

The Road to Drumleman: Some follow up info...

Since completing what I thought was the final edit of the film, a missing piece of the jigsaw fell into place for me when I read a letter in the Campbeltown Courier – it was from Ronnie Gay, the nephew of James Woodcock, the Argyll Colliery's only fatality. Jim was killed in 1951 when a huge lump of coal fell on him. The accident which killed Jimmy had been described to me by the late "Big Wullie" McKinlay and by Davy Anderson who both had very vivid memories of that day and who were still clearly emotionally affected by the experience all those years ago. My understanding had been that at that time, young Jimmy Woodcock had been married but that he had no children.

I wasn't able to find a photo of Jimmy for the film and it bothered me not being able to put a face to the name and that tragic story but like with so much else of the research for the film, there was a scarcity of information or the trails just went cold... But having had the screening of the film at the Picture House in Campbeltown, the subsequent publicity resulted in Ronnie, Jimmy's nephew I talking and he explained that his Auntie Cathy, Jimmy's wife, had been pregnant when his Uncle Jimmy was killed and that that she had had a son, also called Jim. I went to visit Ronnie in Dunoon, where he now lives, and was able to scan family photos and was used two of them in the film – one of them was a lovely photo of Jimmy with his young wife, Cathy.

The whole process of making TRTD has been very emotional and has been part of the process of greiving for my father, Neil, as well as engaging with all the contributors, some of whom are no longer with us...so to be able to edit these two photos in was just amazing... Once they had been included in the edit we sent a copy to Jimmy's son, Jim, in Australia – here is his response:

Hi Jan

I'm writing to thank you very much for sending me a copy of the Road to Drumleman DVD, received via my cousin in Scotland.

A short history:

My Dad was Jim Woodcock who was killed in the Machrihanish mining disaster in 1951. My mum, Cathy, was 7 months pregnant with me when my Dad was killed and so I never knew my Dad. I've always had an interest in finding out more about what actually happened. My grandfather, James Woodcock died when I was 5 and I can remember him quite vividly. He was one of the first to be employed at the mine. His wife, my Gran, Isabel Woodcock, lived until the 1990's and as she got older she gave me all the newspaper cuttings, death certificate and a few photos. After my Dad died, my mother moved back to Paisley to be with her own mother, however we always kept in touch with Campbeltown through Gran. My cousin, Ron Gay lived in Campbeltown until a few years ago when he moved to Dunoon and we've always kept in touch. After 7 years my mother re-married and moved to South Africa with me and my step-brother, Mitchell. We lived there for 9 years, before returning to Paisley. In 1980 my wife, Anne and I moved to

Australia. We've now got two daughters and two granddaughters who live close by. In December/January 2001/2 we went home to Scotland for a holiday and drove down to Campbeltown to visit some of the Woodcock family. We actually went to Janey and Peter Hall who still live in Davaar Avenue (mentioned in your DVD) and my Dad's cousin, Sheena and Lachie took us into the Campbeltown Historical Museum. They had a little information on the mine and when we got back to Australia, we copied the information Gran had given us and sent it to Sheena to be used in the Museum as she thought fit.

My cousin hadn't mentioned his contact with you and so the DVD arrived quite unexpectedly. I got home from work and put it on. It brought back some memories from the Campbeltown I remember (late 1950's/60's) I was quite taken with the history, of which I knew a little, but the pictures and interviews really meant something. When Willie McKinley started talking about 'young Jimmy Woodcock', I really sat up and then saw the picture of my parents and my Dad's grave which I've visited several times. I was quite taken aback and promised myself to try and get in touch with Willie until the end when I read he had since died. I really did appreciate hearing from someone who knew my Dad and was in the mine at the time of the accident, and wanted you to know how much that meant. For your information I received £700 and my mother received £2,000 in compensation from the Coal Board. They then asked my mother to recompense them for the backpay of rent.

My Mum died at the beginning of 2009, however I know she would have been happy to think that something had actually been recorded. I've already shown the DVD to both my daughters and granddaughters and it's given them some insight to their background. The DVD will become part of the Woodcock ancestry. Here in Australia, it's quite the 'in thing' to research the family and I want to thank you sincerely for taking the time to research the Argyll Mine. I will turn 60 in April next year and had a major heart attack in 2001, so take each day at a time but am absolutely delighted to think that my 'heritage' has been so well documented. I've attached a couple of newspaper cuttings which might interest you.

Thank you very much - your work has meant a lot to me.

Kind regards

Jim Woodcock
Australia

DEATH OF LOCAL MINE OFFICIAL

Mr James Woodcock, of 4 Hillside Road, Campbeltown, a well-known figure in local mining circles, has died at the Cottage Hospital at the age of 51.

Mr Woodcock was employed in the coal industry for 30 years, latterly as safety and training officer at the Machrihanish mine.

He started mining work in Ayrshire and for 20 years was employed in the Doncaster area. He had been employed at Machrihanish since 1946.

Mr Woodcock was highly respected by all who knew him, both fellow workers and townspeople alike.

Mr and Mrs Woodcock were dealt a severe blow when their son Jim was killed in an accident at the Machrihanish mine in February, 1951. Mr Woodcock felt his son's death deeply and it did much to aggravate his illness.

Mr Woodcock was a communicant member of St. Kieran's Episcopal Church where the last rites were solemnised before a number of his fellow workers, friends and relatives.



Images of Jimmy Woodcock and his wife Cathy – photos: courtesy of Ronnie Gay



Jimmy Woodcock and his bride Cathy. Photo courtesy of Ronnie Gay.

I've kept in touch with Jimmy and his wife, Anne – that has meant a lot to me as has being in touch with all of the contributors and, and in some cases, with their surviving families. Sadly Willie McKinlay, who tells the story of Jimmy's death, died just before I finished the film, a source of sadness to me, so he was wasn' t aware of the follow up story, nor did he know of the audiences's warm response to his contribution. Willie helped me so much with the film (as did many others) - he went to the cemetary at Kilkerran most days to visit his

wife's grave, but also went to look for Jimmy's grave as he too was trying to fill in the gaps. I'm glad to say that Jim Woodcock Jnr. has since been able to correspond and talk to Davy Anderson and I think this has probably been good for them both to share stories – I hope so anyway. Making the film has made me realise that many other mining families in South Kintyre shared similar experiences to that of my own family and so it has made it all worthwhile knowing that this story is part of a shared legacy. It's been just lovely to have been in touch with everyone.

Contributors who have passed away during or since making the film are:

John Anderson
Jim Fowler
Willie McKinley
Campbell Maloney
Denis McWhirter
Willie McKinven

I'm very happy to have had the contribution of Agnes Stewart, the daughter of Willie Mitchell, who composed the the song from which the film takes it's title, The Road to Drumlmen. When I went to film Agnes and her husband, Alstair singing the song that too was quite emotional - neither of us said as much but I know that we were both missing our people close to us; me, my father and she late sister, Kathy, with whom she used to sing the song – so I am grateful to her for agreeing to sing the song which was later to punctuate the film.

Jim McKinven, who did lots of work to prepare for his interview me, was even able to remember the registration number of Gus Morrison's lorry and I was delighted when, about a year later, I met Jackie Morrison, Gus's son. Jackie gave me permission to scan his photos including one of his Dad's lorry and lo and behold Jim had remembered the registration number correctly! And I can't remember yesterday!



Photo: Courtesy of Jackie Morrison

I've loved being able to see all the photos that are associated with the mine – here are a few of my favourites...



Willie Durrance in the colliery garage – photo: courtesy of Willie Durrance



Face workers at Argyll Colliery – photo: courtesy of Davy Anderson



Neil Nimmo, shot firer, and the salmon he caught in the Machrihanish Water, just below the colliery –photo: courtesy of the Nimmo Family



Miners at the "Old Pit" at the Pans far left Willie McKinley's brother and father –photo: courtesy of Willie McKinlay



Miners, probably from the Kilkevan pit – photo: courtesy of Willie McKinlay



Big Willie McKinlay - photo: courtesy of Willie McKinlay



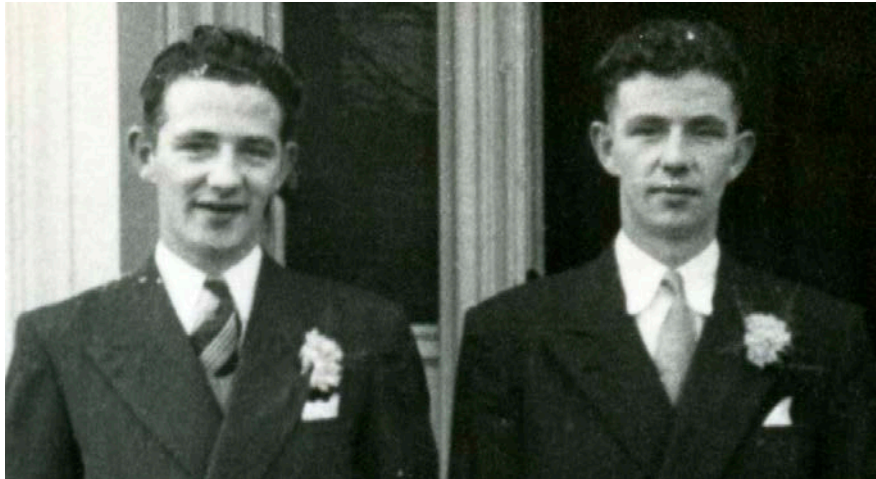
Sandy Smith, Willie Durrance and Gus Morrison: photo: courtesy of Willie Durrance

Since making the film it has been shown at the Campbeltown Picture House (a full house for the premier – thanks to all helped out and to the audience), Machrihanish Village Hall (a very special night - thanks to everyone who helped out and who came along!) and the film has been screened at Document International Human Rights Festival, Deep Fried Festival, Beneath the Surface, Austria and the Festival de Cine de Granada, Spain.... But I need to keep looking for new audiences and venues....

I'll update this document with more info when and as it happens but meantime many thanks to everyone who contributed to the film and to those of you who have taken the time to watch it.

Best wishes
Jan

20th March 2012



Ramsay and Neil Nimmo:- photo: courtesy of the Nimmo family