Celebrate 50 years of tenants and tenements with Cloch Housing Association! Take a stroll back in time to the origins of the town, read true tales of houses becoming homes and look back at all that has been built and achieved...
It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Cloch Souvenir Book celebrating 50 years of Cloch. This is our story of growth and development in the Inverclyde area since 1968. This book has been entirely funded from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the end result is a humorous, informative and interactive journey through the decades, providing readers with clips from our history so far. Among our contributors are our tenants, our staff and board members and all made possible with the artistic flair of the Magic Torch from Greenock.

I hope that readers will enjoy the book even half as much as we enjoyed making it. Inverclyde has a really proud history and Cloch is a key part of that and will be for many years to come.

Paul McVey, Director

If you spot a QR code in the book, scan it on your phone with a QR reader for bonus content...

Magic Torch Comics would like to thank everyone who took the time to help out and share their stories with us. Every story you will read is based on true events - though we did change a few of the names here and there. Special thanks from us to all of the Cloch Housing team, but especially Mick McKendrick and Liz Bowden whose imagination, enthusiasm and patience has helped make the project work.

Artwork by Andy Lee (p5,6,8,9,11,12,21,24,27-29)
Curt (p15,22)
Mhairi Robertson (p13)
Clochie’s Race Through Time by William Rice & Black Cassidy
Tenements, terraces and tenants
50 years of Cloch and a stroll down yesterdays streets....

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Many a reader has undoubtedly enjoyed a wander through the daffodils and oaks of the Well Park, strolling along the terraces and enjoying the panoramic views across the river.

Here is to be found the centre of our little town, the ancient heart of the place, a place where the woods and fields come rolling down hill to meet the river. It is little surprise that the ancient lords of Greenock chose this as the site of their residence; notable as much for its beauty, as its fortification and security.

Today we know the park as the great gardens of the mansion house. But before this building stood there, the ancient castle of Wester Greenock occupied this site. Sitting on a hill above the town, with clear site across much of the river, this spot was easily defendable from attacks from both land and boat. The first Lord, Hugh De Grenok is known to have occupied this area from as early as the 13th century, and though the stories are now lost to the mists of time, we can’t help but imagine the role that once mighty fortress would have played in the battles and wars of Bruce and Wallace. But as peace descended across our nation, castles gave way to stately homes, and in 1674 the castle was replaced by the a new, more domestic structure.

Turrets and battlements gave way to kitchen gardens and ornate gate posts. This edifice formed the residence of the Shaws, our wealthy superiors, and thence received the name of “the Mansion house” - a name it still retains, although it has not been occupied by the proprietors since 1754.

In addition to the lands of the house, marked out by their walls, the estate covered much of the area to the south of the house, as far back as the Whinhill. To the east of the house stood the woods of Ingleston (or English-toun), where the lords had their own hunting grounds, the Deer Park. As I walked through these places today, changed by the engines of industry, I can’t help but marvel at how far our little town has come. The old mansion house has stood witness to the great changes which have shaped our home; the thousands of ships which have been built and sailed from our harbours, the men and women who have toiled in our industries, and the great sons and daughters they have raised. Chief among them is surely Mr James Watt, born in the shadow of the mansion house.

What sad irony then that the great mansion house is soon to be demolished to make way for that greatest wonder of the age - the railway.
HURRICANE LOW Q HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO HEAD NORTH, INSTEAD, THE WEST COAST OF SCOTLAND WAS BATTERED BY 100 MPH WINDS.

INVERCLYDE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST PLACES TO FEEL THE FORCE OF THE STORM.

THE DAMAGE OF THAT ONE EVENING WOULD COST AROUND 50 MILLION TO REPAIR IN TODAY’S MONEY.

THE COMMUNITY RALLIED ROUND, WITH EVENTS TO RAISE MONEY FOR A RELIEF FUND.

HOUSES WERE DESTROYED, CRANES COLLAPSED, CHURCHES, CLUBHOUSES AND SHEDS HAD THEIR ROOFS TORN OFF.

FIVE PEOPLE DIED IN THE CHAOS.

IT SEEMS APPROPRIATE THAT THIS WAS ALSO THE WEEK THAT THE CHRISTIAN ACTION HOUSING ASSOCIATION WAS FORMED, ON 16TH JANUARY 1968, REFLECTING THAT SAME SOCIAL PURPOSE AND DESIRE TO RENEW AND REBUILD.
Christian action’s original chair and vice chair were the reverend Duncan and Father Kinsella.

We found out how many homeless people there were in Greenock, and solicited the help of the corporation.

The idea was to purchase houses to convert into flats.

We want to provide suitable and affordable housing for rent to stem the flow of young families leaving the area.

Greenock was only the second place in Scotland to take this approach.

We are not concerned with washing our face financially, but what we offer is a service rather than a monetary charity.

From 1965 until 1986, 116 units for rent were created through new build and modernisation of existing tenement properties.

We recognise that a permanent solution lies with the corporations housing department, but they agreed that companies like ours would have a role to play on future developments.

We are now at the stage where it has become imperative that we must find a property.

The original growth of that portfolio is recorded in the typewritten minutes of the organisation.
The chairman submitted a report on the former Trinity Manse of 120 Finnart Street, solicitor Mr Banner was instructed to submit an offer to purchase. The offer was not accepted.

Mr Gallagher indicated he was at present making enquiries about a property in Charles Place Gourock.

Mr Gerrard suggested that Port Glasgow should be looked at especially where a number of buildings might be available because of the new road building works.

The question of the acquisition of the property forming 20 Shankland Road was then considered, with the potential to turn the house into four separate flats.

...the chairman reported that he had offers of donations from groups to decorate rooms at 20 Shankland Road...

enquiries were being made with regard to the property at 5 and 7 Bank Street and to the purchase of gap sites...

...Father Kinsella opened a discussion about the association developing a block of 30-40 utility flats...

Mr Forbes reported that permission had been granted for the Larkfield Grove project and the way was now clear to proceed with development.
JANE'S TALE

MEMORIES FROM CLOCH'S LONGEST TENANT
(NOT OLDEST TENANT MIND...)

When we moved into Larkfield Grove in 1972 the first thing that grabbed me was the amount of space and how clean and new it was. There was plenty of grassy areas and lots of car parking.

Though at that time, very few of us had a car.

And there was a community spirit. I remember the lead up to the Queen’s Jubilee in 1977.

Matt Anderson and Jackie Ramsey went round the street putting up bunting for a street party. We all set about making jelly, sandwiches, cakes...

After a couple of months of living there, we had made friends with probably everyone in the 24 houses. It was very much a communal place and everyone was very friendly.

You could leave your door open with everyone coming and going. Kids, not even your own coming for a drink or a piece with jam. It was that kind of place.

Happy and glorious!

...but as normal in Scotland, it rained. But it didn't deter us, we just took everything up to fancy farm tenants hall and had it there.
I look around now, and I see lots of cars in the car park, but then, every summer, Wimbledon would be on the telly, and all the kids in the grove would mark out the car park as a tennis court, pretending to be born Borg or John McEnroe.

"That ball was in!"

It was such a fun place for the kids to be brought up.

At one point, there were 51 children in 24 houses. I had 3, 2 boys and 1 girl. We were quite crowded, but whenever I asked them if we should move, the answer was always no, they loved living there.

In 1993, it was Cloch’s 50th anniversary and my husband and I were asked to lay a time capsule at the carwood street new build as they had discovered we were the longest tenants. (Not the oldest tenants mind)

Through the years, I have seen a lot of changes, and when I am in town, all the kids who are now grown up still come up and speak to me.

We were delighted to be asked, my husband was in a wheelchair by then, Cloch made everything easier for us and we had a lovely day. We were so proud to be asked.

They all remember the good times living in larkfield grove.
I had occasion of late to enter into conversation with a fellow patron at the White Hart Inn. He revealed that he was a borders man, hailing from the Reivers country around Kelso. I enquired how he found our little community. Fine enough he replied, but remarked with some surprise that “you have a fair few mare steeples than you have turrets”. An accurate observation; Greenock has found itself home to many different churches over the last century or so, certainly far more than my companions home lands, where the reformation saw many raised to the ground. But as for the turrets (of which the borders has an inordinate number), Greenock can boast few Castles. I pointed to the old engraving on the wall – “The ruin of the Castle of Easter Greenock”.

The castle was to be found in the lands around Bridgend, about half-a-mile south of Cartsdyke, and was for centuries the ancient seat of power for the lands of Easter Greenock. Not surprisingly, the earliest history of the lands of Easter Greenock remain lost to the mists of time. But what is know is that a knight by the name of Hugh of Greenock swore fealty to Edward I of England in 1296. His surname isn’t recorded but he is assumed to be an ancestor of the Galbraith family who held the lands of Greenock by the 14th century. When Malcolm Galbraith died without a male heir the lands were divided between his two daughters, with Easter and Wester Greenock being split by the Strone Burn. The old castle, with estates of Eastern Greenock were finally reunited with the lands of Wester Greenock in 1669, passing into the hands of the Shaw-Stewarts from the Crawfurd family.

With this reunification, the old castle fell out of use, and its stones were gradually pillaged to build new houses in the area. Today, there is little left. I am told that the walls were standing as late as 1826. The mound which they form is over grown over with grass and planted with forest trees. A lost ruin of a once mighty fortress. Yes, plenty of steeples; not so many turrets.
In 1979, to reflect its changing role within Inverclyde, the Association decided to change its name.

Inverclyde Housing Association?

Lower Clyde Housing Association?

Cloch Housing Association

Turning Back the Cloch - Part Two

In 1983, the Association built a sheltered housing complex at Elliot Court.

Cloch worked on behalf of Inverclyde Council on the area renewal of Well Park.

In 1994, 246 Inverclyde District Council properties in Strone Farm were transferred to the Association.

Following a successful ballot of tenants, further stock transfer took place in Strone / Maukinhill.

Local tenants and residents were elected to the committee to help implement this wide ranging regeneration programme.
In the last 25 years, the focus of the association has moved eastwards, including the regeneration of Strone Farm, Gibshill and Weir Street.

Cloch was the lead agency for the regeneration of Gibshill.

Did ye know Lansbury Street was named after social reformer George Lansbury, who was also the grandfather of actress Angela Lansbury?

Naw, ah dinnae.

In 2009, the association completed its first new build project in Port Glasgow, Dunlop Court.

Partnership has been the focus of the last few years, Cloch and Oak Tree Housing launched the Common Housing Register in 2012.

After five decades, Cloch is still driven by that original mission of making houses into homes.

...and in 2013, Cloch entered into a formal collaborative partnership with Oak Tree Housing.

ICHRI
Inverclyde Common Housing Register
I was thinking about my best and worst time as a housing officer. They both concern the same tenant...

We organised her first house when she came out of care aged 16.

She got an attic flat but soon after, she had a couple of kids and at one point she was living on her own with 2 wee boys.

It went on fire one night and her and the boys ended up in the homeless centre.

We rehoused her in Dempster Street then when she had another baby we rehoused her in a lovely 3 bedroom flat at Belville Street.

I loved it when tenants wanted to show off their house or garden — I remember Mrs P who moved from a flat in Strone to a house in Clydeview Road...

I met her at the flat the following day and it was heart breaking to see the state of the place.

She was so delighted to get another chance.

I also loved to see Christmas trees in the windows when it was their first Christmas in their new house.

Look! Who knew I would be able to grow bloomin' flowers?!

It was lovely when a new development was finished (whether it was flats or houses) and you could see people making it their home.
Rhodes Down Our Street

We delve into the historic papers of local antiquarian Sir Glen Douglas Rhodes written in the 19th century to find out a little more about the history and heritage of our neighbourhoods.

I have remarked on many occasion the fascination I hold for some of the most ancient communities in our neighbourhood; the farms of Easter and Wester Greenock. These small steadings became the roots from which many branches of our town grew.

It is a natural inquiry - What was the style of character of the farm-houses or steadings occupied by the tenants? We may safely assume that the style quite common in this immediate vicinity sixty years ago was that which prevailed in the time of the late Sir John Schaw - low, one-storey buildings of stone, with very small glass windows, the roofs of heather or thatch, large boat loads of heather being regularly carried across from Sir John Schaw's farms at Millings - the fireplace in the centre of the kitchen, with a stone seat round the ingle, the smoke from the peat fire being carried up through the centre of the roof, displaying the blackened rafters which were utilised for various domestic purposes. Slated houses were comparatively rare in the country, and many were thatched in the old style.

The lands which these farms worked was not the most forgiving; and many of them were named for the landscape itself. Take for example the case of Auchmountain; recorded in its earliest form as Auchmuggin or Auchmugton, this place likely derives from the scots for “field of nettles”, a common reflection of this area as anyone who has walked there will attest.

More recently, the work of Sir Michael Shaw Stewart has lead to the creation of a fascinating and well conceived “fairy grove” in this area. Worked by labourers these last few years, the area directly around the glen has been transformed. A steep hillside garden with paths and steps lead down to a small greenhouse. Statues, on plinths, with cannons between them line the uphill side of the hillside path. White railed footbridges cross the stream. A statue of Lord Nelson stands at the top of the steps. Sir Michaels “Auchmountain Boys” have of late began to create a path through the glen to Whin Hill and I for one cannot wait to hike it.

Auchmountain Glen
GOOD MORNING, CLOCH HOUSING!

EIL, HULLO! I'VE GOT A UEE PROBLEM. CAN YOU SEND SOMEONE OUT?

CAN YOU COME OUT AND LOOK AT MY BACK PASSAGE?

EXCUSE ME?

REALLY QUITE WORRIED THE LIGHT'S GONE OUT!

HERE, MUM!

WE REPAIR...

BING DONG!

THAT'S YOUR DOORBELL SORTED! HERE HE GO!

CARE AND REPAIR

...BECAUSE WE CARE.

WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

IT'S YOUR DOORBELL. IT'S FIXED!

THAT'S NOT MY DOORBELL!

THIS DOORBELL GOES "DING DONG"; MY DOORBELL GOES "BING BONG, BING BONG!"

...I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.

CARE AND REPAIR, HOW CAN WE HELP?

I NEED YOU TO COME AND CHECK SOMETHING.

I THINK I'VE GOT WOODWORM.

THAT CAN BE HASTY MARDING, WHEREABOUT?

MY WOODEN LEGS.
Serving Inverclyde since 1968

1968
- Cloch HA to our flat office
- Bogle St

1974
- United Nations proclaims 8th March as International Women’s Day

1975
- Change name to Cloch Housing Assoc Ltd

1976
- Advance 2 spaces

1977
- 1978

1979
- 1980

1981
- 1982

1983
- 1984

1985
- Advance two spaces to new offices

1986

1987

1988

1989

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

Launch of the...
Cloch Housing Association celebrate 50 years of...

Enter into a partnership with Oak Tree Housing Assoc.

LOCHIE’S RACE THROUGH TIME

Cloch HA lead on the Wellpark Regeneration Project.

TX Spectrum 64
Commodore computers released.
In 1860 Cathcart Street was a very important area. This started when the trains arrived 1841. The station was built to join the journey from Glasgow to the steamers leaving from Customhouse Quay. It also led to Greenock becoming the centre of the sugar trade with prices being set here for the sugar trade throughout the country. The name Sugaropolis was given to Greenock at this time. Businessmen came to Greenock meeting in Exchange Building and Assembly Rooms at 27 Cathcart Street. The White Hart Hotel at number 50. The Tontine Hotel at number 34. The Prince of Wales Hotel number 28 (this later changed to Temperance Hotel). The Railway Hotel number 29. Many people would stay overnight and continue travel next day.

Other Banks also had offices on Cathcart Street including Bank of Scotland at number 47, The National Bank of Scotland at number 29, Glasgow City bank at number 32, making this the business centre of Greenock.

In the 1960s the houses in Crossshore Street became offices of several businesses including National Commercial Bank, Lloyds Registrar Shipping, Twaddell & Reid Accountants.

The Bank moved in 1975 to 122 Cathcart Street and is still there today. The original Bank building became The Steak House and Bar with Business offices above including Denholm J&J Agency, Denholm Line, Greenock Sack Company, West Renfrewshire Business Agency.

In May 1941 Cathcart Street was badly hit during two nights of bombing. Many buildings on the Street had to be demolished but number 38 survived and carried on business while the Street was reconstructed. This was the cause of the differences in architecture in the street.

Although Cathcart Street was an important Street the area behind and toward the town centre were mainly slums with many families living without running water within the closes. Longwell Close which ran from the docks to Cathcart Street (about the length of William Street) had over 40 households. Each with as many as 8 people living in one house or even one room. Number 3 East Quay Lane had over 40 people living in one close. This was while the west end of Greenock was being developed with many villas housing only one family usually with several live in servants. Also in the 1880s many of the slum housing was being demolished to build the magnificent Town Buildings. I always wonder how they must have felt with their children running around with bare feet and sleeping four to a bed to see this building rising up around them.

This gives meaning to the real purpose of Housing Associations. Reconditioning the old to make new and more suitable housing from the tenements which were well built but unsuitable for modern day families.

Eleanor Robertson - Cloch Board
ISOBEL'S STORY

I moved to Port Glasgow with Mum and Dad in the 1970s.

I always wanted to move back to Greenock. My heart was in Greenock, my pals were in Greenock.

Years later, I was at a meeting at the Mearns Centre in Greenock, and I saw the houses opposite had been renovated.

I would love to live there.

I saw the advert for an exchange. Our house was big, and the one we wanted was the right size.

Mutual exchange wanted, Deadister Street.

It was all sorted by June 2000.

One of the women that moved in at the same time was a neighbour from Port Glasgow...

It started to feel like home.

...and then another neighbour was someone I knew because my Mum knew them from working in the canteen for the buses.

Dreams can come true.
Rhodes Down Our Street

We delve into the historic papers of local antiquarian Sir Glen Douglas Rhodes written in the 19th century to find out a little more about the history and heritage of our neighbourhoods.

Cartsburn, Bawhirlie and Belville

Cartsburn has a very old history, the earlier stages of which it is somewhat difficult to trace. The Cartsburn itself marked a natural boundary line, which flowed downhill through the lands of Ingleston. We first encounter a record of Ingleston on some of the earlier maps of the area from around 1650. Ingleston or Englishtoun was most likely settled by a colony of English farmers. There are numerous records in the old town minute books of “English Town Timber” being sold from here, and it is not surprising that this area was always heavily wooded. The lands between Easter and Wester Greenock were divided at this place; from the point where Cartsburn stream (the Strone burn) enters the Clyde, (crossing the road leading from Greenock to Port Glasgow) up the East side of the burn as far as south of Bawhirlie farm, then down Border street. Here too was the old Cartsburn House, and beyond this towards what is now Belville Street, the farms of Strone, Augmugtron (Auchmountain) and Maukinhill (all of which are recorded on some of the oldest maps. It is not surprising that these small farms, often made up of two or three tenants, became the custodians of some of our most ancient traditions.

There used to be a curious superstition which may still prevail connected with the mountain ash or rowan tree as being a necessary adjunct of farm steadings. We know of a farm steading in the immediate vicinity of Greenock, which was rebuilt upwards of forty years ago to replace the old house which was removed to construct their reservoir now used by the Model Yacht Club. When the new steading was ready for occupancy, the tenant— a respectable man— positively refused to enter it till rowan trees were planted round it and the unfailing horse shoe nailed to the byre or stable door to keep away witchcraft! The trees are to this day. Another farm immediately behind Duncan Street Burying-ground had surrounding it a group of rowan trees whose lovely inviting berries were the envy of every child! Doubtless they were planted there for the same superstitious reason.
SINCE CLOCH HOUSING ASSOCIATION FIRST STARTED REFURBISHING HOMES, EXPECTATIONS HAVE CHANGED A LOT...

**TENANTS EXPECTATIONS**

FINALLY!

NO MORE RUNNING OUTSIDE IN THE DARK!

I MIGHT MISS THE PEACE AND QUIET OUT THERE RIGHT ENOUGH...

INDOOR TOILETS. THE BEST THING EVER.

1960'S

I'VE GOT MY OWN BEDROOM.

MORE BEDROOMS AND SPACE.

SPACE FOR NEW KITCHEN APPLIANCES.

1970'S

WE COULD TURN THE HEATING DOWN.

RARE 'N WARM.

CENTRAL HEATING.

DOUBLE GLAZING.

1980'S

THERE'S LIKE 30 CHANNELS ON HERE!

CABLE TV POINT.

SMOKE ALARMS.

ENERGY EFFICIENT HOME INSULATION.

1990'S

AYE. AND NOTHING ON.

ALTERNATIVE HEATING SYSTEMS.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS.

2000'S - 2010'S

BACK AND FRONT DOOR PROPERTIES.

HOW WILL OUR EXPECTATIONS CHANGE IN THE NEXT 50 YEARS?

SMART-HOME HUBS FOR HEATING AND LIGHTING?

INTEGRATED HOME RECYCLING UNITS?

ROBOTS CUTTING THE GRASS?
GOOD MORNING, CLOTH HOUSEY!

HELLO, I'M PHILIP!

SHE'S BEEN TAKEN INTO HOSPITAL AND APARTLY IT'S NOT LOOKING GOOD.

OH, DEAR. I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.

SO, I WAS JUST WONDERING... CAN I GET HER HOUSE IF SHE POP'S HER CLOTH?

CARE AND REPAIR

WE REPAIR...

...BECAUSE WE CARE...

CARE AND REPAIR, HOW CAN WE HELP?

MY HUSBAND'S GOING TO SOME ASTROTURF DOWN IN THE GARDEN. WHAT ADHESIVE SHOULD HE USE?

FOR ASTROTURF, YOU SHOULD USE MEGABOND 3000. DO YOU WANT US TO HELP?

NO, HE SAYS HE'LL DO IT.

NEXT DAY...

HOW DID YOU GET ON WITH YOUR ASTROTURF?

NOT GREAT. HUSBAND ENDED UP IN HOSPITAL.

GOT THE GLUE, WAS CHECKING THE NOZZLE, AND SPRAYED IT. GLUED HIS EYES SHUT. BLOODY USELESS!

OKEY, MODAR, IF YOU JUST THE PEEPHOLE TO YOUR EYE AND STAND NEXT TO THE DOOR.

SО I CAN GET THE CORRECT HEIGHT.

BUT HOW CAN I SEE THROUGH THE DOOR?

WELL, I HAD TO PULL A HOLE THROUGH IT FIRST!

BANG... RIGHT!
Rhodes Down Our Street

As I have noted on many occasions, in ancient times, the lands of Easter Greenock were given over largely to farms. The families who tenanted many of these farms became chief names in the history of our town, and these farms became the seeds of crops that were to bloom into whole neighbourhoods. Chappeltoun, Boagstoun, or Boston, Wood, Knocknairhill or Knocknearshill and Carolina, Lurg, Sheillhill, Cuddieston, Fifestoun, Maukinhill, Glenbrae, Darnduff, Auchmugton, tenanted by William Neill, James Hendry, John Lang, Archibald Duff, John Dennison, Matthew Scott, John Lindsay, Joseph Hyndman, and Robert Warden or Wardon.

Over the years the records show little change in the personnel, or names of the tenants, probably from the circumstances that the farms were held under long leases, and were still occupied by the original tenants or members of their families. The names of these farms tell us much about our ancestors, and their language. Let us take Maukin Hill as an example. ‘Maukin’, a hare, is an old scots word, most often encountered in the works or Burns:

Grim vegeanance lang has taen a nap
But we may see him wauken:

Gude hel the day when royal heads
Are hunted like a maukin.

Little surprise that we find the moors and brush here home to many hares and rabbits still to this day; Many a Maukinhill Hare has found its way into a pot of stew or a plateful of rarebit served up to the patrons of the Tontine. And while the ancient Scots and Gaelic words may have lost some of their meaning, giving way to our more modern tongue, their memory echoes in the hills and glens above the river.

Nearly a century later, the lands of Maukinhill were to play an important part in the protecting of our town during the German raids of World War II. Around this area were sighted a number of decoy balloon anchoring sites, intended to throw bombers off their targets and direct bombs to less populated areas. Here too, on the sight of All Saints Primary School was to found an anti-aircraft gun battery emplacement. The battery was one of at least five constructed to protect Greenock. Similar arrangements of light anti-aircraft batteries were established around a number of vulnerable points, either military or industrial, along the banks of the Clyde.
WE WERE CALLED TO A DISTURBANCE AT A LOCAL PROPERTY...

LOOK AT THIS! HE JUST LETS HIS DOG RUN RIOT.

NAW IT ISNAE. THAT’S NAH DUG POO.

NOT DOG POO? WHO DID IT THEN?

YOU?

TELLIN’ YE. WISNAE MAH DUG, WISNAE ANY DUG.

WE’LL GET IT TO THE VET’S TO GET IT CHECKED.

MEANWHILE YOU TWO BEHAVE.

GET ANYTHING?

LOOKS LIKE THE NEIGHBOUR WAS RIGHT. IT’S NOT DOG POO.

IT’S SHEEP.

BUT... WHAT WAS THE SHEEP DOING UP A CLOSE?

THAT’S THE REAL MYSTERY...
THE WORD ON THE STREET

CAN YOU FIND ALL OF THE STREET NAMES BELOW?
The names are hidden up, down, backwards and diagonally...

Aberfoyle
Bank
Bawhirley
Cathie Allan
Elliot Court
Grosvenor
Highholm
Irwin
Kelly
Lansbury
MacGregor
Quarrier
Riverside
Roxburgh
Trafalgar
Whinhill
I had occasion of late to pay a visit to a good friend in Port Glasgow. Finding myself with plenty of time and in need to some spring air, I ambitiously decided to hike along the old turnpike road, which links the many farms of Port Glasgow and Kilmalcolm with the eastern reaches of Greenock.

As I walked, I was reminded of the many ways in which the geography of our town has influenced how it has developed. Since ancient times the lands of Easter Greenock comprised everything east of the Dellingburn. From the late 1600’s, the records being to put names to these lands, and the people who dwelt on them. In the papers on the Schaw family we find, among others, the names of the following farms in Easter Greenock:- Braehead, by Thomas Reid; Bridge End, by James Alexander; Woodhead, by James Finneyson; Craigend-knowes or Craigieknowes, by John Speir; Mains, by William Campbell; Cabilows (Cappilows), by John Warden; Partanlaw, by Robert Alexander. And Gibshill, occupied by Robert Kerr.

Gibshill is perhaps unique among these farms; sitting as it did in a thin strip of land on the borders between the lands of Greenock and Port Glasgow, it was difficult ground to work. I recalled to mind a story one of the labourers there had told me many years ago. He had remarked on how thin the soil was, so much so that ploughing was a great challenge. One day as he drew the horses across the field, he caught a glimpse of something silver shining in the mud. He stopped down and picked it up, brushing the soil from his hands to find a silver coin. But it was no scottish merk. This one featured the head of some bearded figure, and the words “antonius” clearly visible. Sadly the labourer had no idea that he had held in his hands a coin of the Roman Empire, most likely brought here by some Legionnaire nearly two thousand years before. He swapped it for a cask of ale from the White Hart Inn. I for my part, wonder if these hills hide more of our Roman visitors than just coins.

Today, Gibshill farm consists of a small farm house and offices the property of Sir Michael Shaw Stewart. To the south of it is a large Sandstone Quarry the stones of which are nearly exhausted; these stones have been used to build many great buildings throughout the town, as well as the quays and docks of our mighty harbours. As I made my way across the farm, I was struck by the bountiful view across the river, and while there might be little left to farm or quarry here, there are still harvests and gems to be found.
It was the 31st of October 1971 and I was 14 years old. Lyonie, Codge and I had set up our tent on the hill behind Poplar Street in Gibshill, just on the other side of the old railway-line.

We hadn't been there long when a man appeared out of the dripping mist that descended from the ruins of Donnie's farm. Donnie had died several years before and the farm was torched by some locals shortly after his death around 1967.

You boys aren't planning on camping out on a night like this are ye?

That's good! It's good to have family. I'm Walter by the way. Call me Wattie.

Wattie? Must be from Gourock wi a name like that.

I'm a farmer actually. Listen, can I tell you boys a story?

Guesing yer gonnae tell us anyway...
YEARS AGO NOW, A YOUNG MAN, JUNIOR, FROM ONE OF THE LOCAL FARMS, WENT MISSING UP ON THE GREENOCK HILLS. FOLKS SEARCHED DAY AND NIGHT, BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF HIM ANYWHERE.

EVENTUALLY, THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO DO, BUT MOURN HIM AND MOVE ON...

THEN ONE DAY, YEARS LATER, JUNIOR RETURNED TO THE FAMILY HOME.

BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT HIM. HE WAS LIKE A SHADOW OF HIMSELF.

A FEW FOLK KNEW JUNIOR HAD CHANGED, HAD HEARD THE STRANGE HOWLING AT NIGHTS...

EVERY SO OFTEN SHEEP WOULD GO MISSING, OR TURN UP IN PIECES. BUT WHO WOULD BELIEVE JUNIOR HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT?

...AND WHEN JUNIORS PARENTS DISAPPEARED AND HE TOOK OVER THE FARM, THEY SUSPECTED FOUL PLAY. BUT THERE WAS NO PROOF. NONE YOU WOULD BELIEVE AT ANY RATE...

IT’S BEEN YEARS NOW, BUT SOME FOLK STILL BELIEVE HE ROAMS THE HILLS BEHIND GIBSHILL.

YOU BOYS BE CAREFUL. I’LL NEED TO GET ON MY WAY. FULL MOON TONIGHT. I’M GOING TO SEE IF I CAN CATCH JUNIOR.

THAT STORY WAS SO FULL OF HOLES YE COULD DRIVE THE GIBBY BUS THROUGH IT.

AYE BUT IF HE TOOK WAN MAIR STEP TOWARDS MA CRISPS AND JUICE ADDAY’E TAKEN HIS HEED AFF.

AYE IF YOU DON’T FIND ANY WEREWOLVES DOON THE GIBBY TRY WEIR STREET, THERE’S USUALLY SOME HANGING ABOUT THE AFF LICENCE.
WE WATCHED WATTIE’S DESCENT DOWN INTO MY SCHEME WATCHING HIM WALK THE LANE BETWEEN COBHAM STREET AND BELL STREET PASSING GIBSON STREET, THEN DOWN ONTO LANSBURY STREET. JUST AS HE GOT TO THE BIG BRICK WALL, THAT SEPARATES IRWIN STREET BACK-GREENS FROM SHANKLAND ROAD THE MIST CLOSED IN...

DID YOU SEE THAT? HE JUMPED RIGHT OVER THE WALL!

AYE, HE’S AWAY INTAE YOUR HOOSE.

HE’LL NO FIND MUCH. AULD JOHN’S AWAY ON THE BOATS BUT HE’LL GIE THAT NEW HUDGER A OORS A FRIGHT WIE THAT THAT MAD JACKET AND BUNNET.

LATER THAT NIGHT AROUND MIDNIGHT, WE HEARD THE HOWLING COMING FROM THE SCHEME.

WE ALL SAT UP, STARED AT EACH OTHER AS THE MOONLIT TENT GLOWED IN AN EERIE LIGHT, PAUSED AND THEN LAUGHED FOR THE NEXT 15 MINUTES.

WE WERE USED TO STRANGE NOISES COMING FROM THE STREETS OF GIBSHILL ON A FRIDAY NIGHT.

SO THIS WAS NO DIFFERENT. BUT AFTER THAT NIGHT WE NEVER SEEMED TO TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN.

FOR YEARS EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT WITHOUT FAIL I WOULD HEAR THE HOWLING WOLF PASS BY MY BACK BEDROOM WINDOW, STALKING THE BACK-GREENS OF IRWIN STREET AND LANSBURY STREET HOWLING HIS WEREWOLF SONG.

IT’S BEEN MORE THAN 40 YEARS SINCE THAT STRANGE HALLOWE’EN EVENING IN 1971 BUT WATTIE’S STORY HAS STAYED WITH ME. I’VE EVEN WRITTEN A SONG ABOUT IT CALLED JUNIORS FARM.

WE ALWAYS LAUGHED AND SAID IT WAS SOMEONE COMING BACK FROM BROON’S AFTER A NIGHT OF CELEBRATION BUT SOMETIMES I WOULD REMEMBER WATTIE’S STORY.

HERE HE IS IN THIS OLD PHOTO OF BOGSTON FARM. WHERE GIBSHILL IS NOW SPITTING IMAGE OF THE GUY WE MET THAT NIGHT.

THING IS, WALTER ALEXANDER WAS THE OWNER OF THE FARM AWAY BACK IN THE 1920S. SO IT CAN’T HAVE BEEN HIM THAT NIGHT. BUT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HIS SON.

AND IT WAS WHILE I WAS WRITING THAT, I THINK I FOUND A PICTURE OF WATTIE!

WALTER ALEXANDER JUNIOR. HE WAS LOOKING WELL FOR A MAN IN HIS SEVENTIES. HE MUST HAVE HAD A REALLY HEALTHY DIET. PLENTY OF FRESH AIR AND EXERCISE...
Crow Mount

Crow Mount, or as it was commonly called, the Mount, formed that portion of the town stretching westwards from Bank Street to Ann Street, and running south from Roxburgh street to Dempster Street. To the east lay Lynedoch Street; the place of the linn or waterfall - doubtlessly a reference to the Dellingburn, whose course ran on the edges of the street. South of this stood Drumfrochar, the hill of the heather. By the 1850’s, the Mount or Mount Pleasant as others referred to it largely consisted of a wild plantation with a few gardens and cottages. An examination of the ancient maps and papers suggests that the Mount has been organised and laid out since at least the 1700’s, and possibly before.

Historians remember it for its lush greenery, a stark contrast to the smoke and industry already taking hold at the rivers edge. But natures beauty hides a darker tale. Rumour has it, that this was once the haunt of witches, who held covens there, far from the watchful eye of the townsfolk. By the 1800s our town ancestors had long since abandoned the mount to the Crows. The Mount was almost a miniature forest, with an abundance of trees which naturally attracted Crows, and made it a breeding place for them; their chorus of cawing became a peculiar feature of the neighbourhood.

My observations and studies have lead me to the conclusion that while it was once part of the Well Park estate, with gardens and avenues leading down to the gates on Regent street, it may have formed around an even older structure or space. Could the mount once have been home to an ancient stone circle or standing stone? Perhaps. It is certainly worth considering that the “Sunny Hill” from which Greenock is said to have taken its name, could actually have been the Mount itself.
Major milestone
Key of the door for Sandra!

HOUSING in Greenock’s Strone Farm has suffered from a vicious circle of vandalism and empty homes, but now a brighter future is ahead.

Tenants have sensibly voted to transfer their homes to Close Housing Association, which Scottish Homes make a £15m investment to improve conditions.
CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF TENANTS AND TENEMENTS WITH CLOCH HOUSING ASSOCIATION! TAKE A STROLL BACK IN TIME TO THE ORIGINS OF THE TOWN, READ TRUE TALES OF HOUSES BECOMING HOMES AND LOOK BACK AT ALL THAT HAS BEEN BUILT AND ACHIEVED...