

# LONGCROFT CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

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## Geoff B Bailey

The Longcroft Co-operative Society was established in June 1873. At the time it had a membership of 70 and a share capital of £251. Within three months the store they were using was considered too small and premises were found elsewhere. An unfortunate incident occurred 3 Dec 1873 when thieves broke into the store, though little of value was removed.. The following year they took part in a joint venture with the Bonnybridge and the Denny and Dunipace Co-operative Societies for the production of bread. The bakery was located in the latter's premises.

The Longcroft Co-operative Society soon started to acquire land and buildings. The dwellings were let at an economic rate and the intention was to augment the pitiful amount of stock available in the area. In May 1895 a row of thatched and tiled houses owned by the Society on the south side of the road from Denny to Kilsyth caught fire. It was thought that the spark came from a chimney across the road and had lodged in the thatch. This spread due to the long dry spell and a fanning wind. It was discovered around 10am when all the men were at work and so Constable Greenhorn found some men to help him to throw off the remaining thatch to prevent the fire spreading. The women busied themselves removing the furniture from inside the buildings, and even the coal from under the beds. Others helped in passing bowls of water from a pond on the Banknock Estate and eventually the fire was extinguished. The houses were insured but four of them were uninhabitable immediately afterwards.

By 1901 a second shop had been opened at Hollandbush and the Society had become the owner of a number of houses in Haggs and Hollandbush.

At the July 1902 quarterly meeting of the Society it was agreed to start a bakery of its own. A year later, on 27 June 1903 it was formally opened with processions, speeches and brass bands. The new building stood behind the tenement just referred to and was of stone with concrete floors and was lined internally with white enamelled brick. It cost, with the machinery, £1,700. At the same time a van-house and stables were built at Haggs and in 1904 a bread shop also opened in Haggs.

Year	No. of Members	Excursion
1873	70	
1874	85-88-93	
1877	134-146	
1903	484-487-504	Edinburgh (200 people)
1904	528	Oban
1905	538	Aberdeen
1906		Ayr (1,100 people in 2 trains)
1909	698	Saltcoats (300 people)
1911		Dunfermline

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In August 1903 the branch store at Hollandbush was broken into and £8 cash stolen. Fortunately, most of the money had been removed the day before by the Treasurer.

As with all of the co-operative societies, Longcroft was active within the community holding annual soirees and concerts. There was also an annual excursion and the gala days.

In 1907 the central premises were extended. In the following year the Society had two shops in Kilsyth Road, Longcroft. In 1910 a Committee Room was provided at Longcroft. June 1913 saw a vote by the membership in favour of establishing a branch at Allandale. JR Martin of Kilsyth was selected as the architect and it opened in 1914.

Jim Jamieson recalled the Allandale branch: *"The Co-operative paid out a dividend to members calculated on the amount of plastic tokens they had purchased. The tokens ranged in value from ½ d to 10 shillings and heaven help you if you were sent for messages and paid for them in ordinary money as there was no dividend paid on that. The Co-op, or "store" as it was called locally, sold practically everything you could require from paraffin to clothing, fruit and vegetables, groceries, sweets and even carbide for the miners' lamps. It was also possible to buy furniture for the house. You were given a line to take through to the large wholesale premises in Glasgow who had a large selection to choose from. The Longcroft and Bonnybridge Co-ops also sold merchandise from vans. They had butchers' vans and bakers' vans; some came every day and others once a week."*



In 1920 a boot repairing shop was opened at Longcroft. Even as late as 1940 a small shop was opened at Haircraigs near the Head o' Muir. However, the fortunes of the Society were on the decline and the Allandale branch closed in 1958 and was subsequently converted into a dwelling. The Society's debts grew and by 1965 it owed £39,000 to the SCWS. After several abortive attempts the Longcroft Co-operative Society amalgamated with the Bonnybridge Co-operative Society on 19 January 1965.

## Bibliography

The Falkirk Herald

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Waugh, J. (1981) The Vale of Bonny.