

Audience feedback for The Road to Drumleman, a film by Jan Nimmo

Hi all – here are some of the comments people have made about the film and happy to say that the feedback has all been lovely!

Jan March 2012

Hello Jan

I'd just like to send you my congratulations after having made the journey down to Campbeltown last night for the premiere of the Road to Drumleman. What a sight as we turned the corner at 7:10pm & saw the queue down the street. I'm just glad we were there early enough to find seats at the first house.

Although not a native of Argyll & only being 10 when Argyll Colliery closed I spent the first part of my working life at pits in Lancashire & North Staffordshire. The pitmen that you interviewed could have been my old face team with Wee Toon accents. The humour, the knowledge, the interest, the camaraderie & the memories were all there. You could tell that those guys were seeing it as it was when they were recounting it to you and to say I was moved would be an understatement....

Although all my family worked in the cotton mills I broke the mould when I went down the pit it's something I've never regretted. A finer bunch of blokes you couldn't hope to work with. Literally, you trusted your life with them on a daily basis. My mining life only lasted from 1976 to 1993 but a lot of the incidents described at Argyll Colliery were replicated at Sutton Manor where I worked & would be recognised by pitmen everywhere. We pulled some stunts on each other as you might imagine but hens in the lockers & a sheep in the baths take the biscuit.

Thank you for taking the time & effort to make the film. If ever you doubted that it was worth it then look at the turnout last night. Truly wonderful.

Here's an odd little tale for you.

When I did my basic training at Bold Colliery, St Helens in 1976 I worked alongside a guy called Steve Cottrell who ended up as a surveyor finding & developing sites opencast contractors. He was well aware of the amount of coal underneath the Laggan but knew it couldn't be worked because of the airfield so it was the only coalfield in Britain he never visited. Steve & his family emigrated to New Zealand in 2001 & in early June he was back in the UK & stayed with us for a week. The only thing he said he didn't want to miss during his stay was a visit to the site of Argyll Colliery just to close a chapter I suppose. So we had a trip down Kintyre, saw the caravan site at Southend where his wife had spent holidays, had a pleasant lunch at Muneroy tearooms & looked over the wall at Machrihanish & tried to imagine. It's a pity we hadn't got your DVD as it would have been so much better but we still had a cracking day to remember. Congratulations on your film, Jan.

I can't thank you enough for taking the time and effort to put together such a worthy tribute to your Dad and all the other mine workers.

My Dad was the Baths Manager, who was involved with the Miners Welfare Drama Group for many years, mentioned in your film by George McMillan. We were "incomers" although I was born in the town.

What a fantastic film, well balanced, full of humour and sadness, and yet also educational, describing the working process of a coal mine through the anecdotes and memories of mine workers. I've learned a lot from it, and will watch again as I got the DVD.

So thanks. Good luck in the future, Jan,

A friend has just phoned to tell me how much she enjoyed the recent showing of your film about Argyll Colliery, "The Road to Drumleman".

Our interest in the mine goes way back to when my husband, was at the coal face and your father worked with my father-in-law. They were very good friends at work and "off duty" fished all the lochs around. Neil was a constant visitor during Archie's last years. My husband worked at the coalface for eleven years and is delighted to learn that you are preserving the memories of the miners. Over the years he has told his mining stories, some funny, some chilling, to our children and grandchildren. Most of the situations I knew very little about, especially the time when he and some of the local miners were with the Mines Rescue Team from Coat bridge. What came through in his recollections was the camaraderie throughout his time underground. Something, he says, he never experienced again through his life in other occupations.

Hi there

You won't remember me, but I am at home for a few weeks and came to see your film last night. It was fantastic and you completely captured the men, the community and exactly what the miners brought to Campbeltown in a nutshell. I just wish that you had been able to include more of the footage as the audience would have sat there last night enthralled for hours and hours. Your father would have been so proud of it all and how you have showcased a whole generation. My mother was saying that she wished that you would do the same for the fishermen. Please do, and in spite of the toll that this film has taken on you, please don't leave it too long...the fishermen are getting as few and far between as the miners!

Sincerely Jan, it is an amazing tribute to the men, the pit and the town.

Kind regards

Hi Jan

Just home from the 'premiere' - what an amazing success. Someone in the queue said they hadn't seen so many people outside the Picture House since the opening night of Grease!!! - Olivia Newton John take note!

Seriously it was so enjoyable, light hearted but also very moving at times and a very fitting tribute to Neil and his colleagues. I bought the DVD and am going to show it to Mum and Dad tomorrow.

Once again many congratulations - it was all worth it in the end.

What a fantastic film and all the better knowing it was done from the heart. Congratulations Jan, A very fitting tribute to your dad and all who worked there, including my uncle Willie - he certainly got a few laughs!!! Well done, loved it.

Queue was so long I didn't bother as was obviously going to sell out. Good to see and looking forward to seeing the DVD Jan - well done. Remember to post an update on the Kintyre Forum. Regards Well done

it's a pure gift to the world Paula x

Jan We watched the DVD and what a fantastic job you did. What a legacy it is for our children. Willie had a wonderful memory and we still miss him dearly he would have been so Proud. Thank you

So glad the premiere of "The Road to Drumleman" went so well on Friday - knowing how much this project has meant to you and how much you have put into it over the past 3 years... I feel proud to be associated with the film and ever so much more so with the person who made it!

Congratulations Jan, the film was excellent. It's the talk of the town!!!!!! Everyone wants to know where they can get the DVD.

Jan, looks like the rain couldn't deter all those people from coming out and supporting their local girl's labour of love....so thrilled for you!

Hi Jan, just wanted to say that I was one of the lucky ones who saw the "premiere" of the above film last Friday night and thought it was absolutely fantastic!! That was the verdict from everyone that I spoke to. I was brought up in Drumlemble and my father and five of my uncles worked at the mine. I knew most of the Nimmo family and can picture your granny Bella no bother at all !! I'm sure you will get lots of comments like mine.
Best Wishes for future projects

I thought the film was excellent and my congratulations to Jan. The years of effort, worry and patience were well worth it. For a 50 minute film, it managed to pack so much in and had so many contrasts. It had its light-hearted moments in the tales on the miners but also its sad moments with the tragedies of the lost lives. It contrasted the beauty of The Laggan with the grim working conditions of the mine. It put together a historical record but with the human face to it that

brought it to life. It had the beautiful soundtrack of Agnes Stewart singing "The Road to Drumleman". However, my abiding memory of the film will be the general camaraderie of the men who worked there and the genuine human kindness that existed then and I believe, still exists, in this area today.

One final thought. I don't remember taking my Dad to the Pictures before and I don't remember the last time he took me, so thanks again Jan!

We didn't manage to the cinema last night though I hear it was such a sell out there was a second showing! We watched the film on dvd last night and well done Jan!! Fantastic job and a wonderful insight to Machrihanish for our children of tomorrow, especially if we end up with 105 wind turbines in the bay!! Great to see some of the old characters we miss so dearly and of course to hear the words of the wonderful "Road to Drumleman".

Thoroughly enjoyable. Queue all the way back almost to the Christian Institute. Not everyone got in but they are having another viewing tonight.

A real snapshot of history. I'm sure someone will come on and explain it better than I can. Bought the DVD and looking forward to watching it again.

Hi Jan - I'm Willie Mitchell's grand-daughter! I remember being in awe of you many moons ago in Campbeltown!! I am so sorry we didn't manage to the cinema on Friday as I would have loved to see your film on the big screen. I am however over the moon that we watched it as a family of 3 generations after far too much food and wine on Friday evening, and left seats in the cinema for other people. What an amazing job you did and the words of Road to Drumlemman were very poignant at just the right places. How could you possibly have worried that people wouldn't turn up to view your wonderful work?

Good luck at the Deep Fried Festival.

Received the film - you will never know the pleasure it has given Bobby. He is registered blind, with very little sight left, but sat, nose to the TV screen, listening and laughing at the comments. Absolutely wonderful for him!
and from him...

"I am very grateful to you for preserving mining memories. Unfortunately many of the old miners are no longer with us. They were a breed apart - we will never see their likes again".

Just a quick mail to congratulate you on the success of your latest production "The Road to Drumleman", I believe it was very well recieved at home in Campbeltown by one and all when screened at the Picture House two weeks past.

I myself have not lived in Campbeltown for almost twenty seven years and only manage two or three visits per year so was not fortunate enough to be there on the night but have since seen the DVD you sent to my father "Willie McMillan" of Crosshill Ave.

For some time now I have been discussing the rich local history of the town that seems to be disappearing without any proper audio-visual record, this DVD will

now (I hope) encourage people to see the benefit of a professionally researched and executed production, it truly is a first class record of significant importance from an extinct part of local history, I am convinced you timed it perfectly before all these old boys are all gone, and with them, their funny AND dangerous accounts.

I do wonder if there are more projects that could be of similar significance?

I am sure you thought about this yourself before embarking on this production but I do think there is an extraordinary story to be told of our fishing history, possibly combined with the shipyard that for years build the most successful boats in modern fishing history.

Dear Jan

I am the daughter of one of the men you interviewed whilst making the film on mine at Machrahanish. Dad had told me of the times you interviewed him and he was really pleased to be able to pass on information on life and events from his time spent in the mine and he was so looking forward to seeing the film on completion. Sadly, as you know, he did not live to see the film. Dad's partner, gave me a DVD on a recent visit, on watching the film for the first time, I found it very emotional and quite a shock to see and hear dad in his own house talking to the camera. It was also very warming to see him in footage that I had not seen before and I have taken great comfort from watching the film over again. I believe that at the time of the fire, my dad was part of the fire fighting team when my mother went into labour having me and dad had to leave to be at my birth. This is a story I remember being told as I grew up, so I found the pictures of the pit buildings very nostalgic. Several of the photos you have used are very familiar to me from my childhood and now seem so much more precious. I would like to thank you for giving me the pleasure of watching this film and for all your hard work researching the information.

Hi, Jan its great when someone gets the recognition they deserve and I have spoken to lots of people who have seen your film (and some who have not and can't wait for the screening in Machrihanish) and everyone who has viewed it says how much they enjoyed it. It's the talk o' the wee toon! I have watched mine three times so far and pick out something I missed in the previous viewings.

(Re Machrihanish Screening) Jan, please don't thank me, it is us who should be thanking you. You are the one who put it all together and made it possible, your dad would be so proud. As for me being there, well there was never any doubt in that, I KNEW it would be a unique evening and I also knew it would be even more special than the showing in the Picture House because the movie was coming home, I had to take the opportunity to be there with and for my dad, it was always going to be a total one off, and it was, it was amazing. John Armour did a marvelous job as MC, he's great at that sort of thing and yet again the old miners were just LEGENDS.

You would have noticed that my dad is pretty humble, you need to prompt him, he will never offer the information as he thinks "I was just at work" Did you notice he gave Peter all the praise for getting him to the surface when he and his mate were gassed? What he never said was that it took him almost 20 minutes to stagger and crawl a normal 5 minute walk to raise the alarm by telephone and get the rescue team down to save himself and the other bloke, he saved that guys life but would never say that, typical of my dad that.

Anyway, it was just the most intimate and special community evening I think I have ever been part of, what you have done is capture not only a special part of local history, but the imagination of the local community and given them pride in something from the past that was almost forgotten, I'm humbled by it Jan, what a fantastic piece of work, you should be so so proud of yourself because we are very proud of you.

(Re Machrihanish Screening) Hi Jan We had a lovely night on Saturday and was just sorry we had to come away with the kids. We can't thank you enough for the making of the film as we now have such a legacy to leave for hopefully future generations of the McK clan.

Everyone did a fantastic job on Saturday but especially you and John.

(Re Machrihanish Screening) The miners were absolute stars - they were brilliant. Thanks for a great night it was great to be involved in something so special not just for yourself but the whole community.

Have not long finished watching our dvd copy received in this morning's post. What an enjoyable 50 minutes it was. We enjoyed it immensely. One of the ex miners interviewed is a cousin of ours and one of the miners photographed an uncle of mine. The camaraderie of the miners made a dirty and dangerous job all the more bearable. It was great to see the film clips of the town as it was in our childhood. The memories came flooding back seeing the coal lorries tipping their load into the chute down the quay. Many's the time we would swing on a rope attached to the chute. As I have mentioned previously on the forum, I went down the pit as a schoolboy of 14? Which would have been 1962. It was an organised school trip, and I well remember vowing that would be the first and last time. Of course I wasn't to know that the pit would be in the throes of closure when my school leaving came around.

Hi Jan received the DVD today and have sat and watched it, absolutely brilliant. I found it very moving seeing a photograph with my dad in there, also seeing one with my uncle John my dads brother also seeing your own dad in there to. Lots of faces I recognised and names. Also seeing the men you interviewed, recognising who they were. I shed a few tears watching it. I can't thank you enough for sending it to me I am very grateful and can't wait to show it to my family. I reduced my husband to tears also and he hadn't met my dad. I was very impressed with the sensitive way in which you interviewed and presented the film. Very well done Jan can't praise you enough. Looking forward to looking at

your website of other material from the leaflets you have enclosed. I will certainly treasure this film I am very impressed with your talent.

OUTSTANDING!

I have just watched the programme via ForArgyll. Lots of stuff I wasn't aware of, but equally great to see some of the old guys that I actually recognise. Jan, brilliant, best film I have ever seen. Showed the Wee Toon, and particularly Machrihanish and the pit in a wonderful light. I can vaguely remember the pit, but lots of my mum and dad's friends worked down there, so this is truly a living history - if that makes sense. terrific

Jan, I think that this subject would always touch the whole area. As a Wee Toon, further from anywhere than anywhere else, the community in Campbeltown is wonderful. But the sub-community which was the miners is a truly great story which should be told world-wide. Now working in the Swansea area, I see what the mining community mean to each other, so although I only lived through the end of our mining story, I can fully understand what the lads are saying in your film. Crikey, there must be a draft causing these watering eyes.

I knew Ramsay (My Uncle Ramsay, Dad's twin - Jan) and on one hospital visit I found him quiet and withdrawn but on my arrival his face lit up as he described the place he'd had a post card from that morning. That place he obviously loved so much was Campbeltown and his enthusiasm was such a delight to see that I set off the following day to see for myself! A beautiful place but showing nothing of what was below the landscape so thank you Jan for bringing that alive. I feel strongly that these first hand memories of bygone days must not be forgotten and I applaud Jan for her research and the final production. Well done!