
Bitesize History - People

Mary Caldwell 1749 - 1767



Dr John Caldwell wrote this reference to the Loch Bridge, which lay between the ford of Calder and Lochhall.

This bridge, says he, is at a narrow neck of the lake and is passable only at low water, but not in time of a flood or spate, as it is built in form of a quay across the lake, with a wooden arch in the middle.

This was the bridge erected by the heritors under the authority of the Court about 1748 or 1749. Such it was at the time to which we refer (1747-1750), and such also when, passing over it in 1767, Mary Caldwell, a daughter of John Caldwell of Lochside, was drowned. She was mounted at the time on a horse, behind her servant man, and

accompanied by her mother, Barbara Brodie, who rode another horse. The loch was in flood, and probably the water covered the road and bridge entirely. In passing the latter, the horse missing its way or having stumbled, was precipitated over the side into the water. The mother did all she could to rescue her drowning daughter. She instantly dismounted, removed the bridle and reins from her own horse, and threw them in the direction of the drowning parties—but this availed not. They were probably beyond reach, having been at once carried down for a space by the current. Other help the mother could not afford, and no other person was sufficiently near to lend any aid. The young lady's body was recovered in about half an hour, but that of the man not till next day. She was going at the time to Lochwinnoch in the view of attending a Ball which was to be held that evening, in Strand's Inn. It was on the 17th of November—the Fair o' Hill day,—that this accident occurred; and what made it the more lamentable was, that Mary Caldwell was affianced at the time, and that the catastrophe was witnessed, from the north margin of the loch, by him who was to be in a short time her husband—a Mr Buchanan, son to Bailie Buchanan, of Greenock.



A still from the Video, Silver Slip. A poem, written by Betty McKellar, about the drowning of Mary Caldwell.