

Helensburgh Heritage Trust Newsletter

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Raking about in Rubbish; *Part Two*

Slightly abridged by the Editor and continued from Vol 10 Issue 4

I was, of course, careful when raking about the old rubbish dump, not to create any new diggings in the land at Colgrain. So the old bottles I found had been left by others and many were damaged. Even so, the results were interesting. Most commonly encountered were smallish, bearing the name, GEORGE HARVIE AND SON, CHEMISTS, HELENSBURGH. He was established in East Princes Street in 1862 and had a shop opposite the Railway Station, - somewhere between 1889 and 1899 the business became "and Son." In about 1937 Boots the Chemists took over.

Several thick walled lemonade-type bottles stamped JAMES A. REID, CHEMIST, HELENSBURGH were found. James Reid was established at 1, East Clyde Street by 1864 as a Confectioner and aerated water manufacturer. His bottling plant was in Colquhoun Square, and seems to have ceased by the mid 1870s. But James A. Reid appears at Apothecaries Hall, 27 East Clyde Street in 1885 with his Aerated Water factory at 6, West Clyde Street. A family connection seems likely, for, just before the turn of the century he appears in the directories at "Lily Springs," 67-69 James Street. His bottles are stamped "You Can't Paint the Lily" with a stylish twin lily design. Continuing, the firm was owned by Garvies who moved production to Milngavie in 1957 due to contamination of their supply.

REID AND YOUNG, CHEMISTS were listed at 9 West Clyde Street, although this may be the same as 27, due to the renumbering which took place when the East - West split moved from Sinclair Street to Colquhoun Street in the 1890's. Miss Pat Drayton says that it was believed to be the oldest pharmacy in the West of Scotland, founded in 1842. They continued until about 1910 when the Taylor family took over until 1973. The single bottle is therefore period 1899-1910.

Another very long associated name, from 1865, is JOHN MITCHELL, GROCER AND WINE MERCHANT. The junction of Sinclair and East Clyde Streets was known as Charing Cross, but the shop, which continued until 1964, was known as "Low Mitchell's." This because their other shop, at 28-30, West Princes Street was "High Mitchell's!" Two of their wine or beer bottles have turned up badly damaged.

In the Roll of Honour of Helensburgh businesses, surely nothing can compare with URIE, CHINA AND STONEWARE MERCHANTS. At 16, West Clyde Street by 1864, moved to 71 by 1875, but probably this is the same as the current No. 45. I found a crazed but complete Bed Warmer stamped R & A URIE LTD. That it had survived burial has to be a tribute to sturdy construction.

Other bottles found on the surface of this amazing tip were from Glasgow, England, even the US! Many had no identification, but I think that they could go back as far as the 1880 - 1890 period. A whole Social History of medicine, cosmetics, sauces and relishes - even furniture cream could possibly be compiled. There are few books to on the subject although there are clubs in existence, mainly interested in pre-fully machined bottles of the 19th century but only when perfectly preserved.

Finally, who can tell me about essence of coffee and chicory, and of rennet?

Alastair McIntyre

Annual General Meeting

The financial Year of the Trust ended on the 31st March 2007 and it is necessary to lay the accounts and Report of the Directors activities before you, the Members. You will have received these when the recent postal strike ended! This is formal, but need not be boring, and we hope there will be a good attendance at **7 p.m. on Wednesday 31st October** at the Helensburgh Lawn Tennis Club, Suffolk Street. The meeting will continue at **7.30 p.m.** with a talk by Marion Gillies entitled "**Tales of the West Coast.**" Lots of pictures with anecdotes and a bit of geology and archaeology.

Exhibitions

Members will be aware that a while back, we commissioned a replica of the 'diy' Televisor that was sold by The Daily Mail in the 1930's. We are pleased to say that it is now complete and its display case has been made. We are awaiting a visit by Mr Brandon Inglis who will put it all together, with the necessary wiring. Then we should be able to announce a new display in the Library to demonstrate what the Original Televisor, on display for many years, really did!

Next May it will be 150 Years since the Railway reached Helensburgh! Seems a good excuse for an Exhibition in the Library. All suggestions and offers will be welcome.

Co-operative Repair?

Although there are a number of brown tourist road signs indicating the route, we have recently been disappointed to note that deterioration of the Clyde Sea Lochs Trail information panel on the sea front opposite William Street has set in. Enquiries revealed that Scottish Enterprise Dumbarton is unlikely to maintain or renew it. However, we are pleased to report that Anne Urquhart of Helensburgh and Lomond Tourist Association has managed to source the original text and graphics. The Trust has decided to discuss with her whether a joint project funded by the Association and Trust could result in the renewal of this amenity for our visitors. Have the display boards outwith the town suffered from the sun in the same way? It must be a poor manufacturing process as the East Bay Henry Bell and Comet board from early 2002 is in good order.



A clear case of nothing to say!

Programme of Public Meetings 2007

The final meeting of the year will be on Wednesday, 28th November on the subject of the two **Helensburgh Conservation Areas**. Kathleen Siddle, a member of the Community Council and the group has worked closely with Argyll and Bute Council's Conservation Officer to revive knowledge of these areas. Their most impressive report on the subject, profusely illustrated, should have been considered by the Council and proposed action set by then.

www.

helensburgh-heritage.co.uk

In the last issue I asked that members send their e-mail addresses to the Chairman, Stewart Noble, if you are willing to be reminded of meetings or urgent news. However, with some sense of timing I gave his previous address just as it changed. So to put matters right, I hope; the correct address is now-

noble84@btinternet.com

Museum Visits

On a recent visit to Townsville in Far North Tropical Queensland, we made a bee-line for their Heritage Centre. This turned out to be a collection of historic buildings saved from demolition and moved to a site donated by the City Council. The centre piece is "Currajong" a timber villa residence built in 1888 for Alfred P. MacKenzie who pioneered sugar growing by founding the 'Gairlock' (!) Plantation before becoming a Banker. The next owner was a gold-miner, Edward Hunt, who named the house after the Currajong tree. In 1939 the house became a wartime Medical Receiving Station and in 1960 the Sisters of Mercy started to build the Mater Hospital around it. Proposed extensions in 1978 were to have resulted in demolition, but founding members of the local branch of the National Trust of Queensland, recognised the historical importance of the house to the City. Generosity of local citizens, consent of the Sisters and a lease of land by the City Council enabled Currajong to be moved to Castling Street where it has since been joined by an 1884 railway workers dwelling and a 1924 farmhouse, both saved from demolition and moved. [Australians have a nice line in cutting houses in half and transporting them at night on low loaders to another site for refurbishment] The workers' house is furnished as a Museum of 1880 to 1900 whilst Currajong houses an extensive collection of artefacts from 1900 to 1920 and Victorian and Edwardian furniture and furnishings.

The Heritage Centre is open three times a week for four hours and staffed and maintained entirely by volunteers. We were made most welcome, especially when we showed our NTS cards. *KNC*



Currajong