

Jordanhill Past and Present

by William Campbell, March 1932

This article is extracted from documents which record a talk given in March 1932 by 75 year-old William Campbell to the members of All Saints Young People's Club. It therefore covers the period between 1857 and 1932 during which time Jordanhill developed from being an agricultural and mining area into a residential suburb of Glasgow.

The following text has been slightly edited and notes have been added in italics within square brackets in order to clarify or update certain statements. Most of the photographs reproduced here appear to have been used by Mr Campbell during his talk, but the originals are in a poor condition.

Introduction

I came to Jordanhill as a boy of six years of age, sixty-nine years ago. At that time it was a truly rural district. It was far from Glasgow, and to reach Glasgow one had to walk either to Partick or Hillhead, where a bus could be joined, the cost of transit being fourpence. Farm lands existed on both sides of Crow Road from Partick northwards and in summertime birds nests were common on either side of the road.

Jordanhill in the 1860's

The name "Jordanhill" then covered a much wider area than it does now. It included a number of scattered hamlets. There was Claythorne, at the junction of Woodend Drive and Crow Road; farther up Crow Road was Anniesland Toll, now Anniesland Cross. When I was a boy the toll gates were still in position, but they were not used. Still farther up, on the left side, was the Store Row, and there was also the Double Row. Barr & Stroud now covers that site. *[and that complex has now been replaced by the Safeway Megastore]* Further away still, close to the canal, was the Blue Row, so called from the colour of the roof tiles; and the last house in the Blue Row was occupied as a public house, where whisky was sold at 6d and 7d per gill, and other drinks could be consumed in unlimited quantities at equal prices. This house was known as the "Sheep's Public House" although I do not know why it was so-called.

It stood so near the canal that it formed a perfect death-trap and not a few people passed out at that place. The most melancholy case I ever knew was that of Dr. Anderson. He was a graduate of Glasgow University, a kindly old man, with a considerable reputation as a medical officer. Unfortunately he was too fond of a dram, and one morning his body was found in one of the locks.

The Square, Anniesland Road



On Anniesland Road stood the Square. This consisted, in addition to a few dwelling houses, of the stables, joiner's shop and blacksmith's shop attached to the local mines. Castlebank Laundry now occupies the site. *[The laundry has long gone, a petrol station existed for many years and the site is now occupied by a new block of flats]* Further along the road there was a group of houses known then as now as Anniesland, and on Knightswood Road, opposite what is now the hospital, *[the hospital has now gone and the site contains new housing]* was the Red Town, two rows of houses built with

handmade bricks, and quite evidently the oldest houses in the district. All these hamlets were inhabited by miners and others employed in the Jordanhill pits, which were scattered here and there over the whole district. Hence the name Jordanhill had a wide application.

In addition to the pits there were extensive brick and tile works on both sides of Crow Road from the point where Jordanhill Station stands today, on the right away to Gartnavel; on the left as far

back Selborne Road and on the north to Woodend Drive. I often wonder if the dwellers in King Edward Road realise that they are sitting on top of an ironstone pit.

No doubt industry was stimulated by the making of the canal at the north end of the district. It had previously been built in sections as far as Stockingfield, near Maryhill, but in 1784 the canal company obtained a grant from the Government of money realised from the sale of lands belonging to Prince Charlie's followers, by which the canal was completed as far as Bowling, and was opened for traffic on July 28th, 1790 The Bridge over the Kelvin, this side of Maryhill, was considered a great triumph of engineering skill. *[this is the Kelvin Aqueduct situated between Cleveden Road and Maryhill Road]* It cost £8500.

Smelting and quarrying

In 1841 Messrs. Barclay, who owned two or three pits along the canal, erected two blast furnaces for the smelting of iron ore, at a cost of £30,000 or £40,000 and about the same time Mr. Peters, the tenant of Temple Farm, worked the quarrying of freestone on an extensive scale. The furnaces and quarries gave rise to the village of Netherton. The coal in the district did not prove suitable for the smelting of iron, and the furnaces were then dismantled.

Jordanhill mines began at Balshagray, where the Great Western Laundry now stands. *[now the car showroom of Arnold Clark]* They extended north to the boundary of Dumbartonshire, east to the Kelvinside estate and west to Scotstoun. They therefore covered the estates of Balshagray, Jordanhill and Scotstoun.

From the University, Glasgow Cathedral and other records we can gain some information about the early history of these estates.

It appears that the lands from Yoker right up to Garngad formed part of the ancient Kingdom of Strathclyde, and were owned by the Crown. During his reign King David granted the lands from Whiteinch up to Garngad to the Bishop and See of Glasgow. The Whiteinch Burn originated near where Whittinghame Drive is now situated. It crossed Crow Road at Woodend Drive then passed down King Edward Road to beyond the railway, after which it followed the railway till it entered the Clyde between Scotstoun and Whiteinch. *[there was a railway line from Westbrae Drive to Whiteinch along what is now the walkway]* Balshagray therefore formed part of this grant. King David died in 1155 and was succeeded by his grandson, Malcolm.

Balshagray's history

The first estate mentioned is Balshagray. It extended from the Clyde to the boundary of Dunbartonshire. The origin has been disputed. "Bal" is the old Gaelic name signifying "a town or house", but "shagray" is a difficulty. It is spelt in various ways in the old deeds, but that does not help us. Some will have it that the name means "the house or town up out of the water". Other hold that it means "the King's hunting town". Still others maintain that the word means "the priest's town". For two reasons the last name is the likeliest. First, I am told that there is a strong resemblance between "Shagray" and the old Gaelic word signifying a "priest". Second the name makes its first appearance in the rent roll of the Bishop of Glasgow 1509 to 1570. It then contained a township farm, the tenants or crofters living in the farm town. For a considerable time there were thirty-nine of these, each tenant holding about fifteen acres and the whole rental amounted to £6.13s.4d. It must of course be understood that the land was mostly moorland, and poor moorland at that.

The curse that persisted

The first proprietor of Balshagray mentioned in the records after the Reformation is Bishop Cunningham. In 1581 he ousted the Roman Catholic tenants. They met and prayed that the curse of God might descend and rest upon him and his successors. It may only have been a coincidence, but there is no doubt that their wrongs were amply revenged for many years. No

fewer than eight successive lairds of Balshagray came to financial ruin. I will only mention the last of these lairds.

William Crawford, owner of a ropework in Glasgow, built the Manor House of Balshagray [*Orleans Ave now stands on the site*]. He also broadened the road leading to Dumbarton Road along which he planted two lines of trees, thus forming Balshagray Avenue. Previously this road had been a mere cart-track. William Crawford also opened a coal mine at Jordanhill. With all his energy he did not escape the curse, and when the estate was put on the market it was secured by the brothers Richard and Alexander Oswald in 1759 for the sum of £4540. To them and theirs it had proved a good thing, and with them the curse has lost its power. The brothers Oswald came from Thurso. They were successful Glasgow merchants, and eight years previously they had secured the lands of Scotstoun from Mr. Crawford. The Oswald family have always been characterised by benevolence, and they have taken a keen interest in the religious welfare of their tenants. The Anniesland Memorial Hall at Anniesland Cross is a standing monument of their good will [*the hall is long gone, but it stood on the site of the present Anniesland Library*]

We have had difficulty in tracing the original of the name "Jordanhill" There is a tradition that there had been an establishment of the Knights Templar in the district hence the names Temple, Knightswood. and Jordanhill. For this there appears to be no foundation, but there was a religious house at Drumry near Drumchapel. This house held the lands of Jordanhill, and probably some passing traveller detected some strong resemblance to some parts of the Jordan Valley and gave the names accordingly. Drumry stands near Drumchapel, on top of the hill after passing the gates of Garscadden House, known locally as the Girnin' Gates, [*near where the Donald Dewar Sports centre is today*] on the way to Duntocher and it is still interesting as forming a part of a farm steading, the ancient Peel of Drumry, formerly the home of the Livingstones.

Sir Robert Livingstone of Drumry, Lord Treasurer for Scotland, was executed at Edinburgh in 1447, and the last of the Livingstones fell at Flodden Field. In 1529 the estate passed to Laurence Crawford of Kilbirnie, who had also acquired the lands of Jordanhill, and he endowed a chapel at Drumry with the "£5 lands of Jordanhill". It is said that he founded the Chaplainry, but it seems to have been in existence before 1475.

Thomas Crawford, his son, bought back Jordanhill from the Chaplain of Drumry and the original house of Jordanhill was built by him. This Thomas Crawford was Provost of Glasgow and during his term of office he rebuilt or improved the bridge over the Kelvin at Bridge Street, Partick [*the bridge existed until 1895 and Bridge Street is now known as Benalder Street*]. He was also a good soldier, and a good friend of Lord Darnley, and did good service in taking Dumbarton Castle for Regent Moray. This was very dangerous work and was accomplished by night with scaling ladders. I often wonder how many, if any, of the Jordanhill men accompanied him.

In 1750 Jordanhill was sold. to Alexander Houston of Glasgow who, fifty years later, in 1800, sold it to Archibald Smith, West Indian merchant and Dean of Guild . He was the younger son of James Smith of Craigend Castle near Milngavie. Mr. Archibald Smith died in 1821, and at his death the estate passed. to his son, James, who did good. work as an architect. He was also an earnest student of geology. In his rambles among the mines and brickworks he was frequently accompanied by the then Duke of Argyll, and I have often heard old miners tell how greatly amused they were to see the two old men with tall hats and long black coats daubing and. howking in the bings and surrounding clay beds.

James Smith published several works. I have seen two: Studies in Tertiary Geology and The Voyage and Shipwreck of St Paul. One of his daughters was Jane Charlotte of whom I shall have a little to say later on. He died. in 1867.

Early Housing in Jordanhill

People nowadays have no conception of the houses of the Jordanhill miners in 1865. We read that in 1767 a blacksmith's house which stood near where Anniesland. Cross now is, was built of divots and bog-oak gathered from the Muir of Balshagray. The house in which I lived in 1865 was stone-

Dwellers in the Square, Anniesland Road



built with a thatched roof; but most of the houses had tile roofs. Some of them were actually disused weigh-houses attached to the pits, which were rigged up for dwelling purposes. Some of them had no ceilings. One could lie in bed and, through the opening in the tiles, watch the stars overhead; while it was not uncommon in wintertime for snow to come sweeping through the roof. The houses were all of the one apartment type, and earth floors were common except in cases where the miner himself had put in wood boards or brick.

The interiors varied very much with the habits of the housewife. If she were lazy and dirty there was ample evidence of it; if she were thrifty and clean the reverse was the case.

There were two houses I used to go into in Double Row. One was Old Matties and I think I see her now with her white goffered mutch and tartan shoulder shawl. She was the proud possessor of a grandfather clock, a chest of drawers and a dresser with a plate rack. The walls were covered with little odds and ends to such an extent as to suggest a toy shop, while the earth floor was carefully sanded, and everything was spotlessly clean. Beside the fire there was a tasty bite ready for her two boys when they came home from the pit.

Kirsty who lived next door was different. Her furniture consisted of a stool or two. On the earth floor there were pools of water in which the boys sailed blocks of wood. Many a morning I have gone in to find her three boys sitting round a basin of brose, each with a spoon, and it was a case of "devil take the hindmost".

Water was very scarce

Sanitary arrangements were conspicuous by their absence. Water was very scarce. There were a few springs, but in summer these readily dried up owing to the underground workings.

I remember when Loch Katrine water was introduced.. The taps were enclosed in a box, and water could only be had by those who owned a key which could be obtained at the company's office on payment of five shillings. My mother was the fortunate possessor of a key. Her idea was that water was supplied by God and she did not think twice to pass a pailful or two after dusk to a less fortunate neighbour.

One night an old busybody caught her in the act. He threatened to report her if she did not empty the two pails and send the neighbour away without the water. Now my mother was an impulsive highland woman and instead of discussing the matter, she promptly dashed the contents of the two pails over his head and shoulders and then refilled them for her neighbour's use. Nothing more was heard of the matter.

In 1865 improvement set in. In that year Mr. Smith of Jordanhill built that block of houses at Anniesland known as Craigend Houses. These houses were, with two exceptions, of the two apartment type. This was the beginning of a better day. Year by year more houses were added. Compass Cottages, Helensburgh Place and Munro Place were built adjacent to Craigend Houses.

Compass Cottages

Incidentally I may mention that Compass Cottages were built by means of money granted by the Government to Mr Archibald Smith, father of the late Mr Parker Smith, for his work in connection with ships' magnetism. Munro Place was an effort of the miners themselves. [see web page with notes on Compass Cottages at <http://www.wsmclean.com/shop.htm>]

The Oswald family were also busy in 1865. They built fourteen cottages in Crow Road north of Whittinghame Drive. On account of the crosses over the doorways the miners dubbed them "Chapel Row" but the name did not stick. In subsequent years more cottages were added and Claythorne became quite a village.

In 1868 the old Double Row was cleared away and replaced by Skaterigg Square a group of twenty houses but these, together with the Store Row, were ultimately cleared away to make room for the works of Barr & Stroud [*now the Safeway site*].

It is needless to add that all these houses were of the two and three apartment type, mostly with sculleries attached and gas and water laid on. Sanitary arrangements were greatly improved and, to the credit of the miners, they were not slow to respond to the higher type of life.

Local education

Before 1852 the district appears to have been educationally neglected. A class was kept in an underground apartment of the house of the man in charge of the canal bridge. A class was also kept in a cobbler's house where the Hospital now stands. The textbook was the "twopenny spell" and the children sat round the cobbler while he was at work.



Another school existed at Muttonhole. [*Scotstounhill, the site of the former telephone exchange at the corner of Anniesland Road and Lincoln Avenue*] Possibly this was a Parish School but I cannot say. It was too far out of the district to be of much use.

Improvement set in about 1852 when Miss Oswald of Scotstoun granted land and assistance to the Free Kirk to erect a school where Knightswood Hospital now stands [*at the top of the hill on Knightswood Road opposite Knightswood Secondary School*]. This was known as Oswald. School. About the same time Miss Jane Charlotte Smith, daughter of Mr. James Smith, opened a school in a barn at Jordanhill House, and subsequently in 1861 she built the hall in which we now meet. [*the hall at the back of All Saints Church*]

This was used as a school and also for religious purposes. Two lady teachers were in charge but subsequently a male teacher, Mr. Walker, was employed. Other teachers followed, but after 1884 it was discontinued as a school.



The honours between the two schools were fairly evenly divided. The parents who were adherents of the Free Kirk sent their children to Oswald School. Many sent their children to the Claythorne School, [*now All Saints hall*] as it was called. because they were not concerned about the religious question; and second they considered the convenience of their children. The fees were nominal. I was one of these children, and I can well remember that at that time, 1863 to 1869, some came from Knightswood, some came from Netherton, while the Double Row, Blue Row, Anniesland, and

Claythorne each supplied a contingent. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that at times there would be from 100 to 120 children in attendance.

The educational quality of Oswald School was said to be superior to that of Claythorne School, but later experience made me doubt that.

One thing I am today thankful for is that we in Claythorne School were not taught the Shorter Catechism which in these days was the standard theological work of Free and Established Church Schools. That work may be all right in its way but "I hae ma doots". I am satisfied that no child of six to twelve years of age could possibly understand it. For a short period of time (when I visited my grandmother) I attended a Parish School and many a cry I had over the Shorter Catechism It was torture to me then and I am sore about it yet.

Our work consisted of reading, writing and arithmetic, but Miss Jane Smith took a personal interest in all the children, and one thing she insisted on was an improvement in our manners. I have no doubt we stood in much need of it. I recall a day when I met her on the road and was lifting my cap in a very gingerly fashion when she encouraged me by saying "Well done Willie, that's right" She died of a fever she caught visiting some of the children in the Red Town. *[She caught typhoid and died in 1864 aged 39]* I have no doubt, had she lived, she would have exercised a powerful influence for good in the district. All the school children were present at her funeral.

We were encouraged to attend the weekly service on Wednesday evenings and the Sunday School, but there was no attempt at proselytising *[religious conversions]*. The attendance at Sunday School was poor but there was generally a fair attendance at the service. This service was conducted by Dean Reid and often a number of children from Partick and Whiteinch were baptised - very few from the district. But the best service of all was the Christmas treat which was provided every year by the Smith family. This was none of your "genteel fancy cake concerns" but bread, butter and jam in abundance with sweets and fruit to your heart's content. I often think that the Christmas treats of today are tame compared with these. But all good things come to an end. I was eleven years of age, a good reader, a passable writer and had knowledge of the four compound rules in arithmetic. I was therefore withdrawn from the school and went down the mines where I earned a shilling a day.

Coal mining in the area

Mining had been carried on for well over a hundred years. It was mainly coal mining, there being at least five seams of workable coal. These were The Main, The Wee, The Gas, The Splint and The Hurler coal. The first four seams were fairly exhausted, but the Hurler coal remained, and is untouched. still. It is thought that it might be found at a depth of 1000 ft at Anniesland Cross. During the process of sinking one of the coal pits one of the managers from the Airdrie district found valuable ironstone. There were three seams of a Blackband type, which gave a yield of 70% of iron and 25% of Clayband yielding 30%. This latter was a duplicate seam, top and bottom stone and was known as the Garibaldi, in honour of the Italian hero of that name. This was the deepest seam worked in the district.

The strata dips to the northward, i.e. coming up the Crow Road we get the outcrop of the clayband near Broomhill, but at Temple it is 600 feet deep.

My experience as a miner began in the Clayband seam. Before many days I realised I had only changed my form of schooling; but in this latter my teachers consisted mostly of self and experience. In less than a week I had my first explosion. I had popped my head (bearing my lamp) into a gas pocket. It was a minor affair; singed my hair, shirt, cap etc. and it taught me how to behave in similar cases of this kind.

A coal mine's lessons

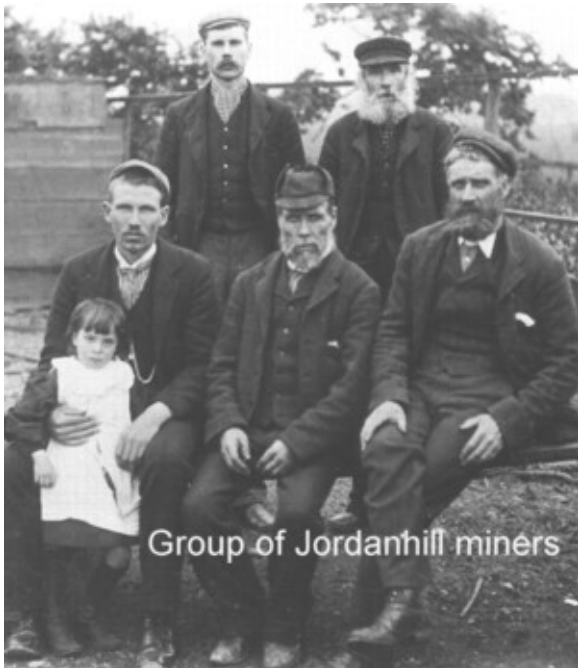
Then I discovered a fossil. An older boy told me it was an eel converted into ironstone and in confirmation of this he pointed out the scales, mouth and tail. But a few days later I found another with similar markings but with branches and I knew then it was a fossilised branch of a tree. Thus within a few days I had practical lessons in chemistry, geology and botany. In later years I learned I had been working in the bed of a great lake whose waters had contained iron in solution.

It is generally supposed that a miner's life is a poor one but I did not find it so. There is certainly a great element of danger but the miner knows that his safety depends, to a large extent, upon himself, and he therefore develops self-reliance and initiative to a degree that is not surpassed in any other calling.

No doubt we come across some rough characters in the mining world, but on the whole I find the miners agreeable, kindly and ever ready to rush into danger to help his fellow workers. I look back upon the eleven years I spent underground as being the happiest years of my life. It was during this time that I became the possessor of Cassel's Popular Educator, and the world of knowledge opened up before me.

"Slaves" of the pit

Up to 1799 the Scottish colliers were "slaves" attached to certain collieries and women as well as men were employed underground.



Group of Jordanhill miners

There appears to be no doubt that the Jordanhill miners were always free men. Among them I have been able to trace some of the descendants of the cursing Balshagray crofters. To what extent women were employed in the Jordanhill pits I cannot say, but there was a tradition in the district that three women were killed by the falling-in of the doorheads in a pit which was beside the Anniesland Road, and one old miner told me that when he was a boy he often went down this pit by means of a stair which had been used by the women while carrying up coals in large baskets. Personally, I knew two women who were employed underground in their early days.

The old Jordanhill miners were a cheery lot, humorous and shrewd to an extraordinary degree, and much given to religious discussions, but when I was a boy I noticed one sad feature. Few of them lived beyond sixty years of age. One old miner informed me that he

went down the pit at eight years of age, earned four-pence a day, and his breakfast consisted of two slices of oatcake with a layer of boiled turnip between. Curiously enough he was an exception to the general rule, because he lived to be over eighty years of age.



The older generation had been the victims of the Truck System, whereby they were paid in goods instead of money. An old Truck barrier still stands at Knightswood. Rows. [now long gone but surprising that it was still there in 1932] After the Truck stores were made illegal, their places were taken by shopkeepers who, in order to cover credits and bad debts, had to charge high prices with the result that the miners were as badly, if not worse off than before. A shopkeeper in the Store Row became bankrupt and a few of the more intelligent miners conceived the idea of taking his premises and starting a Co-operative store. With

the exception of the salesman, all the directors, secretary, etc. gave their services free and in 1869 they started the Skaterigg Co-operative Society which proved a blessing to the district. It is now the Anniesland Co-operative Society. {the shop stood on Crow Road just north of Great Western Road, but long gone}

Decline of mining

Gradually the seams became exhausted and mining in the district slowly declined till about 1890 when it ceased altogether and most of the miners found homes in other lands. With the decline of the mines came the introduction of the School Boards, the speculative builder and annexation to Glasgow. Thus Jordanhill was converted from a rural area to a suburban and city area, the name Anniesland was substituted for Skaterigg and Claythorne, and the whole character of the district became altered.

Of the men who influenced the district, there was Dean Reid. [*First Priest -in-charge of All Saints 1853 till 1886*] His work lay among the children who attended Claythorne School. He visited them frequently, especially when they were sick, and whenever he left a house he left the impression in the household. that it had been visited by a saint. Also there was The Rev. Mr. Munro, minister of Jordanhill United Free Church. He was a faithful pastor and a Highland gentleman. He went in and out the people for about thirty years and never lost an opportunity of doing good. It was he who advised miners to build their own houses, hence Munro Place, Anniesland, and when Jordanhill was laid out for feuing, Mr. Parker Smith honoured him by giving his name to Munro Road.

Then lastly I mention the Rev. Mr. Brooke of All Saints. He had been a missionary to the South Sea Islands and possessed wonderful tact and judgement. Like Dean Reid his work was mostly among the children of Claythorne School [*Mr Brooke was the clergyman of All Saints from 1877 till 1879*].

To Mr. Munro and Mr. Brooke I owe more than I can express. The former helped me with English and put me on a course of reading which is not yet finished, and the latter gave me many educational hints and such sound advice that I was able to step out of the mines when I had attained twenty-two years of age.

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