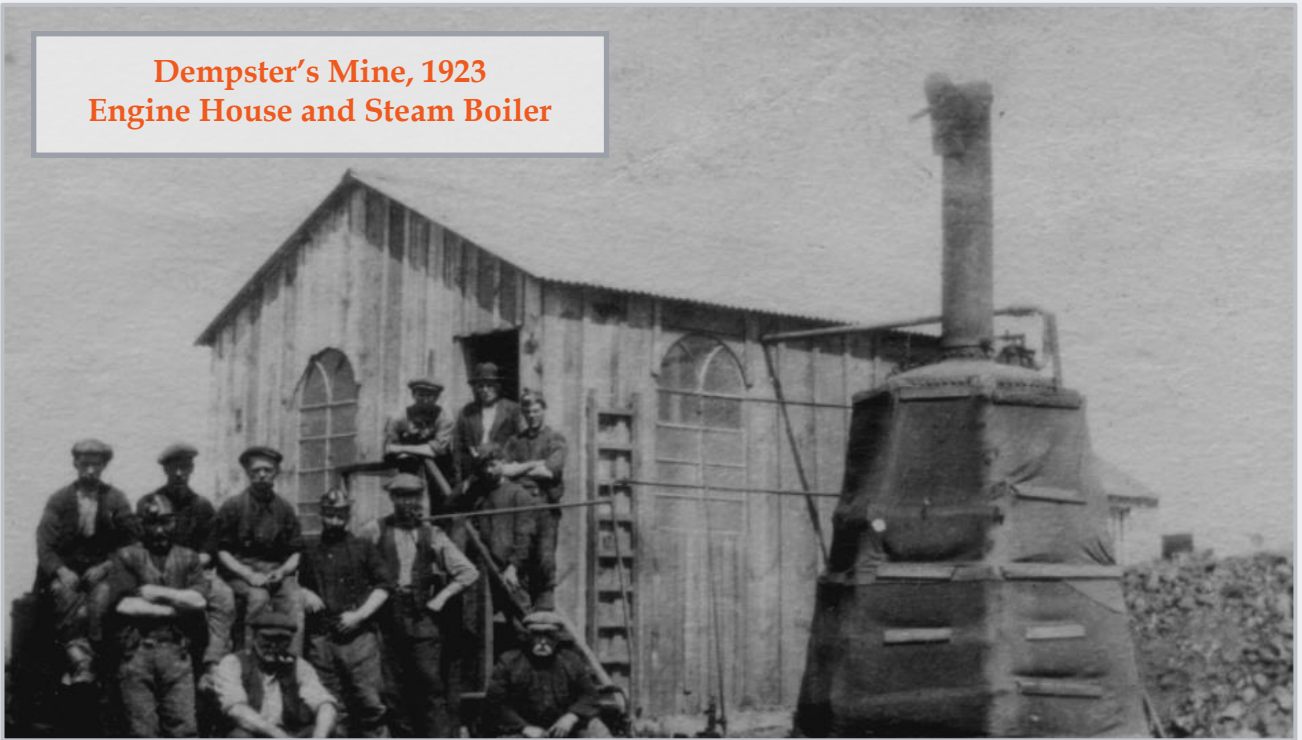


The Jim Hamilton

Heritage Society of Coalburn

A Potted History of DEEP MINING at COALBURN

Dempster's Mine, 1923
Engine House and Steam Boiler



The Inns Brig area with Auchlochan
No.1 Pit – known as 'The Maid', c1900



The village of Coalburn evolved principally due to the rich seams of coal which lay deep beneath the surface. This created work on a regular basis from around 1840 until the closure of the last deep mine in July 1968.

Originally there were mines dotted throughout the district. People lived in hamlets situated near the main collieries, such as at Bankend, Bellfield and Auchenbegg. As these pits closed and the miners' rows came to be considered unfit for habitation, the occupants moved to more modern premises around the newer pits—and so the village of Coalburn grew into what we know today.

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The first deep mine operated at Auchenbegg in 1837. By 1900 there were over 1600 men employed locally in the mining industry. Some travelled in by train, from Lanark and Larkhall, however around 80% of miners were resident in the village. This influx brought changes. Shops had to be erected to supply the needs of the many people now living in the community. The existing school at Bellfield was unable to cope with the growing numbers, and so an additional school was erected in Coalburn, opening in 1908.



**Miners' Rows & Bellfield School in Bellfield Road**

**The Miners' Rows were demolished in the 1930s**

**Bellfield School closed in January 1958**

A railway line had to be constructed in order to supply the extracted coal to steelworks throughout Lanarkshire. Coalburn's rail connection opened in 1862 as a mineral line. It wasn't until almost three decades later, in 1891, that Coalburn Station opened for passenger traffic, terminating at Glasgow Central Station. This service continued until October 1965 when Dr Beeching closed the line.



With none of the present day modern conveniences—no TV, no telephone, no computers, or even a radio—folk had to find ways of providing their own entertainment. Thus the two bands in the village were born—the Pipe Band in 1894, and the Silver Band in 1902—as well as various sporting organisations favoured by miners such as football, greyhound racing, quoiting and pigeon racing: Coaburn hom-

ing club was formed in 1905 and remains active today.



## Quoting at rear of Bellfield Rows c1926

**STANDING:**

**Hugh 'Burleigh' McLay, Wattie  
Graham, Jimmy Mochrie,  
Jimmy Dickson**

## AT THE FRONT: Bobby Graham





Auchenbegg Colliery, 1901 – closed 1922



Thought to show miners – and a four legged colleague – working to sink a pit, possibly Dempster's Mine, in the 1920s

The miner standing far left is Charles McGaffney, born 1878



**Coalminers from Coalburn, Lesmahagow and  
Kirkmuirhill after a shift at Dalquandy Colliery, around 1930**

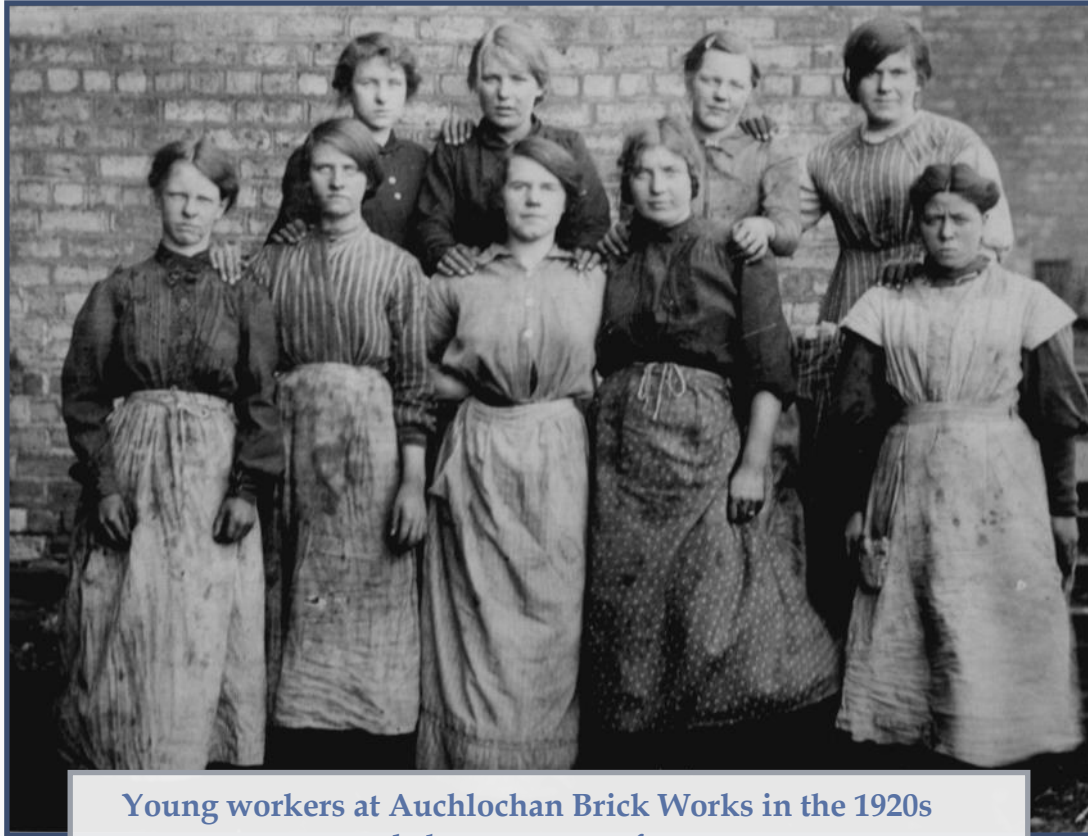
**BACK: T Hearty, (unknown), T Reid, J Brown, D Pate, D McArthur, J Meikle,  
Joe Rollo, Rab Frew, Jimmy Frew  
FRONT: J Smith, W Frew, Buff Pate, Bobby Graham, Willie Garrett,  
Dickie Smith, Andrew Frew, Tam Morrison**



**Residents at Lime Row, around 1930**



There was a brickworks at Auchlochan No. 6, where women were employed from the war years into the 1920s. Stonehouse and Law Hospitals were built with Auchlochan bricks, as were the chimney stacks at the colliery.



**Young workers at Auchlochan Brick Works in the 1920s**

- we only have surnames for most -

**BACK:** Airlie, Graham, Mima Penman, Nimmo

**FRONT:** Airlie, McLaren, Docherty, Graham, Smith

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“Each miner had two tokens with his number on—one round, and the other square. One as handed over before going underground. The other was handed over when he came up the pit. These were put on token boards to confirm where the miner was.” (former Auchlochan colliery miner)

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**Miner William McLay, at home at Railway Terrace**

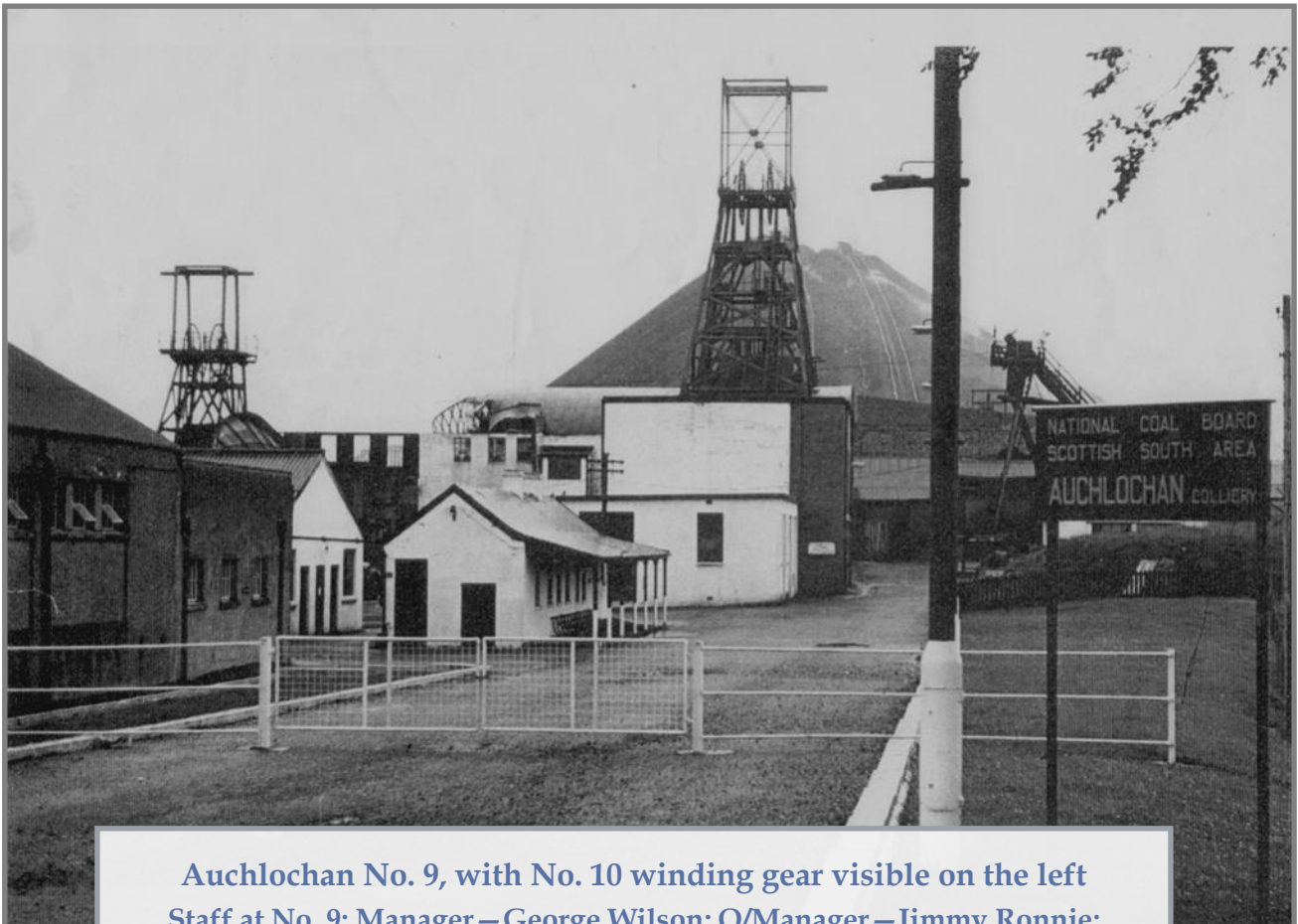
**William was killed on active service in WWII**

*Mr & Mrs Wm McLay, Railway Terrace, Coalburn, received official notification last Saturday of the death in action of their only son, William. A fine, well-built lad of 27 years, he was of a very quiet and reserved disposition and his passing cast a gloom over the community*

~ Hamilton Advertiser, July 1st 1944 ~

Of course mining was a dangerous occupation and many injuries and fatalities occurred in Coalburn's mines, and also to Coalburn miners working in pits elsewhere. These terrible incidents could fill a booklet in themselves.

Gradually over the years the local collieries were not producing the level of tonnage required and submitted to closure, with the end coming in July 1968 when Auchlochan No. 9 ceased production. Many miners left the village to continue their occupation in other coalfields in Ayrshire and the Lothians; some travelled further afield to England. So ended a century and a half of Coalburn's deep mines and miners.



**Auchlochan No. 9, with No. 10 winding gear visible on the left**  
**Staff at No. 9: Manager – George Wilson; O/Manager – Jimmy Ronnie;**  
**Chief Engineer – David Bryce; Chief Electrician- Willie McCormack**

Twenty years later, in 1988, work recommenced on the extraction of coal in the area, via the Dalquandy opencast operation. This was the largest opencast operation in Western Europe at the time. Of course, the labour requirements for this type of operation were very different to those pertaining in respect of deep mining. When British Coal went into receivership in 1997, opencast mining ceased.

By this time, Hagshaw Hill—located between Coalburn and Douglas—had become the site of Scotland's first commercial windfarm, with construction taking place in 1995. The hills around Coalburn are now a major centre for wind energy production, with various windfarms located nearby.

*-you will find articles on opencast mining and on local windfarms on our website-*

# *The Jim Hamilton*

## Heritage Society of Coalburn

[www.coalburnheritage.org.uk](http://www.coalburnheritage.org.uk)

### **Lanarkshire Coalminers and their Wives**



Reminiscences from Coalburn  
and Surrounding Villages

compiled by JIM HAMILTON

*The Jim Hamilton Heritage Society of Coalburn  
20th Anniversary Edition*

Jim Hamilton's 2003 book records the vivid real life recollections of local miners and their families.

Copies are available from the  
JHHS of Coalburn  
— cost £6 + postage —

The 5,000+ pages of Jim Hamilton's 'Coalburn Chronicles', published in 80 volumes between 1973 and 1998, are also a rich source of lived experience, recorded for posterity.

These are held by the JHHS of Coalburn. Copies of most are available to purchase, cost £3.

As well as holding the work of Jim Hamilton, the Heritage Centre has a wide range of photographs, documents and artifacts.

Please contact us to arrange a visit, our contact details are below.

## The Jim Hamilton Heritage Centre

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*Booklet first published 2014 – this edition June 2025*