

Kids in Drumchapel¹

I was seven years old when my family flitted from Govan to Drumchapel. This was sixty years ago. I soon made pals and Pete was the first, he lived downstairs and referred to our new place as Trumpetchurch, and when we had a day at the seaside said Sugarjackets was better than Saltcoats. This was the first time we saw grass that was not in a park. It was the first time I saw a bath in a house. It was the first time we could roam away beyond houses, streets and roads. We wandered deeper and deeper into the countryside. We found places to swim and hills to climb. There were no adults giving us rows and tellings-off, except only a farmer or gamekeeper.

Drumchapel was the best place for playing ever. No place was better in the whole of Scotland. We thought that. Only one place might have been better in the entire world. That place was the Wild West in America, the land of cowboys and indians.

I had four brothers but no sisters. This was the 1950s. There were two schemes in Drumchapel. One Scheme and Two Scheme. I lived in One Scheme up the top flat in 86 Glenkirk Drive. In those days it was the best view of all. .

Nowadays it is pretty hopeless. Across from my old close the view is blocked off by a row of trees and bushes, so that is all ye can see. Why would

¹ A friend of mine was a schoolteacher at Camstradden Primary. She asked me if I might write something for the Primary 7 class. I wrote this essay, around 2012, trying for the voice of a Primary 7 pupil.

people do that? Why would they stop ye looking? Before that ye saw everything. It looked across to the Old Kilpatrick Hills on the left (the west) and the Campsie Hills on the right [the east] If you looked in between them on a clear clear day you could see one of the highest mountains in Scotland. It is called Ben Lomond. Some people in Drumchapel could even see the edge of Loch Lomond. At the start of the Campsie Hills was a single very big mountain. It was known as 'Dumgoyne Hill'. Drumchapel kids did not call it Dumgoyne. We called it 'the Camel's Hump'. We wanted to climb to the top. One day I did climb to the top. By that time I was a dad and had wee girls of my own. They came with me and their mum. We all climbed to the top.

In 1953 there were no good shops in the whole of Drumchapel. Mothers had to go on the bus or the train to bring back vegetables, groceries and butcher-meat from the shops in Glasgow and Clydebank. In Glasgow the main places they went to were Maryhill, Cowcaddens and Partick. They had to buy enough food for a whole week. The mothers came home laden-down with heavy bags. Sometimes boys and girls waited at the bus stop or train station to help them carry the bags home.

Food vans were there too. They caved round the streets in selling different food things. We had not just ice-cream vans, we had fish-vans, chip-vans, bread-vans, butcher-vans and vans selling fruit and vegetables. The bread-vans sold cakes and biscuits too. Some boys and girls had plenty of biscuits and did not need any more. Their mothers and aunties worked in Beattie's Biscuit Factory and they brought home piles of broken biscuits. The biscuit factory is away now. It used to be beside where the B & Q store is at Drumchapel Shopping Mall.

The best vans of all were the chip-van and the ice-cream van. The chip-van sold fish and chips, sausages and haggis suppers. In One Scheme the ice-cream van was owned by the driver Alex Verrecchia. His family owned the University Cafe in Byres Road. Some of this family still own the cafe. It sells great fish and chips today and makes good ice cream.

Sixty years ago there were no schools in Drumchapel. Not even one. But it was not just a long long holiday, we still had to go to school. Boys and girls went to all different schools. At 8.30 am every morning all the primary school children in the whole of One Scheme used to go down to where the wee shops are on Glenkirk Drive. Many buses came to collect us. Protestants and Catholics went on the same buses but if ye were a Protestant ye didnay sit beside yer pal if he was a Catholic. They took us to schools all over Glasgow. We went to these different schools for a year.

I went to Temple Primary in Fulton Street, near to Anniesland Cross. In the old days there was a great picture-house at Anniesland Cross. It was called the Gaumont and was beside the railway station. Later on they changed its name to the Odeon. Then they closed it down and made it into flats for people to live in. Kids in Drumchapel liked it better as a picture-house. They had one in Temple too, just over the bridge near where there were garden plots. My grannie's dad had a plot there. He had a boy killed in the 1st World War, my grannie's big brother, and his name is on the plaque the Parish Church at Anniesland. The picture-house here at Temple was called the Vogue. It went away years ago. Now it's an Aldi supermarket.

On the same street as the school there going up to the canal was a factory called Sloan's where bottles of milk were made. We saw the lorries passing the school gates. The drivers backed them into the entrances. Inside were

hundred of bottles of milk all stacked on crates. The men lifted the crates on to the lorries.

There were great big doors along the walls of the factory. They had big heavy gates to block the entrances. Chains were joined at the corners of these gates to roll them up. We called them roller-gates. The chains hoisted them up and lowered them down. Men jerked on the chains to start it rolling. If they did not do it right the roller-gates did not work.

At dinner-time we went outside the school playground. Me and my pals played at the entrances to the milk factory. We watched the men. They shouted at us not to come too close if the lorries were there for the milk crates. Sometimes the men were not looking and we skipped in. One boy stood on the bottom edge of the roller-gate and another boy jerked the chains to hoist it up. The boy who was standing on the gate went up as high he could get before the men saw ye and shouted. So ye jumped off. We all laughed at the men and ran back to school.

Temple Primary was a good school. There were forty three kids in my class. We played football in the playground. The best thing was the dinner-school. It had the best cooking. The mashed potatoes and steak pie was great and so was the caramel cake and custard.

The winter was very cold that year. Heavy snow fell and lay thick on the ground. One morning we waited for the buses to come and take us to all the different schools. The buses never came. We played at snow fights in Glenkirk Drive and then went home. Lucky for us most mothers were in the house.

Next day we hoped the snow would stay so we would miss school again. But even with snow we never missed football. Sometimes we played and

the ball turned into a big snowball. If it was snowing very heavily some boys did not come out to play. Maybe there were only four. We could till play a game of football two against two. If there were only two boys we played 'heidies'. One boy a side. We had a goal each and headed the ball to score a goal. Only heads were allowed to score.

The year after we went to Drumchapel the schools were ready for the children. In One Scheme we had two primaries. One for Protestants and one for Catholics. The Protestant one was called Stonedyke Primary. The Catholic one was at Belsyde Drive. We had Protestant pals and Catholic pals and played the same games of football.

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Stonedyke Primary was made of tin. It was a smashing school. The janitor was called Mister Knox. He had a smashing big dog called Glen. Its fur was golden brown and white. The janitor had a son who was in my class. He had great bikes. I still see him now, Sammy, he lives in a street near Summerhill Road.

I was lucky because there was a wee path went up to Cloan Avenue from beside my close at Glenkirk Drive. So I was not late very often. I waited in the house till the bell went then it was out the door and fast running but usually ye made it

When it was raining hard we heard the rain pattering off the walls. We liked that school. It had a good playground and a real-size football pitch. The pitch was not made of grass but of a thing called 'red blaze'. 'Red blaze' was like hard dust. We ran fast to get the ball. When we fell down our arms and legs got scraped and bled. But it was still good for playing. The pitch

sloped down. If we kicked the ball too high it bounced away down and went into people's backs and they didn't like ye climbing the fence to get the ball. It was a high fence but ye could to it. It had good places for yer toes and when ye reached the top ye could swing ower and dreep down.

The name 'Stonedyke' was taken from the farm that was on top of the hill up on Canniesburn Road, halfway between Pendicle Road and the corner of Kinfauns Drive. Here were cows and cattle before the Lawrence houses were built.

There were other farms in Drumchapel back when we flitted there. Another one was farther along Canniesburn Road and round the bend past Pendicle Road. The road here goes up a wee hill before getting to Westerton Avenue. On the right hand side going up the way as a field and cattle grazed on it.

Along down Canniesburn Road was another farmhouse with its barns. They were right in the middle of Canniesburn Toll roundabout. There was a toty bit of grass there for the cattle graze. The farmer led the cattle across the road to fields. On the other side of the roundabout was one of our favourite places. This was a picture-house called The Rio. We called it the R 10. Ye saw good pictures here. Then they took it away. Now it has a block of flats

There were two other farms in Drumchapel. One was very near to Camstradden Primary. Turn the corner off Canniesburn Road where it meets Drumchapel Road and it takes us into Kinfauns Drive. Go along Kinfauns Drive to the bend in the road, just about Goyle Avenue. Here was a farm called MacGregors Farm. They sold milk. One of my uncles knew a woman that worked there.

More and more flats were being built in Drumchapel and more and more people were coming to live. The farmer and his family shut the farm moved away. The house and barn were left standing. Nobody was in it for a long time. Big boys went there. They climbed in the windows and climbed on the roofs. Soon all the windows were smashed. Fires were started and things all broken. It was dangerous. Wee kids were not supposed to go in it. People thought it would fall down on their heads. But they went and wee boys climbed the roofs too. It was a good roof but ye had to go careful.

After a long while workmen came and knocked down the buildings. Other workmen came and built new flats. This bit of Drumchapel was called Three Scheme. The streets were Tallant Terrace, Tallant Road, Goyle Avenue and other ones. Three Scheme stretched round Kinfauns Drive beyond Merryton Avenue to Kinclaven Avenue and Blackcraig Avenue. From there it went onto Linkwood Drive then down the hill to Southdeen Avenue, then back along to Kinfauns Drive. So it was like a lasso, the way a cowboy throws a rope, and all the flats and houses were in the middle. A great footballer lived here. His name was Danny McGrain who played right back for Celtic. He was in the 234 Boys Brigade football team and played outside right.

Another one of Scotland's best players was Pat Crerand. He played for Celtic and Manchester United. His girlfriend lived near Tallant Road. One day Pat Crerand came to visit his girlfriend. His pal was with him. His pal was Denis Law. Denis Law was the best player in the world. Boys saw them getting off the 105 blue bus that went along Kinfauns Drive. Before long all the boys in Drumchapel knew this. Everybody rushed to Tallant Road to see if we could see them.

Another football player lived in One Scheme. He stayed in Cloan Avenue. This was across the back from my house in 86 Glenkirk Drive. He was a good player and played for a team from the old days called Third Lanark. England and Scotland were playing football at Hampden Park. After the game some players came to his house at Cloan Avenue for a party. One was Jim Baxter of Rangers. We thought he was great. Boys said another player was there too. He was a famous English player called Johnny Haynes. People said Jim Baxter was leaning out the window. Boys went to look at that window, just to see it.

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In number One Scheme I had pals who lived beside me on Glenkirk Drive and our everyday place for playing was down the hill where we lived. We called it 'the field'.

At the top of the top of hill we gathered. Then we started running. You could not stop running once you started. Some boys and girls fell while running. We had to be careful. It was a very steep hill and it was swampy at the bottom with piles and piles of jaggy nettles.

All different nettles grew here. The worst nettles were the ones that left wee blisters. We searched beside the jaggy nettles for big docken leaves. If you wiped the docken leaves on the stings it made it a bit better. We carried docken leaves in our pockets in case we got stung by jaggies. In the swamps there were special grass that had shoots. We pulled the insides out the shoots. Thsee inside shoots were tasty to eat. There were leaves we ate too. We just chewed them and spat out the bits. We were very careful about the one we chewed. Maybe now it is just poison.

Halfway down the hill from my close at 86 Glenkirk Drive was the biggest boulder in Drumchapel. We called it 'the big boulder'. If we played games of hide & seek the 'big boulder' was always the den. One of our best games was called "one man hunt". Everybody hid everywhere and one person was het. The het-man had to hunt all the rest. But each person he caught joined the hunters. This game went on all day. Sometimes you had to be careful if you were too good at hiding and nobody caught you. When you came out of your hiding place nobody was there. The other boys and girls had all gone home for their supper. They forgot you were still hiding. That happened to me once.

We wondered if the 'big boulder' guarded the secret entrance to a cave from the olden days. We wondered where the cave would lead to and there was treasure down there. One of my pals heard a story from his grandpa who heard a story from his grandpa. This story said that the cave was the secret hideout of the bravest leader and the best fighter of all the Gaelic Clans. He alone put the big boulder there to cover the entrance to his secret cave. His name was Fionn MacCuill and he was with the warriors of Erin.

The warriors of Erin and the warriors of Alba were cousins and fought the same enemies. In Erin their Clan names were O'Donnell and O'Neill. In Alba their Clan names were MacDonald and McNeil. The McNeills were great singers too. One of the best is a woman called Flora McNeil. She is now an old lady but is still singing. She lives in Glasgow. Many of the old McNeil Clan are found in the islands of the Inner Hebrides. One is called Barra. The MacDonalds were the biggest clan in all of Scotland. Their main place was the island of Isla. Their Chief was called the Lord of the Isles. Some Kings of England and Britain did not like the MacDonalds. Their Clanspeople had to leave Scotland. They went to America and to Canada. Me and my pals

wanted to find the secret hideout of the brave Fionn MacCuill. We tried to push the big boulder. Ten of us boys and girls tried and tried to push the 'big boulder'. It would not budge even one inch. We never saw into the cave.

If we ran too fast past the big boulder and on and on down the hill, we landed right in the water. There was a burn here. This burn was deep in places. It went through the middle of the field. Away up the hill on one side was my street, Glenkirk Drive. Away down the hill on the other side was Southdeen Avenue. But when we moved into One Scheme there was no Southdeen Avenue. The workmen were just beginning to build it. Me and pals went there and took piles and piles of nails and kept them buried beside the burn.

On this side of the field was a great place for football. In the summer we played other games. Rounders was the best. We played cricket too. It was not so easy to play cricket. People needed a lot of stuff for that game and special balls that were very heavy and solid. They were dangerous. Once a big boy threw a cricket ball to my big brother. He was to catch the ball. But he forgot it was cricket and jumped up and heided it like in football. The ball went clunk on his head and he was knocked out. Unconscious. We had to go away up to the house and tell my mother. She took him to the doctor. But he was okay. The doctor said the boy had a hard head. Maybe he had made a dent in the cricket-ball instead.

Rounders was a better game for kids. We only needed a tennis ball and a tennis racket. Our jerseys too. We took them off and laid them down on the grass to make the bases. Boys and girls played rounders the gether and all ages could play. The best player was a girl called Maggie. She was my pal's

big sister. She was better than any of the boys. Whoever was captain and won first choice always chose Maggie for the first. Sometimes the ball was smacked so far by the big boys and girls that it landed in the burn. We had to walk on stepping stones and balance down to lift it. Some stones were wobbly and our feet slipped in. One time it happened to a boy. He went back the way and sat down in the water. We were laughing at him. It was not funny for him. When he got up his trousers were soaking wet. He had to go home to get changed. But his mother kept him in, and it was not his fault.

If it was raining the burn was fast-flowing. Sometimes the water overflowed the banks. On the One Scheme side of the burn there were not many trees. The other side was Southdeen Avenue. That made it Three Scheme. There were plenty of trees and bushes on the Three Scheme side.

These trees were great for climbing. Big boys climbed the trees and found a good strong branch. They had a long rope. They wrapped the rope round their waist or shoulders and climbed the strong branches. They crawled along and tied the ropes round and round the branch to knot it tight. Then they lowered the rope down from the branch.

This made the best swing ever. We called it a rope-swing. Kids swung on them way across the burn from one side to the other. Sometimes another boy or girl jumped onto the swing, and then another. When that happened we all slipped off and landed in the burn. Our socks and shoes were soaking wet. If it was tea-time we had to go home like that. Squelch squelch the whole way.

We also climbed high up the trees and took spars of wood with us. Up there we built a tree-hut. We jammed the wooden spars into the elbow

sides of the branches. We tried to make a platform. We wanted this as a den. We could climb up there and hide out. This was good when big boys were chasing us. Sometimes we were cheeky to them. We shouted names at them and ran away. If they chased us we had to hide.

Other boys who chased us came from a Squatters Camp. They were angry to see us crossing the burn because it was their place. We tried to find a tree with a huge long branch. We found one so long that it stretched across the burn. We could crawl right along the branch, holding on very tightly until it dropped down over the other side of the burn. If boys were chasing us we could climb up the tree and escape along that long branch. The weight of our bodies dragged the branch down over the burn. We dreeped down the other side and ran away.

In some places we jumped the burn or else put down stepping stones so we could get across. We had to run fast across if we were being chased. We were careful not to fall into the burn. Some did and got so soaked they had to go home. Their mothers gave them into trouble.

The burn was great for fish but all wee toty ones. We caught them. They were called 'baggy minnows'. The best ones to catch were goldfish. Their bellies were golden or red in colour. There were not many goldfish and they were hard to catch. If you caught one you could swop it. Another boy would give you five baggy minnows for one goldfish.

We caught the fish with our hands. We lay along the bank of the burn, lying on our fronts, and reached down our hands into the water. We cupped our hands together and waited for a fish to swim over the top. Then we pulled our hands up fast. That was the way we trapped the fish.

We did not kill them. We kept them in a jar or else let them go free again. We put the fish back at the exact spot we found them. They had their pals and family swimming in the same place. We did not want them to get lost.

We did not catch sick fish. Sick fish had white stuff growing round their necks. Some we called 'ghost-fish'. If we saw one we shouted: A ghost-fish! We knew not to hold one in case it was poisoned and we caught the poison.

In early Spring we looked for frog-spawn and took some home in empty jars. We waited for the frog-spawn turning into tadpoles. If it did not turn into tadpoles we went back down to the burn to catch some. We gave names to the tadpoles we caught. Then we set the tadpoles free in the burn. Weeks later they turned into frogs. We went back down to the burn and shouted the names of the tadpoles. We hoped they would remember their 'tadpole' names and come to see us. If we made pals with any of the frogs we could take one in our pockets into school. That would give us a laugh with the lasses.

In the long grass down the hill we caught crickets. We waited and were very quiet until we heard one making their special sound. They knocked their knees together and that is what made the sound. We parted the grass where the sound was coming from. If we saw it we sprang onto it with our hands to trap it. We put the crickets into jars. We also found wee mice down the field. These were different mice to the wee ones we got in our old houses before we came to Drumchapel. The ones in the field had fatter bellies.

Our burn came from under Kinfauns Drive, coming over from Bearsden. There was a huge wide pipe deep under the road. It was good for doing echoes. Boys went down into the big pipe. Ye climbed through from one

end to the other. The pipe went underneath Kinfauns Drive and buses and lorries went over the top. We heard the deep rumbling noises and hoped the pipe walls would not cave in.

We called it the pipe-tunnel. It was a circle and it was very hard to climb through. Boys aye fell in the water. There was a special way to do it. You had to jam the sides of your shoulders and arms onto the top sides of the tunnel.

The tunnel walls curved at the top like a circle. Ye could not stand inside. The burn flowed through. There were stepping stones outside. Ye stepped on them to come inside. Ye wedged the sides of your legs and ankles against the side walls of the tunnel. Your head bent forward. Then you pushed your hands flat against the top, and moved along very slowly. It hurt your ankles and gave aches in your shoulders. But some boys could do it without their feet falling in the water. If people fell in water splashed the tunnel wall and made it too slippy and if you were next you slipped in.

We followed the burn in the direction opposite Kinfauns Drive. This led the way back along through the middle of field down from Glenkirk Drive. Along from here is the street called Belsyde Avenue. When I was bigger I got a job as a paperboy and delivered newspapers round Belsyde Avenue, Boon Drive and Arcan Crescent. In One Scheme the best boys' football team was the Arcan Dynamo.

The best big boys' team in Drumchapel was the best in the whole of Scotland. That team was the Drumchapel Amateurs. All the best players played for them. The man who ran this team was Douglas Smith. He was the Captain of the 2nd Boys Brigade. This company was in the White Church at Garscadden Road. The other BB in One Scheme was at the

Congregational Church in Essenside Drive. Their Minister was a woman called Mrs Shedden. Their BB was the 142nd Company.

My Dad was a BB officer in the 142nd and he taught the boys how to do morse-code and semaphore. Morse-code is how soldiers and sailor make up words by tapping out short sounds and long sounds. If there is danger they tap out the warning signal SOS. Three long taps, three short taps, three long taps. Semaphore is a different a code altogether. Semaphore uses two flags. A soldier or sailor holds a flag in each hand and can make up different letters by the way they move the flags.

Boys under 12 joined the Lifeboys. We called it the 'Lifies' and played all different games. My pals who were Catholics did not go to the Lifies. They had a club called the Boys Guild. One time they smuggled me in and I got a game of table tennis.

Boys and girl liked playing table tennis. My Dad was good at it. He ran a table tennis club for boys in One Scheme. Me and my brothers played it in our house. My mum was good too. We had a table in the living room that pulled out. Sometimes my pals came in and we had big games. My Dad would like to have seen how Drumchapel table-tennis players became the best in Scotland.

At the corner of Belsyde Avenue and Boon Drive was Belsyde Primary School. All my pals who were Catholics went to this school. Beside it was a great field for big games of football. We called this field the 'cornfield'. You looked over the hill here right down onto Drumchapel Road. There was a Chapel for Catholics on one side and a Church for Protestants on the other. Behind them was Drumchapel railway station.

Nowadays there is a wee row of shops here. In the old days it was all a big nursery. A nursery was where you could buy potted plants, flower-seed, fruit and vegetables. It is a wee bit like Dobbie's out in Bearsden, or else like B & Q Garden Centre.

If you go along Drumchapel Road one way it changes to Garascadden Road and leads down to Great Western Road. Everybody calls it the Boulevard. A boulevard usually has grass growing down the middle of it. Sixty years ago the tramcars went down the middle of it instead. The trams had their terminus at Blairdardie, beside Cloberhill Primary School. My Dad went there as a boy.

We thought Great Western Road was the best road ever. It went from St George's Cross right out past Loch Lomond and up through Crianlarich. It goes right up to the Highlands from here, through the high mountains by Glen Coe.

Great Western Road goes another way. This is through Arrochar then up the long steep road called the Rest and Be Thankful. You see here the old road that the Highland cattlemen used to drive their cattle down from the Highlands. They were quite poor and did not have much food. When they were hungry they pricked the veins of their cattle to let out wee drops of blood. They mixed the blood with oats and called it a 'blood pudding'. They ate that blood pudding to keep them going till they got to the market. They went to America and were cowboys and went on long trails.

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If you go the other way on Garascadden Road past the White Church it leads to the corner of Kinfauns Drive and Drumry Road. Before you get there

the road turns a bend and here was a private road blocked off by iron gates. These gates had their own name. They were called the 'Girnin Gates'. They guarded the entrance to Garscadden Estate and were made out of twisted iron and painted jet-black.

Kids thought they were a bit creepy and angry-looking. An angry-looking face is a 'girnin' face. People said the gates were 'girnin'. My grandpa was aye girning. My grannie called him Girny Gub the Cat's Auntie.

The Girnin Gates blocked a wee private road that led into the mansion house. The rich people who lived there closed the heavy gates to stop people running in to look.

Garscadden Estate was made for adventures. Kids in Drumchapel all had their own ways of skipping in. We were not allowed to go through the Girnin Gates. Nobody was allowed. Only the ones that had the big mansion house. This was a rich rich family from the olden days called Colquhoun. Other people out of this family owned the land all round Loch Lomond. They owned all the land all round Dawsholm Park as well and all around Kilmardinny and away up in Aberdeen they had all the other land. They had all everything and were very rich. They did not like people walking on places if it was theirs and had men with rifleguns to shoot ye.

If you look up from Garscadden Road you see a high-up street on top of the hill. This is Belsyde Avenue. It overlooks the Estate. One of my teachers from Stonedyke Primary lived there. She was a good teacher. Mrs Douglas was her name. We all liked her. She told my mum I would be good at my lessons if I stopped talking. She said I was a complete blether.

Down the other side of Belsyde hill was the same field joining to Glenkirk Drive that had the burn flowing through the middle. This burn separated

One Scheme from Three Scheme. On the other side of here was Southdeen Avenue. The burn in between flowed into Garscadden Estate. This was our secret way to skip in. We followed the burn along. There were bushes, weeds, hedges and all different trees. It became the thickest ever. The trees were the thickest. Bushes and weeds were all tangled. This was the start of 'the woods'. Jaggy nettles were everywhere. Nobody in Drumchapel could see into Garscadden Estate because of the woods. It was difficult to find a way through and ye had to watch for the 'gamey', the man with the riflegun. When you got along near the Estate there was a fence. We had a way and the fence helped us. We crept along at the sides of the burn then came into 'the woods'.

The woods was the boundary of the Estate. The rich people put a fence round it. The fence came down inside the woods and stopped above the burn. But we could sneak through. We just crouched down low and went underneath. If it was hot weather we did it another way. We took off our socks and sandshoes and waded through the water.

We had to creep carefully when we were inside the Estate. Kids from Drumchapel were not allowed. The people who owned the Estate had their big mansion house in the middle. It was called Garscadden House. There were apples trees and pear trees growing in an orchard nearby. We were always starving and trying to find that orchard. The gamey tried to catch us. A big boy said he had a rifle and was looking for kids from Drumchapel and if he found any hiding in the bushes he would shoot them.

We crept in among the thickest bushes so he would not see us. Some things were scary. There was a narrow path high up against the side of a big wall. It was very dark here with the thick bushes. My knee cracked against

a big piece of stone. I looked to see what it was. It was a gravestone. Aaah! We ran away. But then we stopped and went back to look. I read what it said on the gravestone. It was not for a dead person but a dead dog. This dog was a man's favourite. After it died the man buried it and put a gravestone there in its memory. We found another grave later. This one had a gravestone too and it was near a wall. It was in memory of a man's horse. It was his favourite. If you climbed a tree you could get on to the top of the wall and dleep down the other side. It was an old stable. On this other side of the wall the workmen were building new flats and houses. The street built here is called Southdeen Road, so it was the old stables. If you walk along here and turn left up Linkwood Drive from here it takes you to the top of a steep hill. Going down the other side of Linkwood Drive are the skyscrapers. All the time going up here if you look over the left then this is where the old Estate was, the place where it was the Colquhouns. Stories about here go back hundreds of years. One side is near the old shopping centre, close to the library on Halbeath Avenue. See across Dunkenny Road from here. This is Halgreen Avenue. My big brother had a newspaper job here when he was a boy. When he stopped doing it I took it over. It was my first good newspaper job.

Another farm was down past the swimming pool on Drumry Road, by the corner of Dunkenny Road. In the old days a 'dun' was the name of a wee fort on a hill. We wondered if one was here in the olden times and if there was a Clan Chief called Kenneth. There used to be a big grass field here and every summer the farmer let a carnival come for two weeks in June. We called it 'the shows'. It was the same carnival went to Glasgow Green. In the winter the same carnival went to the Kelvin Hall.

In the old days it went round to where people lived. When it stopped in Drumchapel it was just there at the corner of Drumry Road and Dunkenny Road. Boys and girls thought it was great when 'the shows' came. We went everyday. We could not pay the money to go on things all the time. We just listened to the music and had a laugh with the lasses. Across this field was a big barn. In the barn the farmer had used a famous old stone to help make the barn wall solid. That old stone was put there hundreds of years ago. A teacher told us. Robert the Bruce went there and had a famous document that was signed. The barn was knocked down so they could build flats for people to live. What happened to the old stone? Maybe we could find it. The teacher said we could.

Other things happened in Drumchapel. Was this a place where people played the 'drums'? No, it was hills. Drumry too. Drum was for a hill. It was a word from the Gaelic language, the same as 'burn', meaning for a wee stream. My Grannie spoke Gaelic and she could tell me. There were plenty of hills in Drumchapel. There was churches all over. In the olden days 'chapels' and 'churches' were the same because Catholics and Protestants were the same.

We thought maybe if stagecoaches went along Drumchapel Road, maybe they did. Or maybe if Highland kilties came chasing the Redcoats. Rob Roy MacGregor roamed the country out Stockiemuir Road. Did he come to Drumchapel? Maybe he did. He was at a place, Robroyston. 'Robroyston' is Rob Roy's town. They had William Wallace too. He came to Springburn and stopped there for water. There is a road that has his name. It is called Wallacewell Road. That means the 'well' where Wallace stopped for water. 'Springburn' is a name meaning water. 'Spring' is water coming out the ground and burn is burn so Springburn is where people got their water. The

men coming with their cattle down from the Highlands stopped at Springburn to let the cattle drink some water then they went to market.

We liked to hear the stories. Some were creepy. It made games good for playing. For some we had Kilties fighting Redcoats. The Kilties were the Highlanders and the Redocats were the English. Mary Queen of Scots was in the dungeon at Dumbarton Castle. A train takes you there in ten minutes from Drumchapel Railway Station. Maybe she passed through Drumchapel when she came to fight the battle.

Some of the stories were daft. A good one was the rich man who lived at the Estate. Him and his pals were all in his mansion house and they were eating big piles of food and drinking lots of whisky and all the dogs were there too and the men were flinging them their bones after they had chewed them and they were all greasy. Some ate so much food and drank so much whisky that they fell asleep at the table and were snoring. This old rich man was like that. People thought he was asleep. But then he was not snoring. They looked at him again and shook him by the shoulder. He was deid. Poor old Colquhoun, they said, he's deid. But they just carried on eating his food and drinking his whisky till it was all finished and then they went away hame. When we played in the woods at Garscadden Estate a lassie told us she saw his ghost.

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We walked everyplace. One of our longest walks was out the Stockiemuir Road. We just liked its name, Stockiemuir. What was that, Stockie? Ye had to be Stockie, and going across the moor, maybe getting chased by the Redocats. Maybe ye would find an old dagger that belonged to Rob Roy. Or

maybe his cutlass. Imagine a cutlass. The teacher told us about the big battle at the old Castle at Drumclog, out past the Waterworks past Milngavie. Nowadays you go into Mugdock Country Park and walk to see it.

We went on long treks into the Old Kilpatrick Hills. We had different ways for going. We called these long treks 'going on a hunt'. We planned for it. We said to our pals. "Come on we'll go on a hunt next Tuesday!" One way we went out to the country was past Camstradden Drive and past the Bluebell Woods, right up the steep road into Bearsden. It took us through to Drymen Road. We only went this way when it was the middle of the summer holidays. We walked and ran.

It was better if we had bikes. We never went only with two boys. We waited till we had about six. Sometimes bigger boys came with us. Maybe we had two bikes for six boys. Two boys went the bikes. Two boys got 'backies'. The other two boys just ran beside them. Then they changed 'backies'.

We took our swimming trunks and pieces too. A piece was bread with jam on it. Sometimes we were very hungry and dug a turnip out a farmer's field. We wiped the soil off the turnip. Boys had knives. We cut off the thick skin of the turnip. It was very white inside. It was juicy and chewy to eat. Carrots were best but we did not find many. Other times we found a tree with wee apples growing. These were called 'crab apples'. We ate them but they were very hard and not tasty. If we ate too many we got sore bellies and needed the lavvy.

There were proper apple trees too and pear trees. We looked for them. They were in people's gardens. They chased us away but we just went. Sometimes apples and pears were in the grass. We lifted them up. Some

boys climbed the trees to get them. A big boy shook the branches. Apples dropped off and we grabbed them before the people came and got us.

Away out miles on the Stockiemuir Road was the golf course. We stopped before the wee road that goes along the side of the golf course beside the Allander River. There was a wee loch here just beside the road where we swam. It was not deep. It had big weeds and rushes at one end. We had to be careful our feet did not get tangled up. That wee loch is not there now. The farmer drained it away to make a new field for cattle.

We went away along the wee road at the side of the golf course. It goes over a bridge and up round a bendy road. There is a big gulch at the side and it is very steep so if ye fell down it was too dangerous. Only big boys went through the railings here. We walked on up the bendy road. It was too steep for bikes. If ye had one ye had to push it. This road takes you out beside Mugdock Country Park. But it was not a park when we went, it was just a place boys went on adventures.

This was our longest walk of them all and it took ye all day and ye needed big boys to go with ye. Ye had to go early and then ye were back late, so ye had to take pieces or else if ye had a wee frying pan and ye could knock sausages out yer house and bring them. Then ye made a fire and fried the sausages. People did that. When we went we just went where we wanted except if there was bulls or gameys chased ye. One time there we found an old zoo from bygone times. If you go round Mugdock nowadays you can see where animals were kept locked up in cages. The best pond for tadpoles is the Gallows pond where they drowned the witches. Over the road from Mugdock Country Park was the best swimming loch of them all but there was bulls to pass. It was very deep and good for diving. If you could not

swim it was better not to go into it. One time I dived in and there was a tree growing underwater and I did not see it so when I dived down it was into its branches and I clunked my head and had to come out and lie on the grass. I was asleep till I woke up..

We all liked swimming a lot and we went to Whiteinch Baths, Maryhill Baths and Woodside Baths, and two baths in Govan, Harhill Baths and Summerton Road Baths. Our favourite baths was at Clydebank. All the swimming pools had diving dales. Clydebank Baths had other good things: a springboard and a chute. Clydebank had a good picture-house; the La Scala. The red bus went from Drumchapel. The terminus was at Peel Glen, right from Camstradden ye go along Summerhill Road and there it was beside the 'big tree'. One time I did a newspaper round at and down to the end of Peel Glen Road, just next to the big tree. I made good tips off people.

Everybody knew the 'big tree' at Peel Glen. Underneath the branches stood a man who was a bookie. Some of our dads put money on horse races. The bookie at the big tree took our dads' money for bets. He had to watch out for the cops. They did not like him doing it.

One of our best walks was here and it was 'a hunt'. We called them hunts when we went looking for stuff but this was a dangerous one because boys chased ye, big boys that were just like men, and if ye got caught they gave ye a right tanking. It was squatters. They had another camp here going out from Peel Glen and they hated ye for coming. Way in the olden days there were two Squatters Camps in Drumchapel. One was here and the other one was on the other side of Kinfauns Road, way up the hill from Camstradden Primary.

Along this way was a big red bing. This was a hill made out of piles and piles of stones and red dust. It was too dangerous. Nobody could climb it and nobody ever did and if ye tried all the stones and dust went right in your shoes and came up to your ankles so really ye could not climb it and if ye managed it all the stuff would fall down on your heads and smother you to death.

Round the bend on the road we crept past the 'Squatters' Camp' near the glen and kept walking until we got to Duntocher Road. We went along the left side from there. We cut along a wee road to the right. This led up a slope to a farm, and passed by a pig-pen. We saw the pigs. They were very big, very fat and always just muddy and all wrinkly. Some boys shouted names at them but they did not bother. Usually we just left them. Pigs kill ye. Imagine they got out.

At the end of this road we walked on across the moor and into the country and this was the real country and the real highlands. Then a gamey came and chased us with a riflegun and shouted he was going to fire it at us and get the polis. But we shouted back at him, if he was going to fire his gun at us our das would come and get him. We found a great loch to swim in. There were big boulders at the side. That made it good for diving and jumping in. But this water was the coldest ever, even in the hottest day, it was freezing. A boy had a frying pan took from his maw's kitchen. Another boy had sausages and eggs to fry. Another boy had pieces on butter. We had matches and got boulders and dry wood and made a campfire. We cooked the eggs and sausages but we had forgot the cooking oil and the eggs all stuck to the bottom of the frying pan and then we had forgot the knives and forks and nobody had plates. Boys had knives but they were just wee and not for eating, but ye could, so ye could use them. The boy whose

frying pan it was waited till the the eggs and sausages went cold. He scraped them out off the bottom of the frying pan and put it in our hands and we just ate it. It tasted good and it was a good laugh too.

One time we climbed a high hill. There were great big boulders and rocks to climb. We reached as high as possible and could see everything for miles, miles and miles. It was the best view ever. But we could not see Drumchapel. That was one thing.

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One big hill in Drumchapel is across from the junction at Summerhill Drive and Kinfauns Drive. In the old days it was only this hill. In Drumchapel it was the biggest hill of all and we called it that, the 'big hill'. Going up the 'big hill' was the other Squatters Camp. They all lived here in huts and caravans, even babies and old people. They had no houses to go to. People called them 'squatters'. Other names were 'tinkers'. People now say 'travellers' because they go travelling about everywhere. They mended pots and pans. They sharpened people's knives and tools. When farms were there they did work for the farmers. They picked raspberries and strawberries for making jams and cakes and pulled turnips, carrots and potatoes out the ground. They did other jobs.

The best fighter was a boy from that Camp. We called him Geromino. He got his name from the Indian in the Wild West. He had an axe in his belt. Him and his pals came along our field and our burn. They did not like us being there. If they saw us they chased us. They wanted us all to go away. We were the new people in Drumchapel. But more of us were coming and

coming. The workies build more and more houses. Scheme One, Scheme Two and now Scheme Three and soon Scheme Four.

One time me and my pal sneaked up the hill past the Squatters Camp, right to the top. The one thing here was an old army camp. Right on the very top of the 'big hill'. Ye had to be careful going here. It was surrounded by barbed wire. Ye lifted the barbed wire at the bottom corner and went in underneath. If you were not careful the barbed wire cut your hands and legs and ripped your clothes.

No soldiers were left in the camp except one sentry. There were big guns there. Anti-aircraft guns. Enemy airplanes might be flying to drop bombs. These big guns had turrets and long long barrels for firing up to hit the airplanes before they could drop the bombs. They were left over from the 2nd World War. My dad was a soldier in it. He was in the armoured cars and did the morse-code in the radio receiver. I did not tell him I went there. He would have given me a doing. These big guns were covered over by great big sheets of heavy tarpaulin. We lifted the edges of the tarpaulin and crawled under. We swung on the long barrels but ye needed a puddy-up. We called it a 'puddy-up'. Frogs jump. A name for a frog is 'puddy'. If you get a 'puddy-up' it is the same as getting a 'jump-up'.

I held my hands clasped together. My pal put his foot on my hands. He put a hand on my shoulder to balance. When he was balanced he reached up as high as he could go. His foot was still standing in my hands clasped together. I pulled up my hands to help him reach as high as he could. He grabbed onto the barrel of the big gun and swung up on it. Then the next time we changed places and it was me who got up to swing.

One time that sentry was there. We heard him coming along whistling a wee tune. We hid underneath the tarpaulin. We waited till the sentry was away on the other side. We crept out up the barbed wire, and crawled under. We ran down through the long grass to escape. But boys from the Squatters Camp were there. They captured us. They took us into the camp. Lucky for us we did not see Geronimo. A while after me and my pal looked out the door of the hut and the boys were not there. We could not see them, so we just walked out the door. A woman was there. She just smiled at us. We ran away down the hill.

One time we went up the big hill we only saw a wide empty space with all the patches where places were and old ashes from fires and that was that. That was the end of the Squatters Camp. The people flitted away to another place. We did not see them and did not know where they went.

Down at Canniesburn Toll a good picture was coming on at the Rio Picture House. Me and my pals went to see it. So did all the kids in Drumchapel. The picture was called Calamity Jane. The best person in it was Jane who was like a real cowboy. She sang good songs. For one song we all changed the words and here is how we sang it:

Take me back to the Green Hills
the Green Hills of Drumchapel,
where the Squatters fight
nearly every night
in the Green Hills of Drumchapel

That was Drumchapel instead of any place else, we thought it was great.

