

# Jim Cockburn

Malcolm James Cockburn, born 6.9.1909.

Life story by his son Malcolm Cockburn.

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Knowledge, Luck and Money, these are the assets which I suggest help towards happiness. My father titled his book of thoughts and memories, *A Lucky Fellow*, and though he was blessed with all three assets, I believe happiness for him was only fleeting.

He was born in Falkirk where grandfather was an Iron-founder. The company, M Cockburn & Co. had been started in the 19<sup>th</sup> C by 'Old Makum', Malcolm being a family name. However our father was always known as Jim. He studied chemical engineering at Edinburgh University presumably with a view to work in the foundry, but his only wish was to be a farmer.

DECEMBER 3, 1921 SUPPLEMENT TO THE IRON-BOUNDER

**M. COCKBURN & Co., LTD.**  
*Ironfounders, Brassfounders & Enamellers, FALKIRK*



**THE "VERA" MANTEL REGISTER.**  
Sizes—24" x 41" x 12" FIRE.  
24" x 44" x 12" "

HIGH-CLASS DESIGNS OF  
MANTEL REGISTERS TO  
SUIT ALL D.B.M.S. ITEMS.



**THE "NEWCOME" COMBINATION GRATE.**  
38" x 38". D.B.M.S. ITEM. ENG. 19. SCOT. 16.  
WITH ALL-BLACK OVEN DOOR AND PANELS, OR WITH  
COLOURED MAJOLICA ENAMEL PANELS IN OVEN AND  
HOT CLOSET DOORS AND CANOPY.  
WITH NO. 6785 CAST IRON MANTEL, 48" x 48" OVERALL.



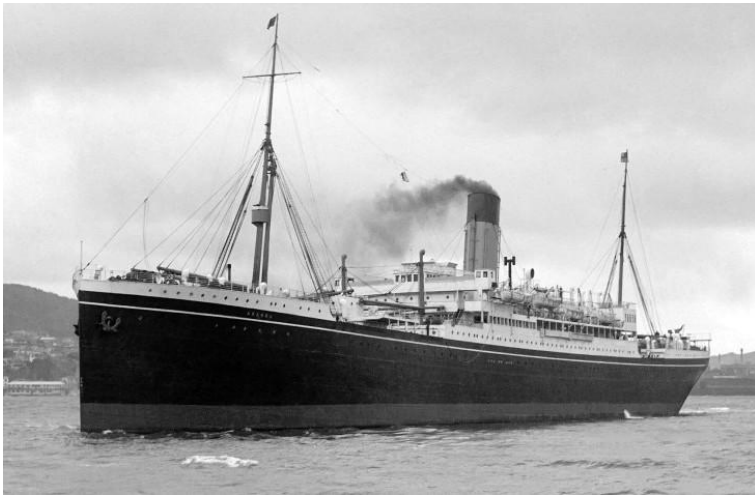
HOUSING SCHEME BATHS—TAPER AND PARALLEL.  
COMPLETE WITH OUR OWN SUPERIOR BRASS FITTINGS TO SUIT THE BATHS, THUS  
SAVING TROUBLE AND INCONVENIENCE, AND BRINGING CREDIT TO THE MERCHANT.

MAKERS OF THE "MORAY" COMBINED BATH AND LAVATORY;  
ALSO OF RAIN WATER AND SOIL GOODS.

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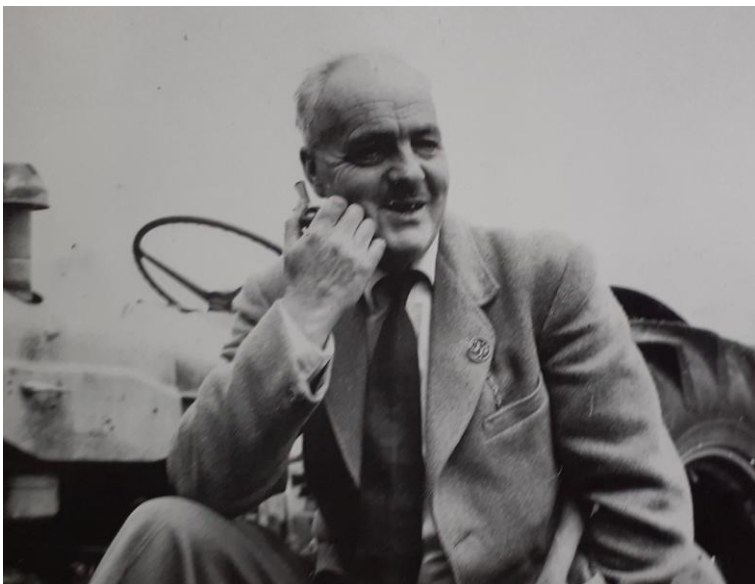
M.Cockburn & Co was founded in Glasgow in 1864. It moved to Falkirk in 1905. At that time a lavatory meant a place for washing, not a toilet. In 1937 their product range included the 'Lavalect' Panelled Basin with built-in hot water unit.

After University he took what is now called 'a gap year' and he sailed to visit cousins in New Zealand. On board the ship Akaroa he met a lady from Cambridge, Elizabeth Whetham who was on her way to visit farming cousins. She had finished her degree on natural science and agriculture. She became his wife and our mother.



SS Akaroa, built at Harland & Wolff, Belfast, in 1914.

Our parents started their life together on a farm in the lowlands of Scotland, it was 1935. Their two children were Jan, born in 1937 and myself in 1940. This was a time of agricultural depression and even on 1400 acres of roughish land it was hard to make a profit out of a thousand sheep and thirty beef cattle.



Jim Cockburn with tractor

One of his many good stories occurred when he sold a bunch of cattle. There was one very old cow who had been valued at £8. The day after the valuation she fell down ('cowped' in Scots), it was obviously her end, but she was heavy in calf. Father decided she must be put out of her misery, he got his rifle and shot her, then with no delay he performed a cesarean, the calf was alive. The £8 lost on the sale was, some months

later, recouped when the calf made exactly the same price at market and Farmers Weekly paid £1 for the story! Such daring mixed with parsimony was often in his stories and in his very make-up.

I realise with hindsight that life must have been hard, especially when the war came and farmers were expected to plough land with horses to grow food crops. There were some terrible winters, especially 1940 when I was born and 1947 when the roads were impassable for many weeks. That same year an amazing change came in our lives: we moved to Dorset.

New opportunities of dairy farming were opened for father which he embraced with enthusiasm. Instead of horses, haystacks and hand milking, he invested in a new Ferguson tractor, a hay-baler and the latest milking machines. There were three dairy farms and father devised a system of partnerships, each farm was in day-to-day charge of a partner but the farm itself was tenanted by himself and partner together. The scheme received much agricultural attention and he often gave lectures to farming conferences.

As years went by my parents became further apart, while still living in the same house at Hilfield. Luckily it was large enough for father to confine himself to his study and workshop. There was a boat too which he sailed at Portland. He loved to have his grandchildren with him on the boat, they would catch many mackerel and he would frighten them with dare-devil escapades.

In his study he welcomed anyone and everyone. He gave wise advice to young people setting up in business and people in financial or personal difficulties. In the public world he became Chairman of the Magistrates on the Sherborne Bench and for many years Chair of the Rural District Council; no amusing anecdote from these meetings would be missed and wickedly recounted.



Jim Cockburn bought the Hilfield Manor estate in Dorset from his father-in-law, Sir William Dampier.

The workshop was his domain; there he built little wooden tables, models of the Cerne Abbas Giant, toys for children and himself, a working replica of a cannon on HMS Victory; 'firing the canon' was an experience much looked forward to. There he

mended anything from the house or farm which might be broken and there his whisky bottle was hidden.

A final anecdote, chosen from many. My parents' friends Ken and Joan Miller had a garden on Hospital Lane, Sherborne. They planned to build a garage there but must first remove a large tree stump. Jim was called one snowy Sunday and arrived equipped with iron bar, some detonators, some sticks of gelignite and a length of fuse. One problem was the music school with many windows just over the garden wall, I had brought a tarpaulin with this in mind. After driving a hole below the stump I pushed in the gelignite, detonator and fuse, all ready, then erected a tent over the stump with the tarpaulin, lit the fuse and in a few seconds there was a muffled bump. The stump rose gently out of the ground, the tarpaulin flew high in the air, riddled with holes, and came to rest over the telephone wires. All the music school windows were intact and no-one ever knew there had been a gelignite blast in the middle of Sherborne that snowy Sunday afternoon!