GENERAL NOTES

Census, 1831	New Cumnock. 'Improvement in agriculture and the increased demand for lime-stone and coal, which is exported into Dumfries-shire; these works afford employment to 92 men.'
OS Name Book 1857	"This name (i.e. New Cumnock) applies to the five villages of Pathhead, Mansefield, Castle, Bridgend and Couplagate."
EG 12570, F 6.6.1913, 608a	Notice of proposed Craigbank SLD or SLSD.
ACC, HC 7.5.1963	"Considerable numbers of families are leaving the area for other coalfields on account of the industrial situation."

RIVER NITH

AA, Th 20.2.1840, 1b	Contractors wanted by proprietor (Alexander Dalziel) for a new channel for the Nith, of about 180 yards near Castlemains Farm.

ARCHAEOLOGY

BUCHANNY CAIRN (site of), 61351092

MOTE KNOWE, 593138 mid (Meikle Creoch)

ESTATE AGENTS' PARTICULARS

42 Pathbrae	June 1996.

PEOPLE AND CHARACTERS

Feckless Fanny

Steven, New Cumnock, per John Burnett

Feckless Fanny was apparently a shepherdess who wandered with her flock over Ayrshire, Galloway, &c., for six years after 1769. She is said to have been in love with a shepherd near Bristol, but her father, disapproving, shot the shepherd, and as he lay dying, he gave his animals to her. Scott's Madge Wildfire is apparently based on her character.

Her favourite ram, Charlie, was killed after he wandered into a kailyard and the farmer set a mastiff on him. Shortly afterwards the farmer was nearly drowned in a peat hag.

A butcher in Kilmarnock struck one of her sheep, and his hand withered.

John Patterson, Memoir of Joseph Train FSAScot The Antiquarian Correspondent of Sir Walter Scott, Glasgow, Thomas Murray & Son, 1857. Text at archive.org/stream/memoirsof jospehtr00pattiala/. Pp 92-3

About the end of the last century a singular individual wandered through Ayrshire and Galloway, who, discarding part of the dress of her sex, was habited in a man's coat and plaid. On her head she wore a hat, and in her hand she carried a shepherd's crook, and, strange to say, she was followed by a few sheep in her wanderings. This singular being was the prototype of Madge Wildfire, in the Heart of Midlothian,

but was a far more amiable character than the mad woman of the Lothians. She was called Feckless Fanny, or the Wife wi' the Sheep. In person she was above the middle height, her features were sharp and thin, and her eyes had a wild unearthly stare when provoked, but when treated kindly she was gentle and peaceable. Little could be learned from her of her birth, but it was the popular belief that she was the daughter of a squire in England, who, on "finding that his shepherd had dared to speak to his daughter the gentle whisperings of love", without compunction shot him, and drove his daughter, who reciprocated the passion of the young shepherd, from his house. She, taking up his crook, his hat and his plaid, and attended by the sheep, which were his hire, became a wanderer throughout the land.

See also

W S Crockett, The Scott Originals: An Account of Notables and Worthies, the Originals of Characters in the Waverley Novels, Edinburgh, Foulis, nd, 244.
[Not yet seen]

And cf

A Glossary of the Dialect of Almondbury and Huddersfield, compiled by the late Rev Alfred Easther, and edited by Rev Thomas Lees, London, English Dialect Society, 1883.
Text at archive.org/stream/glossaryof dialec15eastuoft/ p.xx
Feckless Fanny. I am not aware whether the word feckless belongs to the dialect or not, but I have introduced the name of the unfortunate young woman mentioned by Sir Walter Scott in his Heart of Midlothian because in her wanderings she came with her ten or twelve sheep to Almondbury, and lay in the churchyard with them for one night. She wore a man's hat and coat, and carried a shepherd's crook. One of her sheep she called Charlie, and when she lay down to sleep, she placed her poor head on [him]. Some people, whom I formerly knew, saw her on this occasion and remembered her well. I am happy to add that the people behaved kindly to her and gave her relief.

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