

## Selections from the Auchenhavrie Papers

### IN MEMORIAM : W. D. KERR

The Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society suffered a loss with the death on 5th July 1960 of William D. Kerr, B.A., F.E.I.S., J.P. At our inaugural meeting in 1947 it was Mr. Kerr who formally moved the establishment of the Society, under his Chairmanship an Interim Committee drafted a Constitution, and he was elected our first Vice-President. A native of Dumfries and a graduate of Queen's University, Belfast, Mr. Kerr came to Ayrshire more than fifty years ago as a teacher, beginning in Glengarnock in 1902, then to Saltcoats and Kilwinning, and in 1934 became Headmaster of High Street Primary School, Kilmarnock. On his retirement in 1942 he returned to live in Saltcoats, for which he had a strong affection. He had joined Saltcoats Town Council as an I.L.P. member in 1914 and served till 1923, and again from 1925 till 1934, a total of 18 years, and he was Provost from 1927 till 1930, the first Labour member to hold that office. W. D. Kerr was actively associated with many aspects of community life—Hon. President of the North Ayrshire Museum Association, Hon. Vice-President of the Saltcoats Literary Society, a leading figure in the Saltcoats and District Vegetarian Society, the New Cuninghame Art Club, the first Scoutmaster of the local troop, and the founder of Saltcoats Queen of the Sea celebrations. He retained the vigour and enthusiasm that were typical of him, despite his 81 years, till a sudden illness brought death; his wife, who had been closely associated with him in public service, died just a week later.

### THE AUCHENHARVIE BROTHERHOOD

One of Mr. Kerr's great interests was the history of the Saltcoats district, on which subject indeed he contributed an article to Volume 1 of these *Collections*. Arising out of the discovery of a mass of estate papers in 1956, he undertook the work of ensuring their preservation. As he explained in a lecture to the Museum Association (2nd October, 1956) this was "one of the most interesting events that has happened in Saltcoats. Mr. James Kirkland, the former owner of Auchenhavrie, proposes to offer the documents belonging to the Cuninghame family of Auchenhavrie to the Town Council. There are hundreds of these papers—they may even reach the thousand mark.

"My task is to try to organise some plan of campaign to have these papers arranged and catalogued, so that some enthusiasts in the future will be able to build up a picture of society in this area during the past three or four hundred years.

"These papers were in a large basket hamper, exposed to damp, moths, mice and dust. They have lain in this condition, evidently untouched by human hands, for a long period of years. Some are parchments permeated with dust. Many items are very fragile and require careful handling. The first thing I had to do was to get them ironed out to be thoroughly dried, and where necessary rubbed with bread crumbs to take off the dust of ages. Many of them had to be repaired. To show the labour involved I may mention that one long roll, over 20 feet in length, took nearly five hours to clean and repair."

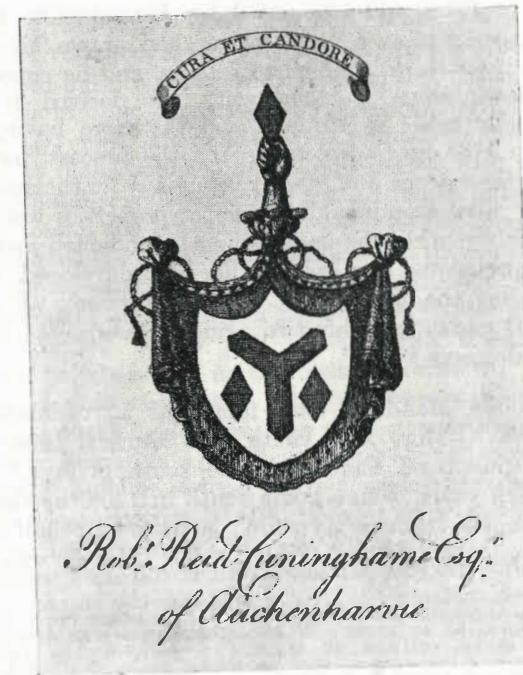
Mr. Kerr went on to describe how he started visiting all the lawyers' offices in Saltcoats to collect used foolscap envelopes, in which the documents could be stored, with particulars of the enclosures noted on the back of each envelope. Mr. Kerr's next step was to collect a number of old tin trunks and deed boxes, which were adapted for holding the envelopes. To assist him in all this work Mr. Kerr approached a number of local persons who were "co-opted, conscripted or, as some suggest, press-ganged" into assisting with the work, and this little group Mr. Kerr christened "the Auchenharvie Brotherhood."

It is to be hoped that this great project initiated by W. D. Kerr will continue despite his death. Undoubtedly the Auchenharvie Papers once they are catalogued will provide a mine of information for future researchers. They are of more than local interest. They will illuminate the story of the growth of Saltcoats from the time of the original crofters who were granted their 999-year leases in 1555; they will throw light on the history of the Cuninghame family; and they are of particular interest to the economic historian, touching as they do on the development of the coal industry and associated projects.

Some months before his death Mr. Kerr passed on to the Editors a number of Auchenharvie documents for their examination. Dr. John Strawhorn has selected several items and presents them with some annotations, as an example of the material to be found among the Auchenharvie Papers, and as a memorial tribute to W. D. Kerr.

## THE DOCUMENTS

The documents which follow all relate to Robert Reid Cuninghame, who held Auchenharvie from 1770 till his death in 1814. The estate<sup>1</sup> with its small mansion-house of Seabank is in Stevenston parish. In 1678 it had been inherited by Robert Cuninghame, who initiated large-scale mining, sinking what was possibly the first deep coal pit in Scotland, installing saltpans at Saltcoats, creating Saltcoats harbour, building Seabank; but requiring to dispose of the greater part of the barony of Stevenston



to recoup himself. After his death in 1715 his successors continued his work, installing in 1719 a Newcomen steam engine—the second in Scotland—and a larger one in 1732. When in 1770 Robert Cuninghame's great-grandson, Robert Reid, succeeded, he assumed the name of Cuninghame and proceed with a series of new projects. He entered into partnership with the owner of Ardeer estate,

<sup>1</sup> Auchenharvie Castle from which the family took their designation was in Stewarton Parish, and the name Auchenharvie was latterly attached to their property in Stevenston.



which was rich in coal; made new deep sinkings; improved his own salt pans; repaired and enlarged Saltcoats harbour; and constructed a canal from the pits into Saltcoats, opened in 1772, and with a claim to be first in Scotland.<sup>2</sup>

These activities and the extension of the coal exports from Saltcoats to Ireland made R. R. Cuninghame one of the leading Scots coalmasters. He was thus an appropriate person for John Loudon McAdam to approach in connection with the coal tar scheme with which he was associated. The progenitor of this scheme was Archibald Cochrane, who succeeded as Earl of Dundonald in 1778, and was noted for his scientific interests.<sup>3</sup> His early experience as a naval officer had drawn his attention to the liability of ships' timbers to rotting, and he conceived the idea of coating ships' bottoms with tar derived from coal. Experiments he made in Holland and the Nore having proved successful, in 1785 he took a patent on the process, published a pamphlet on the subject, and formed a company for the manufacture of coal tar. Lord Dundonald's principal properties were in Fife, at Culross Abbey, where he had his home, conducted many of his chemical experiments, and where he had developed the coal workings. But the family seat was in Ayrshire, at Auchans, in Dundonald parish, and his two principal associates were also Ayrshire landowners.<sup>4</sup>

John Loudon McAdam, later famed as a roadmaker,<sup>5</sup> had left his native Ayrshire as a youth, but returned from America about 1783, purchased Sauchry estate south of Ayr,<sup>6</sup> and for the next dozen years, before going south in 1798, he carried out road improvement work in Ayrshire, on his own behalf and as a member of the Ayrshire Turnpike Trustees. That he was a person

2 For these developments see *Statistical Account*, VII, Stevenston Parish, pp. 1 foll.; Ardrossan Parish, pp. 42 foll.; W. Aiton, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Ayr*, 1811, pp. 47, 56, 561; George Robertson, *Topographical Description of Cuninghame*, 1820, pp. 23, 24, 26, 28, 43, 151-154, 173-179; *New Statistical Account*, V, p. 439 foll.; James Paterson, *History of the County of Ayr*, 1866, Vol. 3, part 1 for Ardrossan, part 2 for Stevenston; A. Guthrie, *Ardrossan and Saltcoats*, 1882; N. M. Scott, "Coal Mining in the Saltcoats District", *Scottish Historical Review*, 1922; ed. W. D. Kerr, *Burgh of Saltcoats: Quarter-Centenary Brochure*, 1928; J. H. G. Lebon, "Development of the Ayrshire Coalfield", *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 1933; also *Ayrshire Collections*, Vol. 1, pp. 106-114; Vol. 4, pp. 190-192.

3 See *Scots Peerage*; *Dictionary of National Biography*; *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*; W. Robertson, *Ayrshire, History and Historical Families*, Vol. 2, 1908, pp. 382-383.

4 Ed. Strawhorn, *Ayrshire at the Time of Burns*, 1959, Index.

5 See Roy Devereux, *John Loudon McAdam*, 1936; *Dictionary of National Biography*; G. S. Barry in Institute of Municipal and County Engineers brochure on *John Loudon Macadam* (sic), 1936. The letters confirm the spelling as "McAdam."

6 The purchase of Sauchry from the trustees of William Wallace, Sheriff of Ayr, has been dated as 1787 (*Ayrshire at the Time of Burns*, p. 311), but it is clear from Letter III that McAdam was in occupation in January, 1786. See also Devereux, p. 41.

of some standing in the County is indicated by the fact that when the office of Lord Lieutenant was restored in Scotland in 1794, and the Earl of Eglinton was appointed for Ayrshire, McAdam was selected as one of the Deputy Lieutenants.

Admiral Keith Stewart is a less well-known figure.<sup>7</sup> He resided at Nether Wellwood, Muirkirk, and was a considerable landowner in that parish of eastern Ayrshire. He carried out agrarian improvements, in particular tree-planting. It was on his land that the Muirkirk Iron Works were established in 1787,<sup>8</sup> and here, too, Lord Dundonald found a site for his tar works.

Letter I indicates that McAdam must have commenced negotiations verbally late in 1785 or early in the new year for the establishment of tar kilns at Auchenharvie. Cuninghame was dubious about the financial arrangements, and the written proposals (II) were unacceptable. Cuninghame was sufficiently interested to make counter-proposals, together with a letter (III), which incidentally gives some interesting details of his coal works. For some reason the letter, though addressed and sealed, was not sent. Quite likely a visit from McAdam and the ensuing discussion brought the negotiations to an abortive conclusion. At any rate, Lord Dundonald and McAdam turned away from Auchenharvie, towards Muirkirk, where just at that time several Scots iron firms were collaborating in establishing furnaces. Probably it was only at this stage that Admiral Stewart became involved as the owner of the land where both the iron works and the coal tar works were established. These latter commenced operations about 1787,<sup>9</sup> and for several years considerable quantities were produced. Manufacture is said to have been carried on also at Tarholm in Tarbolton parish and at Ayr harbour.<sup>10</sup> But the high expectations were not realised, particularly as copper sheathing proved a more acceptable method of treating ships' bottoms.

7 *Statistical Account*, VII, pp. 606, 613; W. Fullarton, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Ayr*, 1793, p. 80; Devereux, pp. 42, 43.

8 Henry Hamilton, *The Industrial Revolution in Scotland*, 1932, for a full account of the iron works.

9 Aiton, p. 605.

10 Dr. A. L. Taylor draws attention to Ayr Town Council Minutes, 25 Oct. 1786—The British Tar Company plan to ship tar from Ayr harbour and to erect works to manufacture 'Salarmonica, etc.' They seek a piece of ground near the quay 'between the house of Gilbert McLure and the sea'; and beg that coal and tar be exempt from bridge toll and causeway custom. A committee is appointed to report.

1 Nov. 1786—The British Tar Company is permitted to build 'not nearer the quay than 70 feet. A line from the W. corner of the E. Bastion of the Citygate upon a stob and line nearly opposite to the middle of Lady Isle will answer that end . . . from the outmost or westmost stair in the quay to the river on the eastmost boundary and not exceeding two hundred feet towards the sea of front and 150 feet of breadth.' A tack granted for 57 years at 6d sterling per fall. Coal tar and other products to be treated on same basis as coal for export (i.e., exempt if drawn by one draught animal).



Before 1793 the Muirkirk works were burning coal tar to manufacture lamp black, and later still the tar was distilled to produce an oil for use in varnish and paint and also as "a good remedy for the maggot on sheep."<sup>11</sup> In 1792 the Earl and the Admiral sold out—the latter died in 1795; Lord Dundonald died in poverty in Paris many years later. McAdam himself left Ayrshire in 1798, leaving his son, William, in charge of the tar works, which continued to operate till about 1827.<sup>12</sup>

Items IV and V<sup>13</sup> refer to salt-smuggling, which troubled Cuninghame as the owner of Saltcoats pans. While smuggling in general began to decay after 1765, accelerated by improvement of the excise service later in the century,<sup>14</sup> these letters indicate that it was far from extinct in 1799, and seem to hint that the preventive service was still lax. English rock salt could be imported to Ireland free of duty; this salt the smugglers bought cheaply in Ireland and brought over to Scotland, where it could be sold profitably at a price less than the legitimate article. An additional salt duty imposed in 1798 made things still more difficult for the salt makers. Cuninghame had four pans at Saltcoats;<sup>15</sup> Letters IV and V show how production had to be curtailed followed by the closing down one of his pans; thereafter the manufacture of salt went into a decline.<sup>16</sup>

Item VI is a printed advertisement<sup>17</sup> issued apparently as a public-spirited gesture by Cuninghame, the owner of Saltcoats harbour, advising mariners of a safe anchorage off Saltcoats in stormy weather in the Firth of Clyde. The manuscript draft on the reverse side of the printed sheet, dated seven years later, indicates that Troon had become a desirable haven. This would obviously be so, after construction began in 1808 of Troon harbour by the Duke of Portland<sup>18</sup>—destined (with the Earl of Eglinton's new harbour at Ardrossan) ultimately to render Cuninghame's small port of Saltcoats obsolete.

Item VII, a letter to Cuninghame from a legal adviser in Edinburgh, concerns a railway Cuninghame proposed in 1811 to

<sup>11</sup> Aiton, p. 605.

<sup>12</sup> *Statistical Account*, VII, p. 606; Devereux, pp. 43 foll.

<sup>13</sup> These two items are copied from an unchecked transcript.

<sup>14</sup> For details, see *Ayrshire Collections*, Vol. 4, pp. 207 foll.

<sup>15</sup> *Statistical Account*, VII, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> *New Statistical Account*, V, p. 460.

<sup>17</sup> On a sheet approx. 7½ inches x 12 inches. The printers were J. & P. Wilson, the first being John Wilson who printed Burns's Kilmarnock Edition and the latter his brother, Peter, an Ayr stationer, with whom he later formed a partnership.

<sup>18</sup> See Aiton, pp. 50 foll., with plan.

construct to facilitate the transport of coals. Such railways were not novel. Short stretches had been in use at Ayr since at least the 1770's.<sup>19</sup> A more ambitious example was the eleven-mile track from Kilmarnock to Troon, the Duke of Portland's creation, commenced in 1808 and completed in 1811.<sup>20</sup> The Troon railway was no doubt the inspiration for R. R. Cuninghame, just as a recent Act provided the incentive. The 39-year-old canal conveyed the coals from the Ardeer pits 2¼ miles as far as Canal Street, Saltcoats; thereafter (as indicated in Letter III) the coals were taken in carts to the harbour. After the Ayrshire Roads Act, 1805, the Road Trustees erected a tollhouse (at McLachlan's Lane) and charged dues on all coal carts passing to the harbour. To avoid these dues Cuninghame constructed a short railway from Canal Street to Erskine Place, and this was completed in 1812. The coal was thence conveyed to the harbour by cart till 1831, when the railway was extended to the harbour.<sup>21</sup>

Item VIII completes the selection with an obituary notice of Robert Reid Cuninghame, from the *Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, December 1814.

# I.—Draft Letter from R. R. Cuninghame to John L. McAdam regarding the Earl of Dundonald's Proposals for a Tar Works at Stevenston.

Seabank, 20th Jany. 1786.

Dear Sir,

Since you left this, have been considering of the hints you gave, what might be the proposalls to come from The Earl of Dundonald, Viz. His Lordship to give me the half price of the Coals upon the Coal hill, and the half concern in the Coke, & I to build the Kills [*i.e.* Kilns] & be allowed 10 per Cent per annm. as Rent, upon the amount of their firm cost, His Lordship to uphold the Kills afterwards, & to deliver them in like good order at the Expiration of the contract, or an allowance given for what they may in a worse condition. This I think was the meaning of our conversation. As that would be paying me in Coke for one half of the Coals, In that case I would run the risque [?] of the Coke answering or not. If it is meant by His Lordship to make me

<sup>19</sup> See *Ayrshire Collections*, Vol. 4, p. 199.

<sup>20</sup> Aiton, pp. 554-561, with plan.

<sup>21</sup> *Burgh of Saltcoats: Quarter-Centenary Brochure*, p. 25; P. C. Carragher, *Saltcoats Old and New*, 1909, p. 27.



any proposall, I would expect the full price for the Coals upon the Hill & a concern in the Coke also & his Lordship to Build the Kill. This I take the liberty of mentioning to you that you may not imagine I acquiesed in the hints you gave, as I suppose this will reach you in time before you leave Culross. I am

[unsigned]

P.S.—I shall be glad to have the Honour of His Lordships proposalls.

Endorsed : To L. McAdam Esq. abt Lord Donalds Scheme  
20th Jany. 86.

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## II.—The Earl of Dundonald's Proposals for a Tar Works at Stevenston.

*This document accompanies the above draft letter and was presumably received from McAdam.*

### Memorandum

The prposal [sic] of Lord Dundonald for the Tar Kilns on Mr Cuninghams Estates are

That Mr Cuninghame is to Erect works at his Expencc not to be Under the Number of Twelve Kilns with the Still of Utensils proper for the works, to be kept in Repair by Mr Cuninghame except alterations for improvement which are to be at his Lordships expence—that for rent of those works his Lordship is to pay Ten per Ct. p. anum for the sum they cost, that Lord Dundonald will pay to Mr Cuninghame [blank] per Ton measure for his Coals delivered into the Kilns—Mr Cuninghame engaging to put on board at his own expence all the Coke or Cinders which are Shiped from the works, the Rent to Comence from the time the Kilns are ready to work, Mr Cuninghame to be paid for his Coals at the end of every Six months except the first payment which shall not become due till the end of nine months, Mr Cuninghame to allow Sufficent grounds / gratis / for the works he erects, if Mr Cuninghame has any doubt about the Sale of the Coke or its Efficacy in burning lime his Lordship will take it on himself, or Mr Cuningham may take half price for the Coal and take half the Cinders or proceeds of them.

Should Lord Dundonald have occasion for the Loan of £100 for the payment of Workmen &c Mr Cuninghame is to advance that

sum at such times as are convenient, Lord Dundonald's Agent granting a bill at six months with lawfull Intrest for the Same. Mr Cuninghame to furnish Coals at the aforesaid price for all the Kilns he erects at the rate of Ten Tons per week for each Kiln if Required.

[overleaf] Required, on failure of giving Coals the Rent to stop during such failure of delivery. The bargain to be in force for twenty years Computing from the date of the patent.

Lord Dundonald finds the Expencc of the Kilns about £70 Each at Culross where building is very dear as they have no Stone and are far from lime, this includes a Still for every 24 Kilns, but his Lordship States the Expencc at £100 as he would not mislead Proprietors—

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## III.—R. R. Cuninghame's Counter-proposals regarding a Tar Works ; with accompanying Letter to J. L. McAdam.

*There is a draft copy as well as this version which was addressed and sealed but not sent.*

Seabank, 26th January, 1786.

The Proposals of the Earl of Dundonald, for the Tar Works at Stevenstoune Colliery, The property of Patrick Warner of Ardeer, & Robert Cuninghame of Auchenharvie, Is expected to be nearly as follows.

The Earl of Dundonald is to Erect twelve Tar Kilns [Draft : That the Proprietors of Stevenstoune Coalworks is to erect Twelve Tar Kilns : *erased and altered to above*] at the Proprietors expence, with a Still of Utensells proper for that number, to be kept in repair by Lord Dundonald, and to be all delivered up by His Lordship in the like good condition, at the expiration of the Contract, which is to be at the end of His Lordships Patent.

That for the Rent of those Kilns & Utensells, His Lordship is to pay ten per Cent per annum for the sum they first cost, It being understood, That the expence of Each Kiln, including every necessary uttensell, shall not exceed one hundred pounds Sterling, or that His Lordship shall pay the Surplus. The Rent to commence from the time the Kilns are ready. But no rent shall be required for what ground The works shall necessarily occupy.



That Lord Dundonald will pay Five shillings & fourpence per Ton measure, for the Coals delivered, or laid down at the Kilns, to be paid at the End of each fortnight. The proprietors to carry the Coke to the Harbour of Saltcoats, and ship them. All that is taken for Exportation, at the rate of fourteen pence [*Draft : Eightpence*] per Ton, to be paid weekly as they are shipped. It is to be supposed, That His Lordship will take about Ten Tons of Coals for each Kiln, or regularly about one hundred & Twenty Tons of Coals laid down at the Kilns weekly. The Proprietors, at any time during the contract, shall have it in their power, to take one half of the Coke or cinders, In which case they shall only receive Two shillings & Eightpence per Ton for the Coals, and Lord Dundonald and they shall be Jointly or equally concerned in the Sale of the Coke.

If the

[*overleaf*] If the Proprietors shall at any time fail to deliver the above quantity of Coals, The Rent of the Kilns shall stop during such failure of Delivery.

The Proprietors will have no objection to advance His Lordships manager at the Works, one hundred pounds or so, occasionally as may be needed, To be repaid by His Lordship, when convenient, But should think it unnecessary to insert this in a contract.

[*third side of folded sheet*]

Seabank, 26th Jany., 1786.

Dear Sir

Inclosed I return you your Memm. of the supposed Proposals of the Earl of Dundonald for Tar works at our Colliery. After considering it with attention I have drawn out the annexed Proposals for his Lordships consideration. Where it differs from your Memorandum we had some conversation about.

1st. our keeping up the Tar works in repair during the Contract, alteration only excepted, we could never agree to, as it might run away with the greatest part or whole of our Rent.

2d. Our putting on shipboard all the Coke that may be shipped at Saltcoats, at our own expence from the Kilns, we could far less agree to. Fourteen pence [*Draft : Eightpence : altered to 14*],

per Ton measure, being as little as we can venture to do it for. The Coke putting on board the Canal Boats from the Kilns Craining from the Boats into the Carts, or laid into the Coalyard at the end of the Canal till shipped, and the Cartage again from the Coalyard to putting into the vessells Hatchways. Including the Tear and wear of Barrow & Runs from the Kilns to the Canal Boats, Tear & wear of Canal Boats, & increasing the number, Crains & Runs laying them from the Boats into the Coalyard and enlarging the Coalyard to keep them separate from the other Coal, & repair & cleaning of Canal, all included, cannot undertake if for less than the above, If at that same.

and 3d. as to the payment for the Coals, It would never do. They must be paid every fortnight, in the other way we must be greatly in advance, as we pay our Colliers regularly every week.

In short I see our advantage in this Contract would not be great, no further than a regular sale for that quantity of Coal, which we never were or can be at a loss for, from our situation with the Benefit of the Canal to the Harbour, & always ready money when delivered on board, Which would also be the case with the Coke or Cinders, as I would recomend it to His Lordship never to ship them any where upon his own acct. But take such a ready money price from the shipping as they could afford to give, after once being introduced & their qualitys made known. [*Draft ends here*]

I am

Dear Sir

Your most hum. Servant

R. R. CUNINGHAME [*erased, and in another hand is added : This not sent*].

JOHN L. McADAM, Esqr.

Addressed to John L. McAdam Esqr. of Sauchry by Ayr.

Endorsed : Intended Letter of proposalls to John L. McAdam Esqr. 26th Jany. 86. Not sent.

Sealed and cut.

Draft copy endorsed : Answer to Mr McAdam. Proposals of Lord Dundonalds tarr works 26 Januy. 1786.



**IV.—Letter of R. R. Cuninghame to the Commissioners of Excise,  
16th February, 1799.**

GENTLEMEN,

The smuggling in of Irish salt amongst the whole of this West Coast, is carried to such a pitch, that it is done openly in daylight, & even into the harbour of Greenock. I am informed boatloads have arrived. The rock-salt imported into Ireland, duty-free, enables them to sell their manufactured salt so much lower to the smugglers who make very great profits, than our manufactured salt from sea-water, can now, from the high duty be sold. I have, since that duty commenced, stopt one of our saltpans from the above cause, & must stop the other three for the same reason; our garnels being full from the returns of your salt-officer for Saltcoats you'll find the duty from what is sold is very trifling; & until matters are settled with Ireland, with respect to the salt-duties, or an alteration made in the Salt Laws, I am afraid we can have no effectual remedy. But that in the meantime, you would be pleased to order that the strictest directions shall for the future be made by your Revenue Crusiers in suppressing the smuggling in boats & other vessels; & the Land Officers in attending to the same on shore from the Mull of Galloway all along the shore through Ayr, Bute, Argyle & Dumbarton-shires. The quantities weekly brought in mostly in boats are immense, to the great loss of the Revenue.

I have the honour to be, etc.,

R. R. CUNINGHAME.

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**V.—Memorial of R. R. Cuninghame to the Commissioners of Excise,  
23rd March, 1799.**

Memorial of R. R. Cuninghame, of Auchenharvie, Proprietor of the Saltworks, at Saltcoats, in the County of Ayr;

To the Honourable the Commissioners of His Majesty's Excise, Edinburgh; Setting forth,

That from the 1st of May, 1798, when the additional duty of 5/- per bushel on salt commenced, till the 1st of March, 1799,

there was sold from his garnels, 3,520 bushels; and that there was sold, in the preceding 10 months, from the 1st of July 1797, till the first of May 1798, 14,570 bushels; the decrease in quantity sold is 11,050 bushels at 6/6 duty £3,591 5/- of loss to the Revenue. Or take it from the same 10 months, that is from 1st of May, 1797, till the 1st of March, 1798, there was sold 12,304 bushels, decrease sold 8,784 bushels at 6/6 per bushel of duty, is a loss to Government, in ten months, of £2,854 16/-.

And that this heavy loss to the Government & to the fair manufacturer of salt, on the West Coast of Scotland, proceeds entirely from the large quantity of Liverpool salt that is allowed to be imported, for the sole purpose of curing fish, together with Irish salt smuggled over that now supplies the general consumpt of the whole of the West Country.

The Memorialist therefore most humbly submits to the consideration of the Honourable Board, the very severe loss he at present suffers, together what the Government sustains from the loss of revenue; that such remedies may be adopted that will bring about an alteration in the present existing Salt Laws; either that the article of rock-salt shall be allowed to be imported from England into Scotland upon the same terms with Ireland; or any other alteration that will prevent the total ruin of the Salt-works upon the West of Scotland.

R. R. CUNINGHAME.

Seabank,  
23rd March, 1799.

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**VI.—Printed Advertisement of Warning to Mariners.**

TO THE  
SHIPPING INTEREST  
OF THE  
CLYDE, &c.

*Seabank, 26th February, 1803.*

THE recent unfortunate stranding of the ships MONTEZUMA and MINERVA of Charleston to the Clyde, the former in the Bay of AIR, and the latter in the Bay of IRVINE, induces me to offer the following observations.



When ships bound up Clyde, after getting to the Northward of the Port of Saltcoats, meet with a gale of wind from the West to the North-west, and cannot weather the Castle-Craigs, Horse Isle and Portin-cross Castle, or Point, so as to fetch into the Fairly Road, and in that situation obliged to ware, and stand to the Southward, where there is no chance, if that wind continues, of bringing Lochryan; in that event, must be embayed in either that of Irvine or AIR, or get upon the Carrick Shore. As to the Lady Isle, it is found from experience to be very unsafe, from the foulness of the anchorage, and from want of shelter, being much exposed, if the wind should vary a single point from off the immediate direction of the island. In the above situation a ship being to windward, so as to bring it to an anchor a little distance off, and to the leeward of the SHOTT, or ridge of rocks, dry at high water, that runs out about West from the harbour of Saltcoats, in good clean holding ground, to bring the west gavel of the Store House on the Quay to bear by the compass North-North-East, and about 400 fathoms off from the House, in about six or seven fathoms water, she would ride it out in safety, till the gale takes off, and so get again under way, by either weighing or slipping. In the situation the ship Minerva was, when she past lately towards Irvine Bar, had they brought to at the back of the Shott, the water was so smooth that boats could have been off that afternoon with assistance, to have got her again under way, and to have made such an offing as to bring with ease, either the Clyde or Lochryan. I hope it will be an object worth attention, that intelligent residenting SHIPMASTERS, and many there are also in Clyde well acquainted with what I mention, may be consulted, and if approven of, to have it published, as a direction for the future safety of vessels in such situations.

ROBERT CUNINGHAME.

*N.B.*—Since the above was published in the Greenock and Glasgow Papers, the Brig, Hugh of Banff from Dundalk to Norway, drove up Channel, and in the situation described, came to an anchor in the exact place, a boat went off from the harbour to their assistance, and two of the boatmen in striking the top-gallant masts, the main top-mast broke under the cross-trees, and down they both tumbled, one entangled in the rigging unhurt, the other after having his fall broke by the same, fell upon deck and was much bruised, but recovered. After the gale took off, they got her under way, and run into Irvine harbour. The brave fellows were liberally rewarded for their meritorious assistance.

J. & P. Wilson, Printers.

[Overleaf, in manuscript]

The Troon or more properly Portland Harbour in honour of his Grace will hereafter be the Port of safety to shipping in all such gales, where they can run right before the wind round the Pier head, and come to an Anchor, in about three fathom water at low tide, and may haul closs into the Harbour Breast, or if they should drift up, if the Gale be such, till they take the ground at the head of the Harbour, when they will lye in perfect safety on soft clean sand, and in smooth water.

Such is the natural good situation of this Troon Harbour, That in the great Storm of Jany. 1739, The Ship Ann Galley Capt. Denholm drove from her Anchorage in Lamash Roads over to the Troon where they run her upon the same sands and was with her whole crew preserved. Some years afterwards a large Dutch ship, bound for the Clyde found in a similiar gale the like protection, both getting away after some repairs and with little damage. And laterly about the year 1774 the ship Blandford of Port-Glasgow, Capt Troop with 500 hhds Tobacco in a north west storm in december was run by him, he being a little acquainted into the same place, and got off and went up Clyde the following spring tides without discharging any part of his Cargo, or receiving any damage—many other have been also at different times in the same manner preserved from ship wreck. Such is the utility that this most noble Harbour will be of to shipping in general, and to the whole trade of the west coast.

ROBT. R. CUNINGHAME.

Seabank, 4th August, 1810.

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**VII.—Letter to R. R. Cuninghame from J. A. Smyth, dealing with proposed railway, 1811.**

Edinr. 9 June 1811.

Dear Sir

I received your letter of the 4th Current and deferred writing in return, untill I had a conversation with our friend Mr John Cuninghame, after showing to him your letter. We talked over the matter yesterday, and were both of opinion, that you should begin your rail way immediately. Lord Montgomeries houses and fews on the Northside of the road cannot give him any right



to interfere with the rail way, as the road is his Southern boundary. It is very probable however, that the road-trustees may present an Application to the Sheriff, or a bill of Suspension to the Court of Session, praying for an interdict against you, on the ground that by this rail way you mean to evade the toll duties; but I doubt very much whether they will be able to obtain an interdict, or at least untill you are heard by an answer either to the petition or to the Bill of Suspension, wherein, I hope, it will be shown to the satisfaction of the Judge, that the trustees have no right to interfere with the rail way.

You'll recollect that last year, I got the Dean of Faculty's Opinion on this point a copy of which was sent to you, along with the principal Memorial & Queeries—Hee expresses some doubt about the opening of a private road through property belonging exclusively to yourself, for the use of the Coal work, as Mr Warner has a joint [*overleaf*] interest; but observes "This is, on the "supposition, that it were a mere ordinary road; and even on "that Supposition it is by no means clear, that it would fall within "the prohibition in the Act; tho' on the other hand, neither is "the contrary clear. But a rail road is extremely different from "a Turnpike, or any ordinary road; and I am therefore inclined "to think, that the opening and using such a road for the exclusive "use of the Makers, could not fall within the prohibitions of the "Act, or infer the said penalties. If there was a good prospect "of obtaining the authority of the Justices of the Peace, before "making such road, it might be expedient to apply for it, as it "would prevent any question if obtained—But the expediency of "making such an application must be entirely a matter of prudence; "and if there is reason to fear that it might be refused it may be "better not to apply at all; but to proceed, on the Supposition "that in the circumstances of the case, the intended road is not "within the Statute; or to bring a Declarator in the Court of Session of their right to make such a road." You'll here observe, that the Dean's opinion is favourable to your making the rail way.

If either Lord Montgomerie or the trustees give in an application to the Sheriff you can let me know and I shall immediately prepare your answers.

I am always

Dear Sir

Yours very sincerely

J. A. SMYTH.

[*third side of folded sheet*]

P.S.—I am happy to mention that Mrs Col. [?] Robertson has had a very good recovery—Mrs Smyth saw her last Monday, when she and the child were very well—Mrs R. & the Col. [?] sett off for Nullcraig [?] on Wed last—

Addressed to Robt. Reid Cuninghame, Esq., of Auchenhavrie, Seabank, Saltcoats.

Endorsed: From Mr Smyth Edinr. 9th June 1811. Railway.  
In answer to letter of 4th June.

Seal.

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### VIII.—Obituary of R. R. Cuninghame.

While the records of mortality are occupied with the names and characters of persons, who, by the partiality of friends, received the most laboured of panegyrics, it would be inexcusable to allow a person, to whose generous and spirited exertions, the society and neighbourhood to which he belonged were so much indebted, silently to drop into the tomb.

Mr. Cuninghame affords a pleasant and encouraging specimen of what may be accomplished during the ordinary term of human life, by persevering diligence, industry and activity, accompanied with undeviating honour and punctuality in the complications of business. Nor were the difficulties he had to encounter inconsiderable.

He left not a single portion of the small remains of a much more extensive inheritance, which devolved upon him from his maternal ancestors, to continue unimproved, and embellished the place of his residence, in the immediate vicinity of the trading town and seaport of Saltcoats, so as to render it a pleasant object of regard to the view of the traveller.

The extensive coal-works in his own estate, and in the estate of his neighbours, must ever remain a monument of his great skill and ability in operations of this kind, and of his constancy and perseverance under every obstacle and disadvantage. To his continued and persevering exertions in carrying on this great



business, hundreds of industrious families, during the course of his life, have been indebted for the means of a comfortable subsistence, and the sea-port of Saltcoats, which sprung under the fostering care of his ancestors, was by him raised to a higher degree of opulence and prosperity than it had ever known to possess.

These works, which at his entrance upon life, he found in a very low state, and which often exhibited the appearance of being ruinous, have been restored, and placed by him upon such a footing as not only to afford a rich return to his own family but also to the gentleman who is connected with him in the same concern.

The means by which he surmounted these difficulties, and accomplished these objects, under Providence, may be said to have arisen from his having never lost a moment of time, and from his great accuracy, and a happy method he had adopted early in life, and from which he never deviated in the arrangement of his business. He may literally be said to have gone to bed with the sun, and to have risen with him. But this only applies in the summer, for in winter he was found labouring for many hours by candle light in the morning, while others around him were sunk in repose.

In this mode of life he persisted, as has been above stated, till within half-an-hour of his end ; and if any additional proofs are required to establish the certainty and reality of a state of future existence, it may be found in the instance now before us. A spirit so active and enterprising, disembodied *all at once*, must surely revive, to enter upon pursuits and employments better suited to the exalted situation to which, we trust in God, he has been transferred.

He was much in his usual state of health till within half-an-hour of his death, when, having prescribed to his work-people the business of the day, he sunk into a faint, from which he never recovered. He died at Seabank House, Ayrshire, on the 21st November, 1814, in the 70th year of his age.