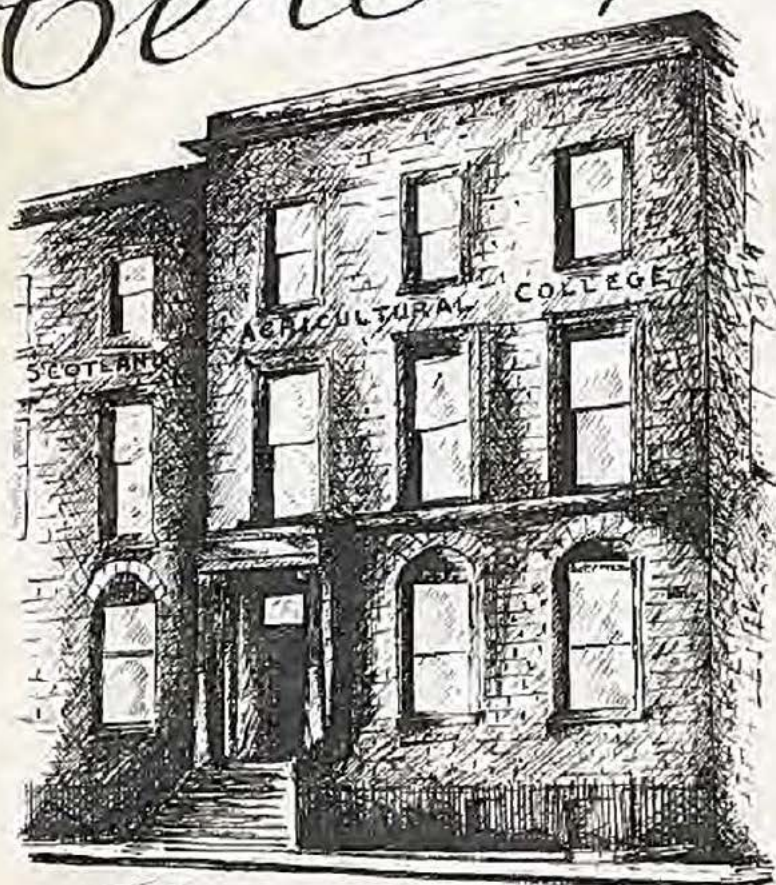


Ceres



MEMORIES**James Kirkwood**

How few there must now be who remember the Central College as it was before World War I, when it occupied half its present frontage and was bounded by a bank on the corner of Blythswood (then Main) Street and the Ladies' Art Club, and extended rearwards only to the lane! It was pitifully incommensurate by present-day standards, with few lecture rooms and no laboratory facilities other than for botany and chemistry; and yet it served its purpose well, many of its students reaching eminence in agricultural circles both at home and abroad.

At that time also there was an arrangement between the College authorities and the Veterinary College whereby students of the latter received their botany and chemistry at Blythswood Square while those of the Agricultural College taking veterinary science went over to the less salubrious atmosphere of Buccleuch Street where, on occasion, the sight or smell of a decaying carcass added a touch of realism to their studies.

There were few amenities or refinements in the College premises of those days, and such as existed were accepted without question; after all, the College was scarcely more than a decade old and the Glasgow end of it still in its pioneering infancy. There was no reading room, the library was insignificant, and the only male retreat, a small, stuffy, so-called smoke room, was in the nether regions of the building, where nearby, the janitor kept a number of show cats whose presence was frequently detectable.

Nor were these the only shortcomings. Whether due to cramped space or to the fact that some of the lecturers were otherwise employed during the day, a number of the diploma classes were held in the evenings. This may not have incommoded the students living in Glasgow, but to those travelling some distance by train it entailed long intervals of wasted time and late home-getting. True, there were public libraries available for between-time study—one, long since defunct, at the top of Regent Street—but one's mood was not always in tune with their hushed solitude and, in any case, the need for fresh air and exercise was often more demanding, even if this only meant shop-window gazing.

Except for the annual dance and private visitation, and an odd visit to a theatre when this could be afforded, there was little social life. On the other hand, there was no lack of student spirit and exuberance when the opportunity presented itself as, for instance, on College excursions and at the meetings of the Discussion Society. At the latter, which were largely attended, all manner of subjects were debated, among them the burning political issues of the time, Home Rule for Scotland and Tariff Reform; and not the least forceful of the speakers was a certain

ex-missionary, an N.D.D to boot, who later became a somewhat contentious minister of the church.

One recalls with pleasure and a feeling of indebtedness some of the staff then in command: Principal (later Sir Robert P.) Wright, who more than any other, brought the College into being and benevolently aloof, presided until 1911, when William G. R. Paterson succeeded him; Professor A. N. McAlpine, the kenspeckle and likeable head of the botany department; Professor R. A. Berry, quiet and shy, whose subject, chemistry, held most terrors for the uninitiated; and John Cuthbertson, the kindly, but not-to-be-thwarted chief of the secretariate. Alas, all are long since dead. Perhaps the one most prominent in the public eye was McAlpine, not so much for his knowledge, which was extensive, as for his brusqueness and love of argument; in his teaching too he was novel and stimulating, though to the lady members of his classes he may often have sounded indelicate.

Among the others who lectured to the diploma students during the period particularly in mind (1909-1912) were: James Wyllie (Senior Agriculture and Book-keeping); James McCutcheon (Junior Agriculture); Professor John R. McCall (Veterinary Science); Matthew M. Monie (Geology); J. J. F. X. King (Zoology—1911); Harry Bamford (Engineering); Richard Henderson (Surveying); and William Stevenson (Dairying and Bacteriology). There were also lecturers in such subjects as Forestry, Agricultural Law, and Bee-keeping.

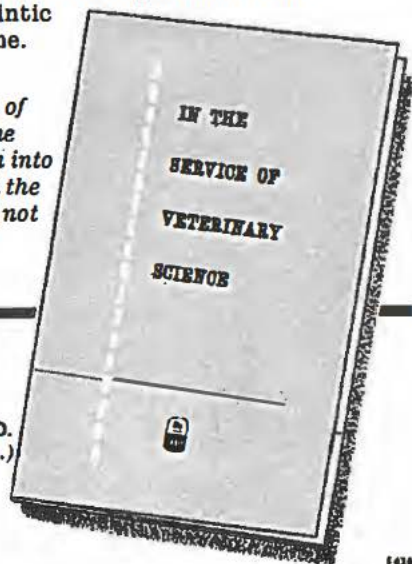
In session 1911-1912 Principal Paterson and Mr Wyllie lectured on alternate days to the class in Senior Agriculture, and for competence and lucidity few could have been better. Professor McCall's graver prognostications at Buccleuch Street were no less convincing. Of the others, Mr McCutcheon is worthy of special note, for he, an ex-dominic, conducted agricultural classes in Lanarkshire, his native county, before the College was founded. Later, under the College, he continued his county work and lectured once weekly to his class at Blythswood Square. He was a most impressive speaker and, if weaker in the practical sense, no one could deny his enthusiasm or be uninfluenced by it. His work in Lanarkshire, in which the writer was privileged to assist, has not yet been forgotten despite his demise fully thirty years ago.

At that time a number of the students had already been to the summer courses at Kilmarnock either to commence or to complete their dairy training there, while others wishing to add a qualification in dairying had that prospect ahead, once they had completed their agricultural course. The writer was in the latter group, but a year elapsed before he was able to carry out his intention. Then, with students from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and other training centres south of the border and beyond, as well as from Glasgow, he found himself within the white-walled confines of the Dairy School. To all the experience was new, and there

A pause for reflection

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was a certain—if, to some, awkward—excitement in donning white aprons for the first time and working alongside members of the opposite sex whom, in some cases, they didn't know. Reporting daily for duty at 5.30 a.m. or earlier was not in itself unduly difficult but, added to study in the evenings, it had the effect of making the afternoon lectures a struggle against somnolence.

The chief of the School was, of course, Mr R. J. Drummond, a Canadian and a man of wide reputation, who had been brought over to Scotland more than 25 years earlier to instruct in cheese-making. Can anyone, having been under him, ever forget his immaculate and punctilious presence or the deft and withering manner in which he brought the wayward to book! His was a reign exceeding in length the life-time of the College and one surmised that he regarded the latter in Glasgow as the junior partner. But he was undoubtedly a craftsman, teaching by example rather than precept, and if inclined to add an air of mystery to matters of simple explanation, he was nevertheless a master in his own profession.

Lodgings were good and remarkably cheap in those days, charges ranging from fifteen shillings per week upwards, and what the landladies—excellent souls mostly—didn't know about the School, its staff, and its students was scarcely worth knowing. As for the students, except for occasional serenading among themselves, they did little to disturb the peace of the neighbourhood, though one did hear of 'rags' in earlier days.

Little did the students, or indeed anyone, suspect the troublous times ahead, and yet soon—in months for some—many were to find themselves in another kind of uniform, this time to learn the techniques of war. One would prefer to draw a veil over the four years that followed and to remember only the fine lads—fellow students in the present instance—who fell in battle. Of those who attended the Dairy School with the writer nearly a third never returned.

Shortly after the war the bank premises mentioned earlier were taken over by the College and linked up with the original structure, thus adding substantially to the over-all space and allowing of more laboratory accommodation. This proved to be a wise provision, for classes then and immediately afterwards were very large—in the case of Junior Agriculture exceeding 80 at a moderate estimate.

Outside, in the counties, work was resumed as formerly, but perhaps with more impetus, and a new feature was introduced in the form of demonstration areas, in the running of which the College provided the seeds and manures and the farmers owning or renting the land were responsible for the cultivations. These areas created a good deal of local interest, but not being investigational or revealing of anything new to the more progressive of farmers, it is doubtful if they were worth the time and money

spent on them. On the lecturing side, the subject of Farm Book-keeping was soon to be added. This turned out to be a hit. The option just previously granted farmers of being assessed for income tax on a profit instead of a rental basis undoubtedly explained the large attendances, and while the motive inspiring the latter may not have been of the highest order, the fact that so many attended helped to extend the influence of the College in other directions.

The year 1925 was one of radical change for the writer and he well recalls the anxious anticipation with which he took over his new duties at the Dairy School in succession to Mr Drummond. Fortunately he had been trained under Drummond and was strengthened by knowledge of this. His position was also made easier by the good will shown him on all sides, not least by the members of the Cheese Trade whose advice often proved invaluable.

The six years that followed are perhaps remembered best through the students themselves, for numerous as they were and not without spirit, they were always completely co-operative. One recalls their happy outings, their cricket and football matches, the tennis played on a not-too-level home-made court, and the dances in the farm granary where, more sombrely, the end of session N.D.D written examinations were held. The acceptance in 1927 by the College Governors of Mr Hannah's gift of Auchincruive was the outstanding event of the period; but second only to this, and with added interest because of it, was the delightful visit of members of the World's Dairy Congress, first to the Dairy School at Kilmarnock and later to Auchincruive and Burns' Cottage.

The transfer to Auchincruive lives vividly in the memory. There was the long preparatory programme of renovation and building, the synchronous appeal for funds to meet the cost of the undertaking, and finally, on 11th July, 1931, what can only be regarded as the heyday in the life of the College, the official opening by Their Royal Highnesses, The Duke and Duchess of York. The staff and students, on duty and all agog, had the great pleasure of seeing the royal couple close at hand and, later, of witnessing the culminating spectacle on the lawn where His Royal Highness addressed an audience of around 8,000 people. Truly a wonderful day.

There had been much comment in the press about the royal occasion and the events preceding it, and, not unnaturally, public interest in the new set-up at Auchincruive gathered momentum. Visiting parties became numerous and sometimes embarrassingly large, two reaching dimensions of about 400 each, and neither evenings nor Sundays were without their strays. The tempo slackened later, but even so one felt that often too much of one's time was taken up in this connection and that parties merely sight-seeing or without specific interest might have been dealt with by

someone not departmentally engaged. Be that as it may, the real, interested parties and there were many—gave satisfaction and pleasure to those who had to minister to them, and no doubt derived some benefit in return.

There were, of course, visitors of special distinction, some holding high political office, others representing government departments or other public bodies, some in a private capacity. Generally speaking all were encouraging by the interest they showed in College affairs. One only need be mentioned — Sir Archibald Sinclair (later Lord Thurso), who was then Secretary of State for Scotland—for it was he who, after visiting Auchincruive, delivered the very charming address marking the official opening of the Bath Street extension to the College premises in Glasgow.

Space does not permit of more than a cursory reference to the writer's more recent recollections. Among these there come to mind various happenings that in one way or another affected the routine and teaching at the Dairy School: the advent in 1933 of the Scottish Milk Marketing Board, the continued decline in farm cheesemaking, and a further development of factory practice both as regards the manufacture of milk products and the treatment of milk for liquid consumption. The last mentioned was to lead to the introduction of a new course, that of Dairy Technology, and, to meet the needs of this, the re-equipment, between 1949 and 1951, of the Dairy School.

Then, too, there was the prolonged intervention of World War II and the sad loss of a number of the students and of two much-valued members of the College staff. The announcement over the radio of the death, by bomb-burst, of Tom Hunter, adviser for South Argyll, still linger uneasily in the memory.

One recalls the popular whist drives of the early years, the subsequent annual staff dinner-dances—both held in the women's hostel — and, more recent, the laudable activities of the Auchincruive Social Club. The celebration of V.E. day and of the coronation in 1953, were of course unforgettable occasions.

On the more materialistic side the disappearance of the woodland of Mount Charles and its reclamation later, the provision of recreational facilities and, now, the presence of the massive buildings near the main entrance gate, are but a few of the changes reminding one of the passing years.

But to the writer there is a memory transcending all others. It is the memory of a long and happy life of service with the College, a memory, too, of his colleagues, past and present, who have made the College what it is—something to be proud of.