

Diamond duo still dancing!

ALMOST 64 years after first meeting at the tender ages of 16 and 13 respectively, Coalburn couple Alex and Annie Williams are this week celebrating their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. Alex (80) and 76-year-old Annie, of Manse View, continue to live happily together six decades after getting hitched. "My mum and dad met at the Victoria Hall dancing in Coalburn in 1947," said daughter Grace McCall.

"It was my mum's auntie Flo and her friend Maggie Reid who ran the dances at that time.

"Although the dancing was strictly for over 16s, my mum went along at the age of 13 to help with the organisation. "And, as things turned out, it proved to be a very good decision!"

It was clearly love at first sight for the couple, who had a great evening at the dancing and then began to see each other regularly.

They courted for four years before they were married by Rev W Campbell at Coalburn Church in February 2, 1951.

Alex - who was originally from Auchenhath before living in Kirkmuirhill - was brought up in his childhood years by his sister Grace.

He and Annie have been inseparable ever since that first meeting in 1947 and ended up having nine of a family - five boys and four girls.

Alex worked locally as a miner for several years, as he put in long hours to support his large family as its sole breadwinner. In his latter working life, Alex also did labouring for a building company for a few years before leaving due to ill health. Before she got married, Annie - who was raised in Coalburn - was employed as a housemaid at a property in Milngavie. Although she couldn't work for several years due to her commitments trying to raise nine children, latterly Annie worked as a domestic and nursing assistant at Birkwood Hospital in Lesmahagow.

Alex and Annie now have eight surviving children (son Billy died in April 2009), 22 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.

To commemorate their remarkable 60 years together, several family and friends were invited to join Alex and Annie at a celebration dinner in Hollandbush Golf Club.



Many happy moments...inseparable couple Annie and Alex Williams



Lasting legacy...Geordie Clark's final gift will let other youngsters enjoy the fun that Tinto pupils Stuart Affleck and Arlene Black, pictured here with George (right) and Lamington colleague Tom Martin (left), enjoyed in the Clyde in the Classroom Project

AN ANGLING ANGEL

By RON HARRIS

THE legacy left by a legendary Upperward countryman is to live on for decades to come in the waters of the River Clyde he loved so much.

It is also very much a living legacy, in terms of both the fish in that river and the human beings for whom, like George 'Geordie' Clark, angling was more a way of life than just a sport.

When Geordie died far too young last year at the age of just 67, the aisles at his funeral were packed with family, fellow anglers and friends who all knew they were saying farewell to someone special and that the Clyde's rural stretch had lost a great champion.

It couldn't have been more fitting, then, that it was decided that the amazing total of £1200 given at the collection at his funeral service would go to a project very, very close to Geordie's heart.

The money was donated to Clyde in the Classroom, a scheme run by the Clyde River Foundation with the dual aim of introducing youngsters in our rural schools to the ecology and fishing of the Clyde and helping re-stock that waterway through pupils rearing fish from eggs in readiness for releasing them into the river.

Essentially, the project has, for some years now, not only been introducing new generations of fish to the rural Clyde but also the new generations of conservators and anglers to follow in Geordie's footsteps.



Clyde champion...Geordie

And, although he couldn't have known it, among the first schoolchildren to benefit from his legacy was one of his own grandchildren, Logan Meikle, one of the Biggar Primary P6 class taking part with Wiston Primary pupils in the latest Clyde in the Classroom breeding programme.

Geordie's three other grandchildren at Biggar Primary, Lyle Godfrey of P4 and P1 pupils Olivia Godfrey and Louis Meikle will also eventually benefit from the final tribute to their grandad, who hailed from Coulter and who worked as a gamekeeper and in other outdoor, rural jobs which made him, in the

words of close friend, "very much a countryman, in every sense".

He was a mainstay of the reassuringly old-fashioned sounding Lamington and District Angling Improvement Association being, at the time of his death, its long-serving treasurer.

That close friend - and fellow Association officebearer - Maggie Martin commented on the legacy: "If Geordie is looking down from above today, he would be absolutely delighted with they way the money was spent.

"He was one of those people who would help anyone the instant he was asked. Anyone looking for advice knew Geordie would always give it or assist in some way.

"Anyone coming into Biggar on the day of his funeral and looking around streets must have wondered where everyone had gone; they were at Geordie Clark's funeral. That's how popular he was."

The Improvement Association does what it says on the tin and Geordie spent practically a lifetime helping to carry out that aim of protecting and developing the Clyde fishing stretches, especially the nine miles between the Boat Brig at Thankerton and the Bower Pool at Robertson it leases.

He was also a prime mover in the campaign against plans to create a huge quarry at Overburns, something the Association and Geordie were convinced would do catastrophic damage to the ecology of the river they were sworn to protect.

Sadly, Geordie died before that issue was settled but his help in getting the anti-quarrying campaign moving is widely credited with being invaluable by objectors.

Talking of Geordie's legacy was another one of his many friends, Clyde River Foundation's Catchment Manager Dr Willie Yeomans.

He said: "It was an incredible act of generosity and selflessness that George Clark and his family asked for the collection at his funeral to go to the Foundation. It has honestly left me speechless.

"We decided to honour Geordie by using the money to part-fund three further classes to take part in the Clyde in the Classroom initiative. Thanks to this, 75 additional children were able to take part.

"We think Geordie would approve of this as he was very supportive of both the Foundation and this particular cause. We are also very grateful to his widow Nancy and family for encouraging us to pursue this idea. It's going to be very strange for us working on the Lamington stretch of river without Geordie being there - but we will never forget him."

He added: "Geordie was a stalwart of the Lamington and District Angling Improvement Association and a man who gave freely of his vast knowledge and experience of the river to anglers and us scientists alike. Geordie was a great advert for Clydesdale and it was a huge loss when he died."

He said that Geordie's many angling friends had already celebrated his life and work with a memorial plaque at one of his favourite spots, the Wolfclyde Bridge.

Perhaps the most telling thing said about Geordie Clark by those who knew him was in his obituary on the Association's website: "It can be said that he had Clyde water running through his veins."

Schools are not on a budget

DESPITE the huge budget cuts at South Lanarkshire Council there was a chink of light as it emerged that the school modernisation programme will continue to progress.

Last year it was feared that the programme would have to be put on hold and there was a threat of a number of school closures or mergers.

However, at the council's most recent executive committee meeting, an amended programme was agreed.

This means that over the next five years 27 primary schools in Clydesdale will either be re-built or re-furnished.

Council leader Eddie McAvooy welcomed the new schedule.

He said: "It is a busy time for education in South Lanarkshire and the fact that all of our primary schools will be rebuilt or refurbished over the next few years, despite the tough financial climate, is testament to the importance we place on our young people."

Currently four schools in Clydesdale are under construction and are due to open in the near future.

These are the new St Mary's Primary in Lanark, High Mill Primary and Victoria Park Schools in Carluke and Bent Primary in Boghead.

This year work will begin on the new Blackwood and Coulter Primary schools while next year primary schools in Carstairs Junction, Lamington and Coalburn will be re-built.

Lanark Primary will also be re-built while work on refurbishing Leadhills Primary will also begin next year.

Carstairs Primary School will be rebuilt in 2013 as will a new St John's Primary



Time to rebuild...Lanark Primary

School in Blackwood. Work will start on a new Stablestone Primary, a new Forth Primary and a refurbishment of Kirkton Primary School during 2013.

In 2014 work will start on a brand new Carnwath Primary and a new Libberton Primary as well as the refurbishment of New Lanark Primary.

Carnwath Parent Council chairwoman Julie Forrest said: "It's a really big relief that the new school is now going to be built. I'm sure it will be a really big boost to the staff and the children.

"The new school will give the children more modern facilities and I'm sure it will be a better working environment for the staff as well.

"In the past year the parent council has bought six new digital projectors for the school but facilities like that will be standard in the new school as well as things such as SMARTboards.

"There was a time where we didn't think it was going to happen and we

were a bit fearful but thankfully it has been sorted and I'm sure the staff and children will look forward to it."

Underbank, Auchengray and Braidwood Primaries will also be re-built.

Crawford, Abington, Biggar and Wiston Primary Schools will also be rebuilt with work starting during 2015 and in 2016 the refurbishment of Tinto Primary will complete the programme, although work on Crawfordjohn Primary has been suspended pending the outcome of an archaeological review.

The future of the entire programme was put in jeopardy in October last year when a council civil war erupted over the level of cuts proposed.

The schools were only saved following further meetings of the executive committee.

Clydesdale MSP Karen Gillon said: "I'm absolutely delighted that the programme is continuing because the benefits are massive to the pupils and staff at these new schools.

"We want our children to have the best possible start in life and providing a better environment for them to learn is important with better IT capabilities and other systems.

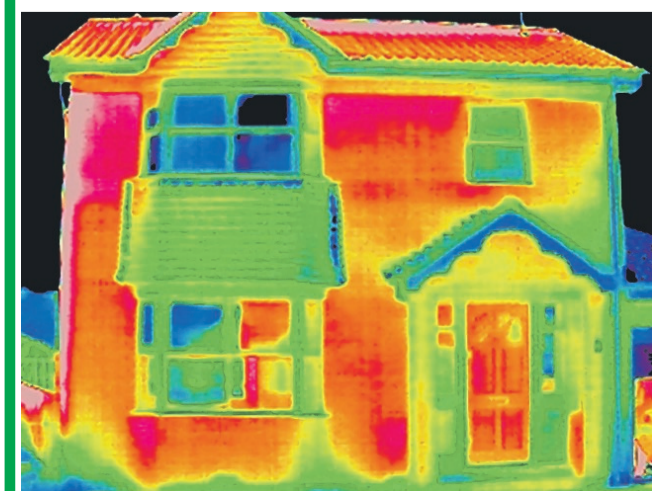
"There was always concern that the remainder of the programme may have to be scrapped.

"That could have meant that some of the smaller schools would have been forced to close.

"Thankfully and even in these tough economic times the council has managed to save the programme and it deserves a huge amount of credit for doing so."

ROSS THOMSON

THERMAL IMAGING SURVEY



In order to demonstrate the energy wasted in Clydesdale and to better determine the best way to tackle the issue, we are looking to commission a thermal imaging survey on a variety of households throughout the area.

This would work most effectively on a street by street or community wide basis.

If you would be interested in seeing how energy efficient your home is from a different perspective and can get others in your community interested, please get in contact today.



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