

## THE AIRTH BRANCH OF THE ALLOA CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

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**Geoff B Bailey**

Alloa Co-operative Society was formed in 1862 and its focus of operations was Clackmannanshire. However, it extended eastwards with branches at Kincardine and Airth. In many ways Clackmannan and Kincardine were natural extensions, but the business in Airth meant moving materials across the Forth Estuary either by a ferry or by the rail bridge. Operating a van was rather expensive.

The Airth Branch was established in 1908 in rented accommodation. The service was successful and in 1911 extra staff was taken on. One of these was a vanman, John Dick Begg, who eventually died after 44 years in the transport department at Airth. The early years were troublesome and in 1912 over a hundred miners in the village were on strike. The Alloa Co-op distributed aid parcels in the area irrespective of membership.

In July 1912 plans for new shop premises at Airth were drawn up by the architect and a schedule of work made out. Cousin, Drummond & Crowe, Marshall & Son, and J Wilson were awarded the contracts. It opened on 15 March 1913, consisting of two handsome shops in the east end of the village for the sale of grocery, boots and drapery.



**Illus: The wooden shop front of the Airth Branch with its large plate glass windows. Margaret Jack and James Hogg on the right.**

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William Fife became the branch manager and was very active in the social activities of the village. A choir was established, along with a women's guild and an entertainments committee. The branch benefited from being part of a larger group and dividends were higher than might otherwise have been anticipated. The Airth folk also got the opportunity to go on the annual excursions. In 1928, for example the Airth people joined the excursion train at Airth Station to Craigendoran, from where they went by steamer to Rothesay. In all there were some 300 day trippers on that occasion.



**Illus:**  
**The Co-operative**  
**building in recent**  
**years.**

The Alloa Co-operative Society provided financial support for the Airth Highland Games and the Co-operative Funeral Service still does. However, the Airth Branch closed in the 1970s.