

## *Here's tae him! ...Hugh Burns*

Whether you knew Hugh as member of the family, a work colleague or a friend we were all privileged to know a 'great' man, and that is not something we can say very often, for few have contributed so much to our community and society in general as Hugh did.

I feel privileged and humbled to be asked to speak of Hugh's life today having only known Hugh for around 30 years when so many knew Hugh over his lifetime. Alas many of his great friends have gone before like John Murray, Dave Bull, Ralph Macleod and cousins Alec and Dewar Torrance, not forgetting his beloved wife Moyra, his ever present companion and confidante over their many years together at Meadowside Cottage in Lockhart Street. Our loss today will be their gain and I am sure Hugh will once again be recounting days of old as he is reacquainted with friends and family of old.

Today I don't intend to give you a chronological account of Hugh's life but rather I seek to tell of his character, energy, knowledge and service through a few stories that reflect upon the man we knew simply as Hugh or Hughie.

Born in 1924, Hugh died at the ripe old age of 92 years having experienced more events and adventures in a lifetime than many of us would experienced in 10 life times.

Stonehouse has always been a village full of characters but Hugh was one of the best. Easily recognised walking the streets of Stonehouse in his deer stalker hat and pipe or sitting at home filing his pipe in front of the fire. Hugh was a man who commanded respect by all who knew him and when he spoke you knew it was something worth listening too.

Born in Caledonia Avenue before moving to Meadowside cottage, Hugh was a man of many talents, as a father, a friend and a work colleague. Educated firstly at Townhead Primary before moving to Cam'nethan Street School, Hugh concluded his early education at Hamilton Academy. He then trained as a mechanical engineer at the Royal Technical College in Glasgow, where he served his apprenticeship with Anderson Boyes & Co, making Mining Machinery in Motherwell, where we served for 50 years, as a Draughtsman, Designer and Technical Manager before his retirement.

Hugh met his wife to be Moyra Dick in 1949 at a Farmers Ball in Strathaven during his apprenticeship when Moyra was nurse at Stonehouse hospital. I remember Hugh telling me just a few years past that the morning after he met Moyra he sat down with his family at breakfast and told them that this was the girl he was going to marry! Unbeknown to Hugh at the time, Moyra had told her family the same thing the following day. And so it was to be.

In recalling the life of Hugh, I was fortunate to have met and spoke to many of his friends over the years who have shared their memories and adventures with Hugh on his travels. As stated before Hugh was a man of many talents....did you know Hugh was an INVENTOR?

(INVENTOR); Story of windmill with John Murray at Brankston cottage)

Hugh was a member of many clubs and organisation both locally and nationally. As a Boy Scout Hugh took an interest in all things environmental and recreational. He was an honorary President of the Agricultural Society and THREE Angling Clubs. It was with the Angling Club that Hugh and his friends recorded all the pools of the Avon from its source in Ayrshire to deepest darkest Larkhall, recalling the historical origins of the pools and enlightening others to the pleasures of fishing.

Did you know Hugh was an EXPLORER?

(EXPLORER); Hugh was a founder member of the Mountain Bothies Association and a life member of the Scottish Rights of Way Society. It was Hugh who is principally responsible, over a period of 50 years, for ensuring our public rights of way in Stonehouse were monitored, recorded, protected and walked to ensure we today enjoy the countryside we have on our doorstep. It is our duty today to ensure we carry on this work in enabling our young and visitors the opportunity to learn, enjoy and explore the environment we too often take for granted....

(CANDER GORGE); with Prof. MacPherson. The hunt for Herb Paris and Dipper Nest and the Deer hair near 'the Meetings'.

Hugh's knowledge of the environment locally with his great friend Ralph Macleod was second to none. Together they recorded the flora and fauna of the parish enlightening others as to our plants medicinal and practical uses in gaining a greater understanding and respect of the environment we hold in trust for others to enjoy.

**Did you know Hugh was a MOUNTAINEER?**

**(MOUNTAINEER); Well a mountaineer of sorts....He belonged, with the Clubs ONLY other member, David Bull, to Netherburn Mountaineering Club! I am not sure how many peaks they climbed together but I suspect many a night was spent in the bar room organising their adventures together.**

**I suspect that Hugh was most at home with nature in the bonnie hills of Galloway. Many a day was spent with Moyra, friends and family staying at isolated bothies including a favourite of his at Backhill o' Bush and roaming the hills around the Merrick up to the Dalveen pass and the Lowther. It is no surprise then that when Moyra became a councillor for Stonehouse they named a number of streets in the village after these hills.**

**It will be no surprise to you that it was largely due to the perseverance, knowledge and campaigning efforts of Hugh, that with the assistance of Scottish Natural Heritage, the Cander and Avon Gorge was declared a SSSI, an area of outstanding natural beauty in 1987. This site is recognised as one of the most important nationally and is a protected haven for flora and fauna to thrive. We owe much to Hugh for ensuring our environment is protected for future generations to enjoy.**

**It will also be no surprise to you that Hugh's knowledge of our local history greatly influenced myself and the decision locally to establish a Heritage Group in the village in 1991. A visit to Hugh's home at Meadowside cottage was like being back at school. If you were like me at school, stupid but saveable, then Hugh was the very man to enlighten you as to the events, places and people that have shaped our fair village. Every time you visited him you left with a new wee gem of information, a tale of intrigue or a glimpse of the past that left a lasting impression of the characters that have shaped the community of Stonehouse today, and our village is the better for the likes of Hugh Burns being among us.**

**Did you know Hugh was a POLITICIAN?**

**(POLITICIAN); Well not in the truest sense of the word, he left the politics to Moyra, he knew where his bread was buttered. In fact, Hugh considered standing as councillor for Stonehouse but was told by his employer that this may affect his employment with the company. Alas Moyra took up the challenge and despite being asked to stand for three political parties she decided to stand as an independent. Hugh joked that from that day he would have to walk two paces behind Moyra at all civic events and functions.**

No, Hugh was a politician with a small 'p'. Regardless of your politics Hugh was there to support the community and the people before any personal political view he held. When in debate, Hugh only spoke if he had something to say, and if Hugh had something to say it was something worth listening too such was the respect he commanded.

(BYPASS); 30 years; visit of Hamilton District Council, Roads Engineer, Donald Caruthers to Community Council and Old Folks plan to lie down on the road.

As well as the aforementioned talents, Hugh was a prolific writer and speaker, as a regular writer in the Scots Magazine debating with his contemporaries such as Tom Weir and presenting lectures on a plethora of subjects from covenanting, national walks and a favourite pastime of his ....beekeeping.

As a member of the Scottish Beekeepers Association, and the last beekeeper in the village until the recent re-emergence of the Avondale Beekeepers, Hugh gave me his last jar of honey before retiring his bees to a life in the heather. It is folks like Hugh, and those he has inspired, that have kept such traditions alive today. Not just in the environmental sense of the benefits but in the historical context of how communities were self sustaining in meeting all their needs. One particular story of the beekeepers I recall him telling me dated to the early 20th century.

(BEEKEEPERS VENTURE TO MUIRKIRK)

The Homeguard, the Festival Committee, the Youth Hostel Association, the Community Council, the Scottish Dance Society, the School Board etc etc etc. Hugh's contribution to our villages social and environmental development over the years is probably unsurpassed. Even greater was his contribution to creating a better society not just here but in the life he led, as a father, friend and resident that encouraged others to play their part supporting those least able to support themselves and enhancing the environmental awareness our changing planet.

Hugh was proud of his country but he was even more proud of his community and his family. We have much to learn from Hugh Burns.

A Stonehouse man through and through, Hugh's great grandfather George Meikle farmed at Tanhill farm, formerly the home too of covenanter James Thomson, killed at the battle of Drumclog in 1679. Hugh loved his history, and is now part of our history, and we here today owe it to Hugh to keep alive the traditions, community spirit and passion Hugh held for his fellow men and women.

Today I have barely touched the extent of Hugh's influence, commitment and activities that have contributed to greater good not just of Stonehouse but of the very fabric of what it means to be a community today.

Regardless of your beliefs, background or political leanings Hugh always spoke up for what was right, when others chose to remain silent, act when others chose to do nothing and stand up for our community when we most needed help. Stonehouse is a sad place today for his passing but a better place for his being part of our community. I am proud to have called him a friend.

*Wha's Like Him? ...Hugh Burns*