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S. S. MURRAY

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OLD KILPATRICK COY.,

DUNBARTONSHIRE

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Chief Guide

Girls' questio



# Women Making History in West Dunbartonshire

In Account with

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Front Cover: Margaret McIlwraith and friends sporting the 'new look' style

Inside Cover (clockwise from top left): Ann Macdonald (centre) with friends, hiking trip around Scotland, 1959; June Galloway, aged 4, at Miss Port's dancing class, Helensburgh, 1958; Nancy MacDonald as administrator for a small company, 1969; Cath Barrett, aged 16, 1960.



# Women Making History in West Dunbartonshire

**Coming to the group has opened my eyes to the amount of hard work and determination of women in history and also our local history ... It also helps us to keep working towards making women's lives better for future generations.**

I first discovered this great group of women from West Dunbartonshire in 2009. They met at a community centre in Clydebank every Wednesday morning and had invited Glasgow Women's Library down to talk to their group about the library and women's history. What we realised after meeting these ladies is that they had a wealth of stories and life experiences rich with anecdote and humour that was its very own unique narrative, a narrative that was often under-represented in the traditional view of West Dunbartonshire history. So a women's history group was born. One of the things the group discovered was that there were few materials and resources that told the story of women's lives, and what did exist was difficult to find, scattered in archives and in people's living rooms and attics or in the memories of individual women. The group decided that it was time to create something lasting that was made by women from West Dunbartonshire for the West Dunbartonshire community. The group successfully applied for funding from the Sharing Heritage Lottery Fund in spring 2014. Then they got to work planning and creating two unique Memory Boxes on the theme of women's lives in West Dunbartonshire in the 1950s and 60s. They also started gathering stories and telling their own. It is these stories, the words and voices of local women, that this booklet celebrates. From the Pitman's shorthand night-school to home births with bacon fry-ups for the midwife, you will find here a unique and entertaining insight into women's lives, and a new resource not just for the West Dunbartonshire community but for women everywhere.

Morag Smith,  
Glasgow Women's Library

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# Setting the Scene: Women in the 1950s and 1960s in West Dunbartonshire

The year 1950 was greeted with high hopes: things could now get back to the 'way we were'. With the war over, the longed-for peace was now a reality. Lights were on again all over the world and the nation was ready to make a new start.

In West Dunbartonshire, everyone was glad to be leaving the previous decade behind with all the horror of six years of a war which had devastated many of our own homes and towns. In Clydebank especially, the epicentre of the bombing, houses were at a premium as the council started to build housing schemes at Drumry, Linnvale and Faifley to replace all that had been destroyed. You knew you had years to wait on the council list.

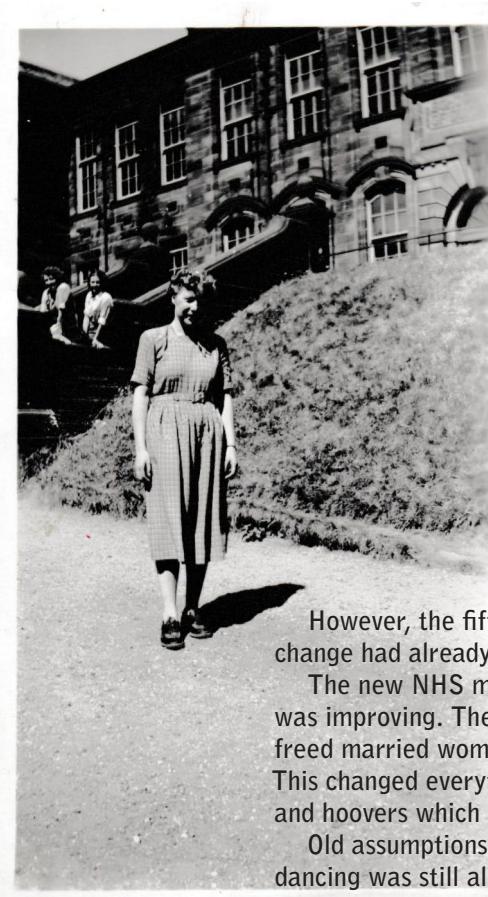
Going to the pictures was popular as most people didn't have a TV. We'd steal fashions from the stars and copy them for going to the dancing. There was the pencil skirt or the big dirndl skirt with the giant underskirts soaked in sugar to hold it out. Dancing was the biggest excitement of them all and where most of us met our husbands.

Rationing and general shortages continued right into 1953 and jobs were scarce to begin with. Legislation meant demobbed service personnel could apply to get their old jobs back, so women were expected to return to the role of housewife and mother. Housework was hard with few electrical appliances and in the absence of fridges and supermarkets, food was bought and carried home daily.



**HEINZ**  
**BABY FOODS**

Suggested Plan for Mid-day



However, the fifties were slow to realise it but the seed for change had already been planted. Rock 'n' Roll had arrived.

The new NHS meant the general health of the population was improving. Then in 1961 the arrival of the contraceptive pill freed married women from frequent and inevitable pregnancy. This changed everything. So did twin tub washing machines, TVs and hoovers which all became more attainable.

Old assumptions began to break down during the 1960s, but dancing was still all the rage. This time it was miniskirts and maxi-dresses, bouffant hair and Mary Quant makeup. In schools there was less accent on learning how to look after the home, and by delaying starting their family, more women were able to work after marriage.

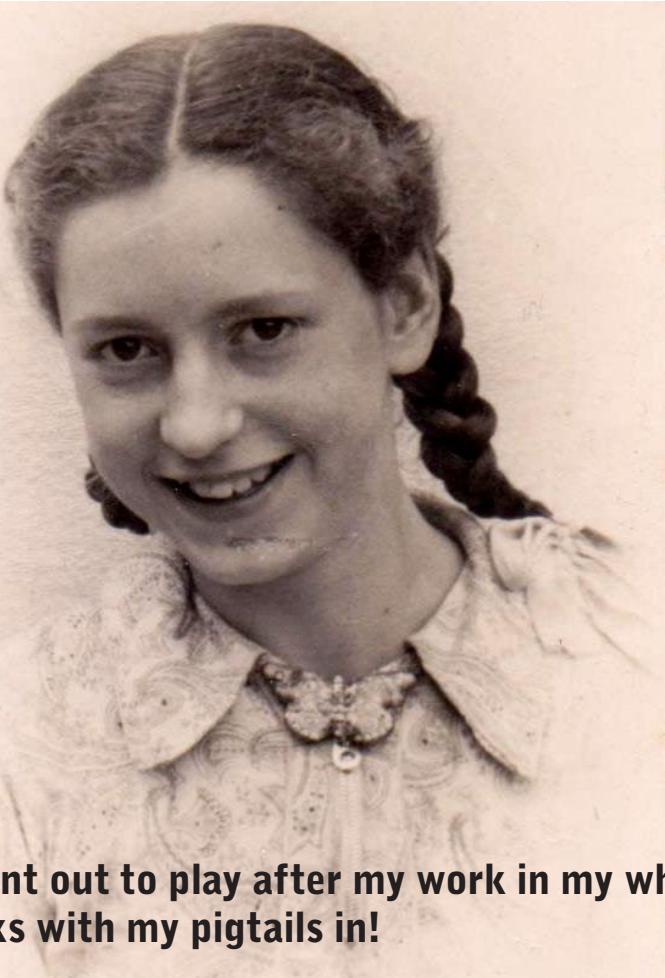
A great sense of community existed across West Dunbartonshire and beyond, especially in workplaces like Singers and United Turkey Red. That sense of belonging and looking out for friends and neighbours is still there today.

We have laid out our story, beginning with education and the transition to work then moving into becoming a working adult, fashion and beauty, dancing and other entertainment, getting married, and being a wife and mother. We have tried to highlight the changes in women's lives across these two decades, so different from our own, and hope you enjoy what you find.

Images (clockwise from top left): Masons Higher Purchase Payment book for Silver Cross Pram, 1956; Nancy Clunes outside Dumbarton Academy aged 15, her leaving year; June Gray – Aged 3, 1950; Heinz Baby Food advert in a baby information pack for new mothers, 1963; June Gray's parents, 1961.

# Leaving School

# Leaving School



**I went out to play after my work in my white ankle socks with my pigtails in!**

Margaret McIlwraith – aged 14, dressed for her interview at Denny's Shipyard for the position of Office Girl.

We did get a lot of domestic science at school but, to be honest, I liked that as it wasn't that academic. I wasn't daft or anything, but I didn't like it. I think it was just I didn't like to be told. Those that weren't academic would get more hours of the domestic sciences while the others got their lessons.

When I went to Vale Academy in the mid 60s, the boys and girls were separated. The girls went up one set of stairs and the boys went up the other, with the teachers going up the middle stairs ... This felt horrible as in primary you had all the boys with you, but then you didn't have them.

In Clydebank High School we were separated from the boys for all our classes, not just the domestic ... We were getting prepared for domestic work after school you see when we were leaving school at 14 or 15. Your mother needed money so you came out of school and went straight into work and would work Monday to Friday and then a half day on the Saturday. We handed our money over and we would get maybe two shillings or maybe a half a crown back.

**They were like how to sew and knit, how to cook, do the laundry and the ironing, things like that.**

There were 40+ of us in a class! We sat in serried rows at our little desks overseen by the teacher at her vantage point on her high pedestal desk at the front of the class. Under the lid of her desk reposed the awesome, thick, fifteen inch long, leather belt – corporal punishment was still the disciplinary norm at this time. I have a vivid memory of a child's mother appearing at the classroom door and after a short conversation with the teacher, stood alongside her while her child was called to the front of the class and the teacher draped him over her knee and belted him several times over his buttocks while his mother spectated.

We also received the benefit of free milk - that dreaded  $\frac{1}{3}$  pint bottle of milk, so hated by all children, its lukewarm legacy putting paid to a society of milk-quaffing adults – yuch! Other benefits included free meals for those whose parents couldn't afford to pay, frequent visits by the 'nit nurse', and irregular trips to the swimming baths.



A selection of 'scraps' for swapping and collecting in a scrapbook.

You would go to night school in Dumbarton Academy for your Pitman's shorthand, typing and things like dress making.

## PITMAN SHORTHAND

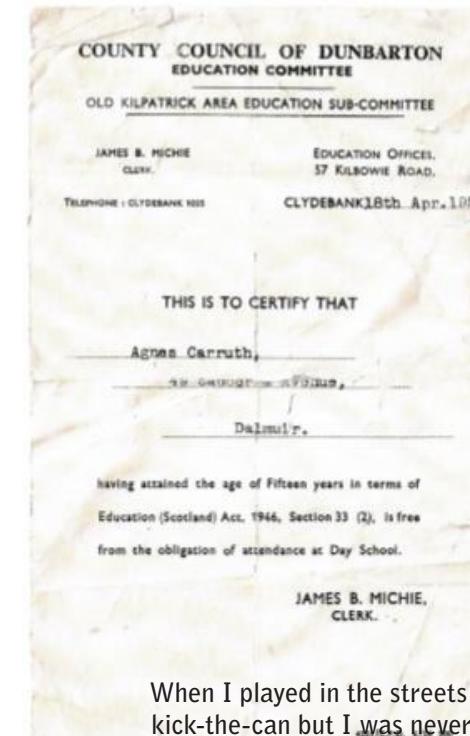
### Rules and Vocabularies

NEW YORK  
PITMAN PUBLISHING CORPORATION

Pitman Shorthand: 1956



To my parents' disappointment, I decided to leave school in third year, following a successful interview and acceptance for the new one-year intensive Secretarial Course at Lennox Technical Centre in Dumbarton. This experimental project was set up in 1955 and had an annual intake of 20 girls from the surrounding Secondary Schools. I took to it like a duck to water – Shorthand, Typing, Secretarial Practice, Book-keeping, Arithmetic and English, following a year of which I emerged with high Shorthand/Typing speeds and sound office practice procedures.



Nancy Macdonald's Leaving certificate (nee Carruth) 1960

When I played in the streets I always was desperate to play kick-the-can but I was never allowed to play as it was seen as a boys game ... I was told 'you're no allowed to play, that's just a boys game!' It looked such good fun with all the shouting and running about and I thought this would be good. I was on a mission to get into a kick-the-can team.

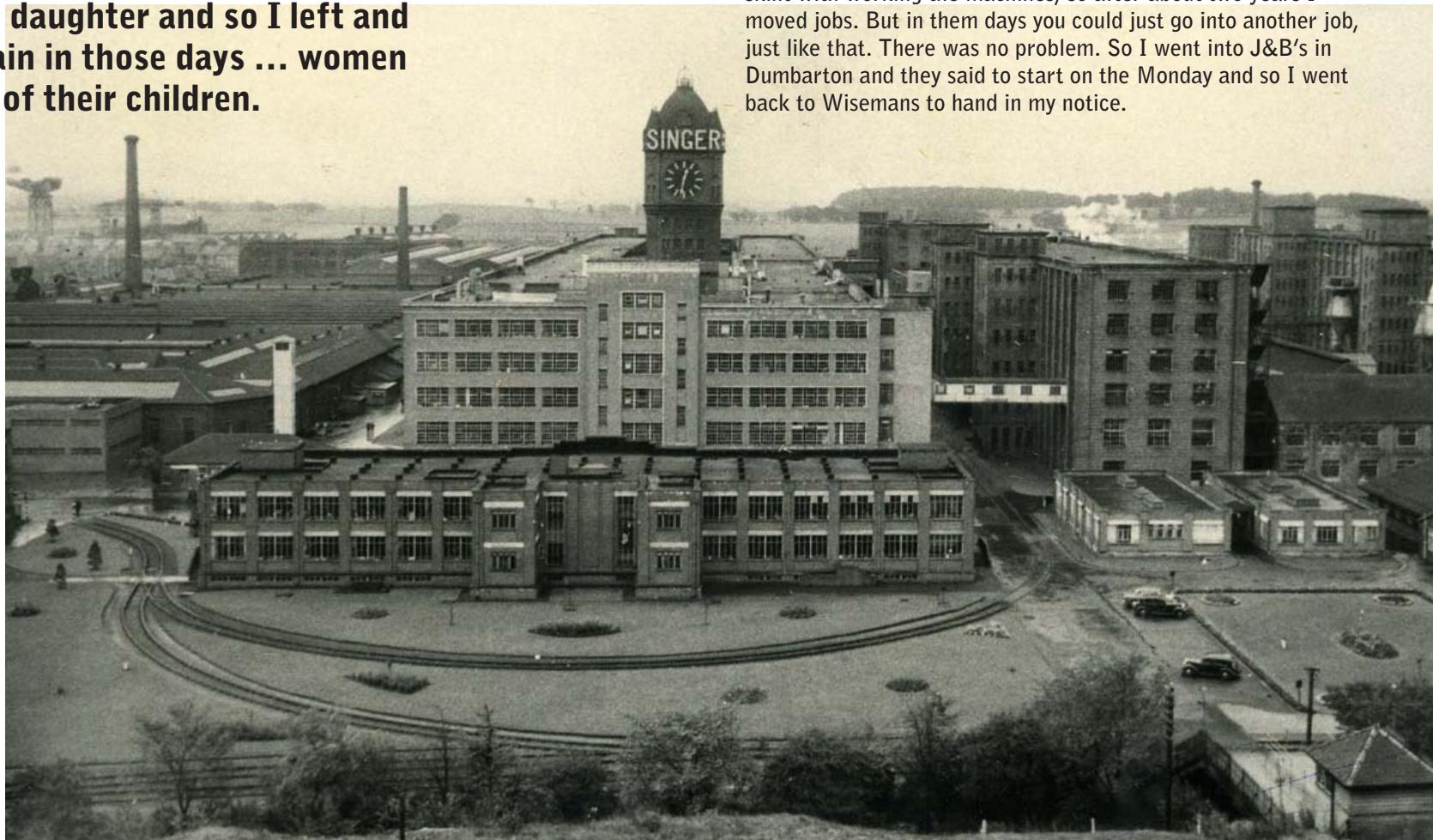
**I didn't want to go to college or anything I just wanted to get out to work ... I had been the top of the class and passed all my exams so the teachers were like 'what are you thinking?'**

For my first job interview at Denny's, I remember my mother got me a pink blouse and a black skirt and it was an A-line skirt and it was out of C&As, in fact. I'd a pair of black flat shoes on, so that was it and a cardigan. Black cardigan, black skirt and a pink blouse with a Peter-pan collar. I didn't decide my own dress, I suppose, cause it was what I was bought.

The thing about leaving school in our time at the age we did was that you left school on the Friday and you started work on the Monday, and if you didn't like that job then you just went on to something else because there was just so much industry. You had Singer with over 12,000 workers, John Browns with over 10,000, you had all the engineering and there was the Co-operative biscuit factory too. You didn't have to go for interviews for jobs, someone just spoke for you, well, for factory work, but not so much clerical.

**When I left school in 1955 at the age of 15 I went to Singers and I was there for two years and then I was pregnant with my first daughter and so I left and you didn't really go back again in those days ... women stayed at home to take care of their children.**

I left school at 15 in 1968 and you didn't have to go for an interview or anything, you just went into a job. I went straight into work at Wisemans that made glasses, the glass bit of the glasses, the lens. I had to work nine machines and you had to wear wooden clogs, as the floor was boards and they got all oil from the machines. If you wore normal shoes they would have rotted. You slid across the floor to one end to your clock light, then you slid all the way back again to meet the other light to clock it off. I worked 8 o'clock to 5 o'clock and it was £5 a week but I got £6, that was with a bonus. I worked six days but the Saturday was just to half three. I got that I didn't like being all oil all the time, the smell and your fingers and hands were always skint with working the machines, so after about two years I moved jobs. But in them days you could just go into another job, just like that. There was no problem. So I went into J&B's in Dumbarton and they said to start on the Monday and so I went back to Wisemans to hand in my notice.



Singers Sewing Machine factory in 1959

## You got jobs through somebody knowing somebody who would say there is a job going at so-n-so's and you would then get your interview or you just started.

At the age of 15 I left Notre Dame High School, an all-girls school run by nuns, to look for a job. My Uncle had a good position in Westclox clock factory and I got a job there without an interview. Westclox, Burroughs and Wisemans had an agreement that if you applied to one for a job, you couldn't apply to the other two. As well as that, I worked at the Rialto cinema in Dumbarton, again without an interview, because our neighbour worked there and he spoke for me.

There was plenty of factory work for women. There was Westclox, there was Bowers that made lenses, then Polaroid, the silk factory (UTR), Singers, Dalquhurn, the Aurora Lamp Factory in Old Kilpatrick – here the workforce was made up of about thirty girls between the age of fifteen and twenty except for management who were ancient old things about forty.

Things were hard for people, wages weren't high and rationing was still around till almost 1954. If you were even just a minute late for your work you were quartered, a full quarter of your wage was docked, and if you were ill you didn't get paid. Many of the works had a check boy, not a clock in but a boy checking you in.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN BANKING FOR YOUNG LADIES

A few vacancies have now arisen in local branches of the CLYDESDALE BANK for single YOUNG LADIES of good personality and ability, who feel able to be trained for responsible positions. Applicants should be not more than 26 years of age and will preferably have had some commercial experience. Salary according to age and qualifications but at least £580 at 21 and £740 at 26. Good working conditions. Five day week. Applications giving details of age, education and experience should be addressed to—

STAFF MANAGER  
CLYDESDALE BANK LIMITED  
30 ST VINCENT PLACE  
GLASGOW

Classified ad in Lennox Herald  
Feb 7th 1969.

I left school and started work in Galbraith's, Dumbarton. I earned £2 10/- per week. My mother got £2 for my keep and I got to keep the 10/-.

In 1952 my husband's wages were £7 per week and so I registered with the small labour exchange in the hope of starting employment. In a few months I found I was pregnant and was subsequently told they did not offer jobs to pregnant married women. (Different from the war years: things had returned to how it used to be).

You worked till you got married or had your first child. Women couldn't necessarily stay in work after having their children in the 50s as there were very few, if any, council nurseries and no private nurseries to look after your children. So to go out to work was a big problem and there were very few electric appliances at home to make your job easier at home.



Big Ben Westclox  
Scotland in 1964

As it got to the mid-sixties, people got to live a better life financially as women started to go out to work more than before.

# Entertainment

# Entertainment

**There was little tellie in those days so we went to the cinema or played the radio...the queues for the cinema were long and the film was on twice a night – they showed an A film, a B film, the news and the comedy, oh and the cartoon, say Tom and Jerry. That was at the La Scala.**



The La Scala cinema in the 1950s showing the massive popularity of the cinema.

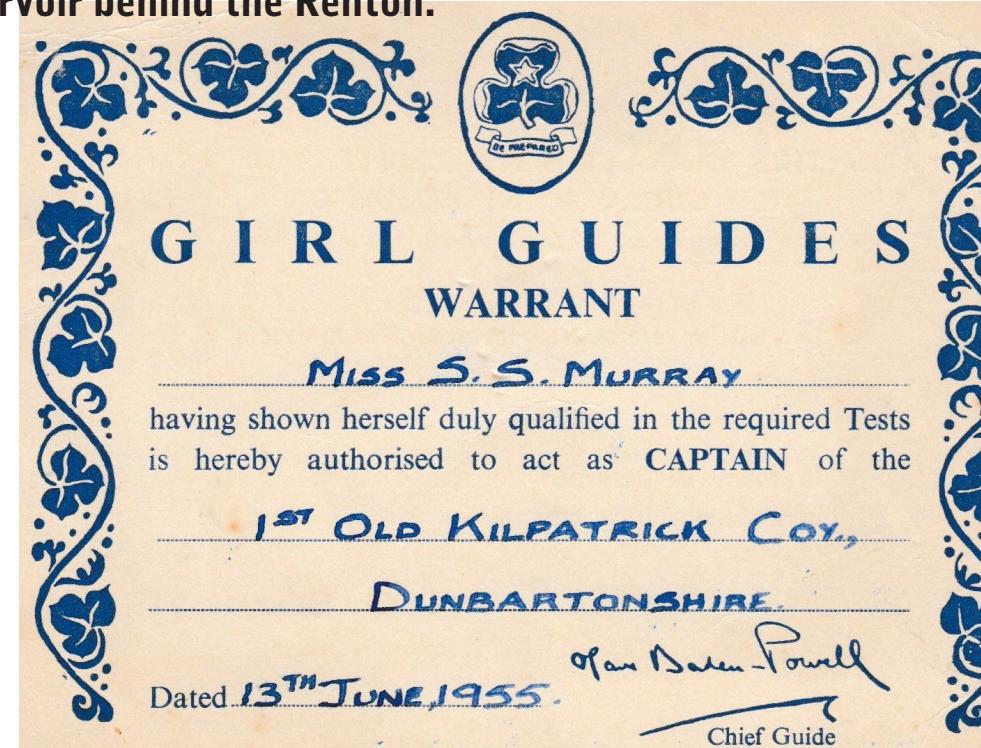
Oh yeah, The Strand, The Hall, The Roxy, well there was lots in Dumbarton so we went to the Dumbarton ones tae, but when we were young it was always the ones in the Vale. We had the matinee on the Saturday. You could smell the oranges and you were choked wae the smoke if there were adults in. If you were sat underneath the balcony you would get orange peelings thrown down on you!

It wasn't unusual for us to go to the cinema by bus even as a small child. It was safe.

You would go to the cinema, The Rialto in Dumbarton as they had the ABC Minors on a Saturday. This was all just children and we watched films, cartoons, Flash Gordon, mind. It would start about ten till about twelve and you were there on your own, not with your parents. We were only six or seven and it was safe, ye know, we were fine and we would get home in time for our dinner.

I can remember when I was about eight leaving my mother's shop in Clydebank to visit my granny who lived in Dalmuir. A lot of excitement was travelling on the tram. I loved the way it 'shoogled' along and I loved to watch the conductress change all the seat backs to face the other direction at the 'terminus' in Dalmuir. This was so that the passengers could see where they were headed. I remember the fare was one old penny.

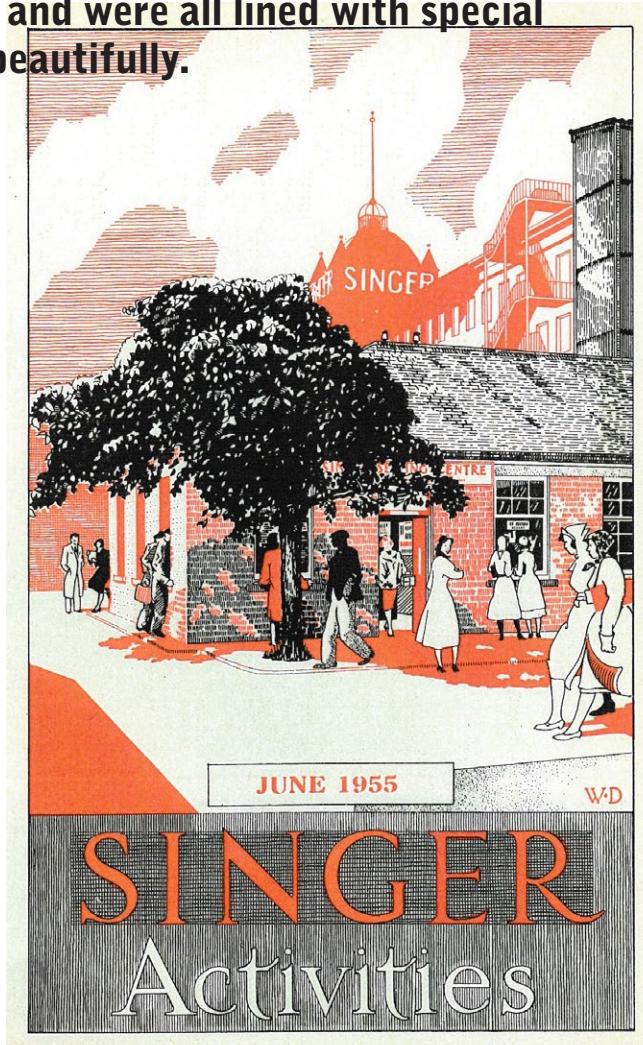
**You had the Girl Guides and you would go a lot of walking, with having all the hills around us, up to the reservoir behind the Renton.**



Sheila Campbell's Girl Guide leader certificate, 1955

There would be the Guides or the Boy's Brigade or Scouts parties but not dancing, no never dancing. That wasn't allowed, maybe in the Church of Scotland but not in our Baptist Church. It wasn't the done thing. We just socialised within our Church.

**Each summer Singer held a huge gala day. There was the police pipe band, all the cadets, air force, scouts, you name them, they were there along with sports events and Scottish country dancers. Each department had to be represented for the beauty pageant and I was chosen for twenty-one. The best part of this was all the girls were bussed into Glasgow every week to be fitted for our lovely dresses. Every dress had to be eighteen inches from the floor and were all lined with special material so they sat beautifully.**



Singer Staff Activities Monthly Magazine, 1955

I played hockey for Singers. They had every sport. They had their own building where they had concerts and everything. They had everything to do in Singers, the football team, the hockey team, days out, the camera club, the fishing club. Singer had a department, department 47, and it was called 'The Beauty Parlour'. The manager would not take anyone on that wasn't good looking. They had a gala every year where they had a queen and her entourage and all these girls were generally taken from that department. In fact, Dorothy Lamour came and was crowned the Queen one year, 1950 I think. There was Punch and Judy shows at these galas. There was also nights out they had, mixed and ladies only, but this depended on the department you worked in. There were big dances in the Singer Hall, like the Highland Ball. One of the other things about working in Singers that was quite nice was that when it got to holiday time you stopped early and you had a 'cookieshine', it was called where there was alcohol and cakes and different things. It was great, it was good fun.

**A group of us would go – boys and girls – and play tennis up where Clydebank College and Radnor Park primary school were and where they've now built Barrett houses. There was a tennis club up there and an old men's club, and we played tennis there.**

We would go to Glen Fruin every alternate Sunday in the summer, after Sunday school, as a family. My dad had all the gadgets you could think of. There was chicken noodle soup in the food flask, tea was made with the gas stove, we had folding deck chairs, wind breakers and umbrellas if it was really sunny. My dad had a great camera and would take loads of photos. If it was a bit cold we would spend time in the car where he had foldable trays to put your drinks on, also a radio to listen to music. Plus what we really enjoyed was swimming in Craig's Pool. Great fun. Some weekends it was so busy.

# Dancing

**Unforgettable - Nat King Cole**

**Singin' The Blues - Tommy Steele**

**Friendly Persuasion - Pat Boone**

**Wake Up Little Suzie - The Everly Brothers**

**Puttin' On The Style - Lonnie Donegan**

**The Banana Boat Song - Harry Belafonte**

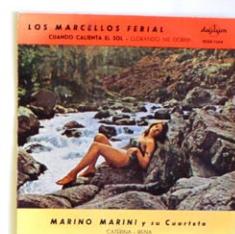
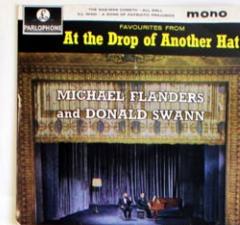
Dancing was a great thing then, everybody went dancing, especially the Saturday night. Very very popular at that time, and that's where you met your boyfriends ... you see many of the ballrooms had a tearoom and if a boy asked you up for tea you could make up your mind then whether he was going to be your boyfriend or not.

Once a night they would have a ladies choice, but only once a night so if you missed getting your choice you had tae wait till another night! But most times you would be choosin somebody who had chosen you as you had to repay the favour.



Betty McElroy dancing with her husband in the early 1960s

'Singles' popular in the 1960s



**My favourite dance had to be the quickstep where, if you managed to get a good dance partner, you whirled and skipped and glided your way around the dance floor, quite literally on "wings of song". The tango was a much more serious affair, requiring concentration, co-ordination and fluid movement.**

I worked in Glasgow in Forsyths, then I left there and went to Trerons because there I could go to the dancing every lunch-time. I went to the Lacarno every lunch time, then sometimes at night.

# Dancing

If you got a lumber they would see you all the way home, but if you didn't you were on the last bus and walking the rest of the way home yourself. But the lumber, they would see you right to the door ... then your Dad would come to the door to put the milk bottles out. I used to try to knock the door soft, as if you could knock a door soft! But that was so ma mammy would hear me and no ma daddy because ma daddy used tae come oot and say 'What kind o time o night is this?' But ma Mum she would ... we had the wee toilet next to the front door, so she would go in and flush the loo before she came to the door so ma Dad didnae hear her open it.

## Once you got used to the dance halls here you would then go up to the dance halls in Glasgow like the Locarno you know ... and that's were a lot of the romances started!

Pete Jolly and his band played at the Town Hall. They always reminded me of Bill Haley and his Comets and when Rock Around the Clock came to the Empire we were all 'rockin and rollin' about the aisles. It was fantastic, so it was. It was amazing how we were all dancing up and down the aisles but we never got chucked out or anything.



Clydebank Town Hall, early 1960s

Ad for a dance in the Clydebank Town Hall published in the Clydebank Press, 1951

The man who brings the stars to your door step  
Presents Another Colossal Attraction in  
**THE TOWN HALL, CLYDEBANK**  
**SUNDAY FIRST, 4th MARCH**

Doors Open 8.15 p.m. Curtain 7.30 p.m.  
The Great Spectacular Show  
**SHAMROCKS and HEATHER**  
starring **JIMMY NICOL**

The whirl of laughter character comedian from his enormous success at the Tivoli Theatre, Aberdeen,  
**COLIN DUNN** **KING & KING**  
Scotland's Joseph Locke **MUSICAL DROPS of Scotch**

**THE ST. DENNIS SISTERS**  
Sweet and lovely  
WITH FULL SUPPORTING ALL STAR CAST  
GUEST ARTISTES WILL INCLUDE  
**FREDA PHILLIPS** **LARRY DAVIS**  
Famous Colourful Songstress The British Larry Parks

**4 - KALUANS - 4**  
The All Star Hawaiians of Stage and Radio with  
**LULU THE ORIGINAL HU-A-HULA-GIRL**

Admission (Inc. Tax) Balcony 2/-, Front Area 2/-, Back Area 1/-.  
Reserved Tickets now on sale at Blackwells Hairdressers, 36 Glasgow Road, Clydebank, also at Hell on Sunday from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.  
and from 6 p.m.

**GRAND DANCE**  
In TOWN HALL  
On SATURDAY, 3rd MARCH, 1951  
**SYLVANS BAND** In Attendance  
Spot Waltz Prices

## Rock Around the Clock - Bill Haley & His Comets Let's Twist Again - Chubby Checker Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On - Jerry Lee Lewis Peggy Sue - Buddy Holly Long Tall Sally - Little Richard Rama Lama Ding Dong - The Edsels Teenager in Love - Dion & The Belmonts

Margaret and I made our way to the (Catholic) Institute on that first Saturday evening with barely controlled excitement. The dance hall was located above two shops in Glasgow Road – a dairy and a printers – and only about fifty yards from Simeone's Café, another popular meeting place for young people. The Institute could only be accessed by climbing about 20 steps from the main road to the Entrance. Doors opened at 7.00pm and dancing finished at 11.00pm. Nobody was allowed entry after 7.30pm, so queueing started early, all the way down the steps from the entrance and along Glasgow Road. The entry price was 2/6d (12½p).

On the Friday night everybody went out, so the women would come to work with their rollers in and their scarfs on to keep the oils and the smells off their hair... At break the older girls would do your hair and your make up, get you all dolled up. It was great...

**My first Ladies Choice? Oh aye, a was like will a go or will a no go? Ye very rarely went up tae a stranger though. Ye never had the brass neck fur that in case you got refused!**

# Fashion and Beauty

Poodle skirts or bouffant skirts flooded the fashion market, and with them came the voluminous net and nylon underskirts that would forever be the trademark of late '50s and early '60s fashion. The skirts in themselves were easy to make for those with sewing skills and we set to extending our wardrobe, working the newest cotton, gingham, seersucker and glazed cotton materials into copies of the latest high street fashions.  
ROCK 'N' ROLL – BRING IT ON!

**We would set our hair with Amami setting lotion on a Friday night as 'Friday Night Was Amami Night!' you see ... and we would keep the rollers and headscarf on till we were in the queue for the dancin and only when we got near the front of the queue would we then take our rollers out! This was so our waves and curls would stay in all night.**



Magazine advert for Amami hair-setting solution, 1950s

A pair of metallic gold shoes, 1950s

## The Pearl of the Paris Collections

from

### MARY POLLOCK

165 HIGH STREET  
DUMBARTON

Picture House Opposite

... Rembrandt loved it  
best of all the season's  
Paris models ...  
translates it literally for  
you in pure linen:  
sparked  
with patent belt and  
buttons—cut to spell  
perfection to your figure  
in the easy beauty of its  
every line.  
Sizes 12-16  
Slightly extra for larger  
sizes.

*Rembrandt*

ORIGINAL



# Fashion and Beauty

I borrowed a dress from my young aunt - a white & navy striped shirt-waister dress, with a narrow cinched waist, caught in with a broad red leather belt – the buckle to the back of course. A small red scarf tied in a triangular shape to the front was tucked into the shirt-neck opening. A pair of one-inch heeled, peep-toe shoes with a little leather bow on top completed the look. I wore my hair in a high pony tail, caught up with a short red ribbon, the whole look inspired by the dark, gamin prettiness of the young Audrey Hepburn, my current screen idol. I was ready for action!

**I was always the height of fashion. The skirts with the petticoats and the waspy belts.**

I can remember when the first lot of tights came out. What an innovation that was! You know. You didn't have to wear a suspender belt! To hold them up...

## Fashion and Beauty



A beauty set with hair brushes, bottles for lotion and nail set, 1950s

The miniskirts and the bell dresses, oh, I had a flower suit on. I have a photograph of me in that suit. I loved it and I had my hair all done up. I would have been 15 or 16 and going on a night out. I loved that suit. I think I bought it in C&A on Argyle Street in Glasgow. There was a place, Parlans, on Main Street in Bonhill and my Mum would get me things from there, but I felt it was old fashioned. C&A was the place to go, you know.

I bought ma clothes up in C&A in Glasgow or Rita's. That was up nearer the Trongate after the clock. It was cheaper up there. Clydebank was dear compared tae C&A, Bremners, Warehouse.

I had really curly hair when I was a teenager and of course, long straight hair was the fashion. Like many other girls who wanted straight hair, I used to put brown paper on my hair and iron the paper with a hot iron on the ironing board. It worked. However, rain or even damp weather could undo all my good work. Clearly, modern straightening irons are based on the same idea.

**We styled our hair ourselves, with wages being low. It was a luxury and there were few salons. One of the best in Clydebank though was Liveranni on Glasgow Road. He was the first hairdresser to introduce the 'Bubble Cut' which us young girls loved.**

## Fashion and Beauty

I loved fashion. I would usually go with the latest trends. There was very big stilettos, skin tight skirts or the opposite, a big flare skirt with lots and lots of petticoat with a tailbone to hold it out, then the big flared trousers or the short jump suits. When Cilla Black came out with her high-waisted dresses my Mum would make me them. The singers were my influence. Whatever they were wearing, I was wearing. I had my hair cut like Cilla too, but then when Twiggy became the fashion I had it cut like Twiggy - really really short.

**For girls the style of the day was miniskirts and beehive hairdos. Some went to extremes with short lengths and high hairdos and encouraged many guys to whistle or even cadge a date!**

In Glasgow at the time there were machines in the ladies that you put money in and it scooted out perfume ... it was great!

We were invited to a flower party up at a farm. This was a great chance for several of the girls to dress as hippies for a carefree afternoon out, gambolling freely in the fields, singing along to some popular tunes. Floppy hats, long strings of beads, long flowing skirts, or miniskirts, were worn for the party and we all had flowers of one kind or another in our hair.



May Semple and friend Margaret Green on their first holiday without family, Rothesay, 1958

## Courtship and Marriage

**Oh, we met at the dancing. That's where everybody met ... or a lot of people met their husbands or boyfriends.**

Across on the other assembly line a well-made lad worked. He was stocky, dark and quite good looking with a brown jumper and white shirt. He always winked over several times during the day and being a bit naïve, I blushed every time, which is a real giveaway that you fancy them. Time went on and this handsome fellow became my husband.



Elspeth Beaton and husband on their wedding day, 1952

## Courtship and Marriage

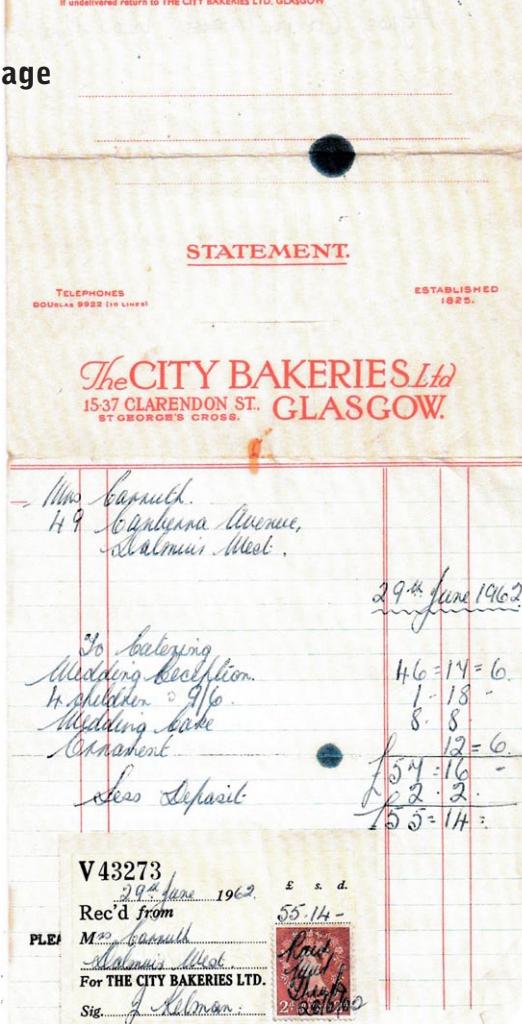
I worked at the Rialto cinema in Dumbarton without an interview because our neighbour worked there and he spoke for me. The manager put me on the balcony so that if an inspector came in, he wouldn't realise that I wasn't yet sixteen, which you really had to be because of the X rated films. Tony was the projectionist at the Rialto and he was five years older than me. He had to pass me on the balcony to change the films. Part of my job was selling ice cream to the cinema goers and one day I had no change to give back to one of my customers. I asked Tony if he had change of 2 bob (2 shillings – 20 pence in today's money, but equivalent to considerably more). He asked me to go out with him, I accepted and that was the start of us 'going out' as a couple in 1965. Tony and I got engaged when I was seventeen and he was twenty two. We got married on the 24th February 1968.

**We lived with my mother-in-law for the first year, then were fortunate to rent a room and kitchen and inside toilet in the bottom floor of a tenement building near the centre of our town, where our first baby was born in December 1956.**

A mean, tae see ma man's willie, a hudnae seen wan o them!  
A mean we were aw lassies and a never even seen ma daddy in his pyjamas never mind anything else ... A remember somebody shoutin a was a virgin and a thought a had a disease.

I had quite a bottom drawer when I got married. My mother-in-law gave me Irish linen. She had a treadle Singer sewing machine so I learnt to do sewing from her. She also took our money and ordered furniture for us. We didn't even get to pick it. But I always got on well with her. We always went to her house after the pictures on a Saturday. We had our tea and then I washed the dishes.

## Courtship and Marriage



Catering receipt for Nancy Carruth's wedding reception, 1962

**Well, I tell you something, you never seen a man walking along the street pushing a pram. It was an unsaid rule. A man was a man and that wasn't his job. They had little involvement with children at home too. They were the bread winners.**

## Courtship and Marriage

I made my wedding dress on a Singer treadle machine and my sister made her dress, from a pattern. We had a dinner at Cameron House Hotel, which was up at Hardgate, newly opened up there, and our wedding consisted of the wedding ceremony in Kilbowie Church and a whole bus of folks came up to the Cameron house for dinner, and then we went to the Alhambra Theatre in Glasgow and saw My Fair Lady and it was a wonderful, wonderful production. But this dress, at the dinner, did the waitress not spill gravy all down my dress... They said that I could claim for it, but I didn't want to claim. It wasn't a bought dress as I had made it.

**... the start of a 5 year courtship and having to work and save up to pay for our own wedding owing to our mums both being widows with little income, and living together before marriage was not done then.**



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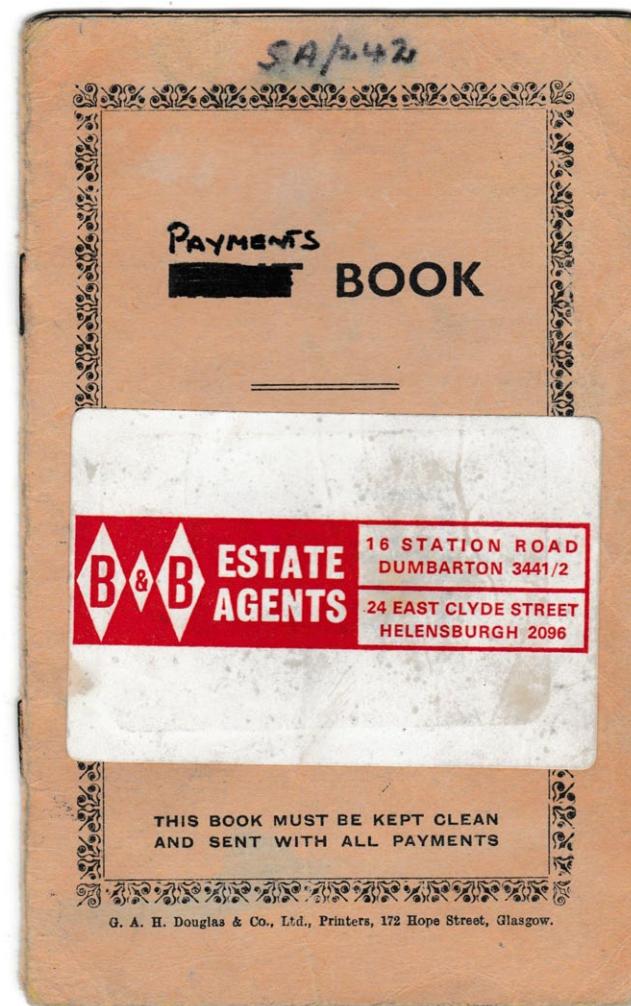
Please send details of  
Home Laundry Appliances  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Advert for washing machines,  
Clydebank Press 1959

It was in the 1960s that high-rise flats appeared in Clydebank for the first time. Initially these flats were seen as the last thing in modernity. It was not long however before many disadvantages became apparent. The lack of outdoor space rendered these flats unsuitable for families with children. Very often people felt isolated from their neighbours with limited access to local amenities.

Mine was a wee single end with a toilet on the stair landing and that was across the road from John Browns and we got it for £50 - bought, no rent - and then we moved up to Hardgate and we bought a bigger single end for £90!

I had to get my big brother up in the morning do all the housework and do the shopping from a young age. Well, I realised my Mum and Dad both worked. Mum had three jobs, so somebody had to be responsible. My brother didn't have to do anything. He had loads of friends, so he was always away doing something. When we got a bit older I had to do his ironing for him too, but I got fly to him and I would make him pay me for it.



Mortgage Payment Book, 1968



The famous Clydebank  
Cooperative Society  
Department Store, Central  
Drapery and Furnishings,  
1950s and still there today.

There was lots of stuff bought in the co-operative then. That was the 'big' shop place in Clydebank. You could take out a club where you paid a half a crown a week. If you bought anything you had a check number which was technically the number of the store plus three figures, and you would use that each time you went up shopping. But when it was the end of the quarter, that's what they called it but it was actually twice a year, then you went and collected your dividend, which at one time was two and six in the pound. You could do a lot with that. You had to buy your kids shoes and everything.

**My fridge was a present. It came from Singers. They were doing appliances at the time. Before the fridge you had to keep things cold in a basin of water! They were gas fridges first before the electric ones.**

You just got on with it, cooking, cleaning, bathing the weans. You were out all the time wi the weans. You coudnae wait tae get yur work done. You'd huv the wain ootside in the pram while ye done it. When you looked up the street it was just a big line o prams at the doors – everybody done it. A went oot the back one day 'n here was ma son sittin wi a handful o dummies. He had came doon the street taking the dummies oot o the prams lining the street!

**We didn't have a tv so it was radio. My mother and her friends used to sit and crochet together, blankets and cardigans and things to wear.**

Your food was brought in fresh. Every day you went out. No ready meals. Always two choices in our house: take it or leave it.

People used to stand outside other people's windows or the shop and watch their TV.

Then there was the shopping which meant having to push a strongly built pram with a baby in it and a wire rack between the four wheels filled with shopping, and pushing it to and from local shops. If you lived up or down a hill, too bad, for public transport was not designed to take prams. Plus all the housework had to be done by hand and of course men did not do any of these chores then. Don't get me wrong, we were happy with what we had and trying to save for better times.

**My granny gave me some furniture for that wee single end. A lot was passed onto you and you got gifts. You paid up but you needed the man to sign for that. I couldn't get anything. It was my husband that had to sign for it. You see, you had to be earning. If you weren't earning then you couldn't sign for anything. The man ruled for that.**

My greatest luxury was buying a second hand ringer. That was the best thing out. And then for my 21st birthday, my mother bought me a twin tub washing machine, and that just saved my life completely. Instead of going down the stair and using the boiler and the two big sinks in the communal wash house ...

**Periods? This was never spoken about. I mean, you would never say anything to your mother! My goodness you couldn't even say knickers in ma hoose without it being an 'Oooooo, tsk, tsk...'**



Sanitary Belt and looped towels, 1960s

I started my period in Primary school, but it wasn't talked about then. My Mum just told me I would be okay and she gave me the Dr. White Sanitary towels with the belt. The towels had wee loops on them to go on the belt. You had a suspender belt too as there was no tights then, so you had two belts on!

Your sanitary towel was a piece of sheet to begin with ... a mind ma mammy sitting cutting the sheets up and she ran them round with the sewing machine. Then when they were used you just threw them away when you were finished. That didnae last long though. Then we got the sanitary towels, but they were not sticky backed or anything like that, no. You wore a belt and the towels had wee loops at either end that attached to the belt.

A remember ma pal, she worked in Singers, and she took her periods for the first time and she knew nothin aboot it. She was just handed a towel by the nurse and cause she had a terrible headache she was told to lie down in the wee room. But here, when the nurse came back, here she had the sanitary towel looped round her ears over her eyes. She didnae know what it was or where tae put it.

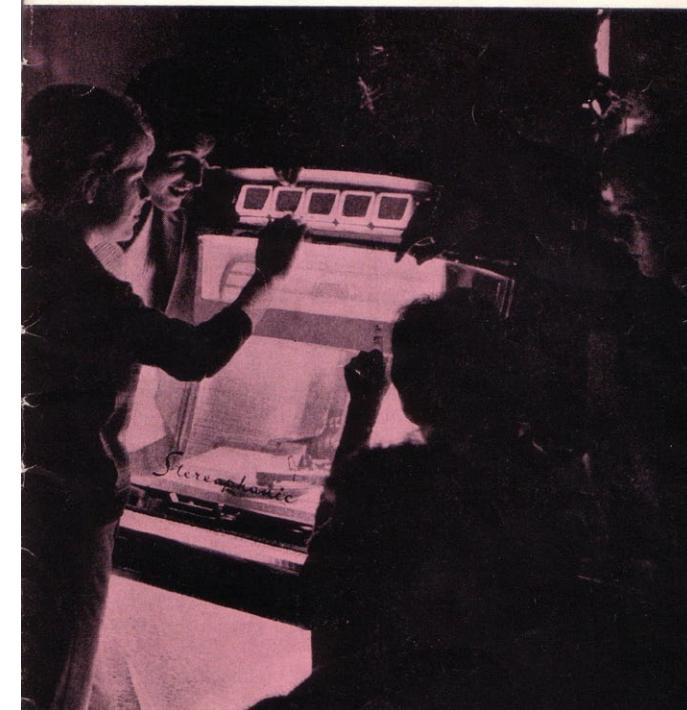
Imagine having to go in and tell your Mum and Dad you were pregnant was enough to frighten you. You didnae need to worry about contraceptives. That was your contraceptive...

To have a baby outside marriage was still considered a disgrace and many girls had to disappear for a few months before giving birth, leaving the child behind for adoption. Personal heartache was payment for immoral conduct. Family respectability was accordingly reaffirmed within the close community.

**Sex was not a subject for open discussion, especially for the young. It was deemed their 'innocence' must be preserved. Many schools were segregated and many parents chose establishments under this rule. 'Ignorance was bliss,' and at that time the Victorian attitude was still adopted.**

1-

## Girls' questions answered



Information booklet, 1960s

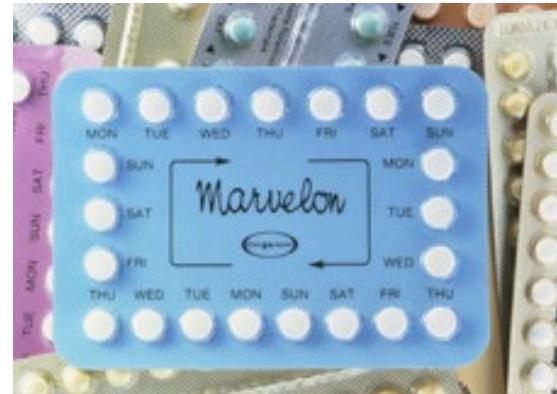
The other one was 'he hud tae jump and get aff at Partick! Oh aye mind? Aye, get on at Argyle Street 'n get aff at Partick. Oh, I done that too. It was the durex for the men. A said to my husband, 'Use that or you're gettin nothin!' Oh aye, cause a wanted to enjoy my life too just as much as him. Then there was the cap, oh aye the Dutch cap...

If your husband drank then it didn't matter if you wanted to or not ... you know how there are abuse cases coming forward today. Well, I think if a survey was done you would probably find the women of our day would be the same ... often there wasn't a say.

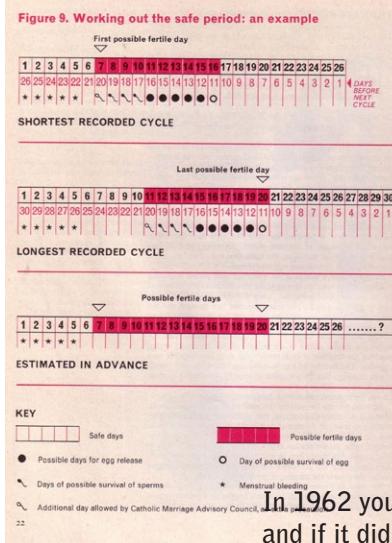
## You just phoned the midwife. You knew you were in labour. I knew I had started labour on Christmas Eve but I still had my Christmas dinner.

When I went to the doctor for advice after having my daughter, the doctor, who was catholic, said to me about that rhythm method, but here, he had thirteen o a family, so a thought to maself 'a way tae hell wi yur rhythm method!'

The pill came in but I wasn't interested. We did our own thing when it came to that and then, when I was having Marion, my sixth, I just said, enough's enough. And I just went to the doctor, and he says "What age are ya?" And I says; "I'm 29 now", and he says, "well you're still a young woman. You can still have children." And I says, "But six is enough as far as I'm concerned". "Does your husband drive?" he says. "What has that got to do with it?" I says, and he says, "well, he could have an accident and you could get married again". And I says, "Anyone who was willing to take me on with six kids would be very brave!" And I says, "No." So, after Marion was born, I was sterilised. And that was it.



Marvelon Contraceptive Pill –  
One of two most commonly  
prescribed contraceptive pills  
in the UK in the 1960s.



How the Rhythm Method worked.

In 1962 you just waited to see if your period came a month later and if it didn't you would possibly, well definitely, be pregnant. Then you'd probably wait off. Some of them waited right till the very end before they would come and look for a midwife. You would either go to your GP, which was probably quite unusual, or you'd more likely go to your mother or your sister and ask, if it was your first one.

Oh it was just so different to go into people's homes and deliver babies and when the baby was born you suddenly smelt the bacon. And even though they had very little, and you knew they had very little, the nurse got breakfast. Whether it was 4 o'clock in the morning or ... This is a sort of a tradition that you were fed.

## And you could have maybe ten or twelve people in the kitchen waiting for the birth ... everybody knew that the birth was imminent and they would come and sit and wait ... mostly family, maybe the odd neighbour but mostly family, all women of course!

I didn't have my children at home I had them in Overtoun House Maternity Hospital with the Angels on the ceiling, though the first time I didn't make it to the Angel Ward as I got home.



Overtoun House

## Thanks are due to the following:

### GWL Staff:

Morag Smith, National Lifelong Learning Development Worker  
Lorna Stevenson, project tutor & support worker  
Sue Reid Sexton project tutor & support worker  
Rachael Kerr, placement student  
Kirsty McBride, Designer in Residence  
Helen McDonald, Systems Administrator  
Volunteers:  
Farnaz Sheikhaleslami  
Norma St Clair

Ruth Forsyth  
Sarah Watson  
Tess Vaughan

The Sharing Heritage Lottery Fund  
West Dunbartonshire Council  
Sarah Christie of West Dunbartonshire Council  
Culture and Creative Learning Services  
Jo Sherrington Archivist of West Dunbartonshire Council  
Dunbartonshire Council Heritage Centres  
Mary Irvine of The Leven Litts Writers Group  
The Banner Girls

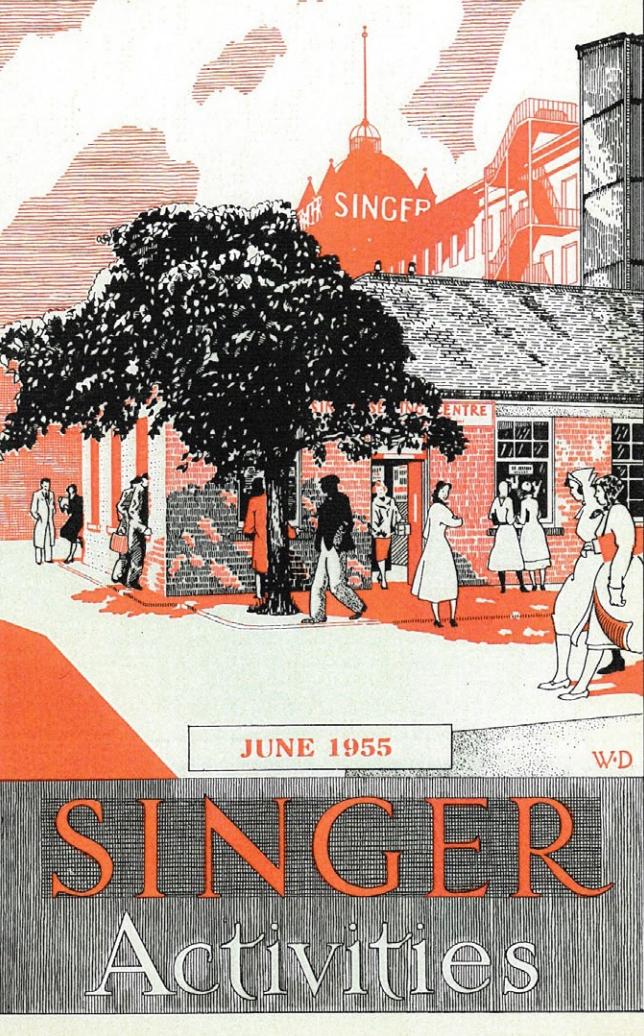
## Thanks are also due to the following who contributed their time, expertise, stories or artifacts to the project:

After Eights Women's Group  
Alexandria Carers Group  
Alzheimer's Scotland Saturday Ladies Group  
Ann Watt  
Anne Clegg, Policy Officer of West Dunbartonshire Council Customer and Community Services  
Anne Cook  
Anne Nicholson  
Bellsmyre Digital Group  
Bonhill Bingo Club  
Catherine Irvine of Dumbarton Veterans Association  
Catherine Laing of The Open Museum, Glasgow Museums Resource Centre  
Chris McClung of Bellsmyre Development Trust  
SCIO The Cutty Sark Centre  
Christine Walker  
Clydebank Life Story Group  
Clydebank Writers Group  
Dalreoch Day Care  
Dumbarton Pain Management Group  
Dumbarton Workers Education Association  
Elaine Young of Benview Resource Centre  
Elspeth Beaton  
Fiona Kane of Dementia Advisor, Alzheimer's Scotland  
Frank Downie Day Care  
Frank Downie House Care Home  
Isa McKenzie  
Isabel Paterson of West Dunbartonshire Council Heritage Centres  
Joanne McGinley Learning Disability Link Worker of Carers of West Dunbartonshire

John and Peter Douglas  
John MacInnes  
June Galloway  
Kevin Hughes of Ceidiog Press and PR for Artizan Community Arts Hub Centre  
Kevin Kerrigan of The Open Museum, Glasgow Museums Resource Centre  
Laura Anderson of West Dunbartonshire Council CL&D, Adult Learning Team  
Lesley White of West Dunbartonshire Council CL&D, Adult Learning Team  
Manse Gardens Sheltered Housing  
Margaret McDougall  
Margaret McIlwraith  
Marion Henderson  
Marjory Dallas  
Mary Frances of West Dunbartonshire Council Heritage Centres  
Moira Salter  
Molly McGinley  
Nancy Clunas  
Pamela Wrethman  
Prime Time Dumbarton Baptist Church Group  
Riverside Daytime Women's Guild  
Riverside Evening Women's Guild  
The Clydebank Post  
The Community Advisor  
The Lennox Herald  
The Leven Litts Writers Group  
Vivian McIlhargay  
West Dunbartonshire Carer's Reading Group  
Young Street Sheltered Housing  
Your Radio



Some of the regular members of the West Dunbartonshire Women's History Group in their regular meeting place, Dalmuir Community Centre and on a day out to the Mitchell Library. Group members are: Ann MacDonald, Cath Barrett, Doreen Cochran, Dorothy Bain, Frankie Primrose, Georgie Lawless, Helen Taylor, Isobel Cochran, Jean Mercer, Joyce Parlane, June Gray, Marion Lees, Mavis Allan, May Semple, Muriel Robertson, Nancy Macdonald, Pauline Bradley, Rena Hector, Sheila Campbell, Sheila Robertson, Violet McGuire.



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