

A LIFE IN KILLEARN

INTERVIEW WITH JIM FALLAS 21/04/2020

Moving to Killearn

Jim was born at Dailly, a village near Girvan, Ayrshire in 1929. He moved to Killearn aged three, in 1932. His father was a shepherd for Lettre Farm and the family lived in the house at the top of what is now Branziert Road (the house has now been converted into an attractive stone building with big windows looking up towards Dumgoyne Hill).

Jim's earliest memory of Killearn is arriving by bus – and the friendly bus driver - on the day the family moved in. His father had gone on ahead to get the cottage organised with the help of their new neighbours: getting the fire going and moving furniture in.

School Days

Jim's father went to enrol Jim's elder sister, Jean, at the (Old) Primary School. Jim immediately hit it off with the Infant Teacher, and he started in P1 that same afternoon, aged 4 – even though he was underage. He was happy at school.

In those days trains ran through Dumgoyne and Killearn Stations from Glasgow up to Aberfoyle and Stirling. Jim's mother used to catch the train from Killearn to Dumbarton for shopping in the 1930's. (The trains stopped running in the 1950's)

However, Jim's father wanted his family to have an indoor toilet and running water and so he moved jobs to Midlothian in 1939 (and lived in Walter Scott house) and later onto jobs in Arnprior and then Langholm and Muirkirk.

Jim only went to secondary school at Douglas, Lanark for half days – being taught woodwork and gardening for the other half - at that time. There were 80 pupils in his class: 40 attended in the morning and 40 in the afternoon.

The War Years

Jim left school on 7 March 1943, aged 14, and moved back to Killearn in November 1943, working as a shepherd and farm labourer, lodging at Branziert House, before taking up an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic with Peter Lyall of Blane field. He had been close friends with the McLachlans - from 1932 he used to holiday with them.

Jim was fortunate to avoid the Clydebank Blitz in 1941. Douglas was on the flight-path for German bombers. There was an observation post on Kingsmile, Killearn (later converted to a cold War look-out post).

German nationals who lived in Scotland were called up to the German army during the war.

There was a Prisoner of War camp at the top of Drumbeg Loan. Germans there were not very friendly but the Italians (the majority) were. The Italians played football as part of the village team and were keen on the ladies! They used to work on local farm and were harmless. In fact the Italians were happy when Italy surrendered and some stayed on after the war.

Jim remembers a terrific dance on VE in the Village Hall, organised by the British Legion – everyone was there! The British Legion played an important role in village life at the time – with 30-40 members - organising events such as sports days and supporting local people.

Important characters in the locality at the time included the Minister, Mr. McLeod; Councillor George Wilson; and the Headmaster at the Primary School, Mr Ferguson.

A Changing Village

Jim and Mary Fallas got married in 1952. The first houses were built in Buchanan Road / Graham Road in the late 1950s and more, later in the decade. Jim and Mary moved into Buchanan Road in 1959 and have lived there ever since. He spent all of his career in the motor industry: moving into management in 1956 and working in East Kilbride.

In 1950 Cllr George Wilson convened a meeting of youth leaders in the area: some villages were to have Scout Troops, and other BBs. The Boys Brigade were inaugurated in Killearn on 13 November 1953 and played an important part in Jim's life for the next 40 years: as a youth leader and then as Captain for 20 years. Along with the Girl Guides, the BBs were at the heart of youth activities in the village for many years with 75 members in 1992!

The current Primary School was built in 1959; houses in the Allan / Lampson area were built in the 1960s; and the estate down Beech Drive in the 1970s.

Killearn was always the home to a number of rich businesspeople: Stephenson (Shipyards); Bannerman (munitions); Orr-Ewing (Turkey Red dye); Kelvin (diesel); Rennie (?) etc. but Jim remembers there was never any class distinction.

Killlearn is still a prosperous village but, as housing and transport improved, it became home to a growing middle-class and more of a dormitory village for people working in Glasgow, Stirling and Edinburgh.

Shops and Trades

Over the years occupations and local businesses have changed. On Balfron Road, beyond the Toll House, was the Post Office (before it moved to the Spar and then Oakwood). The Vets was the Doctor's Surgery before the Health Centre was built.

Across the road was the White Horse Inn which operated until when a woman was killed getting off the bus at the corner of Station Road and the Council closed it.

Where the Mulberrybush Nursery is now was once a butchers; and Miss McCreddie spun wool in what is now the Old Mill.

Trilogy Hairdressers was previously a shop and Simpson's block included a sweet shop, with a knitting business upstairs and a joinery workshop.

Where the Outdoor Classroom now operates (previously the Spar) was the site of the Wheatsheaf Inn and Gilfillan's Bakery and papershop. The site of the Co-op and adjoining buildings previously housed a grocers, and until fairly recently, a butchers.

Mr Sinclair used to operate the village abattoir on ground where Eldon House (?) now stands – killing sheep and cattle with an axe! Yes times have changed.