at Benarty”.

This building recently demolished became in time the Church meeting place until the new Church was built at Lochcraig and even then it continued to be used as a Mission-hall, where Sunday evening meetings were held. How things have changed! The last time I passed that hall it seemed to be in use as a betting-shop.

Newer and deeper pits were sunk about the year 1890 — “Glencraig” and later in 1902 the “Mary” so called in honour of Mrs Charles Carlow, who cut the first sod. Rows and rows of brick houses with neither inside

GLENCRAIG PIT



Before Clearance



After Clearance

water supply nor indoor sanitation, were built *so* quickly for the miners. Soon enough money had been gathered to build a Church to serve the two communities of Lochore and Glencraig, and *so* it was called "Lochcraig". This was opened in 1904. The Parish Church also had a hall in Lochcraig.

The minister of the new Church still lived in Portmoak as there was no manse at Lochcraig, but by 1909 enough money had been gathered to build a manse. Both Church and manse when they were built were free of debt, which, for such a small community was no mean achievement.

Soon the village changed in appearance, for huge bings of waste material rose up round the pits. Occasionally when I had to spend time in a sick bed, my only view from pillow level, was of the men pushing the hutches along the rails on top of the bing and emptying the contents over the edge. Some days, in wind and rain, emptying them must have been a hazardous occupation. Later this process was mechanised. The hutches were filled with stones and waste material by the pit-head girls who stood on either side of the moving tables to separate the stones from the coal as it was "shoogled" along. The girls always wore shawls tied round their heads. It must have been a cold draughty job in the open sheds. No wonder their voices seemed *so* loud when they were on their way home for the noise from the rattling stones must have been considerable. They always seemed to be *so* cheery. This was almost the only occupation open to girls in the district unless they left home and went into service in some big house. Some became cooks, housemaids or lady's maids and a few became nannies or nurses. Now the girls are able to enter all kinds of occupations and there are no more "pit-head girls" — indeed, there are no more pits.

Cheery, too, were the men with their black faces and wet, loose jackets with the hanging, bulging pockets holding their tin "piece boxes" and flasks. It was *so* difficult to recognise even those you knew quite well. Only the smiling eyes and gleaming teeth were recognisable. The wives who had been cleaning the houses must have been discouraged, for the next procedure was that the huge wooden tub had to be filled with water — all carried from the one pipe at the end of the row of houses — and when the men had their bath the wet dirty clothes were hung round the fire. Now, with the baths at the pit-head and plenty of hot water, towels and soap provided, the men can go to work clean in buses and return in the same state or go straight to the football match. The wives must know a great difference. Much praise must go to the wives and mothers of long ago who took a pride in sending their men and children out *so* clean and tidy.

Most of the coal was found in pits, except for the Benarty Mine where the men walked into the dark tunnel on a steep slope, wearing their tallow lamps fixed on their bonnets. Here coal was mixed with whinstone called "Jocks" or parrot coal used for the making of gas. The pit shafts were sunk deeper and deeper as new seams of coal were found and at one time the deepest in Scotland was the "Mary". The deeper the pit the hotter it

THE NELLIE PIT AREA



Before Restoration



After Clearance

was to work in. Sometimes there were accidents ending in tragedy. One I remember at the “Mary” when the cage, which was lowered on ropes down the shaft, was overwound and one cage came over the wheels, ripping the engine house walls, while the other cages crashed to the bottom of the shaft. The emergency “kettle” had to be lowered with the first-aid squad and Manager in it. The accident victims had to be carried underground through the undulating, low-roofed passages for about three miles and then brought to the surface at the Aitken pit near Kelty. Some men died on the way. In some pits the miners took a day off when there had been an accident, but the men at the “Mary” pit decided to stay at work and to give their day’s pay to the bereaved relatives of the dead men. Most of the miners were generous and kindly. They knew what trouble was and how unexpectedly it could happen. In those days, after collecting their Davy lamps men had to walk out to the coal face underground, sometimes a long and tiring journey with parts where the roof was low and even the wooden pit props giving way under the strain of the overhead weight. The pick and shovel were the chief tools. The pit ponies pulled the hutches. Their underground stables were well kept and the ponies, too, but only at the Gala holidays did they see daylight. In newer pits conditions improved. In the Comrie, the Wellesley under the sea, and the short lived Rothies pits the roofs were higher. The men could ride in seated buggies until they were near the face. Huge mechanical “arms” gouged out the lower parts of the coal seam to allow the upper parts to fall. This caused a greater output, but was there not also greater danger? All the way down in the cage water was dripping on the men. This water was gathered from the pit and this is how the houses were supplied with water for all our needs. This water was very brown and, as one doctor described it, “it was both meat and drink”. It was impossible to raise a lather with any kind of soap because of the lime in the water which caused a scum on top of the water and when it was boiled a thick fur was deposited inside the kettle. We learned never to drink water which had not been boiled or filtered. We did appreciate the Glenfarg water when it was laid on in our houses in 1920.

EXPLORING THE SURROUNDINGS

There was much exploring to be done in our new area and we went far and wide on our rambles. Our favourite picnic place was Dunmore Hill. Up through the village and Ballingry Road we went past Craigie Malcolm the hillock called after the people who at one time had owned the land and were the principal heritors of Ballingry. We passed the gateway to Lochore House now in a busy built-up area. This house and its surroundings have many historical associations, but the present house was built when Sir Walter Scott’s son married “Bonnie Jeanie Jobson of Lochore”. Sir Walter Scott visited here often and mentioned Ballingry and

Loch Ore in “The Abbot”. He often visited Blair Adam House, where William Adam and his famous architect sons lived, and agreed with Richard Sheridan, the poet, who wrote “How pleasant away from the turmoil of party to sit at this window and look at Benarty”. He would ride along the hill-road to Ballingry Church and Lochore House. Some say Sir Walter Scott designed the policies when his son married. Is it possible the Adam family built the house with its fine fireplaces and beautiful woodwork — now vandalised? Sir Walter planted some of the trees in the drives (including the four cedars from the Holy Land before the house), with those in the long drives and the half-moon park where the primroses grow, as he did at Abbotsford.

Dunmore Hill was our goal beyond the pre-reformation Church of Ballingry, from Bal-an-righ, the King’s Town. This Church was one of the first Churches in Scotland, founded by the Monks of St Serf’s Island in Loch Leven. Earlier still St Ninian had missionary influence among the “Southern Picts” and one of their strongholds was on the Clune Hill near Ballingry, but pagan invaders from the continent drove those early Christians to the west. After Columba settled in Iona in 563 his monks went all over Scotland, some settling in St Serf’s Island, where Andrew Wynton wrote the first history of Scotland; so for 1,500 years the Church has had its influence on the people of this place. Various buildings must have existed here, one of Scotland’s oldest parishes. At one time King Macbeth and his Queen Gruoch must have worshipped here. This King and Queen have been much maligned by Shakespeare in his play “Macbeth”, all because (according to Ian Grimble, the T.V. historian) he wished to please King James VI and I who had an abnormal interest in witches and their brews and also a fear of being murdered. King Macbeth and his wife gave large pieces of land to the Monks of St Serf’s and also took an interest in the churches which were being built near their palace. The last church was remodelled in 1831, but has recently been rebuilt using the original stones.

The church bell is inscribed “Malcolm de Lochore, 1658” with the inscription in Latin “Happy are they whom these Ballingry chimes call to the sacred worship of Christ”. More recently two stained glass windows were installed depicting St Serf and St Andrew, a harvester who gathered grain, and a miner who gathered coal, with insets of local views by Mr Sievwright, one of the ministers of the church. These windows — designed and produced by Douglas Hamilton — were gifted to the Church by Mr David Greig, in memory of his great-uncle, James Greig, who was minister of Ballingry for 43 years from 1807.

Now we continued up the hill road and past the farmhouse, where James V is said to have stayed on his hunting trips from Falkland Palace, to the top of the Dunmore — the dark fort — a hill of volcanic origin. From here there is a magnificent view in all directions — over Loch Leven to the Bishop Hill and to the Howe of Fife, giving a view as far as the East Neuk on a clear day. On one picnic in the Autumn of 1914

we saw great clouds of black smoke rising in the distance. Means of communication were slower in those days *so* it was a few days afterwards that we heard it was the Pathfinder Battleship which had been sunk in the Firth of Forth by the Germans.

Sometimes we went even further to Loch Leven. Near the Sluices which had been cut to take water to the paper mills in Leslie, was a lovely sand-bordered bay with grassy slopes and a little burn running down from the hill behind. Here various rare and beautiful flowers, including sundew and butterwort (insectivorous plants), cuckoo flowers, marigolds, quaking grass; and many others could be found. I wonder if, now that this picnic spot is *so* very popular, any of these flowers are still to be seen. In severe winters Loch Leven used to freeze over and it was possible to skate or slide over to St Serf’s Island or even to Queen Mary’s Island. In January 1896 the frost was *so* severe that some people drove in a carriage and pair from Kinross to Queen Mary’s Island.

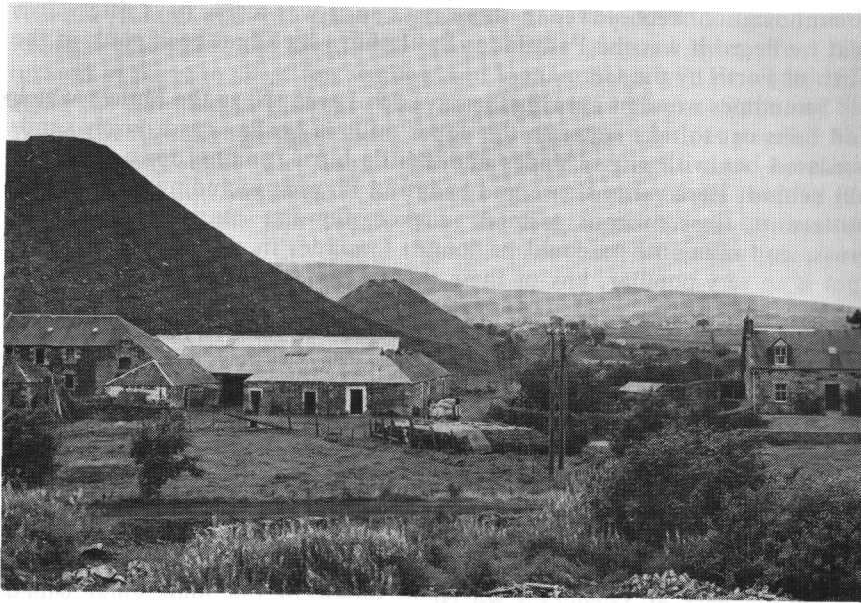
Another of our walks was past the “Mary” pit, up through the Lochore estate, past the Cleikum Inn and along the hill road (most interesting when the wild strawberries were ripe) and on to Paranwell. The bridge is still to be seen over the old high road from Perth to Queensferry which Queen Mary must have used while escaping from Loch Leven Castle.

To the east of Lochcraig we could climb to the high knoll which archaeologists have found to be an ancient burial ground. Harelaw, although it has had some disturbance and has been a camping ground for many generations of gypsies, has still not been fully excavated and investigated.

HAPPY DAYS

Life was hard and even grim in early days, but the people showed a great enthusiasm for enjoyment when it came. The Christmas soirees in the church were full of excited children, their mugs hung on strings round their necks. For weeks beforehand every room in the manse was filled with children learning poems, songs or plays as they wished to take part in the entertainment. No time was wasted on the night, as all were assembled ready in order for the platform. “Before we have Tommy, we will have Jeanie to sing” the announcer would say. But we were all waiting for “Before we have tea, we will all sing — ?” Meantime the tea was being made in the big washing boiler in the dark outhouse. In the early days there was no such luxury as a kitchen. That was built later. On one occasion when the word came “It is tea next” in the excitement of lifting the wooden lid the lady in charge knocked the candle, the only light, into the boiler of tea. By the time another light arrived the melted candle wax was floating on top of the tea. Quickly it was removed, the tea was served and no one complained. We were easily pleased in those days.

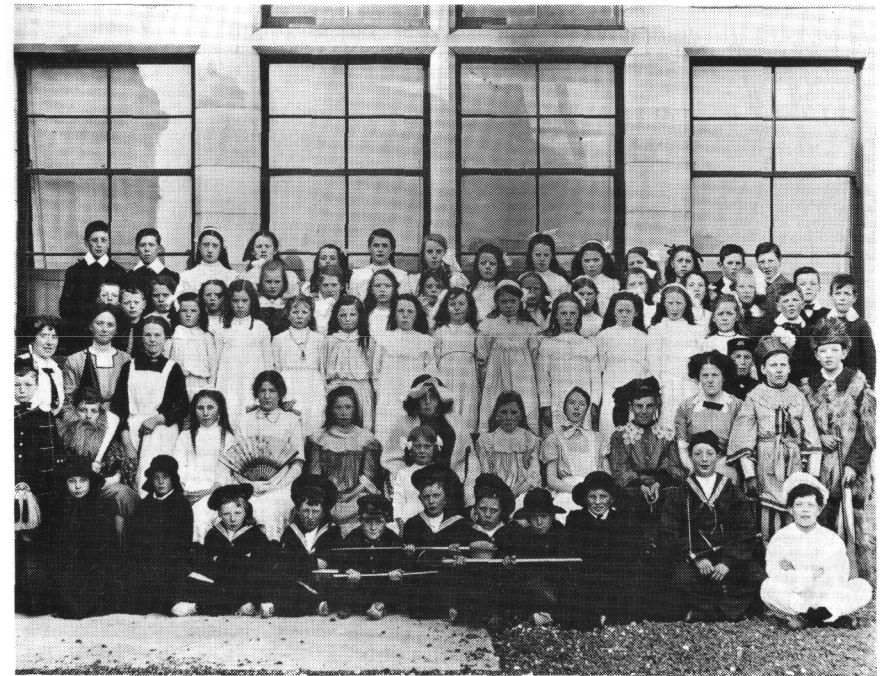
WESTER COLQUHALLY FARM



Before Clearance



After Clearance



Kinderspiel — the old woman in a shoe

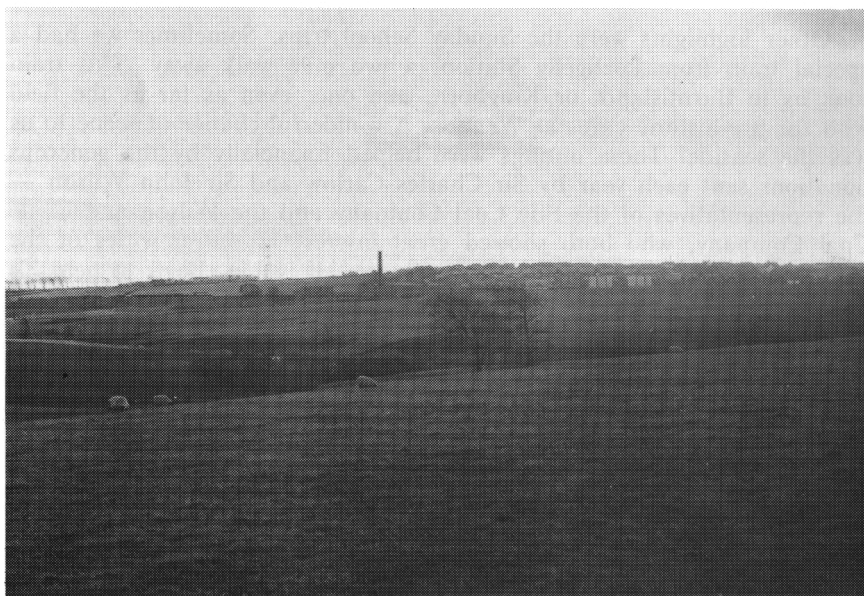
Other highlights were the Sunday School trips. Sometimes we had a special train from Lochgelly Station, a two mile walk away. This train took us to Burntisland, or Kinghorn, and once even as far as the field with the pre-historic caves at Wemyss. A wonderful change of scene to us was the seaside! Those outings were helped financially by the generous donations sent each year by Sir Charles Carlow and Sir John Wilson — the representatives of the Fife Coal Company and the Wilson and Clyde Coal Company, who both showed great interest in the activities of the people. The first minister did not spare himself in his efforts to help his people who chose for his memorial tablet the text “He being dead, yet speaketh”. The Presbytery report says “His real memorial is in the hearts he comforted, in the spirits he cheered, in the houses that were brightened by his presence, and in the lives that through his ministry and influence were won from the power of Satan unto God”.

As in the Welsh mining districts the people enjoyed singing and the choir would tackle anything. We children had our “kinderspiels”, but the senior choirs gave renderings of more serious pieces, I remember one very dramatic rendering of “Esther” and we even produced the “Messiah” with orchestral accompaniment, all the soloists and choirs being from our own area. The churches helped one another in all their special efforts. When the belfry was added to the church the young lads of the community took

AREA OF FITTY RIVER



Before Clearance



After Clearance

great pleasure in ringing in the New Year, an accompaniment to the usual blowing of the pit whistles. Now the whistles have gone does the bell still ring?

But the Miners' Gala in the beginning of June was the highlight of the year. There were great processions led by Pipe Bands, and further down the procession, by Brass Bands. Everyone eventually gathered in the field overlooking the Castle where sports of all kinds must have been held for hundreds of years, and there the real sports took place. These miniature "Olympic Games" roused as much enthusiasm in the competitors and spectators as the real Olympic Games. To see the effort put out by those young boys in the marathon race showed what stuff they were made of. The highlight and the greatest amusement came when the competitors battled with each other in the pillow fight, each perched on a greasy spar, or when they tried to reach the side of bacon hung high on a greasy pole. Now the processions and gatherings are held in Edinburgh, or some other communal place, and the local social patriotism has gone.

THE REAWAKENING

The pits, too, have now gone. Some say they have been worked out, but those who worked there don't think *so*. The deepest seams, flooded during the strike, were never re-opened. First the 1914-18 war took away many of the miners, then a prolonged strike made many of the most enterprising young people try to find work elsewhere. They scattered, going to Canada, U.S.A., South America, Australia, New Zealand, and even to that very foreign country — England. This left the community without many of the people who would otherwise have been the leaders and every organisation suffered — especially the Churches and their organisations for the young. Before the 1914-18 war a very large and enthusiastic Scout Troop kept the boys interested, but the war scattered the leaders and it was disbanded. In 1921 I started a Girl Guide Company with about 20 girls. The numbers soon increased to **80**, and with no money nor even a hall big enough for our activities, we took to the Clune Hill, where we drilled, danced our country dances, played games, and did nature study. What better place could we have had for that! Passing the banks of white blossomed blackthorn bushes, with primroses and wood anemones underneath, we could find, in their season, in the marshy places mayflower or cuckoo flower, lady's mantle, golden marigolds, meadow-sweet, spotted orchis, quaking grass, and, in the woods, both wood and water-avens. On the high ground were cushions of thyme and yellow crowfoot, the sturdy bugloss and dainty milk wort, but best of all were the infinite variety of smiling faces on the heart's ease pansies scattered all over the grass. How many of these flowers can be found now?

When the evenings became too dark we squeezed into the hall and learned our songs in preparation for a concert. This was a great success

SOUTH GLENCRAIG



Before Reclamation



After Reclamation

and with the funds raised we bought a bolt of blue cloth and made our own tunics — no mean task, with all the pockets, shoulder tabs and flaps which those tunics needed. (The new uniforms are much simpler and much more comfortable.) But we were able to put on a good show at the Fife Rally in Dunfermline Glen — as we were the largest company in Fife.

A second and even worse strike, in **1926**, sent a second wave of emigrants abroad and yet the community has survived. Better housing took the place of the old miners' rows, and now it is difficult even to remember where the old places were. Since the pits no longer provide work, the workers commute to different occupations in Dunfermline, Rosyth, Kirkcaldy or Glenrothes, although some find their original occupation in collieries further afield.

Where are the huge bings of slack now? When the motorway from the Forth Bridge to Perth was being laid, many loads of material for the foundations were here available, and the mounds were reduced. But a more interesting and imaginative use was made of this material.

During the **1914-18** war our Friday evenings were often occupied along with all the young people we could collect to help, in gathering huge sacks of sphagnum moss in the marshy ground near the Fitty river. This was required by the Red Cross to be used as dressings, as cotton wool was unobtainable. There was always a plentiful supply, for this area was one huge marsh. Lately the banks of the river have been built up, the top-soil removed, the slack from the bings has filled in the low ground, with the top-soil replaced, and the land is restored to its former use, and the cattle graze happily on the grassy knolls. When those improvements had been completed they were formally opened by the Duke of Edinburgh who arrived in a helicopter which landed just beside the Glencraig Miners' Institute. The Duke had his arm in a sling because of an accident on the polo field the day before, but he still kept his appointment to open the new area.

But this is not the only place where improvements have been made. Around the old Lochore Castle quite different projects have been carried out. This Castle has a long history. In very early days it was an island when Agricola fought against the Picts in **79** A.D. The Picts had fortifications on the south side of the Loch. We children often played in the still visible remains on the Clune Hill. When large groups of people who were the Naturalists from Dunfermline or Kirkcaldy arrived on the hillside we used to mingle with the crowd and listen to the stories told of how our "little houses" were once dwellings of the Picts, and on top of our "Rocky Mountains" was a perfect fort because from there was a good view of the surrounding districts. We even joined the parties in the Church hall and enjoyed the splendid tea which had been laid on for the visitors!

The Romans, according to Tacitus, had settled under Agricola on the North side of the Loch — where now the Chapel Farm is. The three surrounding ditches and rampart of stone were recently still visible. The

battle against the Picts took place on Haran Hill, which we knew as the “Bluebell Wood”.

The history of the Castle in earliest times is not known. This was on an island called Inchgall — “Isle of the Stranger” built in 1160 by Duncan de Lochore and at one time it had a drawbridge to the Castle which must have been a stately castle with walls nine feet thick, arched windows, round arched doorways and a stairway. Later it was owned by Sir Constantine de Lochore who was Sheriff of Fife in 1291 and fought under William Wallace. It passed to an owner called Vallance and then in 1477 to Henry Wardlaw of Torrie. “Robertus Wardlaw” was sculpted above the door of the present buildings inscribed in the fifteenth century, but the Castle is now in ruins. **An** ancient couplet runs: Colquhally and the Silleroun, Pitcairn and Bowhill, should clear their haughs e’re Lammas goates the Ore begin to fill.”

The loch which surrounded the Castle in the early days was drained by Richard Park in 1793 and for many years a crop of hay was grown there, but the undermining, and nature, have brought back the loch, and now there is to be yachting, water ski-ing, fishing and all sorts of sports taking place there. The ground surrounding the old Castle is landscaped — the old trees removed, and new trees planted. Many people will now be taking pleasure in the place which had been neglected for *so* long. This project, largely directed by Fife’s Director of Physical Planning, Mr Maurice Taylor, and others, and known as the Lochore Meadows Regional Park, well deserves the Fife Regional Council awards from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and *The Times* newspaper.

How did the Loch get its name? In the very old maps the Loch is called Loch Or. Some say the name was given by the French who lived here for some time and that gold — “or” — was found near the Loch. This may be *so*, but when approached from the east, and with the sun setting in the west, it is indeed a “Golden Loch”.

With all these activities taking place, will the people ever remember the cross which was placed on that hillock 1,500 years ago, and from which the place got the name “Crosshill”? May the Cross, indeed, again take its rightful place in the midst of the community it inspires.