

## FOREWORD

The following long rhyming record, "The Pithead Saga," tells of the workmen their conditions, their poverty, and many incidents, tragic and humorous, but all of these authentic, between the long, lean years of 1924 and 1965.

Most of the participants are gone to where "the weary traveller at last lays down his load." Some still survive, may their memories be refreshed.

Many of their relatives will read these eight-hundred and forty-four lines, for the saga contains the names (or nick-names) of three hundred and four of whom I am proud to claim as fellow workmen.

Some references may seem impertinent, some words ambiguous, and in a few cases, obscene—it was our crude way of expression; they contained no enmity, not even sarcasm. I hope that all who peruse this work accept it as the actors did.

The lines were written but for one reason only, that in days to come, if the rhyming should fall into the hands of Muirkirkers they will be aware of, I hope interested in, a small part of Muirkirk history.

I do not claim the tale as a work of art, but if it had been unwritten the flood of regret might have washed away "the salt of the earth."

JAMES G. SAMSON.

# The Pithead Saga

I've often thocht I'd write a screed  
About the folks at Kames Pit Heid :  
I'll no' say much ye may depend  
Anent them at the latter end.  
We'll creep in canny, unawares  
Then hurry up the New Pit stairs ;  
I couldna think o' ocht that's better  
I'll stert wi' a wee gey guid onsetter—  
Wha ushered a' the cages doon  
Gey quate, jist whiles, was Sanny Broom.  
A few feet frae the safety gates,  
Repairing hutches oan the plates,  
There naebody spoke, nor naebudy dared  
Tae interrupt aul' Johnny Baird  
A handy man wha'd skelp yer lug,  
An' squeeze ye in a bear-like hug—  
He'd let his biceps press ye ticht  
And vice-like haud ye wi' his micht—  
He'd laugh as tho' it was a jest,  
Erichie McDonald kent that best.  
Big lanky chiel, for hauf a dollar,  
He'd slip doon thro' a twelve inch collar :  
It seemed gey queer, yet sometimes funny,  
An' a' tae gain some pocket money.  
At the aul' pit brae aye reekin', steamin'  
Was a swaggerin' lad ca'd Sanny Fleemin'.  
Ye never could complete a screed  
Unless ye mention auld Bob Reid,  
Singing " Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot,"  
He put the pins doon thro' the slot—  
The pins were numbered, but his plan  
Aye made him shout " Ane-naething-wan:  
The colliers resented him gey much,  
For that wis aye a Company's hutch.  
Then in the weighs box twa men stood  
Try an' dae them if ye could ;  
Ane wis wee, the ither tall.  
Wee Davie and big Jock McCall.

KAMES WINDING TOWERS, 1960



KAMES WASHER, 1956



Nae doot, it lookit very posh,  
 The designer wis Jimmy Macintosh ;  
 Tae decorate wis his devotion,  
 But why he ta'en this curious notion ,  
 Is something that I canna' tell  
 Best leave it wi' the Tosh himsel'.  
 The need is done, I didna' fail,  
 Nor leave oot mony in ma tale—  
 Thae days are gane, they'll no' return ,  
 Sae a' ma thochts I maun adjourn—  
 The pitheid's noo a deserted scene,  
 It micht as weel ha'e never been.  
 Each week from Monday morn 'till Sunday ,  
 This picture meets me at ma windae:  
 Ma min' gangs back, it's sweirt tae pert,  
 The recollections stoun ma he'rt—  
 Ye'll sometimes see a silent tear,  
 That tells o' mony mem'ries dear—  
 No' mony left tae tell the tale,  
 For mair ha'e passed beyond the vale:  
 And when the Reaper tak's me hame,  
 Perhaps I'll get an honoured name—  
 Tho' the seats o' the great I'll never grace,  
 Let me sit in Abou Ben Ad'hem's place:  
 I've tried ma best tae yaise ma pen  
 In tribute tae ma fellow men ;  
 I'll mind them a', the thochts are sweet,  
 I ken the tale is no' complete:  
 At least I've tried tae dae ma bit,  
 Mebbe the Lord will feenish it.

"WELLWOOD."

June, 1970.

Doon next tae them, like a solid pillar.  
 Erect and motionless Davie Millar—  
 The only man tae gang hame clean.  
 His jacket held wi' a safety peen.  
 We'll tak' a trip noo if ye please,  
 An' spend a wee while oan the screes.  
 A boy weel kent as Wullie Fung—  
 Next him was fiddler Mattha Young :  
 Hoo Matt played God only knows,  
 They couldna' manufacture bows.  
 Tae suit his haun—the memory lingers,  
 You never seen sich wee short fingers—  
 Never heard him ? Then you've learnt your les-  
 sons,  
 His masterpiece was " Count Your Blessings."  
 There was thin Bob McGledrie, whiles gey cross,  
 No peyed, but pleased tae be the boss—  
 And at the table end there a' forlorn,  
 Was the diminutive creature Davie Moran.  
 Gang doon the iron steps, but be share,  
 And dinna rattle Sanny Kerr,  
 Wi' scotches laid oot neat in raws,  
 The handiwork o' " Lantern Jaws."  
 Gang up the brae, but min' tae stop  
 An' slip inside the jiners' shop—  
 Wull Studdart gropin' for a nail,  
 Wad hit his fingers, then set sail—  
 Wi' language no' for me tae tell—  
 Lash richt an' left at A. Caldwell :  
 Dae ye min' when Allan stacked the trees  
 An' tried tae coont them oan his knees ?  
 A hunner laid oot in a line,  
 But Allan coonted only nine :  
 An' min' he went tae the nicht schule tae—  
 Was lost at coontin' through the day.  
 Before ah write doon ony mair,  
 A' this wis dune jist for a tare :  
 Next tae a place faur famed tae kill,  
 But better kent as " jist the hill "—  
 Jock Graham was at the faur tip end  
 While Frank and I ran roon the bend—  
 Olympic work without a doot—

We were always kent as " shovers oot."  
 Up tae the oor o' nine o'clock  
 We had the dootfa help o' Rab " the Cock ; "  
 He whiles got stuck wi' a heavy tub—  
 Toiled less wi' hauns an' mair wi' gub.  
 When men were lying aff their wark  
 They brocht up miners frae the dark;  
 Puir souls, they toiled hard for their sillar—  
 The choice was often Andra Muller ;  
 He'd totter on, yet sometimes ponder,  
 For when the roll is called up yonder —  
 Andrew would sing, then in a rage,  
 He would demand a living wage.  
 Wee Jimmy Higgins cursed and swore,  
 And raised some words ne'er heard before ;  
 When the gaffer often blew his tap,  
 Wee Jimmy always got the rap—  
 Said, looking East and then to Westward,  
 "He's jist an auld triannical b —————."  
 That word seemed almost to be mechanical.  
 No' many tyrants are " triannical."  
 There were ithers there, I see them now,  
 First on the list was Charlie Lowe—  
 A'e day the gaffer dared to send  
 Auld Charlie tae the faur tip-end;  
 He sterted oot as prood's a king,  
 But couped ten hutches ower the bing :  
 A' lying broken in the fiel'  
 But Cherlie thocht he'd dune rale weel.  
 A'e name stauns oot, distinct, alone,  
 As weel it micht, quate Jimmy Bone.  
 Ma pen is dancin' in a hurry,  
 I'll mention here wee Johnny Murray  
 His memory will always staun,  
 A quate wee ane wi' a sair blue haun',  
 Roon Jimmy Smith we'd spin oor jokes  
 He signed his name wi' jist five strokes :  
 A'e day he left the boy near deid  
 When he drap't the larch tree on his heid :  
 The ' boy,' ye'll min', made oot a plan,  
 Wull Logie wis a grown-up man,

Weel, Wullie worked doon here ana' :  
 My best respects tae ane I pay,  
 He wis ma helper - Johnny Rae—  
 He left the pit and went tae be  
 Initialled by the rank P.C. :  
 That name gangs richt intae ma' barry,  
 I can mention noo his brither Harry.  
 Next Davie Guidlet fills ma rhyme—  
 But then I think it's mair than time  
 Tae mention Tammy Mackin tae,  
 This clever chiel maun ha'e a say  
 When aff his wark, we felt the draught,  
 For he maistered many a different craft.  
 Tae the yarn anither name I'll fix,  
 Efter the strike in twenty-six :  
 Big Jimmy Wardrop—seems like a dream,  
 Came tae raise the biler steam.  
 The faurest back that I can go—  
 I think that I should let you know  
 Wis tae a gey deaf sou— but no' sae dumb,  
 Whit wis his name ? —Jist ca' him " Chum."  
 Memory can sometimes cast a doot—  
 Dae ye ken a man that I've left oot ?  
 Johnny Paiterson, if his name I didna' tell,  
 I never could forgi'e masel'.  
 Richt noo I'm in an awfu' pickle,  
 Here's anither miss—wee Norman Nicol ;  
 Oh hell! Ane mair—ah widna' fail ye—  
 A big strappin' chap named Wullie Baillie,  
 No like his faither, say no more—  
 I've written about his dad before.  
 Cunnin' clerks, cute officials, crawl in here,  
 Ah rued ma connection for ower forty year';  
 The weary pen must bid fareweel,  
 The contents o' ma screed, I'll seal—  
 Here's the last but ane, no' prone tae flattery,  
 The unforgettable Francis Rattray.  
 Noo feenish up, ye're tire't, am share,  
 Jist mention last the ambulance room flair  
 Laid wi' new beltin', its surrounds  
 Cost ower a hunner precious pounds.

Nor wad ah like tae ha'e the fear  
 O' leavin' oot an engineer  
 Sae tae ma biddin' I maun hark,  
 I've mind't ye noo—young Johnny Clark :  
 And on the dirt hill, miss him naither,  
 I often spied yer weel-liked faither.  
 On tradesmen, jist before oor pairtin',  
 We shall remember Davie Mairtin.  
 Back tae the men I worked amang,  
 Names that keep ma writin' thrang,  
 There's ane creeps in, a lonely felli',  
 Best kent by us as Darkie Kelly ;  
 Nae immigration laws were broken,  
 Jimmy wad ken I'm only jokin'.  
 The thocht jist came, he'll be nae dissenter,  
 So why should I leave oot Jim the penter?  
 A' ower the place his pent brush ran,  
 And then wis Russell's richt haun' man,  
 And tho' this thocht may seem quite partial,  
 Let's gang 'way back tae Chookie Marshall ;  
 Jist as faur back—nae Shaw nor Ibsen,  
 But wise in himself was Richard Gibson :  
 I wadna' miss him—If I did,  
 He widna' see it, Davie Greenwid.  
 Noo mind the tramp's, first very wily,  
 The evergreen auld Belfast Riley :  
 Dapper Hughie Mershall's memory turns,  
 He wis a devotee o' Robert Burns :  
 Tae cap this lang poetic feastin',  
 Dae ye min' o' yin ca'ed Robert Easton ?  
 Or jist tae feenish aff thae notes—  
 Dour an' destable Johnny Hunnercoats.  
 Ma pen is aillin', it's noo unsteady,  
 It's yet tae mention Robert Keddie ;  
 As tradesman, weel his image stauns,  
 He had a heid as weel as hauns.  
 Ower a' thae thochts I fondly carry  
 A longing deep for Wulson Barrie—  
 In moments few o' fleeting leisure ,  
 A crack wi' him wis indeed a pleasure.  
 Ye min' o' Mershall frae the Springhill Raw ?

Mair than man he wis indeed,  
 The best hounded one on Kames Pitheid.  
 Na ! Na ! Ma names are no' a goner,  
 I aye remember Shanyan Connor :  
 When ill times woefully wad attend ye',  
 He sympathised and said " Hell mend ye."  
 We'll creep on quately as a moose  
 Tae see the auld scree engine hoose.  
 Its engine rackit, rent, and sair  
 Wis nursed gey weel by auld Wull Mair ;  
 When its stroke wis centred, then stood stull,  
 Ye'd hear the cry, " Ach, come oan Wull."  
 Ah mind the wee brae pinion wheel  
 That grupped auld Wullie by the heel  
 Jimmy Stitt ran smert and gleg  
 And shouted lood. " He'll brek his leg."  
 Wull laughed and said, " Ma man ye'r blin,  
 It caught me oan ma wudden pin."  
 I've mind when the pitheid main shaft broke,  
 And then repaired, auld Wullie spoke  
 Tae the manager, ah heard him say,  
 "If it goes forever and a day" —  
 Then paused an' said, wi' anither slant,  
 " That's the shaft the Directors want."  
 I almost grat, ma joy expired.,  
 When my aul' freen Wull at last retired.  
 Look oot the windae and ye'll see  
 A callan as busy as a bee.  
 Rinnin the dross roon tae the biler.  
 Rale workin' chap wis Cammie Tyler.  
 See shaftsman Murray and ye'll min'  
 O' his sturdy neebor Ballantyne.  
 He couldna' staun, he couldna' sit,  
 Rowed up wi' springs wis auld Wull Stitt.  
 He never had very much tae say,  
 Wis faur ower busy every day.  
 I canna think o' mony there  
 That worked abune the auld pit stair—  
 Bob Gibson comes noo tae mind,  
 A quater man ye'd never find :

There wis ae man that wis his bogey—  
 He couldna stomach Danny Loggie ;  
 For Dan wad rant wi' sheer delight,  
 Aye rattlin' looder on the pipe,  
 Tae hurry on the coal galore,  
 Bob taigelt and went even slower :  
 Imagine hoo big Danny fared  
 As he said a'e day tae Wullie Baird—  
 I'm telling ye this and I'm no' jokin,  
 Auld Santa disna fill yer stockin'  
 But Willie said withoot a swither,  
 " Dae ye no' ken, Dan, it's jist yer mither."  
 Jist mention Celtic and he laughed,  
 For Jimmy Weir wis Rangers daft.  
 Then wis John and Geordie Goldie tae,  
 I mind them baith, tho they're away:  
 Big Hughie Love wis always beamin'  
 Ower devilish tricks wi' Sammy Fleemin'.  
 I mind the nicht in the fermer's field  
 We went tae raid the tattie field.  
 We laid oan twa or three planks or mair  
 Abune the angry windin' Ar:  
 Love cried oot " Polis"—wi' a clatter  
 Wee Sammy slipped doon in the watter.  
 We fished him oot, still in a daze,  
 And strippet aff his wringin' claise.  
 Then sat him doon withoot excuse  
 An' dried him in the dunkey hoose,  
 Anither chiel, aye quate but wary.  
 We never ca'd him ocht but " Hairy."  
 There wis his young son, Tam, but a' I'll say  
 His nose bled almost every day.  
 Anither man maist oan his lonesome,  
 A gey dour cratur, big Tam Johnstone—  
 Look in the firehole and ye'll see,  
 He'd argue like a new M.P.  
 But a' he got was jist a froon  
 At loggerheids wi' Cherlie Broom.  
 Tammy Haugh ye couldna' jook  
 Had aye a pleasant care-free look.  
 An ashman kent as big Jock Ross

He wis the fella' wi' the bike,  
 Could gang it either fast or slow,  
 Wha was't that stole his dynamo ?  
 Mony a guess roon this revolved,  
 But this wis a mystery never solved.  
 Some Lugar men cam' up tae work,  
 Jock Soden bummin' about the Kirk,  
 The nation wi' Jock aye hunky-dory—  
 A typical auld Lugar Tory:  
 A' were rich beneath the crown,  
 I had five o' white an' eight o' brown.  
 While big Wull Carson laid the bricks  
 Between his time o' playin' tricks ;  
 Billy Barclay, always reprehensible,  
 Implored big Wull tae be mair sensible.  
 If you forget—Oh ! weel, I dinni',  
 I'll aye remember wee Len Finney,  
 He patched the bilers jist as nate  
 As yer mither shewed yer trooser's sate ;  
 He was the finest tradesman I have known—  
 Did Wales jist gie us but a loan  
 O' this fine son ; was it in vain  
 Na ! Whit Wales lost wis Scotia's gain.  
 Noo settle doon, reserve yer talk  
 Tae them that built the big roon stalk—  
 The main ane, never labelled zany,  
 Ye'll ken him noo—Aye ! Davie Rainnie.  
 Next were the Wylie brithers, quite content  
 Tae plitter about in saft cement ;  
 While on this volatile bricklaying squad,  
 Wha kept them rinnin' wi' the hod  
 When they built the big white poo'er hoose—  
 No' mony noo can even jalouse  
 That Geordie Vallance did his wheck—  
 Was bricklayer, builder, and the architect.  
 Bob Edamson wis aye his neighbour,  
 He stakes a claim—he gi'en his labour.  
 I've noticed in ma hurry-burry  
 I've left oot ane - young Johnny Murray,  
 Ye couldna' be a good tactician  
 When leavin' oot a'e electrician :

I've missed oot some o' that I'm sure.  
 For instance, I've neglectit Alec Muir:  
 Another chiel o' some renown  
 Quate and deep, tall Allan Brown ;  
 Yes, Percy Stacey, a tricky lad—  
 Mony a tare wi' him we had—  
 I kent his faither as a brither,  
 Sae Jimmy Barclay mak's anither ;  
 An engineer ca'd Tammy Beck,  
 An' Joe McGrath frae Auchinleck.  
 Noo Davie Foster's in ma ditty,  
 An evacuee frae Glasgow City.  
 Maybe ye think that that's ma lot,  
 Well, ye hivna' min' o' Iain Scott ;  
 Nor Taffy Jones the plate layer man,  
 Frae the land o' the leek fond Albert cam' :  
 Said Alec Shields, devoid o' spite,  
 " He's the only Englishman that I like."  
 The pen is dry, don't let it fail,  
 Tae indite a pairt tae Douglasdale—  
 I min' o' Burnside wi' the brush,  
 That swept the roadways wi' a push.  
 He steered it next his ain briest bane—  
 The roads were cleaner left alane ;  
 The whalebone 'gainst his chest weel lockit',  
 But his hauns were anchored in his pocket—  
 There's ane wha beat the fower meenit mile,  
 But did it in an awkward style—  
 On his bogie, scurrying like a dug,  
 Near knocked the buffers aff the bug—  
 Puir Wullie Loudon failed his dive,  
 But I'm glad to say he's still alive ;  
 Ma writin's slow, don't dilly dally,  
 Wha could forget wee Phil Savali ?  
 Nae screed is richt unless it tells  
 Its toll aroon' twa Scottish bells—  
 Wee Jim maun rectify this code,  
 He wis the ane frae the Glesca' Road—  
 Then wee Johnny—whit a blaw,  
 Resided in the back, white raw.  
 About young Jim Stacey I maun write,

Wis neebored whiles by ane ca'd Cross—  
 A crabbit man, a dodgy cratur,  
 Wis cross by name and Cross by nature.  
 Later oan, big, strong and wullen',  
 The ash wis cleared by Johnny Mullen.  
 Anither's praises I maun sing—  
 A worthy chiel, George Pickering :  
 I saw this happen, noo I'm nae mug—  
 Geordie wis knocked doon by the pug—  
 I looked ablow it, saw his heid,  
 And numbered him amang the deid ;  
 His shirt was burnt, his breeks were torn.  
 A party gathered roon tae mourn,  
 But George got up, bowed tae the party—  
 Unhurt, unscathed, baith hale an' hearty.  
 The pug moved oan, a mighty whussle,  
 Warned oot the wey wis big Ned Russell—  
 He tipped ye horses by the score  
 And said he sure had hundreds more :  
 A' their praises he wad sing  
 Before they feenished " oan the bing."  
 This his been rattlin' thro' ma heid  
 About a gey queer lad indeed—  
 He turned up in a licht grey sit—  
 And fancy leather oan each fuit ;  
 Amongst the pitheid stoor and dirt  
 He sported a braw white linen shirt—  
 Even had the cheek tae deck  
 A white silk muffler roon his neck :  
 He came, but never made his mark,  
 A broken city timber clerk ;  
 They say he wranged a Glesca' dame,  
 Yes ! Gordon Comrie was his name.  
 Back tae the fire-hole, I'd be sorry  
 Tae leave oot ane they ca'd him " Jaury."  
 Ower a' thae names ma he'rt will sadden—  
 I daurna leave oot Wullie Hadden :  
 We'd sit an' talk for near an 'oor,  
 Oor favourite subject —literature.  
 Noo on ma mind the thocht will dawn,  
 I'm thinking o' John Adamson—

Focht injustice like a fighting Turk,  
 An' destroyed it like a firework.  
 Wull Anderson was attendant three,  
 He never ceased tae astonish me :  
 He oft wad offer up his thanks,  
 He stood abune fond Danny Banks.  
 Danny, tho' underground alone,  
 Kept contact wi' us on the 'phone :  
 Ae memory that will never fade,  
 Misnomer indeed wis " gaffer " McDade.  
 Wi' his sweet tenor voice you'd hear him hum,  
 And lilt tae his shovel—timmin' gum.  
 But tae the yin that beat them all—  
 McCormick's tales they still enthral—  
 We treated him with swift derision,  
 The first man wi' a television :  
 Some queer exploits, no' always true,  
 His set aince landed in the zoo—  
 Himself enthralled, he gi'en a wink,  
 And shut it aff tae end the stink :  
 Dae ye min' wee frail-like Wullie Mackin ?  
 Discovered a roll o' engine packin'  
 Weel iled and covered ower wi' dirt,  
 McCormick wrapped it roon his shirt  
 An' a' because some stupid lackey  
 Had made him think it wis tobaccy :  
 Tae his hame he meant this haul tae take,  
 Rowed roon his ribs for convenience sake.  
 There wis Allan Irvine, Davie Broom,  
 Baith in my min' gang circlin' roon—  
 Wha wis the yin wi' braces danglin' ?  
 O ! hell, it wis auld Barney Hanlon,  
 Wha when the lang turn wad begin,  
 Created an infernal din—  
 And if we tried tae catch his rift  
 Could easily get an extra shift—  
 He wad hurry tae the door an' shout,  
 " Barney Hanlon's not coming out."  
 His son, young Barney, ye can gether,  
 He aye looked aulder than his faither.  
 Wullie McGledrie ta'en the huff

He bore at least an honoured name :  
 Tammy Begg, ye'll min' him fine,  
 Toiled for his breid on the auld pug line :  
 Ma brain's no' workin'—My, I'm dense,  
 It's functioning noo wi' Johnny Spence—  
 Ma pen wi' glee it keeps on rollin',  
 It's doon on the screes wi' wee Mick Boland.  
 This screed it micht as weel be mockery  
 Withoot a word for fond Gavin Lochrie ;  
 I canna leave oot Hughie Samson—  
 An' we're a' the bairns o' anither Jock Tamson.  
 Oh ! Here ! I've jist had min' the noo,  
 'Twill help tae cool ma fevered broo,  
 It's about Jimmy Campbell—this is queer,  
 Something that caused me muckle fear—  
 It didna' cause him ony herm,  
 He'd let you shove a peen richt in his airm.  
 Noo that is jist a wee diversion,  
 I didna' mean tae cast aspersion  
 Nor dae I mean tae end ma screed  
 Withoot Wattie Wulson—no indeed ;  
 Nor Wullie Murdoch—But I think  
 I'll hae tae fill ma pen wi' ink.  
 When the auld windin' gear wis torn doon ,  
 And the new skip winder's turn cam' roon ,  
 Opeenion's worthless, if ye canna' say,  
 That wis the beginnin' o' decay :  
 Brocht up the coal, loads abune loads,  
 An' wha wis at the helm but Peter Dodds.  
 It's nearin' the end we're gaun tae pairt ni',  
 Sae let's return tae Alec McCairtney,  
 Wha in the driftin' snaw wad say,  
 " I think we'll get the sun the day,"  
 Then add, like a prophetic seer,  
 " I'm bluidy shair it'll no' be here."  
 I could write from the day that I wis born.  
 Tae the time when Gabriel blows his horn,  
 And some wad sure escape ma pen,  
 But Andy Edams is in ma ken—  
 Where'er he is, whate'er the Fates,  
 He'll be pu'in the hutches tae the plates.



Fond Jimmy Stitt, tho' much maligned,  
 Was the finest form o' human kind—  
 Aye thocht harsh but wis indeed  
 A glorious freen' tae a' in need.  
 Doon on the skrees wis auld Baun Wull ;  
 Wi' Mattha Smith and Wullie Hull :  
 Look ower whaur the gas coal bing is,  
 I'm share ye'll see big Wullie Mingis.  
 Ma thochts micht weel hae gane tae Denny,  
 If I'd missed oot canny Andrew Rennie.  
 Jock Leslie, whustlin' like a mavie.  
 Ne'er a chirp frae his brither Davie.  
 Noo auld Bob Park, he held the fort,  
 Wi' a disabled sodjer ca'd Jock Short—  
 Anither in ma min' keeps rinnin',  
 Big Jock McCulloch, aye ! and Davie Slimmon :  
 A gey guid soul was big Tam Broom,  
 Similarly designed was big Tam Broom.  
 This rhyme is gettin' hard tae fill—  
 Min' the Canteen Manager, Skeeny Hill ;  
 Yes, Big Tam Smith amang the many,  
 He polished up the collier's glenny—  
 Aye liltin' an' singin'—noo let me see,  
 Ach ! Ah canna forget the Road tae Dundee.  
 I'll min' o' Davie Love, and frankly,  
 I'll no' forget ma freen' Jock Shankly :  
 Jist for a wee, let yer min' go back man,  
 There's an honoured place for wee Jock the packman.  
 The deein' dregs o' the pithead family,  
 Appropriately on line comes Wullie McCamly :  
 Then next on line, I knew him well,  
 The Sassenach—old, bold Bill Bell.  
 McVey and Jack Samson, baith loco men,  
 Back frae the past they come again ;  
 They're lifeless that's faultless, tho' he wis a  
 moaner,  
 Look ower the failin's o' the wee Yip Connor.  
 I'm' thinking o' a lad tae Cumnock he's gone,  
 Ane o' ma favourites—Wullie Ferguson :  
 There wis anither fine chap—ye'll hear me sighin',  
 'Tis guid tae remember Pat O'Brien :  
 ' A ' Nelson tho wi' little fame

An' a' thro' peein in the sheugh :  
 Hotly denied, he'd drap his broo,  
 Dan Dunsmore swore that it wis true.  
 Anither man, a kinna cunnin' deil,  
 But likeable auld Robin Steel.  
 He talked o' Muffet, Beattock tae,  
 I hear his sermons tae this day—  
 Aye feenished up without a moan,  
 And landed in his Crawfurtjohn.  
 There's ithers—I maun ha'e a look,  
 Oh ! Aye ! Flat-fuited Wullie Cook :  
 Could gi'e a scarecrow an affront,  
 Cam' a' the wey frae dear Penpunt.  
 Anither Wullie Cook, if ma pen will run.  
 He wis in fact the grocer's son—  
 He thocht he filled a distinctive role  
 By marking up the back-shift coal.  
 Here's a gey deaf soul, but a ceevil man,  
 Wis liked by a'—Hughie Harrigan.  
 No' mony tradesmen then tae pen  
 But still a few names come again—  
 A wee douce chap wi' a' his gear,  
 He wis the foreman engineer—  
 Hughie Murdoch wi' his iley face,  
 Kept a things rinnin' at their pace.  
 Andrew Wulson, then McGowan,  
 Kept the electric lights a' glowin' :  
 Joe Fulton and a wild marauder,  
 The fickle loon, wi' surname Lauder  
 He often left us in the dark,  
 Like a wee snuffed oot electric spark.  
 I used tae visit almost daily  
 The swearin' blacksmith Wullie Baillie.  
 Some names forgotten, whit's the odds,  
 Auld Tammie Mackin—Davie Dodds ;  
 There's ither names that spring tae min'  
 Back frae the days o' auld lang syne :  
 Weel oot o' context Wullie Higgins,  
 No' auld Jock Peters, nor Johnny Biggans—  
 Robertson aye rinnin' oot o' pith,  
 Tam Bickerton and Wullie Smith :

Some ither pugmen, name them now.  
 Big Tam Widburn, wee Wullie Lowe.  
 Some names I find it hard tae tell,  
 There wis Davie and big Jack Dalziel :  
 Wullie Boland - Adam Loggie,  
 Auld Purdie wi his wuden bogie :  
 Arthur Goldie, quick and fleet,  
 The fellow wi' the dancin' feet.  
 Ower a' thae names ma pen maun tarry—  
 There wis big Wull Mathieson, Hoppy Barrie :  
 Bobby Bain, as fat's a b'ilie,  
 And the slurry man, wee Bobby Wylie—  
 Bob Strickland always worked alone,  
 Below him wis his nephew John.  
 There were big men, wee men coorin' doon :  
 Big Hugh McVicar, wee Jimmy Broon.  
 The pick blade sherpener, let me tell,  
 Wis ane we ca'd wee Jack Caldwell—  
 He made the miners broken he'rted ,  
 The picks were sherper when he sterted.  
 Ma pen is gettin' awfu' racy,  
 There wis the back-shift gaffer, Harry Stacey :  
 And lest the rhymin' gangs aff balance  
 Let's spend a tick wi' big Jock Vallance.  
 Twa Wullie Kirkwoods ; let me say,  
 Ma mind will often hie away  
 Tae Elec Guidlet—at a push  
 Fill up the rhyme wi' Jimmy Fush.  
 The canniest craturs ever born,  
 The wee Kid Clark and Paddy Moran :  
 Jimmy Russell, a grand gentleman,  
 He went tae the land o' Uncle Sam :  
 There wis Bobby Gray, aye in a frenzy—  
 There wis Nally Murray and Joe McKenzie.  
 The pen tho' it has had its share,  
 Could mention anither hunner mair ;  
 But somehoo I wad like tae pen  
 About Caley Johnstone and his men—  
 Jock Kean, and here I maun tak' note,  
 Wi' his summer and his winter coat—  
 The names come fast, for here's anither—

But let ma thochts get noo deflectit,  
 Tae ither names they're noo connectit.  
 Tho' he always' had a lassie o.  
 Oh ! I'll no' miss oot de Mascio.  
 Don't end up yet, jist wait the noo,  
 I maun puit in fond Henry Frew—  
 And ere the pen will ease tae roam.  
 Mind Elec McCairtney and Frank McCrone.  
 Anither import, this ane'll jog ye,  
 No' mony min' o' Barber Loggie.  
 There wis Tammny Holden, limp'in' sair,  
 Jock Gibson, Aye ! and ither mair :  
 Doon on the tables Robert Begg,  
 Wee Jammy Wulson, wha lost a leg—  
 Ye're min'll hae tae gang back faur  
 'Twas in the 14-18 war.  
 Anither name is creepin' in—  
 Ye'll mind o' Dougie Hendersin—  
 We had a Gairdner, tho' nae flo'ers,  
 He'd while away the lonely 'oors,  
 Wi' tales aroon his engine fire,  
 Noo's ma chance, fond Tam the liar ,  
 Tae get ma ain back, aye ! it's meant—  
 Noo can I write in sweet content.  
 Three Kelly's, can ye name them folk ?  
 There wis Wullie, Geordie, and auld Jock.  
 Ma haun' is sair, it's hard tae thole it.  
 Try yer best, puit doon Jock Rollet.  
 A casual worker's name keeps birlin',  
 King o' the road wis Robert Stirlin' ;  
 Remember as this screed ye read.  
 He slept upon the biler heid :  
 For this is Roberts saicond mention,  
 Indeed it wisna' ma intention,  
 For in ma book wi' honest rapture—  
 He fills I'm share, at least a chapter.  
 Ma book, no' mony folk hae read,  
 Named " Feather bed to boiler head."  
 For quick relief ma writin' turns  
 Tae the hutch repairer, Jimmy Burns—  
 I near missed oot efter a' ma plannin'.

Adam and wee Sanny Cannon.  
 No, Erchie Smith, I didna' fail ye,  
 He wis the fella frae the railway.  
 Noo Tammy Shields roon hutches dancin',  
 Next Joseph Hunter an' wee Jock Cranson.  
 A'e boy I min' he taen a look  
 At Australia's shores like Captain Cook :  
 I hope ma pen wi' ink's no' lackin'  
 Wull I manage it in ? Oh ! Aye ! Joe Mackin.  
 Look at this chiel, strong and tall—  
 His name is Jimmy Erchibal'.  
 The names are slippin' fast awa',  
 Back again tae the tradesmen's raw—  
 I'll puit Jock an' Geordie in ma plan,  
 Twa brithers o' the Tyler clan.  
 Noo Jimmy Laidlaw, brither Wull ;  
 Wee Johnny Davidson o' the Bull—  
 Ye'll min' o' ane wha emptied gum,  
 Pleasant enough, but aye looked glum,  
 A Glenbuck man, is it no' pathetic,  
 Played centre for the " Athaletic:"  
 And no' tae keep ye in the dark,  
 I'm shair ye've min' o' auld Jack Park.  
 Why tae my memory should I pander,  
 It helps me spell Joe Casagrande.  
 The licht is deein', it's gettin' darker,  
 Shine on, sun, on Joseph Parker.  
 I'd like tae puit ma pen tae bed,  
 Defeat the sleep wi' James Lochhead.  
 I hope I end before the dawn,  
 I'm scribbling in Tam Morrison.  
 Anither lad noo mak's his bid  
 We'll a' remember Jock Girwid :  
 Jock Guidlet tae, aye in a jitter,  
 Nae sailor, but we ca'd him " Skipper :"  
 Wull Angus, anither punter freen',  
 Hoo mony horses has he gi'en ?  
 I personally had tae get a loan,  
 Tae keep me oot the Welfare Home.  
 There wis wee Sammy Johnstone, and again  
 I gang back tae a former name :

Wull Kean, aye ! He wis John Kean's brither :  
 Read on or tak' yer leave wha likes,  
 Wi' polished tongue cam' big de Sykes.  
 I'll end wi the navvies, o' no I daren,  
 I'll jist skip ower auld Peter Cairney.  
 We often laughed—it noo seems cheeky—  
 About the yarns o' oor pal " Reekie :  
 He whiles gien me an awfu' look,  
 For ma tales o' him wad fill a book ;  
 The fun wis guid the while it lasted.  
 Didn't Erchie say " I'm thundergasted:"  
 " He wis naither " flabbert nor got struck,"  
 Sae find the word wi' the best o' luck.  
 Tho' his looks were dour, I don't pretend.  
 Na ! I wis Erchie's very special friend;  
 His tasks were never left ahin'—  
 There wisna' a lazv inch in him.  
 I shouldna' let ma pen gang oan  
 Unless tae mention Duncan Bone.  
 Ere Erchie Johnstone's day wis done  
 He'd shovel over forty ton,  
 Then gang and fill wi' little braggin'  
 Wi' dross or gum a ten ton wagon.  
 Gang oan, tell, a' the names the noo,  
 Mickey Gibney comes in view—  
 Could tie himsel' in awfu' shapes,  
 We ca'd him ' Tarzan o' the Apes.'  
 There wis Dave McDowall an' Alec Borland :  
 Wee Bobby Hamilton —Dickie Moreland ;  
 Ma pen has gi'en anither shoogle,  
 There wis Geordie Murdoch and John McDougall ;  
 Anither looms oot frae the dark,  
 An engineer ca'd Jimmy Clark  
 The only man wha ever dared,  
 Tae dicht his hauns wi' his insurance caird.  
 Jimmy an I had fun ower this—  
 He wisna the only ane tae gang amiss,  
 Ah aince forgot an' in ma ire  
 Threw the manager's bunnet on the fire,  
 An' when the flames were gettin' dim  
 Weeshed ah had flung the manager in.

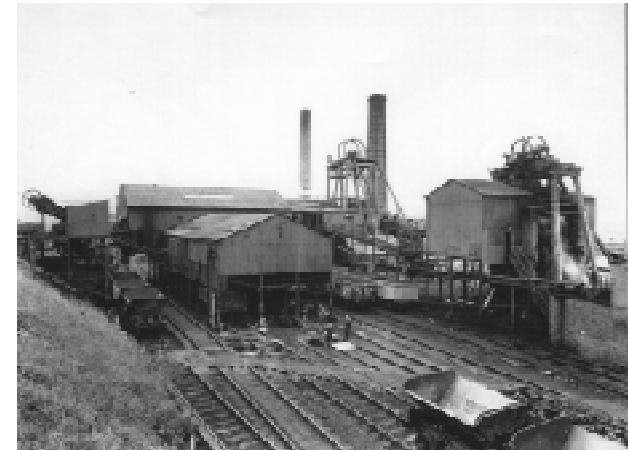
Tam Co'wan, if for ill or guid,  
 Aye tallied up the stocks o' wid  
 Come oan ower here an' tak' a look,  
 " A Barrie boy " marked it in a book,  
 Recorded day by day, my word,  
 We stopped him at the 43rd  
 O' February, true to say,  
 He nicht ha'e marked tae Judgement Day.  
 Ah hear an awfu' noise o' hammerin',  
 Oh ! Aye ! It's the jiner, Bobby Cameron :  
 Next him wis Guthrie ; hear the puffs,  
 It's McDougall wi' the fisticuffs.  
 Ma brain is bulgin' an' it's wrackin',  
 There wis Erchie Anderson and Riddy Mackin.  
 Aye ! Even noo ma ears keep ringing,  
 Rab Shaw, Young Nally, wee Jock Dingham ;  
 There wis Sanny McKenzie, strangely enough.  
 On a Monday he wis in the huff—  
 The reason for his surly frown  
 Went back tae the Saturday afternoon—  
 If Rangers got bate you may be share  
 Celtic would be damned forever mair.  
 I see Wullie Loggie, sae keep on ma story,  
 I'll ne'er forget wee Dick MwcCrorie:  
 I mind o' Wullie, he wis aye contrairy,  
 He forgot tae feed the pit canary—  
 I canna' think noo why he didni,  
 His nickname wis Canary Gibney.  
 Ower a' thae names ma pen keeps rinnin'  
 Young Wull Stitt big Dave McSkimmin' :  
 Noo "Chuddy" Gibson and his ploys.  
 Jimmy Easton and Tammy Boyes.  
 Nae use tae keep some names in hoardin',  
 Back tae the tradesmen Bobby Gordon.  
 Bob Dickson there amang the ithers—  
 Big Matt. and Jock, the Tyler brithers :  
 Tam Dickson, happy fu' a' joy,  
 My hoo I liked that pleasant boy.  
 Maisterton and McCulloch at the ready,  
 They had a striker, Wullie Keddie :  
 Anither yin—aye ! anither rap man,

Weel named indeed wis Johnny Chapman—  
 But ane stauns oot, ye'll mind him folk, Aye !  
 That's right—he wis the " Doc"—  
 But why the reason's hard tae tell,  
 He deid an' couldna' cure himsel'.  
 There wis Andrew Ross, a quiet loon—  
 Davie Towle and Chuckles Broon :  
 Young Jimmy Smith, he noo is gane,  
 There wis big Tam Park and Daddy Bain.  
 It's funny hoo yer min' gangs back,  
 It usually has the queerest knack  
 O' mindin' things you're keen tae tell,  
 Yet thochts best kept within yersel':  
 I'd like tae forget, baith broad and tall.  
 An Englishman ca'd Harry Hall :  
 And jist tae show ye some disparity,  
 Remember the dwarf-like Sam McGarrity.  
 There wis Jimmy Murphy, Alec Broon,  
 And ither names come tumbling doon,  
 Ma brither Erchie, big Greegor Smith :  
 Tam Shaw had the ile tae bother with.  
 Gae back a wee bit further noo,  
 Ye'll min' Jimmy Campbell an' Jock Caldoo.  
 Wug Mershall, pair soul, lost his life.  
 The scraper cut him like a knife—  
 A guid wee boy, it's ma belief,  
 That tragedy caused the greatest grief :  
 I laid oot mony on their bier,  
 But let a bitter, silent tear  
 Fa' ower a hero, wee, but brave—  
 Lie peaceful, Wug, within your grave.  
 Let's leave the sorrow, tak' the path,  
 Tae whaur the grimy had their bath—  
 You'd find a'e man, oan him depend,  
 He wis indeed ma staunchest friend :  
 Was always high in my appraisal.  
 They're hard tae find like Johnny Hazle.  
 There wis Sanny Lochrie gaun his mile :  
 An' Davie Tyler keepin' him on the bile.  
 There were lassies bonnier than the Queen,  
 They graced wi' favour the pit canteen :

# THE PITHEAD SAGA

BY

"WELLWOOD"



A STORY IN RHYME OF  
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