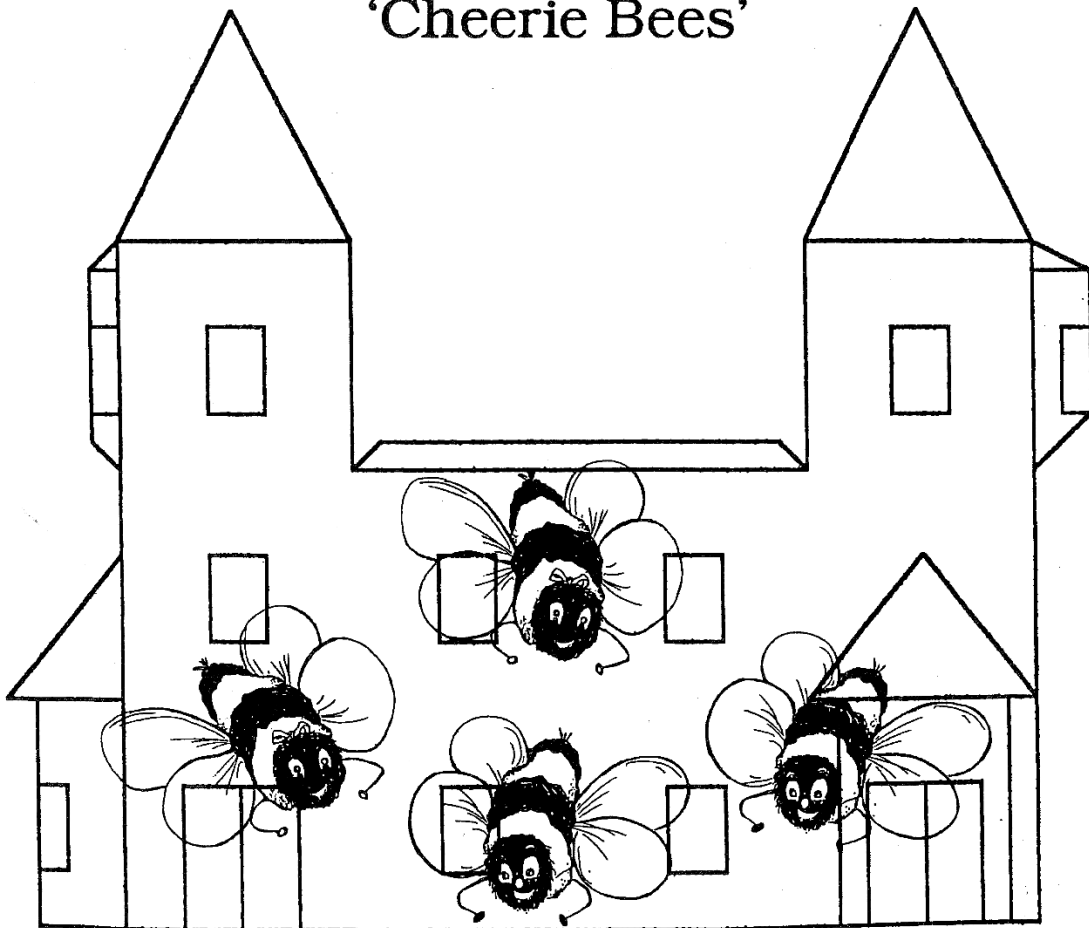


This is a digital copy of a booklet called “*...we were glad o’ all this*” created in 1994 by the Craigentinny/Lochend Community Centre. It gives a brief history of Craigentinny Castle and its importance as Scotland’s first Community Centre. Above all it tells of the **‘Cheerie Bees’ Women’s Club** and how they established a warm, friendly and supportive community group in, what was then, a newly formed neighbourhood.

Passed to the **Restalrig, Lochend and Craigentinny People’s Parish Project** in 2022, we have added the booklet to our resource pack as: a valuable source of the area’s social history; a source of inspiration for future generations; a reminder of the importance of our community centres; and an example of how individuals working together to make a real difference.

*".....we were glad
o' all this"*

A brief stroll through the intertwined
histories of Craigentenny Castle
and the almost legendary
'Cheerie Bees'



Printed and Published by CRAIGENTINNY/LOCHEND COMMUNITY CENTRE, with the support of L.R.C. Community Education Service (S.E. Edinburgh, Portobello Sub-Area) and The Scottish Office - Social Work Services Group. [1994]

In Loving Memory

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of all of those late former members of the 'Cheerie Bees' Women's Club who did so much to establish Craigentenny Castle as a Social Centre, and Community Focal Point, and create the special atmosphere that we know and take for granted.

".....we were glad o' all this" :

is a collection of reminiscences of the life of Craigentenny Castle as a community centre, as told by the surviving 'Cheerie Bees' Women's Club members to John Woods and the children of Craigentenny Primary School; with added research and contributions from John Woods [C.S.V.]and Jake Herriot [L.R.C. Community Education Service].

Front Cover artwork by *Jake Herriot and Lami Mulvey.*

CONTENTS



Foreword - Mrs. Phyllis Herriot J.P.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The Castle - A Brief History

About the Cheerie Bees

The 'Cheerie Bees' - In Their Own Words

Cross-Generational Element: Young Meet Old

Conclusion

Appendix : Selection of Photographs



FOREWORD

I am sure that many, many of our Senior Citizens, from all over the City of Edinburgh, have at some time in their lives had cause or reason to visit Craigentenny/Lochend Social Centre, and no doubt have left treasuring the happy memory of their short time with us. It is equally doubtful whether they could have passed through this Centre without hearing some of the tales of the almost legendary social activities organised by Mrs. Kate McKenzie, Mrs. Bella Gibb and their equally legendary Cheerie Bees. Craigentenny wouldn't have become the friendly Centre it is if it hadn't been for the efforts of women such as these.

Some of these women were strong-willed and stubborn - they had to be, times were often hard. Some of them were kind gentle souls, who would part with their last for a friend in need. And some of them always had a joke or a song to cheer us up.

All of them were our friends!

Many of those wonderful women are gone now, God Bless Them, but they are still in our hearts and minds.

Mrs. Phyllis Herriot J.P.
(Chair of the Management Committee of
Craigentenny/Lochend Social Centre)

Acknowledgements (1)

Craigentinny/Lochend Social Centre was established as Scotland's first community centre in 1938. It has in the past 56 years been an innovative, if somewhat low-key, pioneer of social, recreational and community education services. Many of these developments were due to the creativity, enthusiasm and determination of a dedicated band of community activists. A group of activists that included significant members of the 'Cheerie Bees'. Our eternal thanks are due to the surviving members of that group, and those original 'pioneers'. The Centre membership owes them a great and invaluable debt for their part in founding this Social Centre.

Special thanks are also due to -

*The 'Cheerie Bees', Their Story/Participation
Staff/Pupils of Craigentinny Primary School, Research and
Participation*

Mr. John Woods, Research and Reminiscence Worker/Main Author

Mr. Jake Herriot, Project Supervisor/Co-Author/Editor

Sandra Scott/Lami Mulvey, Proof Reading

AND TO

The Scottish Office, Social Work Services Group for funding the production costs.

L.R.C. Community Education Service for employing the tutor.

C.S.V. Scotland for introducing us to John Woods, and voluntarily supporting his efforts.

Acknowledgements (2)

I would like to offer my thanks to the following groups and individuals for their time, patience and effort throughout this project :-

Ms. Gladys Baillie, Head Teacher, Ms. Fiona MacArthur, Class Teacher and the pupils of Craigentenny Primary School for their time and effort, I hope they enjoyed the project's experiences.

Heather Robertson, C.S.V. Scotland, for her support and the benefit of her experience.

Jake Herriot, Senior Community Education Worker, and everyone at Craigentenny C.C. for giving me the opportunity to work on this project.

And last but by no means least those splendid women from the Cheerie Bees, without whose experience none of this project could have taken place.

John Woods(Main Author)

Introduction

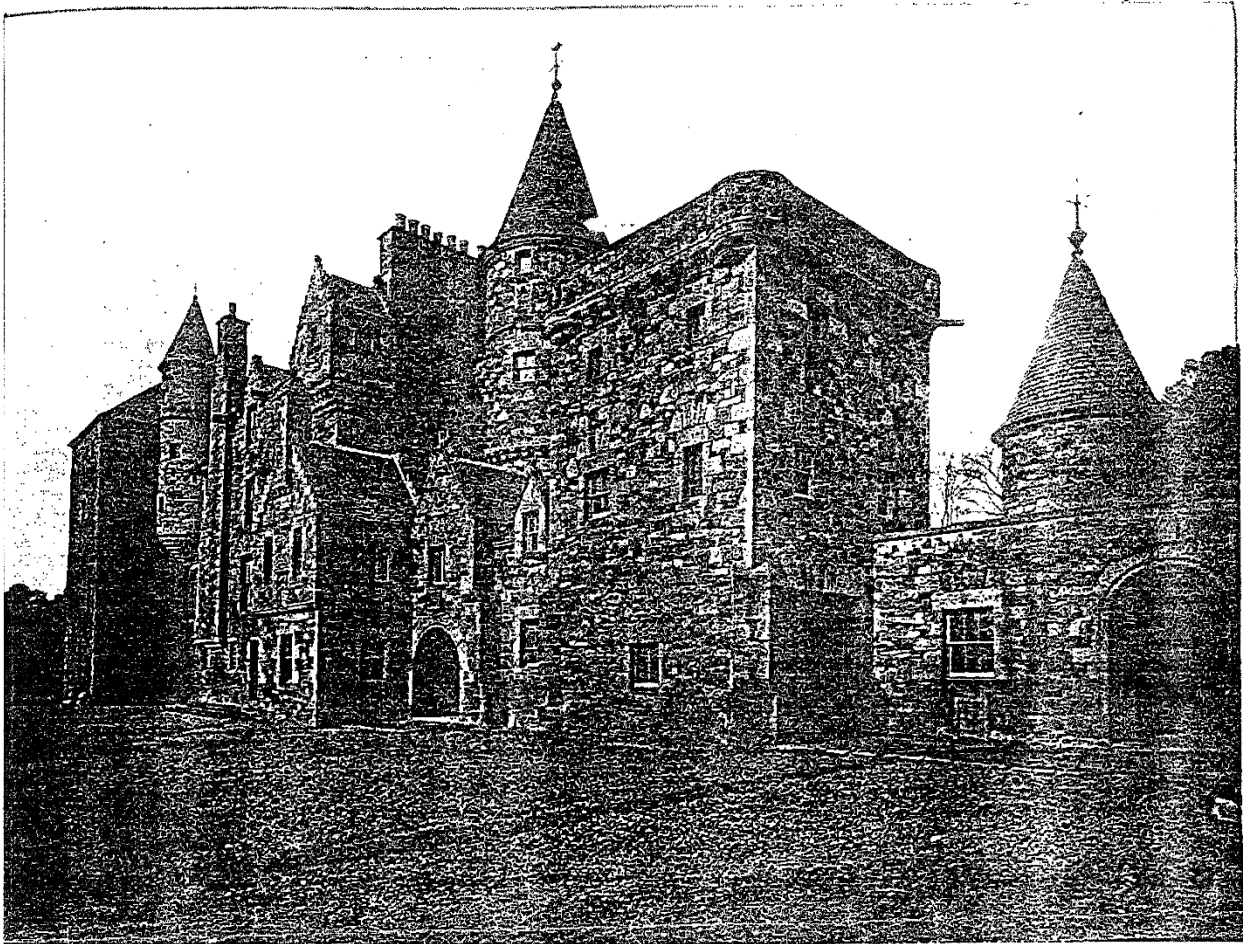
The Cheerie Bees were established in the year just prior to the Second World War, by women from the Labour Club, in the Canongate. The Club was mainly for young mothers from the new estates at Craigentenny, Loganlea and Lochend.

Over the last few months some former members of the Cheerie Bees have been meeting and talking about their involvement in the Club. There was also an opportunity for some children from Craigentenny Primary School to share and participate in these reminiscence sessions.

We had everyday objects from the People Story Museum and Museum of Childhood's handling collections and a video presentation of street games from the early fifties. The children were impressed by the tales the older people related to them of their own childhood. Although there wasn't much, in this age of computer games, that they could identify with, the children did ask many questions.

A measure of the success of this project is in the fact that when they met the older people in the street the children are still coming up and saying hello several months on.

"The Castle" - A Brief History



Craigentenny House, as it looked before the bombing in 1942

Craigentenny House (originally Craigantinnie), now a listed building, was built in 1604 on the estate of the Nisbets of Dean and Craigantinnie, probably by the family of Sir Patrick Nisbet - later to become a Baronet of Nova Scotia - and an ancestor of Henry Nisbet, Lord Provost of Edinburgh and an M.P. in the last Parliament of Scotland and the first of Britain. Sir Patrick, whose personal estate was at Craigantinnie (the patrimony of the Nisbet Family), exchanged lands with his cousin Sir Alexander who at that time had inherited the barony at Dean. Years later, and after much internal feuding,

intestate deaths and subsequent court actions the estates passed into the hands of a distant relative Sir John Nisbet of Dirleton, King's Advocate. An action was raised, during the 18th Century, against any future sale of the lands by Sir John's ancestors, by Young of Newhall, which went all the way to the House of Lords. This action led to the lands passing to the Crown for disposal.

After the Nisbet line died out the house was purchased from the Courts by William Miller a noted book collector, seed merchant and quaker. Miller acquired the Craigentenny estate to add to his already considerable lands at Philliside (now known as Fillyside), this newly established estate measured over six hundred acres. His son, also William Miller, an M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme, built the mausoleum known as the 'Craigentenny Marbles' just off Portobello Road, the structure was completed in 1856. William Miller, the younger, has a somewhat colourful if not mysterious past widely believed to have been a changeling or transvestite, or even a woman! Suggestions apparently given credence by his frail figure, weak voice, lack of facial hair growth and 'distinctly effeminate habits'. Needless to say these so-called facts were never corroborated, as no-one, not even those close to him were permitted to touch his person. (Could it be that the 'Green Lady of Craigentenny was in fact a 'Green Man'?). The eccentric Miller was buried according to his instructions forty feet below ground and capped by the massive mausoleum, with its impressive Alfred Gatley sculptured marble panels. 'The Castle', as it is better known locally, was greatly renovated during the 19th century and acquired the style of a Franco-Scottish chateau with only the south west corner remaining as original. Around this time tales began to circulate of the apparition, later to become known as the "Green Lady" haunting the top floor of the Castle. Indeed to this day staff and users of the building still report

strange occurrences. Over the years the lands were slowly sold on to the local authorities for housing, and to business for expansion, with the family eventually uprooting and moving south to London.

In 1937 the Castle was purchased, from the Christie-Miller family, by Edinburgh Corporation for £1,000 . A further £2000 was spent on renovation and upgrading, including a gym and showers. In 1938 it was leased rent free to Craigentenny Council; an organisation which represented local welfare groups and social clubs; from one of these groups was to evolve the Cheerie Bees. And so Craigentenny/Lochend Social Centre was born, it was to be the first of it's kind anywhere in Scotland. During the war the groups within the Centre organised themselves for the war effort, arranging parcels etc. to give comfort to the soldiers at the front line.



The aftermath of the 1942 bombing in which a young girl died.

Tragedy struck, however, on the night of the 6th of August 1942 at 11.20 pm. A Heinkel bomber escaping

after a raid on Leith Docks jettisoned its' remaining four 500kg load of bombs from 1,000ft. The bombs exploded along Loaning Road killing 13-year-old Betty Veitch a number 35 and killing Mr. Wright the caretaker of the Castle, and destroying a substantial part of the building. After the war, a memorial plaque was erected in the main building, to all civilians and servicemen who fell during the conflict.

On March 2nd 1949 the then Princess Elizabeth, and her husband the Duke of Edinburgh, visited the Centre and were presented with flowers by the children. Over the years the Centre has been patronised by many distinguished visitors - from Royalty to the Ambassador of Foreign Governments to local dignitaries and celebrities - indeed, the Centre's Visitors' Book makes for interesting reading.



The 'Castle' as it stands today, 1994.

The Centre set the pattern for all future community centres in Scotland and has been innovative in setting

up adult education classes, after school clubs, pre-school playgroups, playschemes, a holidays at home project, community services for the elderly, as well as pioneering joint working and sharing its' premises with all kinds of social welfare groups. The Centre is constantly expanding and developing its' programme, and seeking new ways to serve the community in which it is based.

The Centre was adopted by the Education Department as an integral part of the Community Education Service in 1975, when the local government structure was re-organised to form Lothian Regional Council. A new extension, replacing the wing destroyed during the bombing, and a new name arrived in 1976 - Craigentenny/Lochend Community Centre - yet 18 years on the membership still cling to and use the original name. (The extension incorporated a function hall, with kitchen, lounge, offices, and shower/changing facilities; as well as a new Area Social Work Office.)

About the 'Cheerie Bees'

In 1938 a group of women, formerly connected to the Labour Club in the Canongate, decided to book a hall in the new Craigentenny Castle Social Centre. Kate McKenzie was elected president with six of a committee from a membership of 40 women, mostly young mothers. Various names for the group were suggested, one woman suggesting, "How about 'Busy Bees'?", to which the reply was heard "I don't know about 'Busy Bees', we are a lot of 'Cheerie B's'". That was that! The name, moderated to 'Cheerie Bees', stuck and so it remained for over 50 years.



Kate McKenzie cuts the cake at the 'Cheerie Bees' 5th Anniversary Party

A subscription was taken weekly to help with the surprising amount of activities. Bus trips, picnics, Christmas parties with presents for all the children, fancy dress parties, bring and buy sales, beetle drives, whist drives, Irish nights, Burns suppers, Guest speakers on every subject and many social evenings were just some of the events these busy women organised. Many dignitaries, amongst them Lord Provosts, Councillors and local celebrities were regular guests at the frequent functions.

During the war years the membership increased to over 80 with the women busy knitting, making up parcels, arranging and providing entertainment for wounded and convalescing soldiers. The entertainments would be in the form of dances or concert parties with the women providing prizes and gifts.

Starting with a subscription of 2/- a week over half a century ago, this all female group sustained a vibrant, cohesive group that was open to all the women in the area; and provided inestimable value to the life of the community.

In January 1994 with the group down to under 20 members and no new younger members

joining, plus the failing health of many in the group it was decided, somewhat unhappily and with definite reluctance to disband the club.



*The late Mrs. Gibb (right) with Mr. Wright's (late janitor) widow
and her deputy Marion Murray (left)*

Sadly Mrs. Isabella Gibb, the long serving Club President, died a few weeks later. Bella had succeeded her great friend, Kate McKenzie, in the running of the group in the early 50's, after the latter had resigned to look after her sick husband. Bella had ran the club virtually single handed and with a great deal of determination for almost 40 years.

And now I'll let the women speak for themselves.

The 'Cheerie Bees' - In Their Own Words

Peggy Fairgrieve - 48 yrs. a member.

(Bella Gibb's health was failing in the last few years and Peggy, often took over much of the running of the Cheerie Bees Activities, especially the Monday afternoon bingo sessions.)



“Bella ran things almost single handed. It such a pity she's gone now or we'd still be going. She was a good friend.”

“When the Cheerie Bees started away back in the 1930's Kate McKenzie ran it.”

“Whenever we went on our outings, even if it was just a stop at a wee pub the manager used to say,” “ You can all come back again “ “, because we'd have a sing song and some good humoured carry on, Oh ! we were always welcome.”

“I joined on , Oh! when was that now, I've had seven children and the eldest is 57 and the youngest is coming up for 40, I think it must

have been about 1946, just after the war”.

“The picnics for the kids were fantastic, the best fun we ever had was with the children. We used to go to Aberdour, Burntisland, Kinghorn, Bonnyrigg, Colinton Dell, Corstorphine Hill and Linlithgow Palace. We went all over the place. It really was fantastic. The picnics all stopped when there was no children. It was all grandchildren and we really couldn't take the grandchildren because it wasn't Cheerie Bees. You know what I mean? It wasn't the same. The bairns wanted to do other things.”

“Kate McKenzie was the one to start it. In fact Kate was our first president. She retired from the chair when she lost her husband and had to get a job to support the family.”

“Mrs. Gibb used to organise retirement do's, for members and their spouses, they were good too.”

“Lord and Lady Wheatley used to come and other Royalty was here 4 or 5 years ago at the dancing. We've had the Duchess of Kent, the Queen, Prince Phillip and Princess Alice.”

“Marion Murray used to run the dominoes and organise a sing-song or a musical afternoon. There were some beautiful singers and that's

how we'd spend our afternoons. There was something different just about every day. Mrs. Murray had the dominoes. Mrs. Gibb had the Cheerie Bees and at night-time we would play Bingo. Wednesday and Friday it was whist. Thursday is the pensioners. I don't come up on a Friday I find it's too much now. I used to call the Bingo but I've had a big operation recently and I couldnae keep it up."

"I must say that this Castle has some happy memories. In fact I had my Silver Wedding here."

"The Holidays at Home started with the lunch club, Mrs. McKenzie and Mr. Fisher. We took up a sub. It was popular and eventually we had to have 3 buses leaving. They were the most gorgeous times we ever had. We would go into the Miners' club in Penicuik with the bus and stop there for the sake of the men, getting a wee nip, and we would have a sing song. Marvellous times we had on those outings. Kate McKenzie was always on her feet from the moment the bus left Craigentenny. Always singing and joking. Wonderful, happy times."

"The younger women aren't really interested now. The younger generation have a lot more different things to occupy them now. You see

we were glad of all this. There's more going on for the young now than there was in our time."

"The Cheerie Bees must be the longest running group in the history of this Social Centre, it will be."

Meg Miller - 55 years membership

Jean Foggo - 30 years membership



Jean (left) and Meg (right) with some of the participating

Craigentenny School Children

Meg: "Kate came down from the Labour Club in the Canongate. There was only about 6 of them of course. Kate gradually got it built up to about 70 odd and my daughter June was only about 6 years old when I joined and I'm going on 90 now and June is 66".

Jean: "During the war, we were entertaining the soldiers, we played dominoes and whist. The men were nae to supply the prizes. We got them socks and things that they would need. A man's a very awkward thing to buy for. It was just a wee night oot. We used to have a sing-song."

Meg: "Kate was an awfae good president. Her man died and she'd tae take a job, an afternoon job. So she had to give up the Cheerie Bees, but she eventually came back. Her husband had a wooden leg you see. By then Bella Gibb had taken over and ran it single handed. Before that there was a secretary, a treasurer, a woman for selling raffles, everything really. We paid about 10p each week. At one time we didnae pay anything. We just used the Bingo money."

"The 'Holidays at Home' the first time cost us £12 for the week. We would go away every half day and we got our tea."

"Marion ran the dominoes on a Monday and banked the money and every now and then she'd take the interest of, about £6 or £7, and as I was on the committee with her she'd say, "Meet me at the top of Easter Road, I've got the interest". She'd buy sausage rolls and cakes

for everybody. She used up the interest.”

“Marion Murray was well liked. You could go up to Marion and talk to her. Marion would listen to you.”

(Marion was a sort of deputy to Mrs. Gibb. During the early 50's Mrs. Gibb took over as President when Kate McKenzie went to work in an ice cream shop because her husband was an invalid).

Meg: “My daughter was 6 years old when she joined and she's 66 now so that's 60 years. My sister stayed in the same stairs and she said “You should come along to the Cheerie Bees. I did in those days. It was a Tuesday. There was about 30 in it when I joined.”



‘Cheerie Bees’ High Jinks in Blackpool

“On the bus to Blackpool, Kate would stand the whole way. She would get everybody singing. We would leave home at 10 o'clock at night.

would cost us £2-10s for a whole weekend, that was our digs and everything. We were well on the way one time when someone says, "There's a wee black cat!", it was hiding under the seat. What were we going to do with it? Kate McKenzie says, "We'll no put it out where there's fields, put it out where there's houses, somebody will feed it". So we did that. It must have went on the bus and nobody had seen it. We went for the September weekend in Blackpool."

Jean: "I used to like to go to the dance hall and we'd meet at Woolworths and get our presents early so you knew how much you had left to spend."

"We went into an auctioneers and we were all there. And this man says, "Well I've only got so many boxes left so I'll let them go for 2/2d". So we bought a box and as he said he was going for his dinner he put us outside and shut the door. When we were outside we had a wee look and dae ye ken what was inside. Ye ken yon vases with loops or handles on the side? They were all broken. A policeman came along and we said, "Look at that he took 2/6d off us for!", and he says, "Well that's your own fault, you bidded for it."

“We loved the shows, but the Tower made me dizzy. We used to go out to the middle pier and see Ken Dodd and that show Mr. and Mrs.”

Jean: “We’ve had some good times. We used to go from one end of Blackpool to the other end signing and dancing. The first time we went to Blackpool we all had kilts, Glen Garries and scarfs on. Kate would tell jokes all day.”

(Although there were many different places they visited, Blackpool was always a favourite.)

Charlotte Christisson - nearly 20 years a member

“I came in late tae the Cheerie Bees, no until the 70’s, ‘cause I worked ye see. But I used tae come tae the Whist when it wis in the hut oot the back o’ the Castle, and I wis regular at the ‘Pie Nights’.”

“We had guid times though. Belle used tae organise the ‘Irish Nights’, they were aye guid nights.”



Charlotte

“Ma lasting memory o’ the Cheerie Bees will aye be the last Christmas Party Belle organised (1993), some o’ the real aulder yins came, that

wis a right emotional time for us a', but guid so it wis."

Ann Sanderson - 5 years a member

"I started at the Cheerie Bees in 1988, no a long time ago, but I needed to get oot and meet folk and dae something, for I'd aye been quite shy. I learnt a lot frae Belle Gibb, she wis a strong wummin, and that helped me."



Ann Sanderson

"We never done as much lately, no like it must hae been in the auld days. We just had oor wee Bingo, the odd birthday party for an auld member, oor Christmas Party and we had a run in the bus with the Lunch Club folk during the Trades Fortnight."

"I run the Well-Being Club now, I couldnae hae done that if Belle hadnae helped make me stronger. I go tae the new Monday Club noo that the Cheerie Bees is finished, it's guid - gettin' there - but it's no the same, is it."

Margaret Munro - member in the early years

“I went in tae the Cheerie Bees near the start after Kate McKenzie and Sally Baigrie set it up, they lived up Lochend way.”

“I was working at the time, I was the cleaner o’ the Queen’s personal rooms at The Palace of Holyroodhouse, ye ken. She was awfy good tae us, there was twa o’ us worked there, and we regular got a present fae Her Majesty.”

“I used tae be asked tae help Kate and Sally, the Club wis upstairs in the Castle Hall in them days, it wis well organised then. Kate wis a rare organiser, so she wis!”

“I left soon after Kate gave it up, it wisnae the same.”

(Charlotte Christisson, together with Mary McQueen, was behind the setting up of the new Monday Social Club, which is supported by a dozen or so other ex-Cheerie Bees. Ann Sanderson and Bette Ronneback, another ex-member of some 25 years service, are also involved in helping run the new club; which, all are at pains to point out, is not a Cheerie Bees Mk.2.)

The Cross-Generational Element:

Young meet Old

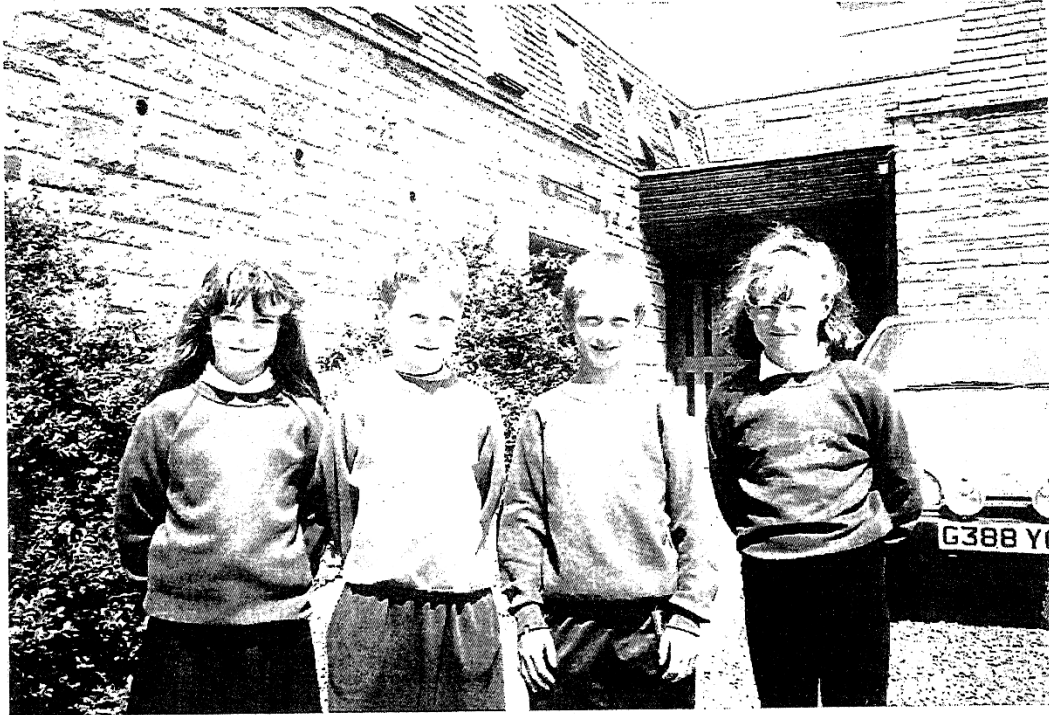
Mrs. Gladys Baillie, Head teacher at Craigentenny Primary School was approached and invited to involve some of her pupils in a short Cheerie Bees/Castle History Project. This approach was met with great enthusiasm by Mrs. Baillie, some of which may have been due to the fact that Mrs. Baillie's own mother had at one time been a Cheerie Bee!

A group of eight nine-year-olds, under the supervision of teacher, Fiona MacArthur, were assigned to the project and took part in a series of six joint sessions with a group of former Cheerie Bees, which varied in size from session to session.

The children were selected, by Mrs. MacArthur, for their self-confidence, level of concentration and listening ability. Skills that proved to be essential to their task, which somewhat interestingly enough 'changed' or rather 'developed' as the weeks passed. At the same time as this project was under way a cross-generational arts/drama project was set-up tracing the story of 'The Green Lady of Craigentenny Castle'. As a result of this unintentional, though fruitful as it turns out, overlapping we found ourselves in the position where the kids were able to glean information from the older participants that was useful to the Drama Project, whilst still acting as a

stimulus for the Cheerie Bees reminiscences. The Drama Project went on to produce a story telling 'promenade' which was performed during the Edinburgh Fling, in April/May 1994.

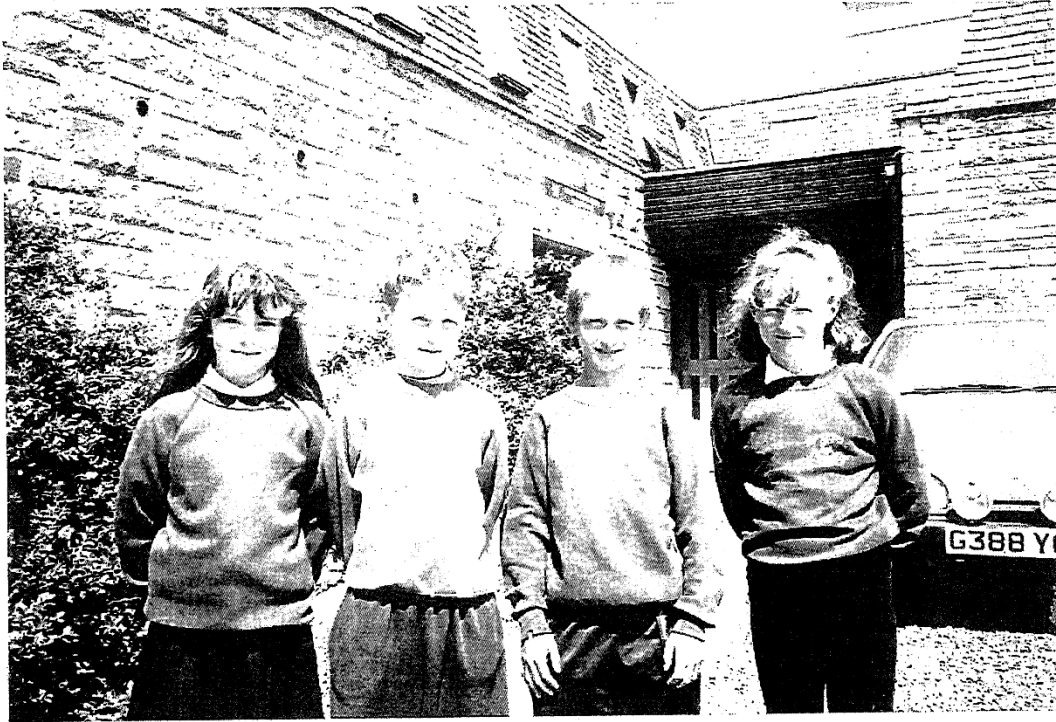
Other stimuli used included a video called 'Street Games', which involved film of children, in years gone by, singing and playing games in the street just as the older people would have done, when they were kids. The pupils watched in fascination as the older people in the group joined in and sang along word for word - still word perfect after all these years! Mrs. MacArthur indicated that the concept of time can often be difficult for children to comprehend, but watching this video and listening to the 'old folks' sing had made the children realise that the older folk must have actually lived in those days. The session also spurred the children into discussing the songs and what they were about, and ended with them singing some of the songs that accompany games that they play nowadays. 'Handling Boxes' of items from the 'War Years' (Courtesy of The People's Story Museum and the Museum of Childhood.) were also used to generate interest and questions from the kids, and to stimulate the reminiscences of the older participants.



*Four of the group from Craigentenny Primary School, pose before
braving the latest Cheerie Bees' session*

Another central feature of the childrens' involvement was that they relayed the information, that they collected, back to their classmates. Mrs. MacArthur was particularly impressed with the detail which they communicated to their fellow pupils, which revealed just how interested, and obviously how well the children listened, and absorbed what they had heard.

The school staff have also reported that the pupils are now saying 'Hello!' whenever they meet any of the older people in the street. Which is evidence of one way in which this project has bridged the communication gap between generations in this community.



*Four of the group from Craigentenny Primary School, pose before
braving the latest Cheerie Bees' session*

Another central feature of the childrens' involvement was that they relayed the information, that they collected, back to their classmates. Mrs. MacArthur was particularly impressed with the detail which they communicated to their fellow pupils, which revealed just how interested, and obviously how well the children listened, and absorbed what they had heard.

The school staff have also reported that the pupils are now saying 'Hello!' whenever they meet any of the older people in the street. Which is evidence of one way in which this project has bridged the communication gap between generations in this community.

Appendix - A Selection of Photographic Memories

A larger selection of photographs is on permanent display within the foyer area of Craigentenny/Lochend Social Centre, Loaning Road, Edinburgh. [Photographs courtesy of Mrs. Bella Gibb, Mrs. Meg Miller, Mrs. Jean Foggo, Mrs. Agnes Stewart, John Woods and Jake Herriot.]



(iv) the youngsters and the older people now speak to each other in the street, this can only lead to a position of trust between them. Hopefully, others from these age ranges will learn from this spirit of communication, and make this a permanent feature of local community life.

We hope that readers will gain even a tiny percentage of the fun the participants had compiling this tribute to a much loved and much missed icon of Craigentenny's community life.

Communities are built on their residents' experiences, and change and development are affected by innovators and pioneers. There can be no doubt that the Cheerie Bees were both of these things. They were essential to Craigentenny/Lochend Social Centre and to the local community.

They will be missed.....



The Cheerie Bees with their guests, during their peak years.