

# AYRSHIRE § NOTES § HISTORY § ANTIQUITIES ARCHÆOLOGY • NATURAL~HISTORY

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Marion Paul Aird (1815-1888).

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Contributions for the Autumn 1999 issue of *Ayrshire Notes*, including information about the activities of Member Societies, should be sent before the end of July to Rob Close, 1 Craigbrae Cottages, Drongan, Ayr KA6 7EN, tel. 01292 590273.

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AANHs President	Dr David Reid
AANHs Secretary	Dr Trevor Mathews 10 Longlands Park, Ayr KA7 4RJ Tel. 01292 441915
AFHS Chairman	Mr Stuart Wilson
AFHS Secretary	Josephine Happell 17B Main Street, Prestwick KA9 1AA Tel. 01292 479949

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## MARION PAUL AIRD REVISITED

In Ayrshire Notes 14, Spring 1998, I wrote about Marion Aird, the Kilmarnock poet, and concluded by positing two questions. One, regarding the reason behind the Kilmarnock street name Kadikoi Place, remains unanswered, but the other, seeking the words to her poem/hymn "Had I the Wings of a Dove", has been answered. I have also learnt further information about Aird and her life.

As noted, Marion Aird's father was David Aird. His wife was Margaret Johnston, and they were married in Coylton on 15th December 1812. Although he was a coachman by the time Marion was born in 1815, he had formerly been a footman, and later butler, to Mr Ritchie of Busbie, Kilmaurs. As a coachman, he worked for a number of families, including the Findlays of Toward, and David Connell, a Glasgow merchant. It was while he was working for Mr Connell that his daughter was born: he later worked for William Dixon of Govanhill. David Aird died in Kilmarnock on 15th May 1847.

Through her mother, Margaret Johnston, Marion Aird was related to Hamilton Paul (b.1773, d.1854), the Ayr poet, journalist and minister, who is these days rather better remembered. Margaret Johnston's parents were David Johnston and May Paul (b.1768, m.1788), who was Hamilton Paul's sister. May and Hamilton's father was John Paul, manager of the Bargany Collieries.

Also well-known in the Kilmarnock area during the late 19th Century was Marion Aird's brother, William Aird (b.1819, d.1913), who was known as "Yerb Wull", and traded as a herbalist from his base in Kilmaurs, travelling the length of Ayrshire "in search of the healing plants which form his stock-in-trade". An article on Yerb Wull appears in the *Kilmarnock Standard* of 13th May 1905.

More details have emerged of the subscription raised to provide her with an annuity in her declining years. The subscription was opened in October 1873, as during the previous two years she had lost by death four of her very best friends and "is at present in such circumstances that her natural modesty would rather the wide world should not know thereof". Notice of the subscription was given in the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* of 11th October 1873, which, in an editorial, noted that "it is thought a seemly thing ... that an effort should be made to smooth her last years and make her way to the Spirit Land happier than it has been". In its edition of 4th July 1874, the *Herald* noted that the subscription had raised £164:11:8, providing an annuity of £12:10 with the Royal Assurance Company. This is not a large sum, and the *Herald* noted that "the sum subscribed would have been larger, but several of her old friends who have been in the habit of giving her a yearly gift, prefer to continue doing so, and have therefore taken no part in the movement of which the above is the result".

"Had I the Wings of the Dove" was found, simply enough in the end, in Aird's second published book of poetry, 'Heart Histories' (1853), hiding under the title "Far, Far Away". It is to be sung to the tune "Long, Long Ago": There is a slight difference between words and music in the refrain in the second line. The first verse, which appears between the staves, has been altered accordingly.

## FAR, FAR AWAY

Moderately

1. Had I the wings of a dove, I would fly

Far, far a-way; far, far a-way;

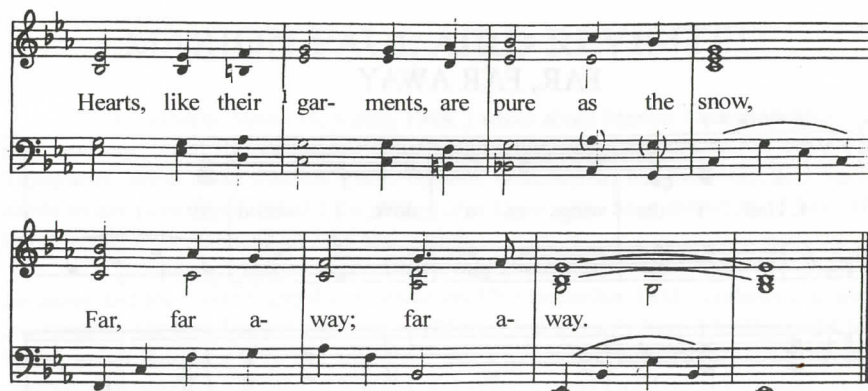
Where not a cloud e-ver dar-kens the sky,

Far, far a-way; far a-way.

Fade-less the flowers in yon E-den that blow;

Green, green the bowers where the still wat-ers flow;





There never trembles a sigh of regret,  
Far, far away, far, far away;  
Stars of the morning in glory ne'er set  
Far, far away, far, far away.  
There I from sorrow for ever would rest,  
Leaning in joy on Immanuel's breast;  
Tears never fall in the homes of the blest,  
Far, far away; far away.

Friends, there united in glory, ne'er part,  
Far, far away; far, far away;  
One in their temple, their home and their heart,  
Far, far away; far, far away.  
The river of crystal, the city of gold,  
The portals of pearl - such glory unfold  
Thought cannot image, and tongue hath not told,  
Far, far away; far away.

My thanks are due on this occasion to Frank Beattie, who carried my request for information in the Kilmarnock Standard, to Bobby Logan in Kilmarnock and May Hood in Troon, who provided the bulk of the information distilled above, and to Ros Smith, who acted as chauffeur.

Rob Close

List! what yon harpers on golden harps play,  
Come, come away; come, come away;  
Falling and frail is your cottage of clay,  
Come, come away; come, come away.  
Come to these mansions, there's room yet for you,  
Dwell with the friend ever faithful and true;  
Sing ye the song ever old, ever new,  
Come, come away; come away.

## McClymont and Dunlop Water-powered Sawmills on the Girvan

For much of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth, this partnership was involved in the operation of water-powered sawmills on the Water of Girvan.

The McClymonts were the family which farmed at Balsaggart in the parish of Kirkmichael, and they require no unravelling. There was John McClymont, born about 1800 and died probably between 1861 and 1871; and his son Charles Dalrymple Fergusson McClymont, born 1840 and still at Balsaggart in 1891. The entry for John in the 1851 census describes his dual interests: *Farmer of 410 acres employing 20 labourers and woodmerchant firm of 2 employing 22 men.*

The Dunlops are quite another matter, with a profusion of related and unrelated (in any meaningful sense) Dunlops abounding in the parishes of Kirkmichael and Dailly. The first so far found with a sawmilling connection was James Dunlop (c.1770-1846), henceforth James I. He farmed at Knockroon, Kirkmichael parish, and died at Kirkmichael sawmill. His wife was Agnes McClymont (c.1776-1860); her relationship to John McClymont has not been established. Their offspring included William I (c.1804-1885), James II (c.1806-1889), Marion I (c.1813-?) and probably Robert (c.1802-?).

The eldest son William I farmed first at Knockroon, where he is found in both the 1851 and 1861 censuses, and then at Kileekie, also in Kirkmichael parish, where he was in 1871 and 1881. He in turn had a son James III (c.1837-?) and a son William II (c.1845-1877), as well as daughters Agnes, Jessie, Marion II and Elizabeth II. This branch had no further connection with the operation of the sawmills.

James II farmed first at Merkland, where he was in 1851 and 1861, and then at Threave, 1871 and 1881, both farms in Kirkmichael parish. The 1851 census records his sawmill interests in similar terms to McClymont's: *Farmer of 160 acres employs 3 women indoors and 5 men out. Also one of a firm of woodmerchants employing 22.* Though his acreage was less than half that of his partner John McClymont, he was still a substantial man. He married Elizabeth Andrew from nearby Rowanston farm (where the same family still farms today). Their children were James IV (c.1834-1894), Agnes (c.1842-?), Elizabeth (c.1845-?), William III (c.1847-?) and David (c.1849-1908).

James IV, eldest son of James II, appears to have played no part in the running of the sawmills. He outlived his father by only 5 years, and in the 1891 census was recorded as being unmarried and living on private means with his brother William III at Kilkerran sawmills. He died three years later at Threave. The second son, William III, went into the sawmill business. In 1871 he was still at Threave, was elsewhere unfound in 1881, and in 1891 he was living at Kilkerran sawmills, described as *Wood Merchant*.

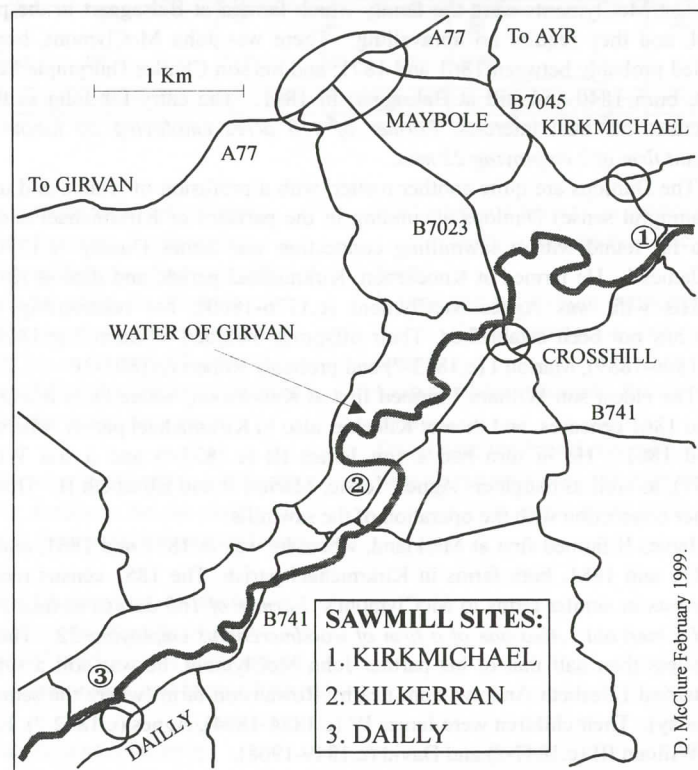
The last son of this generation, David, was in 1891 at Threave, but died in 1908 at Nether Mains Farm, Kilwinning.

William III and his wife Annie (c.1845-?), from Muirkirk, had four children: James V (c.1876-1960), Minnie (c.1879), William IV (c.1880-?), Francis (c.1884-?) and



Jane Ann (c.1888-?). James V worked at the sawmills, but left in 1909 after his marriage for Dobbington Farm in Dailly parish. William III was followed at Kilkerran sawmill for a time by his son Francis, and when he left the property was described as 'ruinous'. About 1832 James V moved to Garnaburn Farm in Colmonell which was subsequently farmed by his son William V; his son James VI is there today - great, great, great grandson of James I.

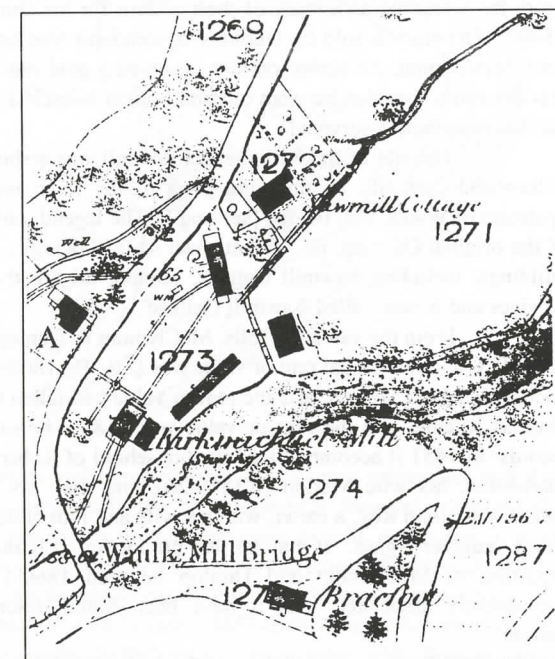
The woodmerchant partnership of McClymont and Dunlop was thus represented through the generations on the McClymont side by John and Charles Dalrymple Fergusson; and for the Dunlops by James I, James II, William III and Francis.



The interests of the partners extended to three sawmills on the Water of Girvan: Kirkmichael, Kilkerran and Dailly, the sites of which are shown on the sketch map above. All of these mills were shown on the first Ordnance Survey maps, surveyed about 1856, on 6" sheets 45, 51 and 50 respectively. None appear on Johnston's 1828 map of the county. Some other mills are marked on the latter, but the omission of these three may reflect no more than the space for detail being limited, rather than confirming they did not exist at the time. We can, however, be quite sure from the Old Statistical Account that none of them was built as early as 1790, and from their absence from Aiton's 1811 account of agriculture

in Ayrshire, in which he described the timber plantations in the Girvan valley without referring to a single sawmill, we may safely deduce that they were erected at a later date. That they were required is not in doubt. He wrote that "the strath of the water of Girvan, from Straiton to the sea, is highly ornamented with extensive plantations, to which very considerable additions are made every year. There are about 800 acres of woods and plantations on the estate of Kilkerran, and Sir Hugh Hamilton Dalrymple is adding 100 acres yearly to those at Bargeny [sic]".

From the First OS Ayrshire 25" Sheet 45.10, to original scale. 'A' marks the surviving building now called 'Sawmill Cottage'.



The *National Commercial Directory* 1837 of Pigot and Co. has an entry for "McClement & Dunlop, saw etc mill" in the parish of Kirkmichael as well as "James Henry, miller", the latter probably at Aitkenhead. There is no sawmill in Kirkoswald parish (the location of the Kilkerran mill) and in Dailly no sawmill but entries for "Hugh McClelland, miller" and "John Currie, sawyer" (though a sawyer does not imply a sawmill).

Turning to the *New Statistical Account*, the minister of Kirkmichael has given a clear account of the sawmill: "There is a large saw-mill on the Girvan Water, erected by the enterprise of Mr John McLymont in Balsaggart, and its operations are conducted under the judicious management of Mr James Dunlop. It has brought wood on the adjoining properties to a ready market. Attached to this is a bone-mill, which, from the extended use of this manure, has been no less serviceable to the public at large, than it has been convenient to this neighbourhood." This suggests that the mill was erected by the current generation, supporting the conclusion that it was erected sometime between 1811 and 1837.



According to the rent roll of the estate of Kirkmichael for the year 1832-33 (Ayrshire Archives ATD 60/4/3/8), John McClymont and James Dunlop were then tenants of the waulkmill; there is not an entry for the sawmill, which was perhaps part of the subjects comprehended by the item 'waulkmill'.

The woodmerchant firm of McClymont and Dunlop must have been a well-established concern by 1840, when the two partners were presented with pocket-watches by their employees. Dunlop's bore this inscription: "Mr James Dunlop. From his workmen as a mark of their esteem for his conduct as a man and A MASTER. 1840." The story is told by Dunlops' descendants that he was given a silver watch, while John McClymont, the senior partner, received a gold one. James Dunlop was so upset by this discrimination that he went out and bought himself a gold watch. The inscribed silver one has nonetheless survived.

The site of the Kirkmichael sawmill was a short distance downstream from the Aitkenhead cornmill, on the right bank of the river and between it and the road, just upstream of Waulk Mill Bridge [see map]. The legend, rather indistinct in this reproduction of the original OS map, is: "Kirkmichael Mill (Sawing)". None of the mill and associated buildings, including Sawmill Cottage, remain, though the house marked 'A' on the map survives and is now called 'Sawmill Cottage'.

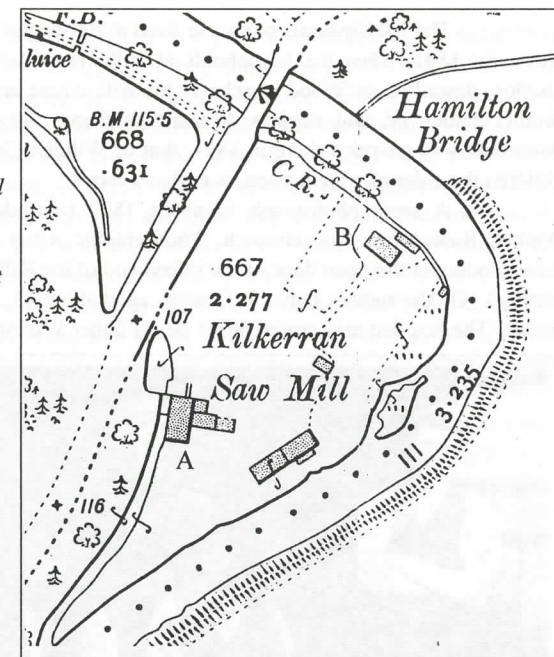
From the valuation rolls, McClymont & Dunlop were tenants here in 1855-6 and in 1860-1, and the annual rent or value was £30. By 1865-6 the sawmill had passed into the hands of Charles Stewart, and the rent or value had fallen to £27. In 1883-4 the tenant was Thomas Ritchie, and the rent or value was £18. The sawmill cottage appears in census records: in 1851 it accommodated the household of Robert Dunlop (b.1801/2), a wright or shaftmaker, his wife Marion (b.1819/20), and their six children. In 1861 it held two households: John Roy, a carter, with his wife and four children; and Marion Dunlop and her eldest daughter Agnes. It may be that production at Kirkmichael sawmill ceased with the departure of McClymont and Dunlop between 1860-1 and 1865-6. None of those subsequently associated with it have been found described as 'miller', 'sawmiller', or 'sawyer'.

Kilkerran sawmill lay on the line of the turnpike which ran from Crosshill to Dailly and thence to Girvan. However, until the erection of Hamilton Bridge (still known to some locally as 'Sawmill Bridge') in 1825, the road kept to the east of the river at this point - the old road can be seen on the sketchmap (see Ronald Brash, "An Early Nineteenth Century Ayrshire Bypass" in *Ayrshire Notes* 3 (1992)). It is probable that the sawmill was not built before the bridge and the opening of the new line of road, though it may have been much later (see below).

Like the Kirkmichael sawmill it was on the right bank of the river, between it and the road. It survives as a substantial stone ruin, all timbers removed, with the stone-faced lade and an iron axle-bed confirming its purpose. Trees have surrounded and invaded the building, and one grows out of the wall overlooking the lade. The site of the millpond on the opposite side of the road can be distinguished, although it has been drained and is overgrown.

*From the Third OS Ayrshire 25" Sheet 51.1, to original scale. 'A' marks the surviving ruined mill and 'B' the house called 'Sawmill Cottage'.*

*All buildings are shown on the First OS. However the 25" sheet is not in the Carnegie Library collection.*



Although by appearances and longevity this was a more substantial mill than that at Kirkmichael, it merits no mention in the New Statistical Account. Perhaps this salient of Kirkoswald parish was too remote to comment upon its mill; at any rate, it is not mentioned in the minister's parochial account. It may simply have been that the mill was not constructed until about 1850, too late for his account but in time for the Ordnance Survey.

The record in the valuation rolls is clear: 1855-6, "Kilkerran Sawmills, tenant, Messrs. McClymont & Dunlop, sawmills, Dailly"; yearly rent or value, £50. Similar entries, in some cases identifying the partners' respective farms of Balsaggart and Threave, exist for 1860-1, 1865-6, 1870-1, 1875-6, 1883-4, 1885-6, 1886-7, and 1889-90; from 1883-4 the yearly rent or value is £54:11:0. The partnership may have been dissolved about 1890, for the entry in 1890-1 is: "Sawmills, Kilkerran, tenant Wm. Dunlop, Sawmiller", and again in 1892-3.

'Kilkerran Sawmill' appears in census records, invariably with two households whose heads' occupations suggest a dependance on or connection with the mill. Thus in 1851 there is Samuel Dougherty (b. 1825/6; Docherty in later censuses), a carter, and James Paterson, a sawyer with a wife and four children. Docherty came from Kirkmichael, the Patersons from Peeblesshire. Docherty, his job title on occasion more specifically 'wood carter', occurs in the censuses to 1881 inclusive. Paterson's widow appears in 1871; in 1881 that family's place is taken by Alexander McIlwraith, a 'wood sawyer', his wife and seven children.



The McClymonts of course lived at Balsaggart and the Dunlops at Threave; so it was until 1891, when the households at Kilkerran sawmill included that of William III Dunlop, described as 'Wood merchant', his wife Annie and five children, together with his brother James IV and nephew Richard Buchan. As in previous censuses, a second household was recorded there in 1891: that of William Caldwell, a carter, his wife and two children the elder of which, a son, was also a carter.

A sepia photograph of about 1892 (reproduced below), taken by Edwin I Walker, Rose Bank, Cockermouth, 'Photographic Artist and Portrait Painter', shows five men standing at the open door of the infeed end of the Kilkerran sawmill (the end facing the cottage). On the right is James V Dunlop, aged about 15, his hand resting on a circular saw bench. The bearded man seated might be his father William.



*Kilkerran Sawmill c.1892.*

Shortly after this was taken, the young man went as apprentice to one of the constituent firms of what a few years later became Glenfield and Kennedy. A set of his drawing instruments survives, together with receipts for their purchase in 1892 at a cost of 17 shillings. From Post Office directories of Kilmarnock, the supplier was Thomas Robertson: either the engineer at 8 Dundonald Road, Kilmarnock; or the draughtsman at 22 Craigie Road, Riccarton, by 1895-7 at 11 Nursery Street, Kilmarnock. The same Robertson also gave Dunlop instruction in 1892 at 5 shillings a quarter.

James V Dunlop later returned to the mill; another photograph, too faded from long exposure to sunlight in a frame to reproduce here and dated about 1908, shows three men at the same place; on the back are the names 'Jas. Dunlop, Duncan Docherty, Thos. Gallagher'. Duncan Docherty, a carter, was in 1908-9 a resident at the sawmill house.

The Dunlops' connection with sawmilling in the Girvan valley was almost at an end. When James V married in 1909, he left to take up the other occupation of his family: farming; first at Dobbington Farm at Dailly, and then, over the watershed and into the valley of the Stinchar, at Colmonell. His father William III was tenant of Kilkerran sawmill until 1910-1. In the following year he was succeeded by his son Francis (Frank) who may have kept the mill going for a few years, but by 1920-1 he had departed and the mill was described as ruinous. Thomas McFarlane was tenant in 1927-8 and presumably engaged in sawmilling (the annual rent or value was £160:14:0, whereas it was £nil when ruinous) though it was probably no longer water-powered.

The mill was later abandoned and its timber and machinery were used in a new, steampowered mill located at NS 297046, on the upper road that runs the length of the valley and opposite the short crossroad linking it to the lower road. Parts of this building, including a small chimney, can still be seen.

*From the First OS Ayrshire 6" Sheet 50, to original scale. The arrow shows the location of the mill, beside which are the words 'Saw Mill'.*



The New Statistical Account contains a good summary of the mills in the parish of Dailly: "Modern Buildings - The buildings in the parish ... are two flour-mills, which go by water, two saw-mills, under wooden erections at the two collieries, impelled by the



steam-engines there, a third saw-mill, in a different quarter, driven by water, and a brick-work connected with the colliery at Dalquharran". That water-powered sawmill in a different quarter is the one shown in the above map. It lay close to the village of New Dailly, on the left bank of the Water of Girvan.

As noted above, no sawmill is listed in the 1837 directory cited. The valuation roll entries never refer to the partnership of McClymont and Dunlop, though it has already been observed that the entries for Kilkerran sawmill give the address of the partnership as "Sawmills, Dailly". It also appears that the Dailly entries relate to a farm, "Mill of Dailly", of which the sawmill formed part (although there was no household there and so no census records). Thus the entry for 1855-6 is: "Mill of Dailly, James Dunlop, miller, tenant of Dailly Mills". The yearly rent or value was £110. There are similar entries in 1860-1, 1865-6 and 1870-1. In the 1875-6 roll James Dunlop was particularised by his farm in Kirkmichael parish, Threave, and the yearly rent or value had fallen to £84:7:5.

By 1883-4, the partners in McClymont and Dunlop, either together or singly, had ceased to operate this mill. The new tenants were Adam Wilson and his sons William, Gilbert, David and James, described as 'sawmillers'. The history of this firm of timber merchants, "Adam Wilson & Sons Ltd", was researched by John McChesney and published by the company in 1980. The transfer marks the end of any interest in the mill for the purposes of the present article, though it will be noted in passing that the Wilsons were tenants of Dailly sawmill a full ten years before the time according to company records.

One of Ayrshire Archives' recent accessions is a box of records relating to Dalquharran Colliery (Acc. no. 135). This is as yet uncatalogued, but the following evidence of purchases from McClymont and Dunlop was found in the "Wood Report from August 1st 1851 to the 30th thereof": "20 feet of small Elm at 1/- per foot, £1:0:0; 70 feet of small Beech at 6d per foot, £1:15:0; 96 feet of small Ash at 1/- per foot, £4:16:0; a small lot of Limetree at 5:6; 20 scotch fir trees at 9d each, 15:0; 9 feet of larch paling at 1/- per foot, 9:0; 27 dozen of larch paling at 7:6 per dozen, £10:2:6; 29 feet of small oak at 1:3 per foot, £1:16:3; for sawing wood for a new fence beside Dailly as per acct., £3:12:1".

The list of timber supplied for the most part agrees with the description in the Dailly parochial account contained in the New Statistical Account: "The trees planted are generally oak, ash, plane, and elm, with such proportion of Scotch larch and spruce firs, as fills the ground for an early crop. The indigenous trees are chiefly oak, ash, and birch. The woods of the first and last are remarkably well pruned and thinned each year. The felling of the Scotch and larch firs takes place at about fifteen years growth, to give room to the hard wood and spruce firs".

The sawmilling and woodmerchant business of McClymont and Dunlop was a significant commercial operation in the Girvan valley from about 1832 to about 1890, at one time having three active mills: Kirkmichael, Kilkerran and Dailly. Kilkerran sawmill continued under the sole ownership of William III Dunlop until 1910, and then under his son Francis until operations ceased ten years later.

### *Sources:*

This research began with a cycle ride down the Girvan valley, when I glimpsed the ruined Kilkerran sawmill through the trees and wondered what it was. Later I chanced

to meet William Sturgeon, whose local knowledge led me to James Dunlop in Colmonell, grandson of the last James Dunlop at the mill, who is keeping both family traditions going with a sawmill on his farm. He provided some family history and allowed me to copy the photograph reproduced above, and then sent me to his cousin Robert Dunlop who showed me the watch, drawing instruments and receipts already described. Manuscript and published sources are identified in the text. The trawl through the valuation records was a bit haphazard. For those who do not know, those before 1892-3 have to be inspected at the NAS; they are stored outside the building and have to be requested in advance, which advance requests are limited to ten volumes.

David McClure

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## SAIL GIVES WAY TO STEAM

### *Change in the Royal Navy in the Early Nineteenth Century*

An interest in an early steam paddle vessel, HMSV 'Shearwater', which was a naval survey vessel based at Largs in the 1840s, led to an enquiry into the mode of transport that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert used in their early journeys to Scotland. This in turn suggested that it might be interesting to compare the descriptions of these journeys as given by the Queen herself, as recorded in her diaries, and by the professionals, whose job it was to see that the monarch arrived at her destination "in good shape". In the course of this investigation, it became clear that, at the time of these journeys, the Royal Navy was embroiled in the transition from sail to steam, and was encouraging another government agency to help resolve this major technical challenge.

There was a precedent for the use of a Royal Squadron to convey the sovereign from London to Scotland, in that George IV came north to Edinburgh in 1822 in the Royal Yacht 'Royal George'. He was the first monarch to visit Scotland for nearly 200 years and, with the planning genius of Sir Walter Scott behind the overall operation, he did it in style. The Royal Squadron comprised seven sailing vessels and two steam paddle vessels. The Royal Yacht was towed for much of the way, especially in the Thames and in the Firth of Forth. As well as the Royal Yacht, the sailing contingent consisted of an earlier Royal vessel, 'Royal Sovereign', one frigate, two sloops and two tenders.

The paddle vessels are of considerable interest, in that one was the 'Comet', the first Royal Navy steamer: she was built in 1821 (238 tons), with an 80 hp steam engine. Her primary duty was as a tug in the Thames: she later saw service as a survey vessel, and was in naval service up to 1869. As the 'Comet' was the only steamer available, and 'their Lordships' had decreed that two steamers were necessary to safeguard the Queen, a steamer had to be 'hired from trade'. The 'James Watt' (449 tons), with two 50 hp engines, was hired from the London and Edinburgh Steam Packet Company and, being the more powerful of the two steamers, she towed the Royal Yacht. The L&ESPCo also supplied their first steam vessel, 'City of Edinburgh', to take part of the King's baggage in advance, namely over 100



clothing cases and the official King's Throne. This 1822 sea trip is of historical interest in that it is part of the initial transition from sail to steam; it shows that commercial shipping was moving swiftly into the new regime, and it also demonstrates that the Navy was not against innovation but was, like commercial interests, adjusting to the demise of sail.

Another government agency, the Post Office, became deeply involved in the transition to steam. By the end of the Napoleonic wars, the bulk of sea mail was being carried by private vessels, and some of these vessels were steamers. At the end of 1816, the Post Office took over the sea mail service, using steam paddle vessels only. These vessels were designed by Naval personnel, were built under Admiralty supervision, and were mostly built in non-Admiralty yards, thus giving the Admiralty experience of the new technology, and breaking the tradition that naval-type vessels had to be built in Naval dockyards. These Post Office packets were designed to include separate cabins for male and female passengers, had 'lash down' space for carriages, and provision for armament. In the period 1821 to 1848, a total of 48 packets were built, serving routes such as Weymouth to the Channel Islands, Holyhead to either Louth or Dublin, Milford Haven to Waterford, Portpatrick to Donaghadee, and Dover to Calais and Ostend. In 1837 the Admiralty took over the entire packet service, following success in running a similar service in the Mediterranean. This move caused all the old PO packets to be renamed - causing considerable confusion for future marine historians. In 1859, the entire sea mail service was privatised, and thus the ownership cycle was complete, but by this time the Navy had acquired considerable experience in the exploitation of steam.

Before direct rail travel was possible between London and Scottish stations convenient to the holiday destinations of the Royal family, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made use of the Royal Yacht 'Royal George' for two journeys in 1842 and 1844 to the Scottish ports of Leith and Dundee. In 1847 the journey to Glasgow and the West coast was made in the new Royal yacht 'Victoria and Albert'; this vessel was a steam paddler, and this suggests that the authorities were becoming confident in the new method of propulsion. As required by protocol, the Queen was accompanied by a Royal Squadron of ships, which always included a survey vessel, as the hydrographic survey of all the local UK waters was not complete! Victoria was an accomplished diarist, and this gives an insight into the reality of sea travel in these days. It also allows us to compare the Queen's diary with the rather laconic entries in the naval logs of the accompanying vessels.

Of the ten vessels involved in the 1842 'adventure', three were sailing vessels and the remaining seven were steam paddlers, thus reversing the ratio of George IV's journey, and so revealing the advance of steam over a period of twenty years. Suffice it to say that the Royal Yacht was virtually towed all the way, and the two accompanying sailing frigates arrived late at Leith. The Queen's diary, in the entry for 29th August 1842, gives the details of the vessels in the squadron as follows:

The Royal Yacht 'Royal George', a sailing vessel;  
The sailing frigates HMS 'Pique', 36 guns, and HMS 'Daphne', 18 guns;  
The steam paddler 'Salamander', which was a very early Naval steam ship, and carried the Royal carriages;

The steam paddler 'Rhadamanthus', often stationed in Scotland, and on the Clyde, and the first Naval steamer to cross the Atlantic;  
The steam paddler 'Monkey', an ex-PO packet, formerly named 'Lightning';  
The steam paddler 'Shearwater', another ex-PO packet, and now a survey boat, which towed the 'Royal George';  
The steam paddler 'Black Eagle' which, in turn, towed the 'Shearwater';  
The steam paddler 'Lightning', which carried the Royal Barge, and was a later Naval steam design;  
and the steam paddler 'Fearless', another survey vessel and ex-PO packet.

Also accompanying the Squadron was the Trinity House steamer 'Argus', and a packet. The Queen's journey to Leith in 1842 took four days, which was one more than planned, due to heavy weather off the English coast. The Queen's diary for the 29th August gives details of the carriage ride from Windsor to Woolwich, and of boarding the Yacht, using the Royal Barge, which then had to be stowed on the 'Lightning'. The following day is recorded rather briefly, and seems to reflect the conditions of the passage: "How annoying and provoking this is! We have only gone 58 miles since 8 o'clock last night. the sea was rough. I was ill". The next day (31st) was apparently no better, and is recorded as follows: "To my great vexation, we have only been going at 3 knots during the night. I did not see Bamborough Castle. Passed St Abb's Head at half past six. Most thankful we are near our journey's end". For 1st September the Queen's remarks sound a bit desperate, even for the journey's end: "At quarter to one, we heard the anchor go down; a welcome sound. On deck at seven; Edinburgh in fog. We were met at Granton Pier by the Duke of Buccleuch and Sir Robert Peel. [We were a day late], but the people were cheering".

The captain's log of the 'Shearwater' is a bit more stark, but it is clear that the passage was not a pleasant one. The entry for 29th August gives: "Steam up early. Steamed down the River in company. Took yacht in tow, and took Black Eagle's hawsers. [This detail suggests the towing vessels were in 'series' and not in 'parallel' and must have been very awkward to control.] Saw 'Pique' and 'Daphne' at the Nore, with all yards manned. Passed Orfordness at 7 pm., and Lowestoft at 9 pm.". The entry for the 30th gives details of the slow passage off the difficult Norfolk and Lincolnshire coast: "Crew stowing carriages [This suggests rough weather, with carriages threatening to break loose]; passing Yorkshire coast; course alterations as from 'Royal George' [this suggests the Squadron commander was with the Queen in the Royal Yacht at the rear, and was telling the experienced steam commanders how to proceed: the logs do not record the thoughts of these commanders]". The log for 31st August opens with: "Breezy - reduced sail [It was quite common for these early steamers to make use of a helpful wind, as this reduced coal consumption, an endless worry to the ship's engineers, but it must have been rather rough before sail was reduced, when the Squadron was behind schedule]. Tynemouth abeam, but 'Black Eagle's' hawsers parted; re-established tow [Clearly the weather was bad, and this accounts for the Queen's indisposition]; royal salute at Bamborough, 7.15 pm. St Abb's Head abeam, 10.30 pm. Bass Rock, 11.30 pm. Inch Keith".

Log entry for 1st September: "Early a.m. cast off 'Black Eagle' and Royal Yacht; anchored east of Inch Keith in 8 fathom, veered to 36 fathom". One gets the feeling that



Captain Washington, commander of the 'Shearwater' was glad this episode was over, but his log does report the arrival of the two escorting sailing frigates, which were two days late! 'Shearwater' remained in the Firth for nearly two weeks. The usual busy routine of a survey vessel was maintained; masts were scraped, coal was taken on, salutes exchanged with Edinburgh Castle, detailed surveys taken of the Cramond and Granton shores, chronometers set against the time-ball at Edinburgh Observatory. However, there was time ashore for the crew to savour the illuminations and any other delights of Leith. 'Shearwater' left Leith on 12th September to return to her East coast survey base, and it is interesting to note that the Queen returned to London not on the Royal Yacht, but on the large commercial steamboat 'Trident' of the General Steam Navigation Company!

The Queen and Prince Albert made another voyage to Scotland in the Royal Yacht 'Royal George' in 1844, landing on this occasion at Dundee. The third visit by sea was in 1847 by which time the 'Royal George' had been decommissioned and replaced by the paddle steamboat 'Victoria and Albert'. This meant that, while the Queen still travelled with a Royal Squadron, all the problems of towage, especially in bad weather, were a thing of the past. The weather could still cause delay, as the Queen records in her diary for 12th August 1847: "We are not at Falmouth, but at Dartmouth; we felt the vessel stop; it was some time until we restarted". Eventually the weather improved, Land's End was rounded, and by 16th August the Isle of Man was reached, being off Douglas at 12 noon. Galloway and Wigtownshire were in sight by 3.00 pm. and the Royal Yacht proceeded to Stranraer. The following day, the 17th, the Queen records: "We began to move; by 7 o'clock we were close to the beautiful Isle of Arran; we passed Brodick bay, then on to the Isle of Bute; we entered the Clyde". The Queen was making for Greenock, where a large crowd and many vessels, dressed overall, awaited her arrival. She did however make another entry in her diary that day: "A small place to the right called Largs is very prettily situated" - a convenient place to end this short account of one facet of the transition from sail to steam in the Royal Navy in the 19th Century.

Bill Laing

## ALEXANDER SMITH: A FORGOTTEN POET

In the middle of the 19th century there lived a young man who on the one hand received plaudits for his work and on the other was accused of plagiarism. Alexander Smith was born in Douglas Street in Kilmarnock on the last hour of the last day of 1830 (although some records claim his birth to have been a year earlier) to Peter Smith, a lace pattern designer and native of Old Rome, and Helen Murray, of Highland lineage. The family moved to Paisley within three years of Alexander's birth and it has proved impossible to pinpoint the exact location of the house in Douglas Street. There is however a plaque there in his memory. A close friend of the family, Allan Andrews, a consulting engineer, must have assisted at the flitting since he recalls leaving Kilmarnock with them at three o'clock on Christmas Day 1832. The journey in a carrier's cart took twelve hours.

It is thought the family may have returned briefly to Kilmarnock during the following five years when it seems the 'wee Alick' worked as a putter-on in a printwork belonging to Baillie William Geddes. If so they probably lived at the corner of Bentinck Street. This is believed to be the house described in *Alfred Hagart's Household*, a touching narrative, mostly biographical, which appeared as a serial in "Good Words" in 1865. The room in the house is described thus:

"The room was small, and the fireplace fronted you when you entered. At the extremities of the mantelpiece stood two china vases, a good deal cracked and chipped, and, out of these vases rose gracefully towards each other, as if in acknowledgement of mutual beauty, two gorgeous feathers of a peacock's tail. Alternately between these two vases stood an egg of the sea-urchin, and a hollow paper cylinder about the height of an ordinary candlestick, and in these paper cylinders fruits and flowers and such arabesques and devices as we see on Oriental shawls and Japanese crockery, were glowingly depicted. On the wall above the mantelpiece hung a Highland target, studded with circles of brazen nails and, on the right hand side, there was an indentation as of a pistol bullet. Across the target were slung two formidable claymores, which, in the grasp of a bold clansman, may have flashed at Sheriffmuir and Culloden, and drunken English blood on both those celebrated fields."

The Smith family were reputed to be a gentle sensible family and the young Alexander showed no sign of being any different. As was usual in these days when a young lad showed any sign of promise he was destined for the ministry. However a combination of factors, one being a serious illness, caused Alexander to change his mind and he followed his father and became a pattern drawer. Early indications showed he took to this with great skill and taste.

The family eventually settled in Glasgow at 12 Charlotte Street. The Glasgow Pen and Pencil Club placed a plaque on the building commemorating Smith's stay there but when the building was demolished it went to the coup with the rest of the debris.

In keeping with children from his class he received a rudimentary but thorough education in the basics of English, arithmetic, geography, history, mathematics and Latin. But he was an enthusiastic reader and continued his education in this vein becoming what is generally known as 'self-taught'. He was particularly keen on reading poetry and this enthusiasm combined with the company he was keeping led him inevitably into the writing of poetry and essays.

In 1850 his first poem was published in the *Glasgow Citizen*. While still in his teens he was introduced to the Reverend George Gilfillan (b.1813, d.1878), a poet and critic. Gilfillan's poetry was not greatly regarded but he did publish biographies of both Burns and Scott, and his three-volume "Gallery of Literary Portraits" was a popular publication in its day. He was a great champion of a group of poets which as well as Smith included P.J. Bailey, J.W. Martson and S. Dobell. This group was dubbed the "Spasmodic Poets" by William Aytoun, and in *Blackwood's Magazine* he savagely attacked them. Indeed Aytoun's criticism of them played a decisive role in ending the fashion for their poetry. The popular genre at that time was long narrative poems such as those written by Tennyson and Browning, and this group tended to follow their pattern. The term 'Spasmodic' was used to describe poems of intense interior psychological drama which were violent and verbose. Strong characteristics were extravagant imagery and pathetic fallacy, a



term coined by Ruskin indicative of a tendency of the writers to ascribe human emotions and sympathies to nature.

The Victorian literary scene was publicised in a rising number of literary magazines and reviews. Although they certainly were a strong influence in bringing to notice the works of the writers of the time they were also peppered with the latest cultural small-talk. The Reverend Gilfillan had a column in two of these and several of Smith's short lyrical verses first appeared there. The poems were a great success and he was encouraged to incorporate them into "A Life-Drama", a long autobiographical poem which appeared in London in 1852. However there was little financial reward for the young Smith since he had sold the copyright to the publisher for £100, a great mistake since editions were soon appearing in America and Australia.

Alexander Smith, one time described as the 'New Burns', was a great admirer of his fellow Ayrshireman. In 1852 he gave a talk to a literary society in Glasgow on the life of Robert Burns and later published it in the *Glasgow Miscellany*, a magazine of which he was the editor. He later developed the article in a much fuller account of Burns' life. Smith is also reputed to have taken part in the Burns' Centenary celebrations in Glasgow. In 1853 his 'Poems' was published and sold well in Britain and in the USA and Smith became as famous as the Poet Laureate. The following year he was offered the post of Secretary to Edinburgh University at a salary of £150 per annum.

In 1857 his 'City Poems' showed a much more mature approach and in a poem entitled 'Glasgow' there is a vivid description of the city he knew as a boy. A quotation from that poem - *Noise and Smoky Breath* - was used as a title for a book of poems on the city recently. In the same year Smith married Flora Macdonald of Ord, Skye, a direct descendant of her famous namesake. In a letter to his friend Mr Brisbane he tells of looking forward to his approaching marriage and also enthuses about the £250 from Macmillan the publishers for his book. It is significant that after stating "I think Macmillan's offer extremely liberal", he should also stress "the copyright to remain with me". But despite his having a certain amount of financial security he admits to "fear and tremblings". Shortly after his marriage he and his young wife took a house at Wardie on the coast near Edinburgh.

But a shock awaited him on the publication of the year's first issue of *The Athenaeum*. In it, a letter, signed 'Z', and under the heading 'The New Poet', accused Smith of plagiarism. The letter, which filled five columns of the magazine, claimed Smith had conducted thinly disguised pilfering from other writers both living and dead. The writer drew a parallel between extracts from Smith's poems and those of Tennyson and Shelley. This was a grave blow indeed. *The Athenaeum* was a high profile magazine with a reputation of the highest standard and there were many people who held its opinions in the greatest regard. To be labelled a cheat by such an established journal was not to be taken lightly. 'Z' was William Allingham, self-taught like Smith, but with limited success to date. Henry Fothergill Chorley, a man who appeared to fancy himself as a literary expert, immediately jumped on the bandwagon and joined the attack. His attack on 'City Poems' was vitriolic:

"He [Smith] announced himself a hero, and the busy world that takes so much on trust smiled on his burnished arms and dancing feathers. But time gave rise to doubts -

whether the preux chevalier had forged his shining armour for himself or merely picked it up by the wayside; "and finally, "everywhere we find the mutilated property of other bards, strewn about like wrecks of noble vessels thrown upon a wild Scotch coast".

By juxtaposing passages from Tennyson, and passages from Smith, Chorley went on to apparently prove his case against the young poet. It is however interesting to note that at no time did Tennyson himself ever accuse Smith of plagiarism. The debate did Smith no end of harm and he lost favour with the Victorian literati. With a young family to support Smith found it almost impossible to survive on his University salary, so he augmented his income by writing articles for newspapers and periodicals. He also continued to write essays and poetry.

In 1865 'A Summer in Skye' was published, an edition of which is still available today. In common with many families in the present day Smith and his wife and family went to Grannie's for their summer holidays. The Smiths spent a month of every summer there before the island acquired its 'misty isle' reputation and he described that time as 'the Sabbath of the year'. He looked forward to that time with intense longing and the happy memories evoked there sustained him when he returned home to Edinburgh. Not only does the book still have credence as a eulogy and a guide to Skye, but it also contains some wonderful descriptions of the city of Glasgow as Smith remembered it in his boyhood. In the same year as 'Summer in Skye' was published he also produced the Golden Treasury edition of Burns' poems. It seems appropriate that Smith from Kilmarnock, where Burns' first edition was published, should be the one to put together this collection of Burns' poems since their lives did have some parallels. Both poets from the county of Ayrshire had faced adversity in their route to fame.

By 1865 Smith's health was poor. He seems to have been suffering from exhaustion. The demands of his work at the University and his need to write to augment his income took their toll, and by the time the family took their annual holiday he was exhausted. That year they stayed near Dingwall and he seems to have returned from the holiday looking better but it was all a facade. He seemed weighed down with depression and did not feel well. The hard work involved in the start of the university session in November began to tell on him and on 20th November he took to his bed, never to leave it. He had gastric fever followed by a severe attack of diphtheria, which latterly turned into typhoid. He died on the 5th January 1866, five days after his 37th birthday, putting him on a par with Burns and Byron. His father-in-law died the day after him at the grand age of 88. Alexander Smith is buried in Warriston Cemetery, Edinburgh.

The tributes which flowed in after his death paint a picture of a quiet, unassuming man of great modesty. He seems to have shown a great sensitivity, a man who rarely showed irritability or anger, but perhaps these words written by him in 1855 were prophetic:-

Sing, Poet, 'tis a merry world;  
That cottage smoke is rolled and curled  
In sport, that every mess  
Is happy, every inch of soil;-  
Before me runs a road of toil,



With my grave cut across,  
Sing, trailing showers and breezy downs, -  
I know the tragic hearts of towns.

A memorial bronze of Smith was unveiled in Kelvingrove Art Galleries on 8th March 1955, but it is now in store. How sad that the only memorial to a poet who was such a success a hundred years after Burns should be a modest plaque in a quiet street in the town of his birth: a town he left when little more than a baby, a town to which he probably never returned. How soon we forget.

Sheila A Grant

## ALEXANDER JACK AND SONS, MAYBOLE

In 1901, the *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, as part of an ongoing series entitled 'Captains of Industry' turned its attention on the Maybole agricultural implement works of Alexander Jack & Sons. The article, in the *Weekly Herald* of 27th July 1901, begins with some philosophical ruminations on the culture of the soil and the history of farm implements and machinery. It then goes on to say:

"There are several firms in Scotland devoted to the making of agricultural implements and machinery. Messrs Alexander Jack & Sons of Maybole may be taken as representative of that branch of the industry.

"The founder of the firm of Alexander Jack & Sons was a cartwright, who carried on his trade at Auchendrane, on the banks of the Doon near Maybole. He began business about 1835 and gradually developed a trade in the making of implements for farms round about. Mr Jack appears to have been a man of special energy and original genius, for he soon gained a reputation more than local. In 1852 he purchased ground in Cassillis Road on the outskirts of Maybole and built works planned by himself for his growing industry. Those works, both in external appearance and internal arrangement tell something of Mr Jack's spirit and genius. Situated beside Maybole Parish Church, the works bear a strong outward resemblance to an old-fashioned kirk. Square and plain, the doorways and windows are ornamented, the windows lead-framed and rimmed with coloured glass, the building presents an appearance singularly unlike the ordinary engineering work. The motto 'laborare est orare' might fitly be inscribed on its portal and whether consciously or unconsciously that idea seems to have inspired the architect and builder. Mr Jack put his whole mind into his work and he had his reward.

"In 1876, Mr John Marshall, the present head of the firm, was taken into partnership, and at the death of Mr Jack took over the whole control of the business. Mr Marshall, though not a trained engineer, has done much to maintain and enhance the firm's reputation. In fact, it must be said, that during his rule the firm has attained its highest prosperity. Locally respected: he has been Provost of Maybole, and the esteem in which he is generally held by his fellow engineers is shown by his election to President of the Scottish Agricultural Engineers.

"To the city visitor who expects a free-and-easy condition of things in the country factory the office arrangements must be surprising. There is the enquiry counter, and behind it the counting house, just as though it were in the heart of Glasgow. Businesslike and spacious, the offices are on the second floor of the front building. The land slopes upwards to the back, and on a level with the counting house the large engineering shop extends back for about sixty yards on an earthen floor. Here all kinds of iron-turning machines are at work. Lathes varying from three feet bed up to sixteen feet; drills vertical and horizontal, planers, slotters, screw and tapping machines are cutting and shaping the metal parts of agricultural implements.

"Further back, at the very end of the shop, the blacksmiths have their fires and anvils, for the wheel rims have yet to be forged by the blacksmith's art and brawny force; the plough-irons are sharpened and tempered anew in the fire and on the ringing anvil. Thus the old craft and the new machines work hand-in-hand. To the right is the erecting and painting shop. Here mowers and reapers, manure distributors, potato diggers, horse rakes, turnip sowers and various other agricultural implements are put together. A few yards beyond, apart from the rest of the works, is the foundry. The castings done in the foundry are not large, but the patterns are varied and the castings numerous. From the high cupola at the end of the buildings the molten metal is run in ladles to rows of dark matrix boxes, and poured into one after the other. Brass fittings are also cast in the foundry, and brass finishing machines change the rough castings into bright and burnished pieces of metal.

"The engineering department is only one division of these works. Messrs Jack & Sons are cartwrights and sawmillers as well. In the yards flanking both sides of the works huge stacks and stores of timber are gathered. Thirty-five thousand felloes and a corresponding number of spokes are kept constantly in stock, while many tons of timber half-prepared and in rough logs lie awaiting the saws. At the side of the woodyard the log saws are constantly at work, and in the adjoining machine-shops the newest wood-turning lathes are fashioning spokes and naves and felloes with marvellous rapidity. The machinery here differs little from that of a cabinet factory. Circular saws, band saws, lathes, tenoning, mitreing, planing and cutting machines shape the hard and heavy pieces of timber for cart and carriage body or wheels. One of the most interesting appliances in the place is a new machine devised for putting on wheel tyres. The old method was to put the tyre on hot, and thus the felloe was charred and partially injured. By this new machine the tyres are put on cold. Shaped like a circular cistern, the heavy blocks ranged round its inner edge, the machine received the wooden frame of the wheel. A cold iron tyre or rim is laid round it, and the wheel is firmly fixed at the centre. The workman slowly turns a crank and what appeared to be solid blocks of iron move simultaneously forward. Look below and see slender tubes running into the metal blocks. Within these tubes hydraulic power is at work, irresistably drawing forward the blocks which now have pressed all round the iron tyre, squeezing it firmer and firmer onto the wooden wheels. The pressure is relaxed, and a completed wheel is lifted up. To make sure the tyre is lightly trimmed and subjected again to pressure. Users of wheeled vehicles will not require to be told what a great boon that machine confers on them.



"In the cart and carriage building department numerous vehicles are being made up. Common carts, hay carts, lorries, vans, dog-carts and other vehicles are in various stages of completion. One speciality of the firm should have to be noted. It is called a HAY-RICK LIFTER, and transfers bodily the hay-rick from the field at a single effort. Constructed like a bevelled lorry, the bottom of the lifter rests on the ground, the ropes are put round the rick, a handle at each side pulls the ropes tighter and tighter, dragging the rick on to the floor of the lifter, which is backed slowly under it. Contrasted with the old hay fork, this lifter is a great advance. In these works genuine labour is done, and an interesting industry is carried on. So much may be said safely.

"Messrs Alexander Jack and Sons have many medals and trophies and on all sides appear to have attained high position in their special line of business. Agriculturalists have instituted shows for horses and cattle, and awarded medals and prizes for excellence; they have carried the principle into the implement yard. The practice is an admirable one; for the rough test of the market is not always fair".

Elizabeth McFadzean

## RIVAL GASWORKS

At the end of last century the town of Newmilns was generally admired for possessing two each of most things. It had two councils, the burgh of Newmilns instituted in 1873 under the General Police and Improvement (Scotland) Act of 1862, and the Burgh of Barony created by James IV in 1490. It had a public school from 1873 and Lady Flora Hastings School. When it comes to gas works, Rob Close's list in the Spring 1996 issue of Ayrshire Notes is incomplete, for Newmilns had also two gas works. His account gives Newmilns gas works a life span from 1873 to 1958, but the dates apply only to the New Gas Company. What became known as the Old Gas Company had been established in 1848, but by the early 1870s it was considered so antiquated and inefficient that a campaign began in 1872 to form a new and rival company.

This occurred when Newmilns had a new spring in its step as that year the town had, as well as the prospect of two gas works, that of two town councils. The police burgh was adopted on the 5th November 1872 and the Commissioners held their first meeting on the 10th February the following year, hoping to replace the old burgh of barony with its obsolescent rights and privileges. Consequently the two gas companies and the two councils ran in competition with much acerbity for another thirty years,<sup>1</sup> but in the early days conferences were proposed to avoid "the evil of having two gas companies in the town".<sup>2</sup> Alternatives were offered either of amalgamation or by buying out the old gas works by the new company with an offer of £1:10s, for every £1 share.

Negotiations broke down and the new gas company was consequently floated with the shares quickly taken up. Among the directors were two magistrates and six commissioners of police, while directors of the old company were also councillors of the old burgh of barony. War would therefore be conducted over the next thirty years on two fronts. It opened with a few skirmishes. Mr Robin Haddow, a local butcher and a director

of the old company, tried to prevent the new company from installing a gas supply in properties belonging to him. The newspaper report flippantly added that "Mr Haddow might as well compel his tenants to buy their meat in his shop, because it was consumed within the walls of his house".<sup>3</sup> The same account tells how Mr Hugh Brown, banker, was mobbed when he went personally as factor to order a tenant not to take in the pipes of the rival company.<sup>4</sup> Other directors who were also landlords threatened eviction if they did not burn the old company's gas.

In June the old company had reduced the price of their gas from 5s:10d to 5s, per 1000 feet, to discourage support for the new company. They had also tried to put pressure on the Road Trustees against opening up the roads in the town, but 437 male inhabitants, four-fifths male heads of households, petitioned the Road Trustees in favour of the new company's operation. By August it had found a place for its works on a vacant site at Hillside Place, now occupied by Covenanters Court.<sup>5</sup> The cost of construction amounted to £3177, of which £1042 was subscribed in £1 shares and the remainder borrowed.

In spite of all the difficulties placed in its way the new enterprise began production in February 1873 on J F Allan & Co.'s patent principle. Newmilns was one of the first places to try it out on a large scale, replacing the old method, conveying the gas more speedily from the retort to the holder and giving a purer flame and higher illumination.<sup>6</sup> Within weeks reprisals began when the new town council, with its large representation of new gas company directors in its ranks, "unanimously agreed that the gas of the new company be burned in the public lamps".<sup>7</sup> The clerk was instructed to request the old company to disconnect their pipes within forty-eight hours, which they resolutely refused to do. Battle continued.

Following teething problems, caused by the liquidation of J F Allan & Co., the engineers who installed the new plant, the new gas company was forced to raise the price of gas to 6s:8d per 1000 cubic feet, an increase from 5s, set at the beginning to compete with the reduction made by the old company, but by that date the new company was supplying two-thirds of the town. Under Allan's patent, from a ton of coal 14,000 cubic feet could be produced compared to 10,000 under the old 'use and wont' system.<sup>8</sup>

By the turn of the century, municipalisation was the latest political catch-word. As early as April 1895, the new council had proposed buying the old and new gas works, and by 1901 had agreed to "borrow £8,000 to enable them to purchase the two gas works within the burgh and to advertise ... and offer interest at the rate of 3¼ per cent per annum".<sup>9</sup>

The joint enterprise would concentrate production at Hillside Place and abandon the old works at Back Street.<sup>10</sup>

Stocktaking before purchase at the new gas works recorded: 50 tons of Hartley coal; 50 tons of Eddlewood coal; 3 tons of lime; 30,000 feet of gas.

Recorded at the old gas works were: 10 tons of Hayhill coal; 1 ton of lime; 20,000 feet of gas.<sup>11</sup>

In 1902 the union was duly accomplished. Thereafter the local community became actively engaged in the struggle by the council of the old burgh of barony to maintain its privileges and honour against the encroachments of the new. It did not finally



give up the ghost until the following year, and like the old gas works was replaced by the new".<sup>12</sup>

Jim Mair

- 1 *The Vale of Irvine Almanack*, 1881.
- 2 *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 10th April 1872.
- 3 *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 24th August 1872.
- 4 *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 24th August 1872.
- 5 The old gas works was situated in an area behind Back Street (now King Street).
- 6 *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 8th February 1873.
- 7 Newmilns Council Minutes, 20th March 1873.
- 8 *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 27th September 1873.
- 9 Newmilns Council Minutes, 18th April 1901.
- 10 The site later accommodated the municipal slaughter house.
- 11 Newmilns Council Minutes, 15th May 1902.
- 12 Newmilns Council minutes, 3rd March 1903. Agreed "to have a public function on the occasion of the transfer of the property and books of the Old Town Council to the New ... to be held in Commercial Hotel on Friday 20th March [1903]".

## JIM MOFFAT (1918-1998)

It is hoped that *Ayrshire Notes* does not neglect modern history. Last year saw the death of Saltcoats' Jim Moffat, who single-handedly turned a small local travel shop into Britain's biggest independent travel agency. There is an article (or longer) to be written on Moffat's development of A T Mays, and his ability to adapt to, and predict changes, in leisure activities. Brian Wilson MP's obituary, from *The Guardian* of 25th September 1998, which we reproduce below, represents a good starting point:-

"Jim Moffat, who has died aged 80, built up from scratch Britain's biggest independent travel agency, A T Mays, a multi-million pound empire run from a small Ayrshire town. Then, after retiring, he discovered football and provided the financial injection which made Kilmarnock a power again in the Scottish game.

"Moffat grew up in Saltcoats, where his parents ran a cafe. After war service in the RAF he returned to work in the bank he hated, and after his wife gave him an ultimatum - give up the bank or give up me - he resigned. In 1955, the couple pitched their savings into two tiny businesses. Jim was a devoted budgerigar fancier and so a pet shop, called All Pets, seemed like a reasonable first bet, while a wooden hut, previously used by an undertaker, became All Travel.

"All Travel's first acquisition was Mays Shipping and Travel in Kilmarnock and the two companies merged into A T Mays. It was a period when many long-established

travel businesses were ready to call it a day rather than adapt to changing patterns in leisure, and Moffat became known as a straight dealer who was interested in acquiring them.

"Over the next 30 years he ran a brilliant operation based on both business travel and package tours. By the late 1980s, AT Mays had, mainly through acquisitions, expanded to almost 300 branches throughout the UK. In scale and market share it lagged behind only Lunn Poly, Pickfords and Thomas Cook. Yet the company continued to be privately owned and run from headquarters in Saltcoats. Moffat could see no argument for moving to a city where property would be more expensive and good staff harder to come by.

"Under pressure to go public, he decided instead to sell to a 'friendly' buyer. Either way, he was going to become immensely wealthy. His main reason for adopting the latter approach was that he thought it the best way to ensure that the identity of the company would live on, and that the future of the Saltcoats headquarters, employing several hundred workers in an area of high unemployment, could be secured. He sold on these terms to the Royal Bank of Scotland, although they were not the highest bidders. Disappointingly for him, within a year the bank sold the business on to the American company Carlson, which has since dropped the A T Mays name altogether.

"One of the few benefits of the Royal Bank relationship, as far as Moffat was concerned, was that it drew him into football - in which he had no previous interest. The bank thought that sponsorship of Kilmarnock would help raise the travel firm's profile and asked him to represent them on the board.

"But long after the relationship with the bank ended, Moffat's boyish enthusiasm continued. As vice-chairman and then chairman, he was a generous and undemanding financial patron, helping the club to win the Scottish Cup last season and regain a regular slot in European competitions for the first time in 30 years.

"He did an immense amount of good with his money - always in the same unassuming way. He was committed to the economy of Ayrshire and was one of those who were persuaded to invest in the buyout and revitalisation of Prestwick Airport - now a considerable success story.

"Jim Moffat continued to take enormous pleasure from the interest in cage birds which had first drawn him into business. He was a most extraordinary figure to have entered the lists of Britain's richest men, by way of the normally cut-throat travel industry. He died of a heart attack while on a cruise with Margie, his wife and shrewd business partner of over 50 years".

## BOOK REVIEW

**ROBERT BURNS THE TINDER HEART**, Hugh Douglas.

Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1996, £9.99; ISBN 0 7509 1903 5.

As a Burns enthusiast I found myself being irritated occasionally by what in the end turned out to be just the extremes of Hugh Douglas's judgement, and by what appeared to be the occasional unsubstantiated claim. But as I progressed through the book I came to



realise that taken as a whole this is a reasonably balanced view of the complex and turbulent life and loves of Robert Burns. Here is a work worth reading and one that should be prescribed for those who too readily gloss over the human faults of the poet and for those who too easily dismiss him because of his failure to conform to their own stated if not exactly lived moral standards. The author has skilfully woven a colourful tapestry of historical narrative and works. Although much of the narrative will be familiar to Burnsians, Hugh Douglas often helpfully enables the reader to see the settings for some of the poetry and the links between the circumstances of the poet's life and his writing. Douglas sets out to examine in detail Burns's relationships with women. The very subject lends itself to speculation, as relationships are hard enough to define from within, far less than by an outsider and at a distance of more than two hundred years and a culture away. Douglas makes the judgement that Burns and Mrs McLehose had a full sexual relationship, but despite their long correspondence, that is still a matter for conjecture. Again he judges the relationship between Burns and his mother to be poor and sees Mrs Dunlop as a kind of surrogate, but that is largely an argument from silence. However, Douglas is not to be faulted for such speculative argument for it often leads others to further research. Burns himself knew how difficult it is to make judgements with accuracy. In his poem, 'Address to the Unco Guid', he writes,

Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentler sister women;  
Tho they may gang a kennin wrang,  
To step aside is human:  
One point must still be greatly dark;  
The moving Why they do it;  
And just as lamely can ye mark,  
How far perhaps they rue it.

Even Burns was puzzled by his own behaviour. Hugh Douglas has meticulously unravelled some of the tangled web of Burns's life, but even he leaves us no nearer to understanding 'the moving Why' of the many relationships that Robert Burns had with women.

**J Walter McGinty**

## NOTES AND QUERIES

### AN ADMIRALTY COURT IN AYR?

From the late 16th century up to 1830, there was a system of Scottish Admiralty Courts in operation. The High Court of Admiralty operated in either Leith or Edinburgh, and functioned as a superior Court that handled the 'awkward' cases that could be referred to it from local Admiralty Courts, located at the major seaports around the Scottish coast.

The proceedings of these Admiralty Courts are a great source of information on Scottish maritime affairs, yet there has been very little published in the literature about them.

Currently Mrs Sue Mowat of Dunfermline is conducting a serious investigation into the archives of the High Court of Admiralty, and is preparing a systematic account of these voluminous records, with the aim of producing a Guide that would assist historians to make much better use of these archives. Mrs Mowat has informed me that certain maritime cases involving Ayr merchants and shipping masters were adjudicated in the High Court of Admiralty, and this suggests that it is very likely that there had been a local Admiralty Court in Ayr. My preliminary enquiries have drawn a blank, and the object of this note is to ask if any of the readership of *Ayrshire Notes* have come across any references to such a Court or to the records of such a Court.

There were basically two types of local Admiralty Court. One group of Courts were hereditary, with the Court staying in one family's hands over many generations; such Courts are small in number, but in terms of size could range from a few miles of coastline, as in the case of Logan and Clonyard at the tip of the Mull of Galloway, to Argyll and the Isles, which covered most of the western seaboard of Scotland. The other local Admiralty Courts had their officers appointed by the senior members of the High Court of Admiralty, and were responsible for the maintenance of maritime law over defined stretches of coast. I have come across documentation of such Courts from Caithness, Sutherland, Aberdeen, St. Andrews and Glasgow. There is also some evidence of a Court at Rothesay.

In the majority of these cases, the Admiralty Court records are to be found in the corresponding Sheriff Court records for the very simple reason that often the same persons acted in official capacities in both the Sheriff and Admiralty Courts. I have seen records of fishing disputes within the Clyde, where the Clochstone, at the site of the modern Cloch Lighthouse, was deemed to divide the Clyde into two jurisdictions, one centred at Dumbarton, where there was an Admiralty Court, the other at Ayr. This again suggests that there could well have been an Admiralty Court at Ayr. I would be most grateful if any readers can point me in the direction of the records of a local Admiralty Court at Ayr, if, in fact it ever existed!

**Bill Laing, 'Glenesk', Montgomerie Avenue, Fairlie, Ayrshire KA29 0EE**

### AYR STREET NAMES

I am presently researching the street names of Ayr, and wonder if any readers of *Ayrshire Notes* can help with one or two names which appear to have been chosen at random, but behind which there may be a reason that I have not yet discovered.

Inverkar Road and Hilary Crescent were named at the same time in the 1920s, but I cannot begin to guess why these names were chosen. The name 'Inverkar', which looks like a Scottish place name, I cannot find any where else, and this is also the case with 'Apna', which was used, as Apna Place, for a now demolished terrace in Princes Street, Wallacetown. Any suggestions would be gratefully received.

**Rob Close, 1 Craighrae Cottages, Drongan, Ayr KA6 7EN**



## KILMARNOCK GAS WORKS

I was recently doing some research on the Gas Works in Ayrshire, and I came across Rob Close's useful article in *Ayrshire Notes no.10* (Spring 1996). In the article, Rob quotes James Keith as giving the date of establishment for the Kilmarnock gas works as 1901. This date doesn't tally with the one given by Archibald Mackay in his 'History of Kilmarnock', (4th edition, 1880), where he states on p.238:

"In 1822 a joint-stock company was formed for supplying the town with gas. The funds necessary for the undertaking were raised by the subscribers in shares of £10 each. The works, which are situated in Park Street, were erected in the following year; and various important additions have since been made to them. The Gas Works now belong to the Corporation".

If these dates are correct this would mean that the Kilmarnock works were the first to be set up in Ayrshire, pre-dating the works in Ayr (established in 1826) by some 3 years. They would also be the ones which were in longest continuous production, viz: 1823 to 1964, a period of 141 years.

I would be grateful if your readers could shed some light on this apparent discrepancy in dates.

Stuart Wilson, 34 Glebe Road, Kilmarnock KA1 3AZ

## EARLY STONE DRAIN IN A MONKTON GARDEN

Mr Andrew Russell of Monkton was digging in his back garden when he uncovered a stone feature which prompted him to contact the Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. Mr Russell felt that his garden needed drainage, even though it was situated on a very sandy soil, and he was in the act of digging out a soak-away when the stone structure was uncovered at a depth of about three feet.

The find, identified as a probable early stone drain constructed either as field drainage or to conduct rainwater or waste from a farmstead or other domestic building, had been built of grey sandstone and comprised a stone-lined channel running NE-SW across Mr Russell's soak-away. It is apparent that the drain must have continued for an unknown distance in each direction.

The site is situated in Monkton village at NGR NS 36002800. The evidence suggests that the drain had been of simple construction - excavated by digging a narrow trench of the required width and at the same depth as the intended channel, lining the trench sides with rough cut sandstone slabs, (here about 12" to 16" long, 9" and 2+" thick) and capping the resulting channel with further irregular sandstone slabs before refilling with the excavated soil. Further evidence also suggests that the builders had kept topsoil and subsoil separate and replaced the subsoil first. The simple construction with no stone base, together with the absence of clay sealing, implies that loss of water from the drain was unimportant, and that it was unlikely therefore that the feature had been associated with a domestic water supply, but the possibility that it had conducted drainage from a building cannot be ruled out.

Dating this feature is not without its problems: a date around the mid 18th Century would fit the context of an early attempt at field drainage before the great estate

owners had commenced their land improvement reforms, but if the drain conducted rainwater or waste from a farmstead or other domestic building, then an earlier date - even medieval or earlier, is possible.

(Since writing the above, I have learned that old style field drains of this type are quite common in this area. They are, however, usually laid on a basal course of flat stones, and while I failed to detect this, Mr Russell may simply have opened up his drain where a gap in the basal course occurred, and I may have missed it here.)

Roland Golightly

## DIARY

- AANHS: Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. Meetings in Carnegie Library, Ayr, at 7.45 p.m.  
CSDH: Catrine Sorn & District History Society. Meetings in A M Brown Institute, Catrine, at 7.30 p.m.  
KCCS: Kyle and Carrick Civic Society. Meetings in Loudoun Hall, Ayr, at 7.30 p.m.  
KDHG: Kilmarnock & District History Group. Meetings in Kilmarnock College at 7.30 p.m.  
LDHS: Largs and District Historical Society. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.  
L(MS): LDHS, Marine Section. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.

### March 1999

- |      |       |                            |  |
|------|-------|----------------------------|--|
| 1st  | L(MS) | Prof D Faulkner            | Loss of the Bulk Carrier Derbyshire                      |
| 1st  | KCCS  | Guthrie Hutton             | The Canals of Central Scotland: Past, Present and Future |
| 2nd  | KDHG  | Allan Henderson            | The Gesto Collection of Highland Music                   |
| 11th | AANHS | James Begg                 | Health, Wealth and Happiness                             |
| 16th | KDHG  | Bill Fitzpatrick           | World War I: Mementoes, Legacies and Effects (+AGM)      |
| 25th | LDHS  | John Burnett               | Ayrshire Milk for the People of Glasgow 1830-1930        |
| 25th | CSDH  | G Connelly and C Eaglesham | Fossils and Minerals                                     |

### April 1999

- |      |      |            |                               |
|------|------|------------|-------------------------------|
| 8th  | CSDH | Dane Love  | Scottish Castles              |
| 22nd | CSDH | Joanne Orr | Doon Valley Heritage - Update |

The editors have been gratified with the response to the inclusion of this diary in *Ayrshire Notes*, and make a plea to all secretaries or syllabus organisers to let us have details of meetings for the 1999-2000 session as soon as possible, for inclusion in *Ayrshire Notes 17*. As summer outings are often limited by number and/or to normally private locations, it is not our intention to advertise them in the diary.



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