

# A short history of Jordanhill

by

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## A SHORT HISTORY OF JORDANHILL

being a resume of a paper read before the members of the All Saints Young People's Club on the 18th December 1931, by Mr William Campbell of Jordanhill.

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### JORDANHILL EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

I came to Jordanhill a boy of 6 years of age 69 years ago. At that time it was, no doubt, a truly rural district. It was far from Glasgow, to reach, which one had to walk either to Partick or Hillhead where a bus could be joined, the cost of transit being fourpence.

Farmlands existed on both sides of the Crow Road from Partick Northwards and in Summer time bird's nests were common in the hedges on either side of the road.

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; further up the 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 further up, on the left hand side was the Store Row and the Double Row - Barr & Strouds works now cover that site. Then further on, close to the Canal

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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 in unlimited quantities. This house was known as the Sheep's Public house, why I do not know. It was situated so near the Canal that it formed a perfect death trap and not a few passed out in that way. 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 the dram and one morning his body was found in the locks.

Then on the Anniesland Road was situated the Square. This consisted, in addition to a few dwelling houses, of the Stables, Joiners' Shop and Blacksmiths' Shop attached to the Jordanhill mines. Castlebank Laundry now occupies this site. Further along we had a group of houses then, and still known as Anniesland. Then on the Knightswood Road, opposite where the Hospital now stands was the Red Town, two rows of houses built with small hand-made bricks and quite evidently the oldest houses in the district.

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All these hamlets were occupied 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 the Crow Road from where Jordanhill Station now stands, on the right to Gartnavel and on the left as far back as Selborne Road and on the North to Woodend Strive. I often wonder if the dwellers in King Edward Road realize that they are sitting on the top of an ironstone pit.

No doubt industry had been stimulated by the making of the Canal at the North end of the district. It had previously been formed in sections as far as Stockenfield near Maryhill but in 1784 the Canal Company obtained a grant from the Government of monies realized from the sale of lands belonging to Prince Charlie's followers, by which the Canal was completed to Bowling and opened for traffic on the 28th July 1790. The bridge over the Kelvin, this side of Maryhill, was considered a great triumph of engineering skill. It cost £8,500.

In 1841 Messrs Barclay who owned two or three pits along the Canal erected two blast furnaces for the

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smelting of iron ore at a cost of about £30,000 or £40,000 and about the same time Mr Peters, tenant of Temple Farm, worked the quarrying of freestone on an extensive scale. The furnaces and the 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 dismantled.

The Jordanhill mines began at Balshagray where the Great Western Laundry now stands. 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.

## EARLY HISTORY.

From the University, Glasgow Cathedral, and other records, we 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 the Whiteinch burn up to Garngad to the Bishop and See of Glasgow. The Whiteinch burn originated near where

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Whittingham Drive is now situated. It crossed the Crow Road at Woodend Drive; then passed down King Edward Road to beyond the railway, after which it followed the railway and entered the Clyde between Scotstoun and Whiteinch - Balshagray therefore formed part of this grant. Because of his liberal gifts to the Church David became known in history as "yin sair saint to the Crown". He died in 1153 and was succeeded by his grandson Malcolm. At about this time Somerled, Lord of the Isles, thought fit to make a raid upon what is now Renfrewshire but he was met and defeated where Blythwood House now stands by the combined forces of the Bishop of Glasgow and the Baron of Renfrew. As a reward for this work, Malcolm granted the lands from Yoker to the Whiteinch burn to the Baron of Renfrew. This grant included the lands of Scotstoun and Jordanhill and it is interesting to note that these lands now form the landward portion of the Parish and County of Renfrew. The Reformation brought many changes.

The first of these estates, which I mention, is Balshagray. It extended from the river Clyde right up to the boundary of Dumbartonshire. The origin of the name has been disputed. "Bal" is the old Gaelic word signifying a town or house but "shagray" is a difficulty. It is spelt in various ways in the

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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. Others that it means "the King's hunting town". Still others that it is "the priests town". There are two reasons, which make the latter name likely; first, I am told that there is a strong resemblance between "shagray" and the old Gaelic word signifying a priest and, 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 39 of these, each tenant holding about 15 acres and the whole rental amounted to £6. 13. 4. It must, of course, be understood that the land was mostly moorland and poor at that.

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 have only been a coincidence but there is no doubt that their wrongs were amply avenged for the curse rested upon the lands for many years, no less than eight successive lairds of Balshagray came to financial ruin.

I only mention the last of these lairds,

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William Crawford, owner of a Rope Work in Glasgow. He built the Manor House of Balshagray - Kent Avenue now covers about 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 had only been a cart track. He also opened a coalmine 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 £4,540. To them and theirs it has proved a good thing and with them the curse has vanished. 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.

I will not go into details of the Oswald family. They have always been characterised by benevolence and 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 work.

I have a map of Balshagray as transferred to the Brothers Oswald in 1759 and it is interesting to find the Watsons (predecessors of the present James Watson, Joiner, Jordanhill) tenants at that time.

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I now come to Jordanhill. Here again we have difficulty in tracing the origin of the name. There used to be a tradition that there had been an establishment of the Knight Templars 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 from the Holy land detected a strong resemblance to some parts of the Jordan Valley and gave the names accordingly. Drumry stands near Drumchapel on the top of the hill after passing the gates of Garscadden House on the way to Duntocher and it is still interesting for forming part of a farm steadings the Ancient Peel of Drumry formerly the home of the Livingstones. Sir Robert Livingstone of Drumry, Lord Treasurer of Scotland, was executed in Edinburgh in 1447 and the last of the Livingstones fell at Flodden Field. In 1529 the estate passed to Lawrence 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 really seems

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to have been in existence before 1475.

Thomas Crawford, his son, bought back the lands of Jordanhill from the Chaplain of Drumry and the original house of Jordanhill was built by him. This Thos. Crawford was Provost of Glasgow and during his term of office he rebuilt or improved the bridge over the Kelvin at Bridge Street Partick. He was also a soldier and a friend of Lord Darnley and did good service in taking Dumbarton Castle for Regent Murray. This was very dangerous work

and was accomplished during the darkness of the night by means of scaling ladders. I often wonder how many, if any, of the Jordanhill men accompanied him. The incident is fully recorded in Tytler's History of Scotland.

In 1750 Jordanhill was sold to Alexander Houston of Glasgow who, 50 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 Craighend Castle near Milngavie. Mr Archibald 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 enthusiastic yachtsman and an earnest student of geology. In his geological rambles among the mines

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and brickworks he was often accompanied by the Duke of Argyll and I have often heard the old miners tell how they were greatly amused at seeing the two old men with tall hats and long black coats dabbling and howking in the bings and surrounding clay beds.

He 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. James Smith died in 1867. I have an impression that I have seen him at some of the services in All Saints.

### EARLY HOUSING OF JORDANHILL.

People nowadays have no conception of the homes of the Jordanhill miners in 1863. We read that in 1767 a blacksmith's house which stood near where Anniesland Cross now is was built of divots and bogoak gathered from the muir of Balshagray. The house I lived in in 1863 was stone built with a thatched roof but most of the houses had tile roofs. Some of them were actually discarded weigh houses attached to the pits which, when out of use, were rigged up for dwelling purposes. Some had no ceilings and one could lie in bed and through the

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opening in the tiles watch the stars passing overhead while it was not uncommon in the winter time for the 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 according to 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 the Double Row. One was old Matties. I think I see her now with her white gofferred mutch and tartan shoulder shawl. She was the proud possessor of a grandfather's 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 and beside the fire was a tasty bite ready for her two boys when they came in from the pit.

Kirsty who lived next door was different. The furniture consisted of a stool or two. On the earth floor were pools of water in which the boys sailed

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blocks of wood and many a morning I have gone in to find the three boys sitting round a big basin of brose each with a spoon and it was a case of Devil take the hindmost.

Sanitary arrangements were conspicuous by their absence; water was very scarce. There were a few springs but in Summer time 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 the 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 scruple to slip 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.

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In 1863 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. 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 ship's magnetism, while Munro place was an effort of the miners themselves. The Oswald family were also busy in 1868. They built 14 cottages on the Crow Road north of the present Whittingham Drive. On account of the crosses over the doorways, the miners dubbed them the Chapel Row but the name did not stick. In subsequent years more cottages were added and Claythorne became quite a village. In 1868 or 1869 the old Double Row was cleared away and replaced by Skaterigg Square, a group of 20 houses. These, together with the Store Row, were ultimately cleared away to make room for the Works of Messrs Barr & Stroud.

Needless to add that all these houses were of the two and three apartment type, mostly with sculleries attached

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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 higher type of life.

#### EDUCATION.

I now come to the educational influences. 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 room of the Blue Row was also, for some time, used as

a school. An attic room in the Furnace Row at Nether-ton was spoken of as the Parish School. The door was in the gable and it was reached by a sort of glorified hen ladder. On the erection of a school, which is now enclosed in the Ioco Proofing Company's premises, the Furnace Row School went out of use. A class was also kept in a Cobbler's House where the hospital now stands. The textbook was the two-penny spell and the children sat round the Cobbler when he was at work.

Another school existed at Muttonhole - now Scotstounhill , Probably 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 Church to erect a school where Knightswood Hospital now stands. This was known as Oswald School and both male and female teachers were provided. About the same time Miss Jane Charlotte Smith, daughter of

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Mr James Smith, opened a school for children in a barn at Jordanhill House and subsequently in 1854, I think she built the hall in which we now meet. This was used as a school and also for religious services. Two lady teachers were in charge, subsequently a male teacher, Mr Walker, was employed , other teachers followed till after 1884 when it was discontinued as a school.

The honours between the two schools were fairly well divided. Those parents who were still adherents of the Free Church sent their children to Oswald School. On the other hand, many sent their children to Claythorne School as. it was called, because first, 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 from Nether-ton, while the Double Row, Blue Row, Anniesland and Claythorne each supplied a contingent; and 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.

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One thing I am to-day thankful for is that we in Claythorne School were not taught the Shorter Catechism which, in those 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 6 to 12 years of age could possibly understand it. During a short 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 upon was an improvement in our manners, I have no doubt we stood much in need of it. I can well recall a day when I met her on the road and, lifting my cap in a very gingerly fashion, she encouraged my by saying, "Well done Willie, that's right". She died as the result of a fever caught in visiting some of the children in the Red Town and 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. The boys of Oswald School used to call us Puseyites; what that meant none of us knew nor cared. Beyond the

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fact that we were encouraged to attend the weekly service on Wednesday evenings and the Sunday school, there was no attempt at proselytising. 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 there were a number of children from Partick and Whiteinch baptized, 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 fruits to our hearts content. I often think that the Christmas treats of today are tame compared with those but all good things come to an end. I was 11 years of age, a good reader, and a passable writer and had knowledge of the four compound rules in arithmetic. I was therefore withdrawn from school and sent down the mines where I earned one shilling a day.

#### MINING.

Before I came into the district, mining had been carried on for well over 100 years. It was mainly coal mining, there being at least five seams of workable coal. These were

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The Main Coal  
The Wee Coal  
The Gas Coal  
The Splint Coal  
The Hurllet Coal.

The former four seams were pretty well, if not entirely, exhausted but the Hurllet coal remained untouched and is untouched still. It is thought that it might be found at Anniesland Cross at a depth of about 1000 feet. During the process of sinking one of the coal pits one of the Managers from Airdrie District observed a ribbed brownish stone among the debris and on closer examination this was found to be a valuable ironstone. There were three seams of a Blackband type, which gave a yield of 70 per cent of iron and a fourth of Claybound yielding 30 per cent. This latter was a duplicate seam - top and bottom stone - and was known locally as the Garibaldie 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 the Temple it is 600 feet deep.

My experience as a miner began in this Clayband seam and before many days I realized I had only changed my school but in this latter my teachers consisted mostly of self and experience. In less than a week I had my

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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. Then I discovered a fossil. An older boy told me it was an eel converted into ironstone and in confirmation of his decision, 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 that it was a fossilised branch of a tree. Thus within a few days I had practical lessons in chemistry, geology and botany. In after years I learned that I had been working in the bed of a great lake whose waters had contained iron in solution.

It is generally supposed that the 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 sometimes come across some rough characters in the Mining World but on the whole I found the miner agreeable, kindly, and ever ready to rush into danger to assist his fellow workers and I look back upon the 11 years which I spent under ground as being the happiest years of my life. It was during this time that I became the possessor of Cassels Popular Educator

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and the world of knowledge opened up before me.

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

In course of time, these women developed certain facial features similar to some African tribes. These features were in evidence for several generations after they were emancipated in 1799.

In Jordanhill there was no trace of this slave element and 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 pits at Jordanhill, 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 informed me that when 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 under ground 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

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sad feature. Few of them lived beyond 60 years of age. I attributed this to poor food, bad ventilation and the foul gases and dust, which they inhaled during their work. One old miner informed me that he went down the pit at 8 years of age, earned four pence a day, and his breakfast consisted of two slices of oatcake with a layer of boiled turnip between. Curious enough he was an exception to the rule because he lived to be over 80 years of age.

The older generation of miners had been the victims of the Truck System whereby they were paid in goods instead of money. After the truck stores were made illegal their places

were taken by shopkeepers who, in order to cover credits and bad debts, found it necessary to charge high prices with the result that the miner was as bad, if not worse, under the shopkeepers than he was under the Truck System. A shopkeeper in the Store row became bankrupt and a few of the more intelligent miners conceived the idea of taking the premises and starting a co-operative store. They began by clearing out the premises. Most of the old stock had to be thrown down a neighbouring pit. With the exception of the salesman, all the directors, secretary, etc., gave their services free and in 1869 started the Skaterigg Co-operative Society, which proved a blessing to the district. It

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is now the Anniesland Co-operative Society, a flourishing concern with a capital of nearly £50,000. Gradually the various 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.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

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 to a suburban and city area, the name Anniesland substituted for Skaterigg and Claythorne and the whole character of the district altered.

I can hardly close this paper without a reference to some of the men who influenced the life and character of the district, and first of these I would mention Dr. Andrew Bonar. He was minister of Finnieston Free Church and was only a casual visitor to the district but the grip for good he had upon the miners was wonderful. Poor old Andrew, he has been known to go home and pray for hours, the burden of his prayers being his own inefficiency but those who knew him knew that he was a devoted and faithful servant of his God. Then there was Dean Reid. His work lay more 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

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impression in the household that it had been visited by a saint: also there was the Rev. Mr Munro, minister of Jordanhill U.F. Church. He was a faithful pastor and, in addition, a Highland gentleman. He went in and out among the people for about 30 years and never lost an opportunity for doing good. It was he who advised some of the 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 attending Claythorne School but he was always willing to help anyone. 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 22 years of age.

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