



Types of ships built at Ayr for the Scottish Navy.

(See Page 75).

The Old Harbour of Ayr.

(From earliest times to the Union of the Crowns).

By HUGH MCGHEE.

This article was inspired by an account of the Harbour of Ayr by MR. JOHN CRIGHTON, JUN., of the Ayr Engineering and Constructional Co., Ltd., which appeared in *The Syren and Shipping*, January, 1949. The senior history pupils of Ayr Academy, in the course of research in original records for information about the early history of the burgh, amassed a great deal of additional information about the harbour. This has been assessed and arranged by the history master. An account of the subsequent history of Ayr Harbour will be published in the next volume.

Whatever alternative reasons may be advanced for the growth of an early settlement at the mouth of the river Ayr, there can be little doubt that the existence of a good haven was one of the most important. From earliest times the prosperity of Ayr has depended on the ebb and flow of its seaborne trade. No other port on the West Coast, from the 12th to the end of the 16th century, could challenge its supremacy¹; indeed at the beginning of the 17th century its burgesses placed it third² in importance in Scotland, after Leith and Dundee. The other Ayrshire ports were as yet undeveloped; Dumbarton was the nearest rival,³ and the greatness of Glasgow had to wait for the Union and the coming of industry. Many of the merchant burgesses of Ayr were themselves ship owners, and some of their ships were made locally, for it is certain that ships were built⁴ at Ayr from the early 13th century till the passing of the era of wooden ships. The haven of Ayr, too, attracted the fishing fleets of the West of Scotland, and brought an additional source of wealth to the burgesses. These activities suggest local importance, but there were occasions when the port of Ayr, because of its position, assumed a national role.

One such occasion was the threat of invasion from the West; from Ireland, or from the Western Isles when the latter were under the sway of the Norse Kings. Thus Alpin, King of the Irish Scots landed in the Bay of Ayr⁵ in 836 A.D., laid waste the land between the Doon and the Ayr, and met his death fighting against the Britons some distance inland. Some time later, during the centuries which witnessed the migration of the Vikings, a royal castle was built at Ayr to protect the community against the Danish⁶ rovers

(1) I. F. Grant, "*Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603.*" p. 353.

(2) Address to James VI. Paterson's "*Ayrshire.*" Vol. 1. p. 181.

(3) Grant, op. cit., p. 353.

(4) Charter of Alexander II., 20th April, 1236. Charters of the Royal Burgh of Ayr. "*Ayr and Wigtown Archaeological Collections.*" Vol. XI., p. 14.

(5) Chalmers' "*Caledonia.*" Vol. III., p. 455.

(6) Paterson, op. cit. Vol. I., p. 159.

and the men of Galloway, whose lands extended then to the South bank of the Doon. A new castle⁷ which would also serve to protect shipping was erected by William the Lion in 1197 on a mound⁸ above the harbour. The attempted invasion by Haco of Norway, who came to the Western Isles in August, 1263, with a great fleet and army against the King of Scots, was the most dangerous. According to one account,⁹ Haco sent an embassy from Gigha with peace proposals to Alexander III., whom they found in the market town Novar (New Ayr). The King of Scots postponed his answer because of a dispute concerning the islands of Bute, Arran, and the Cumbraes which were claimed by Haco, but when the latter sailed out of Gigha, and lay off Arran Alexander sent a Scottish peace embassy to the Norse fleet. A final attempt to reach agreement at Ayr failed. This is in keeping with the generally accepted delaying tactics of Alexander III. before the battle of Largs. Another account¹⁰ of the invasion, however, states that Haco, with a great army, besieged Ayr and stormed the castle.

"The toun of Air he seigit syne and wan." Thereafter he proceeded to spoil various parts of Carrick and Kyle. That Haco should have gained a foothold at Ayr, taken the castle, then left the shelter of a good haven to make a further attempt on an open coast, is difficult to believe. The compt of William, Earl of Menteith,¹¹ Sheriff of Ayr 1263, in the Exchequer Rolls provides an interesting comment on the events of that year in so far as they affected Ayr. He claimed the following expenses: for the worker of the ballista (the catapult for shooting bolts from the Castle wall); for the repair of houses in the Castle; for hiring deputies "exploring" (i.e. to keep a watch on) the King of Norway; for the men watching the vessels of the King for 23 weeks; and finally for making ships to the King. The first two items would appear to suggest that an attack was made on the Castle of Ayr, but the others imply that Ayr, though in a state of readiness to resist attack, was left unmolested.

The menace of invasion was finally ended that Autumn at Largs, but the port of Ayr occasionally came into prominence in later times in the play of events concerning Scottish relations with Ireland and France. After the crown of Scotland had been offered to Robert Bruce by the Parliament in the Kirk of St. John, the Irish of Ulster offered their crown to Edward Bruce,¹² if he would

(7) Charter of William the Lion, "*Ayr and Wigtown Archaeological Collections*." Vol. XI., p. 1. "*Hailes' Annals*." Vol. I., p. 162.

(8) Paterson, op. cit., p. 159.

(9) "*Icelandic Sagas*." Vol. IV., p. 352, 389.

(10) Paterson, p. 20. Tytler, "*History of Scotland*," p. 33-34.

(11) "*The Buik of the Chronicles of Scotland*." Vol. III., p. 3. Buchanan's, "*History of Scotland*." Vol. I., p. 380. This account speaks of 600 sail, and 20,000 men landing.

(12) "*Exchequer Rolls*." Vol. I., p. 64.

(13) Paterson, op. cit., p. 39.

help them to free themselves from English control. He sailed from the harbour of Ayr in May, 1315, with over 6,000 followers, and was killed in Ireland near Dundalk.

James IV. must have known Ayr well as he was wont to pass through on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Ninian at Whithorn. On one visit¹³ he was ferried across the river mouth opposite the Kirk of St. John, and left "drink money" to the masons who were either repairing, or rebuilding the bridge of Ayr. On another occasion¹⁴ he came by sea, and was conveyed to the town by "four botes that brocht him on land." This monarch supported the cause of the pretended Duke of York, Perkin Warbeck, against Henry VII. of England, but when the prospect of a profitable marriage alliance was offered, James decided to drop Warbeck's cause. The unfortunate pretender and his wife came to Ayr to embark¹⁵ for Ireland. Their ship,¹⁶ appropriately named the "*Cuckoo*", liberally provisioned, and commanded by the famous Robert Barton, sailed out of the harbour in July, 1497.

When relations between Scotland and England were strained, communication with France followed the West Coast route to avoid the intercepting English ships. James IV. declared war on Henry VIII. in favour of France in 1513, and the famous Scottish fleet of the day under the command of James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, was sent to the assistance of Louis XI. Arran appeared to be incapable of carrying out his orders, and instead of sailing for France, he stormed Carrickfergus in North Ireland and returned¹⁷ to Ayr loaded with booty. He was off to sea again before the arrival of Sir Andrew Wood, who was sent to supersede him. Perhaps his failure made Flodden necessary. One of the ships riding in Ayr road on that occasion, probably the flagship, was the *Great St. Michael*,¹⁸ most famous vessel of the day, 240 feet long, 36 feet within the sides, which were ten feet thick. It took a year to build, consumed all the oak wood in Fife, had 32 guns, an immense number of small artillery, and carried a complement of 1,000 men, among whom were 300 seamen and 120 gunners. A year after the death of James IV. it was sold to France for 40,000 livres. In the Spring of 1515 the Regent Albany arrived at Ayr¹⁹ from France "with aucht schippis weille furnesit with men, and all kinds of apperell for his honorabill convoy."

Such were the great occasions of the port of Ayr in the early centuries. It might be argued that they were bound to bring a

(13) "*Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer*." Vol. I., pref. p. cx.

(14) *ibid.* Vol. I., p. 379.

(15) *ibid.* Vol. I., p. 363.

(16) "*Exchequer Rolls*." Vol. XI., Pref. P. LXII.

(17) "*Accounts of L. H. Treasurer*." Vol. I., p. 301-303.

(18) Paterson, op. cit., p. 48.

(19) Pittscottie. "*Chronicles of Scotland*." Vol. I., p. 251.

Grant, op. cit., p. 363.

(20) Lesley, "*History of Scotland*." p. 102.

measure of prosperity to a trading community. The building and victualling of the King's ships, and the provision of transport for 6,000 troops to Ireland were certainly fat contracts. A fair percentage of the Carrickfergus booty, too, must have found its way to the booths of the merchant burgesses in the Sandgate and the High Street.

The Charter of William the Lion,²⁰ creating Ayr a royal burgh at the beginning of the 13th century, recognised the existence of a well-established trading community. It declared that any man coming to Ayr to buy or sell should have his firm peace, should make his market and should return in safety and peace. It also freed the merchant burgesses from tolls throughout his kingdom, for it was his policy²¹ to levy taxes on the foreign merchant while freeing the home merchant of all burdens. It has been suggested²² that William the Lion, seeking the development of Scottish trade, encouraged colonies of Flemings to settle in Scottish towns before 1200, but there is no definite evidence²³ of the existence of one in Ayr.

In 1261 the Charter of Alexander III.²⁴ granted a yearly market to be held at the feast of the nativity of St. John, 24th June, lasting for the following 15 days. This was the midsummer or Beltane fair which for centuries continued to be the most important trade fair held in Ayr. In later times²⁵ people came from far afield to sell woollen cloth, horses and cattle, while a fleet of sailing vessels filled the harbour. By the 13th century Ayr was a royal burgh with a harbour capable of accommodating the shipping of the day. The account of William Cumin of Kilbride,²⁶ sheriff of Ayr 1265, containing items of purchases of red and white wines, shows that Ayr was importing wine from France at this early date.

A limited amount of cultivation devoted to the production of oats for local use left the remainder of the land for pasturage, producing an exportable surplus of wool, woolfells and hides. On these²⁷ the great customs due to the crown were levied, and with the addition of salt, salted herring and salted salmon, they were the chief exports of Ayr in the 14th century. The chief imports were wine and salt, though the latter was manufactured near the Doon mouth²⁸ by the monks of Melrose from the beginning of the 13th century. Only imported salt,²⁹ however, was suitable

for the preserving of herring and salmon, two of the major occupations in the West of Scotland. Foreigners³⁰ trading into Ayr paid double custom, and had to submit to local burdens as well, before they were allowed to take their cargoes to market. "Dry"³¹ money was exported after paying duty, possibly to buy foreign goods for import. The Ayr Mss. of the Burgh Laws, a 14th century office manual of the town clerk, mentions the granting of protection to the merchants of the territory of the Count of Hainault, Zeeland, Holland and Friesland, desiring that they be honourably received with their ships and goods, and be allowed to dispose of their merchandise according to the laws and customs of the realm. Towards the end of the century woollen³² cloth began to find an export market.

In the 15th century imports grew; French merchants³³ began to visit Ayr, and Ayr traders settled in France. Arnold of Gascony,³⁴ for instance, in 1487 had his goods confiscated by order of the bailies of Ayr for failure to pay customs on a previous visit. Imported wine was re-sold³⁵ in Scotland or Ireland. A precept of James IV.³⁶ forbade foreign buyers purchasing their fish on the coasts. They were only allowed to do so in one of the free burghs such as Glasgow, Dumbarton, Irvine or Ayr; and then the fish had to be salted and barrelled. Thus Ayr became one of the staple ports for herring and white fish. The Exchequer Rolls give a glimpse of a typical cargo³⁷ leaving Ayr about this time, in the account of Jacob Chawmir and John Brown, Customars of the burgh of Ayr, on a cargo of hides, wool, salted salmon, woollen cloth and mullones (dried cod). The burgesses³⁸ owned a fleet of small vessels with which they traded to Arran, Argyshire, the Western Isles, Ireland, Flanders and France. The Arran men were already distilling aqua vitae which became an important export³⁹ before the end of the 16th century. The following picture from Masoun's Notes,⁴⁰ illustrates the successful conclusion of a business deal by the merchants of 16th century Ayr. "Apud burgum de Air Sep. 19, 1597. The qlk day—comperit personally Guilliame Adrian maister and pairt awner of the gude schip callit the *Angell of Flushing* in Flanderis and Paul Francryis alsua pairt awner of the samin schip. Quha grantit thame to be fullie satisfiet and payit be the handis of Joseph Richert, Wm. Fergushill, and Patrik Lyle merchandis and burgesses of Air for thair said schippis laidining of salt sauld be thaim to the saidis merchandis—and

(20) Charter of William the Lion, 1202.

(21) Murray, "Early Burgh Organisation." Vol. II., p. 378.

(22) Paterson, op. cit., p. 159.

(23) Murray, op. cit. Vol. II., p. 366.

(24) Charter of Alexander III., 12th October, 1261.

(25) Murray, op. cit. Vol. II., p. 469.

(26) "Exchequer Rolls." Vol. I., p. 27.

(27) *ibid.* Pref. pxcviii.

(28) "Liber de Melros." p. 27.

(29) Imported salt from France probably rock salt as distinct from panned salt produced in Scotland.

(30) Murray, op. cit. Vol. II., p. 533.

(31) *ibid.*

(32) *ibid.*

(33) *ibid.*

(34) "Exchequer Rolls." Vol. IX., p. 544.

(35) "Register of the Privy Council." Vol. V., p. 293.

(36) Hamilton, "Descriptions of Lanark and Renfrew." p. 188.

(37) "Exchequer Rolls." Vol. XI., p. 222.

(38) Murray, op. cit., Vol. II., p. 535.

(39) "Register P.C." Vol. III., p. 326.

(40) "Records of Prestwick." Maitland Soc., p. 144.

deliverit be thaim—at the key of Air in Scotland"—and by the same contract these merchants are to have "sex ton wecht of retour in the said schip bak frae the port of Air to the portis of France—fraucht free."

During the 16th century a new and vital commodity which found a ready market in North Ireland was added to Ayr's list of exports. At Whitsun, 1528, Adam Wallace of Craigie,⁴¹ resident in the castle of Newton-on-Ayr, and Steven Prestoun, later town clerk of Ayr, obtained in tack for 7 years the right to work coal wherever found in the Barony of Alloway ("full faculty and license to wyn coil wtyn ye Barony of Alloway for space of sewin zeirs nixt"). They seem to have experienced great success for a brisk export trade ensued. Towards the close of the 16th century, however, so much was exported that there was a dearth of coal in the burgh, and on May 4th, 1593, the council ordained⁴² that "having consideration of the greit multitude of burning coles continuewalie careyt furt be sey out of yis port furt of the realm—hes given sic occasioun of maist exhorbitant derth—that ye samen is not tollerabil—that no maner of persoun, stranger or vyr fremen tak upoun hand to transport ony burning colis furt of yis realm." The ban must have been lifted shortly afterwards for the magistrates in 1600 decided to increase their revenue by an "impost⁴³ on the outgait of coles", and themselves promoted⁴⁴ the opening of a new pit, financed by the burgesses "at the seyseyd and watter syd" in the sandhills near the harbour.

The payments levied by the King's Customars⁴⁵ throughout the centuries under consideration give some indication of the relative trading importance of the Scottish burghs. During the entire period,⁴⁶ the East Coast towns like Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee handled a far greater bulk of trade than Ayr, but until 1591 the trade of Ayr was greater than that of Glasgow; in fact the latter is only mentioned for the first time in 1535. In 1327 Ayr was ninth in importance; in 1481,⁴⁷ the sum collected was £43 15s 2d, small in comparison with Aberdeen, about half of that paid by Haddington, but double that of Dumbarton the nearest West Coast rival. By 1578 Ayr was sixth in the list; but this appears to be the high water mark, for by the end of the century Glasgow had forged ahead to fifth place, and Ayr had fallen back to tenth. Difficult times lay ahead in the 17th century.

No picture of the harbour of Ayr in the centuries before the Union of the Crowns would be complete without reference being

(41) Court Book of Alloway, Whitsun 1528. See Lyon, "Ayr in Olden Time," p. 48.

(42) Minute of Town Council quoted by Lyon, p. 48.

(43) Pryde, "Burgh Accounts of Ayr," p. XLVIII.

(44) Promoted in 1611, by Town Council. See Lyon, p. 48.

(45) "Erechequer Rolls."

(46) Grant, op. cit., p. 353. Table showing relative importance of Burghs.

(47) Murray, op. cit. Vol. II., p. 536.

made to shipbuilding and fishing. Information is scanty, not because of lengthy periods of inactivity; but for the very opposite reason that these crafts were plied constantly and little special notice had to be taken of them. An entry in the Burgh Accounts⁴⁸ 1591, for instance referring to the "Herring boats that past away unpayand their dewitie this last fisching" implies that a fishing fleet operated from Ayr regularly.

The earliest mention of shipbuilding at Ayr occurs in April, 1236 when Alexander II. in a charter⁴⁹ of that year granted to the burgesses the well-wooded lands of Alloway, Corton, and Careluie on condition that they would take only so much of the growing timber as was required for building their houses, and building boats to belong to the port of Ayr. Less than thirty years later, the events of 1263 show that shipbuilding⁵⁰ was well established, for in that year £60 15s 8d was claimed for the making of ships for the King, and 7 merks for cutting, shaping and carrying 200 oars. It was the 15th century, however, that was to witness a tremendous outburst of activity in the shipyards of Scotland. In an Act of 1471⁵¹ the Lords thought it expedient for the common good of the realm that certain Lords Spiritual and Temporal and the royal burghs "ger mak or get schippes," nets and gear to encourage the fishing trade. Towards the end of the century, under the direction of James IV. and his famous captains, Scotland took the lead in shipbuilding, and the burghs by acts of 1493 and 1503⁵² were urged to build more ships. How far the burgesses of Ayr responded is unknown, but their harbour, at least, had the honour of entertaining in its hey day, the Scottish fleet⁵³ of sixteen great vessels and ten smaller craft—on Arran's return from Ireland in 1513. As the honest men walked along by the Ratton Hole and the Big Quay, to the low sand hills by the river mouth, they must have stared in amazement at the immensity of the *Great St. Michael*.

Whether such a vessel could enter the port of Ayr, or whether it had to lie off in the road is a matter for conjecture which raises the question of maintenance of the harbour in a fit state to receive the shipping of the day. According to the early law of Scotland the right of port or harbour⁵⁴ could be granted by the King, and a burgh given such a grant was bound to maintain the harbour. For this specific purpose certain tolls were given, in addition to which harbour dues of various kinds could be levied on ships using the port. In the 16th century, a water-bailie⁵⁵ was appointed at Ayr to levy, on forecastled ships, barks, barges and row-boats,

(48) Pryde, "Burgh Accounts," p. 42.

(49) Charter of Alexander II., 1236.

(50) "Erechequer Rolls," Vol. I., p. 64.

(51) "Acts of Parliament of Scotland," Vol. II., p. 100.

(52) *ibid.* Vol. II. 1493 Act., p. 234-237; 1502 Act, p. 242, 245, 252.

(54) Murray, op. cit. Vol. II., p. 366.

(55) Pryde, "Burgh Accounts," p. XXVII.

harbour dues according to the size of the vessel. He had also to collect the special tariffs⁵⁶ on the foreign merchants in the adventure trade which by the mid-sixteenth century was bringing in wine, timber, oil, canvas and iron, and carrying out wool, hides, cloth, skins, salt and coal. The Charter of Alexander II., 1236,⁵⁷ had granted the fishings on the Doon and the Ayr to the burgesses of Ayr expressly for the maintenance of the bridge and the harbour, but the "mails" from these seem to have been paid into the "common good" and devoted to any outstanding expense. From the Burgh Accounts of the 16th century it is evident that a fair proportion of the "common good" had to be spent on the upkeep of the harbour which seemed to be in a perennial⁵⁸ state of disrepair. There was no breakwater, so the open river mouth was exposed⁵⁹ to the batterings of the westerly gales, and wrecks inside the harbour were not uncommon. The winter spates loosened the foundation of the mason work at the quays, and caused silting. The seamen themselves made the harbour⁶⁰ less efficient and even dangerous by the indiscriminate dumping of ballast. Hulks left abandoned in the harbour were liable to be swept down by a spate to the detriment of shipping. In 1586 the magistrates decreed⁶¹ that no ballast from ships be put down or taken up without the sanction of the master of works, and in 1608 the "auld wracks of shippis"⁶² had to be removed.

There were two quays, on the south side only, for "nae guidis by say in shype, bark, or boat"⁶³ could be "discharged on the Newton side" and so avoid the payment of dues. The Ratton Hole, an indentation below the South end of the present railway bridge, accommodated small vessels, while the main quay, west of that, was suitable for larger ships. The following items, referring to the upkeep of these, are typical of 16th century harbour expenditure.

"For wyning and lifting up the stanes under the key that were fallin thairout £6, and for planting of thaim agane at the key end 40 shillings."⁶⁴

"Lime, sand and clay £3 5s 5d. Stones £5 18s 0d. James Massoun and other masons for their work at the haven £18 8s 0d. For the Alloway horses to cart stones, and for filling 12/2d."⁶⁵

(56) *ibid.*, p. XLV.

(57) Charter of Alexander II., 1236, 7th December.

(58) Pryde, "Burgh Accounts," general repairs.

(59) See diagram.

(60) Paterson, *op. cit.* I, p. 181.

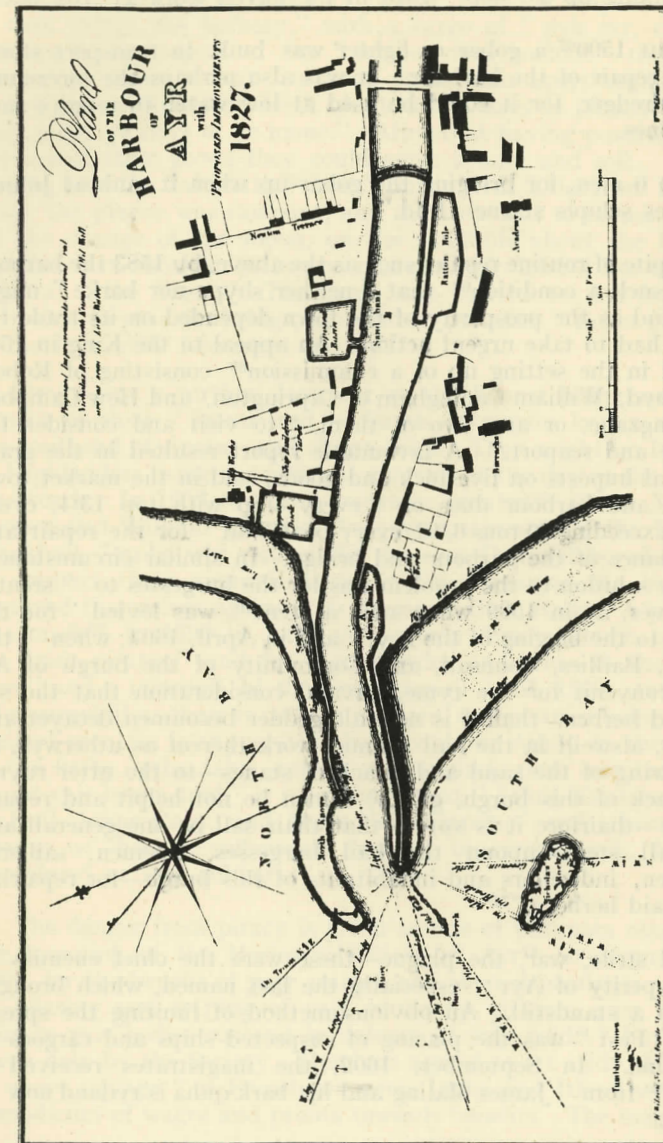
(61) Minute of Town Council, 1586. Paterson, *op. cit.* I, p. 181.

(62) Minute of Town Council, 1608. Paterson, *op. cit.* I, p. 186.

(63) Minute of Town Council, 1586. Paterson, *op. cit.* I, p. 181.

(64) Pryde, "Burgh Accounts," p. 53-54.

(65) *ibid.*, p. 92.



"Making up a 'slop' (gap) in the haven work £1 16s 0d."⁶⁶

About 1590⁶⁷ a gobar or lighter was built to transport stones for the repair of the harbour. It was also perhaps the forerunner of the dredger, for it could be used at low water to remove mud and stones.

"To 6 men, for bringing the gobar up when it sank at Johnne Rankines schipis starne 11/4d."

In spite of routine repairs such as the above, by 1583 the harbour was in such a condition⁶⁸ that "neither shype nor barke" might enter, and as the prosperity of the town depended on its trade the council had to take urgent action. An appeal to the King in 1587 resulted in the setting up of a commission⁶⁹ consisting of Robert Lord Boyd, William Cunningham of Caprington, and Hew Campbell of Teringzane, or any two of them, "to visit and consider the herberie and seaport." A favourable report resulted in the grant of special imposts on livestock and goods, sold in the market town of Ayr, and harbour dues on "every ship with top 13/4, every barque exceeding 20 tons 6/4d, every boat 3/4d" for the repair and maintenance of the harbour and bridge. In similar circumstances the only solution to the problem was for the burgesses to "stent" themselves, as in 1599 when such a stent⁷⁰ was levied "for the support to the bigging of the key," and in April, 1604, when "the Provost, Baillies, Counsell, and Community of the burgh of Air beand convenit for the tyme, havand consideration that the sea port and herbery thair of is now altogedder becoumen decayet and ruynous, alsweill in the hail tymmer-work thereof as utherwys, be the blowing of the sand and inlack of stanes—to the utter ruyne, and wrack of this burgh, gif the samen be not helpit and reparit in tyme—thairfore it is votet—that thair sall be ane generall and universall stent—upoun the hail burgesses, freemen, sailleris, craftsmen, indwellers and inhabitants of this burgh—for repairing of the said herbery."⁷¹

Civil strife, war, the plague—these were the chief enemies to the prosperity of Ayr; especially the last named, which brought trade to a standstill. An obvious method of limiting the spread of the "Pest" was the placing of suspected ships and cargoes in quarantine. In September, 1602, the magistrates received a request⁷² from "James Maling and his bark quha is rydand now in

(66) *ibid.*, p. 94.

(67) *ibid.*, p. 165.

(68) Paterson, *op. cit.*, I, p. 181-6.

(69) "Acts of Parliament of Scotland." Vol. III., p. 519.

"Ayr and Wigtown Archaeological Collections." Vol. XI., p. 55.

(70) Pryde, "Burgh Accounts," p. 45.

(71) Minute of Town Council, 25th April, 1604 (quoted in full by Murray, *op. cit.* Vol. II., p. 500).

(72) Burgh Records, September, 1602. See Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 19-20.

the raid cum in furt of Danskin (Danzig) quhair the pest and pestilence is said to be veray vehement, that she may be sufferit to cum within the herbery," with a cargo of "pyk tar, cordage, and irn." In respect of the "tempestuous wedder" they were allowed to come in, but "to keep yame selfis apert togidder—at ye key end or Newtoun Grene quhile a xv. days or yareby be past quilk wilbe ye heyt of ye mone." After that having purified themselves and their goods they could come ashore and sell. Several months later "a Saltcoittis⁷³ boit" put in with hides from Ireland, where the plague was rampant, and the crew had to remain 8 days till the change of the moon, on the sandhills about the harbour mouth. Yet another, to escape quarantine,⁷⁴ landed her cargo of hides at "the Trwn." The cargo was carried to Ayr by road, forbidden to pass the bridge, and had to be taken "threw ye water to the layt hillis foirranent ye key."

Piracy was a further deterrent to the honest burgesses in the pursuit of their "lesum tred." Bands of pirates lay in wait off the southend of Arran, and about Ailsa. They might be Irishmen or Highlanders using the political quarrels of the day as the pretext for attack. In 1602 the town treasurer granted⁷⁵ £2 to Malcolm Hunter and William Thom of Ardgowan, servants of the Laird of Blackhall, "quha wer spulyeit be the clan Donnald besyd Pladay, to support thair expensis hame." On occasions the burgesses bestirred themselves against this threat to their trade. A payment was made⁷⁶ in 1590 to "the young men directed forth to catch the Irish pirates," and for "gunpowder and wine to the young men," and a minute⁷⁷ of the town council April, 1590, states that "for samekill as thair is certane rubberis and pirattes being Scott's hieland men (as is supponit) quha lye about Ailsay in the middis of the firthe, quha takis, rubbis, and spulzeis pure merchand men usand yair lesum tred," it is ordained that "Johne Rankine, Johne McKall, Johne Rayt, and Alane Neil skippers" and others should "gang wi' boittes sufficientle furnesit to serche, seik, tak and apprehend ye said rubberis."

The danger from piracy is given as one of the main reasons for the founding of the Mariners' Society of Ayr⁷⁸ in August 28th, 1580, for the benefit of poor seamen and their dependants. "Sum, be pilasing and reiping of yair guidis by pirattes, sum be greit hurt in yair bodies sustenit in defence of yair guidis" have to be given help by the Society. Members agreed to set aside at the end of every voyage "of French weyages, Inglis and Irland weyages" a modicum of wages and profits towards benefits. The magistrates

(73) Burgh Records, September, 1602. See Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 19-20.

(74) Burgh Records, September, 1602. See Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 19-20.

(75) Pryde, "Burgh Accounts," p. 216.

(76) *ibid.*, p. 163.

(77) Minute of Town Council, April, 1590 (Lyon, p. 6).

(78) Lyon, p. 99.

of 16th century Ayr, too, showed a benevolent attitude towards the unfortunate strangers within their gates. "Flavit Deus et dissipati sunt." Four shipwrecked sailors of the Armada arrived at Ayr in 1588. Robert Maxwell, treasurer of the burgh for that year, spent £4 of the town's money "for meat and drink to the pure Spainyardis," gave James Boyd, cordiner, £1 "for four pair of schoone gevin to the saidis four Spainyardis," and £5 for lodging them.⁷⁹

It is fitting that the magistrates themselves should have the last word in assessing the importance, national and local, of the port of Ayr about the time of the Union of the Crowns. In an address to James VI.,⁸⁰ in reply to an enquiry on the state of the harbour, with a view to its improvement, they expressed their opinion "that the worke of the reparation of the said herbery is most necessair for the benefit of the whole cuntrey—the place it self being the onlie sey poirt upoun that haill coast whair the resett and dispathe of goods is most ordinair and frequent—and for number of goode schippes and skilfull and able marinaris it is the best in this your maiesties kingdome, Leyth and Dundee onlie except—it lyes oppin to Irland, within twelff houris sailing to the North pairtis thereof, whair the seid of all the rebellion of that kingdome took roote, unto the whilkis pairtis your maiestie, at every occasioun, may haif the commoditie of transportatioun whatever your maiestie sall think goode. And iff this intendet worke be not finished—the towne, which is so ancient, and for civilitie, bewtye, buildingis, and goode governament may be rekynd amangis the best and worthiest of this kingdome, will come to noght; whairby the haill trade of the west cuntrey, which wes intertenyed be the schipping of Air, will ceis, to the impoverishing of that nuke of your maiestis kingdome."

Ayr Harbour.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS.

Date.	
A.D.	
836	Landing of Alpin.
1197	Building of the New Castle by William the Lion.
1202	Charter of William the Lion.
1236	Charters of Alexander II.
1261	Charter of Alexander III.
1263	Coming of Haco of Norway. Battle of Largs.
1315	Edward Bruce sails for Ireland.
Circa 1320	The Ayr Manuscript.
1471	Act for encouragement of Shipbuilding. (Also 1493, 1503).
1490	Precept of James IV. regarding purchase of fish by foreigners at "free Burghs."
1497	Perkin Warbeck embarks for Ireland.
1513	Scottish Fleet under Arran at Ayr.
1515	Regent Albany arrives at Ayr.
1528	Earliest record of coal working in Barony of Alloway.
1580	Founding of Mariners' Society.
1587	Royal Commission on state of Harbour.
1588	Grant of Imposts by James VI. for upkeep of Harbour.
1588	Shipwrecked Sailors of Armada given hospitality.
1590	Action against the Pirates.
1593	Ban on Export of Coal.
1599 and 1604	"Stents" for the "bigging of the key."
1602	Vessels in Quarantine to prevent spread of Plague.
1610	Address of Magistrates to James VI.

(79) Pryde, "*Burgh Accounts*," p. 161.

(80) Address to James VI. (Quoted in full by Paterson, op. cit. I., p. 181).