

Memories of a Coalman

(The late Harry McFarlane)

Recollections of Stonehouse

My first recollection of Stonehouse is about sixty years ago. Stonehouse Sanatorium was the main building with the Old Pavilions for Tuberculosis patients. Dr. Sutherland was the head doctor. John Ferrie of Stonehouse was allowed into the grounds to serve the patients with ice cream. I was the driver and Mrs. Ferrie served the ice cream, this was before the trolley service that now goes round the wards. There were only two entrances to the hospital, the main one at Tofts, where Mrs. Shields the caretaker lived with her family. The top entrance on the West Side was used for services to the old boiler house, the kitchens. Refuse was also taken out by this entrance, two days per week, to the County Depot by local contractors using a horse and cart. I think probably the status as Stonehouse Hospital was named sometime during World War II. There were Canadian soldiers billeted in Stonehouse and the new wards were built about this time. I know this because I brought the building materials for the builders. There was no modern heating system as we know now. There was just a round stove in the middle of each ward. The modernisation began in Dr. Smith's time after the war and continued under Dr. Pettigrew's time. Before the Canteen was built the visitors used the Tea Room, "The Wee Hut," across the road from the hospital. Dr. A.H. McLean's wife owned the Tea Room. On the grounds running parallel with Strathaven Road, above Tofts entrance, was the old SlaughterHouse, which served the local butchers with meat. When it closed the hospital took it over as storerooms. As far as I know, the grounds of the hospital were part of the land of East Mains Farm with the landowner General Lockhart being the Few Duty Collector. At one time there was a Garden Fete held annually and was well attended by the village people. There was a very important event held in the hospital for long term children patients when Bishop Douglas of Motherwell conferred Confirmation on them. Sister Sloan and myself were sponsors. The early staff of workers were Mr Andrew Liddle who was a "Jack of all trades." Alex McLuckie was the Boiler House Man at the Old Furnace and Ian Cochrane was the Charge Hand of the Ground Staff. David Stewart was in charge of the New Heating Plant.

Coalmen

Daniel Fleming lived at New Street, Stonehouse. Entry to his coal yard was from Kirk Street. His son in law names were Hawthorne who married two of the Fleming girls. Thomas Hutchison in later years ran it as a one-man coal business at the foot of Kirk Street at the entry to Loch Park. Neil Collison then carried on as a one-man coal business. He also had a glasshouse where he grew tomatoes.

The Murdoch brothers had their coal depot at the foot of Union Street on the site of the Old Gas Works. They later bought the United Free Church in Millar Street with the intention to convert it into a coal yard. George Wilson (Joiner) made a deal with them to purchase the church because he did not fancy a coal yard opposite his house. He then built them premises at the foot of Kirk Street. Later he (George Wilson) demolished the Church and built a bungalow, which still stands on the site today. The Murdoch brothers were named Jim, Tom, Willie, Johnstone and John. They delivered mainly in Ayrshire. David Aitken was one of there workers.

W & J. Summers first depot was situated in Green Street at the back of the house part of Loch Park. Most of the bagging was carried out at the railway station goods yard. John Summers was the senior partner assisted by his brother Bertie. Their offices were in New Street and their depot was across

the road. Their fleet of lorries consisted of 10 trucks – 5 tippers and 5 coal delivery trucks. Their coal customers were mainly in the Strathaven area.

John Summers, Boghall Street, was the son of Thomas Summers, Kirk Street, who was also in the coal business in a small way. The main business was in Stonehouse. Tom Millar was his main man at first. Harry McFarlane and Archie Millar took over the business as partners when John died. Two of the senior workers were Pat McCluskey and Thomas McFarlane, brothers of Harry. When Archie married, he immigrated to Australia, and Harry became the sole owner. Harry still traded under the name of John Summers of Boghall Street. A Pug brought down the coal supply from Broomfield Colliery to the sidings at Canderside Toll. At that time there was a choice of coal suppliers – Swinhill Colliery, Woodside and other pits in the area

Across the road from Townhead public School, where Alex Dick had built a house, John Fléming carried on a coal business but he moved away to farm in the Drumclog area and his brother in law Bob Percy took over. His wife Jessie took over the coal bagging. Jessie was better known for her work in the Salvation Army.