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Auchinleck House

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Contributions for the Autumn 2000 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 (acting)	Rob Close 1 Craigbrae Cottages Drongan Ayr KA6 7EN Tel. 01292 590273

## *Auchinleck House*

*Cover photo by David McClure*

The Landmark Trust is due to begin restoration of Auchinleck House this spring. There was no activity at the house in late February, but we understand that an assessment has been made of all that has to be done and that the work will commence shortly. Interested members can find out more about The Landmark Trust and its current projects, including Auchinleck House, at the Trust's Web site: [www.landmarktrust.co.uk](http://www.landmarktrust.co.uk).

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## A Millennium Story: The King of Fanning Island

Those readers of Ayrshire Notes who were breathlessly awaiting the mis-called Millennium Dawn on the 31st December 1999 may be aware that the first glimpses of this new dawn were seen, about half an hour after noon, on the other side of the globe from an island known as Millennium Island.<sup>1</sup> This uninhabited island, formerly known as Caroline Island, is in the Line Islands, which constitute part of the country known as Kiribati.<sup>2</sup>

Also in the Line Islands is a larger, and inhabited island, called Fanning Island or, in the native language, Tabuaeran Atoll. It has an Ayrshire connection as the following article, taken from the 1892 Ayr Observer reveals:-

*"Captain William Greig, who was known all over the Pacific Ocean as the 'King of Fanning Island' is dead. He died at the residence of his son-in-law, Captain J Reed, 932 Filmore Street, at nine o'clock on Wednesday evening, at the advanced age of 71. Captain Greig was a native of Ayr, and went to sea before he had got into his teens. At the age of 23 he was master of a fine barque trading from Great Britain to the ports of South America. Forty years ago he made his first and only voyage to the Pacific, and left his vessel in Valparaiso. From there he went to Honolulu, and spent several years trading among the islands. Thirty-five years ago he bought a schooner and went to Fanning Island, then owned by an English firm. Greig liked the place, and undertook to develop a trade in guano, but the firm failed, and Greig bought the entire island from them. His first move was to get married, but in order to do so he had to go to Honolulu, nearly a thousand miles away. The daring Scotchman made the voyage safely, and carried his bride back to his lonely island kingdom. He then sailed in his schooner in quest of labour to work the guano deposits and look after the big grove of cocoanut [sic] trees which were growing on the island. Contented and happy, Greig passed many years on the little island and reared his family, caring nothing for the world from which he was divided by hundreds of miles of broad ocean. The first visitors to Captain Greig and his island home were a couple of British warships, the Caroline and Cormorant, commanded by Captain Sir William Wiseman, who presented Greig with a handsome flag and placed the island under British protection. On the following day the entire crews of the ships landed, and the flag was hoisted and honoured with a royal salute. Greig entertained his visitors royally, and was dubbed by the officers of the ship as 'The King of Fanning Island'. Soon after Greig took possession of Washington Island,<sup>3</sup> about 60 miles from Fanning, and shortly had natives at work there also. He made frequent trips from his home to Washington, and several times narrowly escaped being wrecked. Both islands are coral reefs, and have been the scenes of some disastrous shipwrecks. Not long after Greig took up his residence on the island a French barque was driven ashore during a storm, and but for the assistance rendered by Greig the*

*entire crew would have been drowned. The boats were gone, and the dismantled wreck was lying on her side with the breakers going clear over her. The crew were all on the after part of the wreck holding on for their lives, totally unable to help themselves. Greig dragged a small skiff over the reef, and at the risk of his life rowed out to the wreck five times, and got every man safe on shore. Had the boat been upset the sharks, with which these waters abound, would have made short work of the daring sailor. As the years went by many a ship called at the island for copra and guano, and quite a trade was built up with the two islands. As his family grew old enough to require schooling they were sent to Honolulu to be educated. At different times thousands of natives of the south seas have worked for Greig, on his lonely islands, but he was never known to have the slightest trouble with any of them, and he was loved and respected by all who knew him. His family are now grown up, His oldest daughter is married to a man named Anderson, who is Governor of Washington Island. Another resides in San Francisco, and is the wife of Captain Reed, owner and master of the brig Douglas, and it was at there house he breathed his last. One of his sons is a recent graduate of Herald's Business College, and was with his father when he died. Mrs Greig is still alive, and is down on the island. She knows nothing of her husband's death, nor will she until the brig Douglas sails into the harbour at the island with the body of the island monarch on board. Captain Greig's death was caused by gangrene, which set in after he had his left foot amputated.*

*"Fanning Island is a coral reef, and is circular in form. It lies in latitude 3 degrees 51 minutes north, longitude 159 degrees 22 minutes west. The estate will be divided among the eight children, and the business will be carried on by them just as if Greig was still alive".<sup>4</sup>*

It is probable that William Greig can be equated with the William Greig who was born in Ayr on 23rd November 1821.<sup>5</sup> His parents were David Greig, stone dyker, and Agnes Brown. They had married on 18th September 1802, at which time David Greig is described as 'dyke builder in this parish', while Agnes Brown is described as coming from the parish of Straiton.<sup>6</sup> William was the youngest of at least eight children, including an earlier William, christened in 1812, but presumably dead by 1821.<sup>7</sup> Agnes Brown died of inflammation on 17th May 1822. She was aged 40.<sup>8</sup> The lack of any further notice of the family in the parochial records suggests that the widowed David Greig may have moved from Ayr shortly afterwards. There are a few fugitive references to David Greig, or Gregg, in the records of the Town Council. In 1800 he was engaged in making a stone dyke around the Town's Common, and become involved in a dispute as to the line of the dyke with John Boyle In Townhead of Ayr. Boyle came to the Common, 'threw down a part of the dyke, and by force prevented [Greig's men] from proceeding in the building'.<sup>9</sup> He had previously had cause to petition the Magistrates in 1799, shortly after he and David Wilson had gained the contract to enclose part of the Town's Common. Wilson was the tacksman of one of the quarries at Townhead: Greig's complaint was Wilson was supplying stone so slowly that he was unable to build the dyke at the necessary speed to complete it within the

contracted time. This case rumbled on before the Magistrates until December 1801, when the dyke is stated to be 'now finished'.<sup>10</sup> Greig's petition of 1799 gives his address as 'Bankend', and he may be meant in the 'John and David Gregg, near Barhill' who owed the merchant William Galbraith 9s 8d in 1796.<sup>11</sup>

Fanning Island was discovered by Edmund Fanning in 1798. It was annexed by Great Britain in 1888 as its site in the centre of the Pacific made it ideal for a cable station, which was replaced in 1963. Fanning was also the first to sight Washington Island, also in 1798, which was annexed by the British in 1889. Edmund Fanning (b.1769, d.1841) was known as 'The Pathfinder of the Pacific'. He was born in Stonington, Connecticut. His voyage through the Pacific in 1797-98, besides discovering the island that bears his name, demonstrated the economic potential of the Pacific. He had left New York with nothing but a few trinkets for trading, and by astute trading in sealskins, tea, silk and the like, returned to New York, the voyage having made a net profit of over \$53,000 for the owners, and \$15,000 for Fanning himself.<sup>12</sup>

Today, Fanning Island has a population of 1309. The economy is still largely based on copra processing, though the cable station has been superseded by improved communications. The island is developing a niche as a port-of-call for cruise liners. Fanning Island and Washington Island today belong to Fanning Island Plantations Ltd.

I would be happy to hear from anyone who knows more of William Greig and his story, especially anything which would indicate whether the Greig family is still involved in Fanning Island Plantations Ltd.

**Rob Close**

1. I assume no reader of *Ayrshire Notes* needs to be told that the 20th Century and the 2nd Millennium will end on 31st December 2000, D.V.
2. Formerly the Gilbert Islands, part of the British colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Kiribati became an independent republic in 1979. The name is pronounced 'Kiribass'.
3. Now known as Teraina. In 1990 it had a population of 936.
4. *Ayr Observer*, Tuesday 16th August 1892, 4f. The obituary notice is taken from the *San Francisco Examiner* of 29th July 1892, and is also reprinted in the *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 18th August 1892, 5c, and *Ayrshire Post*, Friday 19th August 1892, 3d. The *San Francisco Examiner* belonged in 1892 to William Randolph Hearst, the model for Citizen Kane: it was his first paper, bought in 1887, when he was 24.
5. OPR 578/10, Ayr Parish, Births 1820 - 1840, p.105.
6. OPR 578/8, Ayr Parish, Marriages 1761 - 1819.
7. These names are taken from the current edition of the International Genealogical Index: John, christened 27.6.1803; Marion, christened 21.1.1805; David, christened 22.8.1806; Agnes, christened 27.6.1808; Margaret, christened 3.10.1810; William, christened 4.9.1812; James, christened 8.2.1814; Elizabeth, christened 18.6.1819.
8. OPR 578/13, Ayr Parish, Deaths 1820 - 1854.

9. South Ayrshire Libraries [SAL], B6/35/33, Warrants of Deceits 1800 - 1807, 1800 Bundle, no.27, Petition, David Gregg to the Magistrates.
10. SAL, B6/35/33, Warrants of Deceits 1800 - 1807, 1802 Bundle, no.14, Petition, David Greig to the Magistrates.
11. SAL, B6/35/32, Warrants of Deceits 1793 - 1799, 1796 Bundle, no.24, Summons, William Galbraith against Thom, &c.
12. Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., Vol.VI, Echols - Fraser, London, 1931, 266-267.

## Mill Street, Ayr

Over the years most towns have seen changes, some having altered more radically than others. Ayr is no exception and the alterations - sometimes not for the better in the eyes of older citizens - have geared the town to adjust to the tempo of modern life. The traffic flow has largely disappeared from the High Street, with only selected vehicles free to move through what was once the busiest part of town. However, the three original streets of Ayr - High Street, Sandgate and Mill Street - are still more or less as they were when the little settlement by the river was steadily growing into a town.

Of the three, Mill Street is the only one that has changed direction, and that occurred eight hundred years ago. The original road followed the river bank, and joined the High Street just about where the Fish Cross stood. In c.1230, the King, Alexander II, presented the Dominican Order with an area of ground running from the river to the High Street. This caused the road to be turned away from the river, creating the sharp turn to the left, and causing Mill Street - or Mill Vennel as it was known in the past - to join High Street at the present position close to the Wallace Tower. This change of direction was to accommodate the Dominicans whose area of land now transected the original road. Blackfriars Walk, where the present block of flats that straddles the original approach to Turner's Bridge, was so named to commemorate the Dominican Order, whose friars were attired in black robes.

Mill Street is presently comprised of housing. After demolitions in the 1970s and 1980s at the southern end of the street, there now exists a large area currently being used for car parking, where many industries had been established over the centuries. Over the years the Street was home to many commercial enterprises as diverse as the town's slaughterhouse, a coal mine, a brewery, electricity headquarters, destructoral works (the forerunner of the Cleansing Department) and Templeton's Woollen Mill. Mill Street was named after the town mill built hundreds of years before the woollen mill was sited there. Situated in the Victoria Bridge area, where the car park at the foot of Mill Brae is now situated, Nether Mill as it was then called, was the first established of three Mills in Ayr at that time. The Over Mill was situated where the Stepping Stones still are, where the Ayr By-pass crosses the river, and was a working mill into the 1950s, before being demolished in 1963. The third mill was situated on the River Doon and was known as Alloway Mill. To the present day you can still see the sluice for the Nether Mill, which was demolished

in the early 1940s, when standing on the Victoria Bridge. Look down on the right hand side of the bank and the semicircular opening is clearly visible. The storage barns for Nether Mill's grain were built further down nearer the North end of the Street.

The burghers of Ayr had a close financial relationship with the monks. King Robert the Bruce gave the Priory certain privileges. They, the monks, had unlimited corn ground free, plus an annuity of £20. The King's generosity did not endear him to the townspeople, however. Twenty pounds was a considerable sum of money, and this annuity was furnished from the revenue of the town's mill. The burghers objected, refused to pay up, and fought a long and eventually losing battle. In 1406, the highest court in the land, presided over by the Duke of Albany, found in favour of the monks. The monks ended up owning the mill, which until the Reformation was known as the Friars' Mill. The mill was eventually returned to the townspeople over two hundred years later, in 1614.

Throughout the years Mill Street has considerably influenced the life of the town. In Wood's town plan of 1818, a quarry quite near the barns, just behind where the Tam o' Shanter bar is situated in the High Street, is mentioned. One of the least successful ventures was an attempt to mine coal in the street. This happened about 1700 when investigative boring took place and easily mined coal was believed to be present in the area. When the coal did not materialise, the contractor licensed to be in charge of the operation was arrested and imprisoned for breach of contract. The Magistrates of Ayr then decided to mine the coal as a municipal venture, a decision that turned out to be both unwise and very costly. The position of the seams made the coal difficult to extract and the scheme was abandoned. The poorer but by now wiser magistrates never repeated that mistake. All future mining operations in the burgh were privately financed.

Apart from the direction of the street being changed in the 13th Century the most significant physical change to Mill Street occurred with the coming of the railway in the 1850s. Although the original Ayr station was at the North Harbour, it was decided to transfer the station to Townhead, its present location - the site chosen as providing ease of access to the centre of town. The original Townhead station was completed and opened in 1857. Installing the railway effectively cut Mill Street in two, with Mill Street, as we know it today, running from the railway bridge to the town centre, and Mill Brae going in the opposite direction, towards the Holmston Road.

Templeton's Wool Mill was probably the best known employer the street ever had. The original mill was built in Fort Street to provide work for the destitute children of the town. In 1825, James Templeton had bought the mill in Fort Street from one of the town's magistrates. To service the mill he built a dye-house in Mill Street. The Fort Street mill was destroyed by fire, with great loss of life, in 1876, and subsequently it was decided that the logical response was to erect a replacement mill adjacent to the existing dye-house.

The new mill was completed in 1878, and for many years James Templeton was the largest employer in the town, and his mill one of the largest in Scotland. Mill owners and industrialists came from far and wide to see the place, which was extremely modern and technically innovative. Rising production costs and cheap imports eventually had an economically devastating effect on the mill. In the late 1960s it was run down and eventually closed. From spinning cotton in the 19th Century to producing their world

renowned 'Ayr'-prefixed wools, Templeton's had earned a world-wide reputation in the global market place.

A unique feature of the street was the Moravian Church complex. The Moravian Brethren, originally from Slovakia, were famed for their missionary zeal. Their Mill Street church was built in 1778 by an Irishman and contained a manse, a school and a small cemetery. It is interesting to note nowadays, when ecumenicalism is encouraged, that one of the declared principles of the Moravian congregation was 'to unite Christians in a common devotion to a Common Lord'. The Moravians were well received in the town, and local ministers invited them to preach in their churches on behalf of the mission. The congregation ceased to exist in 1916, after which the premises changed hands several times. The Band of Hope held meetings there for many years. Before its closure the hall had functioned as a dance studio, and finally as a bookmaker's office. This was a far cry from the original purpose of the complex.

In the early part of the 20th Century, Mill Street was a bustling, booming place. Apart from the woollen and grain mills, it houses the previously mentioned cleansing department, electricity headquarters and the slaughterhouse with its attendant industries. A slaughterhouse was proposed as early as 1734 and it took years of argument before the building was approved in 1747. In 1749 William Duff set up a linen factory but his attempt to establish mass production by hand looms was a failure. The tannery was established in 1761. Such was the success of the venture that by the 1790s an average of 3000 hides were tanned annually, and twice that amount of the separately designated calf-skins. The calf-skins were used for much finer work and had a much greater value than ordinary hides. These products provided the raw material for the shoe and boot makers of the district and also for the saddlers whose high value goods were in great demand for export. These tanneries were to continue for the next two centuries, latterly owned by Harry Beebe, who had taken over from R Dobbie & Co. Thomas Murray's ice factory being next door to the tannery, and in close proximity to the slaughterhouse was a sensible arrangement. At that time refrigeration was unknown, the meat from the slaughtered cattle being kept cool, allowing it to remain fresh longer.

It is interesting to note that in an era of paraffin-lamps and gas-mantles, James Murray Ferguson, Provost between 1888 and 1891, put forward a proposal to erect a generating station and provide a supply of electricity for the town. The Electricity Works with its attendant offices were situated in Mill Street, and became operational in 1896. Other employment was provided by a brewery, the fore-mentioned boot and shoe manufacturers, and a small engineering works. Robert Dickie owned a furniture store - a two-storeyed wooden building that was taken over and became the Carrick Furniture Company when it moved to Carrick Street. For many years it was a flourishing business, well known throughout the county. Carrick were pioneers in facilitating credit for furniture purchases: an increasing number of young people began married life availing themselves of this extended payment arrangement, more succinctly known as the 'never-never'.

Life might not have been easy for the residents of Mill Street, but it certainly didn't lack interest. Like Templeton, the name Turner has long been associated with Mill Street. A brewery was established there in the early part of the 19th Century at the site

now occupied by Christina's Bar. The Brewery House stood in the elbow of the street, and was home to one of the Turner family for many years. Christina's Bar was always known as the 'Wee Brewery' until the second half of the 20th Century. This was to distinguish it from the bar close to Turner's other and much larger brewery in Main Street, Newton on Ayr. The Wee Brewery was an ale and porter house, having no licence to sell spirits - this was not an uncommon practice before the Second World War.

Although Brewery House and the brewery are now long gone, the name of Turner lives on because of the bridge gifted to the townspeople of Ayr by Andrew Muir Turner a century ago. Originally the brewery employees who lived on the north side of the river arrived at work after having crossed either by the Victoria Bridge, the Cage Walk or the Auld Brig. Turner's gift - a 300-foot long bridge, built at a total cost of £2500 - halved their walking time and no doubt improved their efficiency, indicating perhaps that the gift was not entirely altruistic. The bridge was officially opened on 12th September 1900 by A M Turner, and presented to the people of Ayr. Provost Templeton, the Magistrates and the Councillors attended a ceremony that took place at the Mill Street end of the bridge. Mr Eaglesham, who designed the bridge, said how delighted he was to be associated with the project. He hoped that he, along with Mr Clarke, the builder, would be considered for the next bridge being built in the town. He proposed a bridge at the mouth of the River Doon. A century on, although the proposal is occasionally resurrected - this bridge remains elusive. One interesting aspect of Turner's Bridge is the fact that from the time it opened, it and its approaches have always been lit by electricity.

Mill Street was not all about industry and work however. People lived there and the inhabitant of a house in Mill Street - especially on the side nearest the river - possessed certain advantages. During the winter it was unlikely that any house would want for a fire, fuel being supplied to a great extent by the flotsam from the river. After heavy rain and the following spate, trees floating down the river were extricated from the water by using long metal cleats. As every back door had a sawing trestle, the small trees were quickly reduced to logs and stacked to dry. The favourite place for pulling them out was at Turner's Bridge. Water flowing beneath the bridge kept the trees swirling in this area, known as McCracken's Corner. Old John McCracken lived in the house on the bridge approaches, and gave his name to the locality. A well-known local personality, John conducted his butcher's business from a corrugated iron shed in his back garden. Surprisingly, there were never any reports of customers falling ill after eating his meat.

The last hansom cab driver in Ayr lived in the street - a tall, distinguished-looking man named Hewitson. He would make his way daily from Mill Street to Gemmell's Cab Stables in Carrick Street. With a cockaded top hat, and a prominent red nose, Hewitson was an easily recognised character. It was said that he was never seen in public without his long whip.

Other worthies from the street were Scone Annie and Maggie Bluelips, ladies well known in the area and fond of a drink. They were 'lifted' on a regular basis when the police had a large washing gathered at the local gaol. On Monday or Tuesday morning the ladies would be released. The washing was generated from the inmates of the cells at the Town Hall - not the town gaol which was situated at Wellington Square. Apparently, these

ladies bore the police no malice, merely regarding their arrest as an occupational hazard - a quid pro quo perhaps. Mill Street certainly lacked neither character or characters.

The 1930s saw the most radical change in hundreds of years. Almost the entire side of the street nearest the river - from the Electricity Works to Turner's Bridge was demolished, with the exception of the house on the bridge approaches. Three new blocks of flatted housing on the river side of the street were erected, bringing to an end the days of eating, sleeping, cooking and washing in one room. This was to be the last development in the street for nearly 30 years.

When the authorities started their redevelopment in the 1960s, the area chosen for demolition included the previously mentioned Moravian Church, and the row of little shops on the arm leading to High Street. Brunton's butcher shop - which had been in business for many years -, a pet shop, a hairdressing salon, and Fairley's Home Bakery all disappeared. A small whitewashed cottage situated between the High Street and Mill Street was also demolished.

Maisonettes rose to take the place of the 'room-and-kitchens'. A passageway was made at the Tam o' Shanter inn - then a museum, now a bar again - to give access to the High Street, and a new road constructed - Mill Wynd - to allow service access for the shops in the High Street. A major commercial development was next on the agenda. Templetons the grocers expanded their premises both upwards and outwards. Solomons the tailors, McHargs the bookmakers, a chip shop and Hays the fishmongers were all put to the sword. Hays, on the corner of High Street and Mill Street, was almost unique. At that time it was one of only three single-storey buildings left in the High Street, the others being the City of Glasgow Bank at 65-67, and the Dormie High Service at 33 High Street, both of which still remain. 33 is at the time of writing a jeweller's shop run by the Stewart Company, while 65-67 became a gas showroom, but is currently unoccupied.

The final development of the river side of the street was carried out in the mid-80s, when the slaughterhouse and electricity works were demolished, and Victoria Court built on the site. A pleasant redbrick apartment block, privately financed, it was later extended. The demolition of the ice factory, tannery and Templeton's Mill directly opposite was carried out in the late 1980s, but the area cleared has not been redeveloped.

What next then for Mill Street? The obvious answer is the use of the cleared Mill site, now used for car-parking. What form any development will take remains a matter for conjecture. A shopping mall? More apartments? Or a combination of commercial and residential uses? And will the shopping malls, pedestrian precincts or shops of national chain stores stir some future writer to the same nostalgia that I feel for the old Moravian complex, Templeton's Mill and Gemmell's cabs?

**George Wade**

## Old Fingerposts in Ayrshire

In *Ayrshire Notes No.6* (Spring 1994) I recorded the disappearance of an old fingerpost at a junction near North and South Balloch. By September 1992, a modern road sign had taken its place; all that remains of it is an August 1991 photograph (photo 1 below).



1. The fingerpost near North and South Balloch in August 1991

Later I searched out and photographed the other old fingerposts to be found in Ayrshire, of which there were 16, or 15 if we exclude one that has no fingers. I finally decided to put their story on record when I noticed that, some time in 1999, work had begun to refurbish them. To some, an interest in these signs may seem perilously close to train spotting (the hobby, not the film - which would be much more exciting). I am

comforted however by the terms in which they were described in an East Lothian Council report in 1996: "a distinctive and reassuringly familiar part of East Lothian's character and heritage".

The information summarised in the following table describes the fingerposts *before* the refurbishment began. For an explanation of the terms please refer to the notes which follow it.

Old Fingerposts in Ayrshire						
	Roads	Grid Ref. and Map	Location	Photo	Directions	
1	B7045/B742	NS332120 OS70		9/92, 7/95	A	Minnyschant 1½ Ayr 7
					B	Maybole 2¼
					C	Kirkmichael 3 Straiton 7 Newton-Stewart 37
					D	Dalrymple 2¼
2	B7045/minor	NS323101 OS70/76		7/95	A	Maybole 1½
					B	B7045 Ayr 8½
					C	B7045 Kirkmichael 1½ Straiton
3	B7045/minor	NS328093 OS70/76		7/95	A	Ayr 9
					B	Crosshill 2 Dailly 7 Girvan 13
4	B7023/minor	NS325066 OS70/76	Crosshill	6/94 7/95	A	B7023 Maybole 2¼
					B	Kirkmichael 2½
					C	B7023 Dailly 5 Girvan 11¼

5	B741/B7023	NS314054 OS70/76	Knockroon Fm.	10/94	A	B741 Straiton 4
	Finial (broken): -- District -- (possibly "Carrick District of Roads") Base: Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon				B	Crosshill ¾
6	B741/ unmetalled	NS289026 OS76		10/94	A	B741 Dailly 1½
	Finial: Ayr County Council Base: Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon					
7	minor/minor	NX289957 OS76	Milton Fm.	9/92	A	Crosshill 11¼ Maybole 14¾ Newton-Stewart 24¾
	Finial: spherical boss Base: Grangemouth Ironworks					
8	A77/minor	NS246077 OS70/76	nr. Kirkoswald	4/97	A	Maybole 4 Ayr 13
	Finial: spherical boss Base: base buried				B	Killkerran 6 (sic) Dailly 6
					C	replacement Kirkoswald ½ Girvan 8
9	A714/minor	NX203921 OS76	nr. Pinmore Fm.	4/97	A	Tormitchell 2½
	Finial: Ayr County Council Base: Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon					
10	A714/B7027	NX237820 OS76	Barrhill	4/97	A	A714 Newton Stewart via Bargrennan 17½
	Finial: Ayr County Council Base: Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon				B	B7027 Newton Stewart via Knowe 17½
11	minor/minor	NS297045 OS76		4/97	A	Girvan 8
	Finial: spherical boss Base: lettering possibly as no.7, but too heavily overpainted to be sure				B	Maybole 4 Ayr 13
					C	replacement Kilkerran Dailly 3/Crosshill 2½

12	B741/minor	NS332054 OS70/76	Cloyntie Fm.	4/97	A	Crosshill 1
	Finial missing Base: <i>Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon</i>				B	B741 Straiton 3
					C	Newton Stewart Hill Road 30
					D	B741 Girvan 11¼
13	B741/B7045	NS378050 OS77	Straiton	4/97	A	B741 New Dailly 8¼ Girvan 14½
	Finial missing Base: <i>Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon</i>				B	B7045 Kirkmichael 4 Ayr 14
					C	<i>broken</i> S[traiton] Da[lmellington]
14	B7045/minor	NS341089 OS70/76	Kirkmichael	4/97	A	Patna 5¼
	Finial: <i>Ayr County Council</i> Base: <i>Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon</i>					
15	B730/minor	NS367342 OS70	Dundonald	8/93	A	B730 Tarbolton 6½
	Finial: <i>Ayr County Council</i> Base: <i>Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon</i>				B	Symington 2¼
16	A759/minor	NS328312 OS70	Troon	2/00	-	No fingers
	Finial missing Base: <i>Royal Label Factory Stratford on Avon</i>					
D. McClure, February 2000						

### Notes on the table:

1. The numbering in column 1 is arbitrary.
2. Present road numbers are shown in column 2. These do not necessarily appear on the fingerposts - see column 7.
3. The National Grid Reference and the appropriate Ordnance Survey Landranger Map(s) are shown in column 3.

4. The entry in column 5 shows the month and year of the author's photographs of the fingerposts.
5. Individual fingers (sometimes called 'flags') on each post are designated A, B, etc.
6. The destinations and distances shown on the fingers are shown in column 7. Where road number appears on a finger it is shown here. The unit of distance, which appears as either *miles* or *mls*, has been omitted. Where a replacement finger is indicated, this predates the present refurbishment exercise.
7. Two types of finial are found. First a spherical boss without lettering; secondly a ring with embossed lettering, the text of which is shown in the table.
8. In some cases there is embossed lettering on the base of the post, the text of which is shown in the table.

### *The origin of the fingerposts*

From the embossed lettering on the base of a number of the posts, it appears that they were made by The Royal Label Factory, Stratford on Avon, which is still engaged in the manufacture of road signs in new premises in Chipping Norton. The RLF manufactured the fingers and not the posts, which were bought in by the company. Until finding one on Warwickshire a few years before 1994, the present manager of the company, Tony Froud, was unaware that any had ever been supplied with the company name stamped on the base. It is probable that although some of the posts bear other names, the fingers were manufactured by the RLF.

The company was founded in 1875 by John Smith, chiefly to manufacture "garden labels in a rustless alloy, the first to be produced by casting process with raised letters".<sup>1</sup> They were at first known as "Stratford" labels, but from their use at Windsor and Balmoral, and Queen Victoria's pleasure at their legibility and permanence, the company was renamed The Royal Label Company.

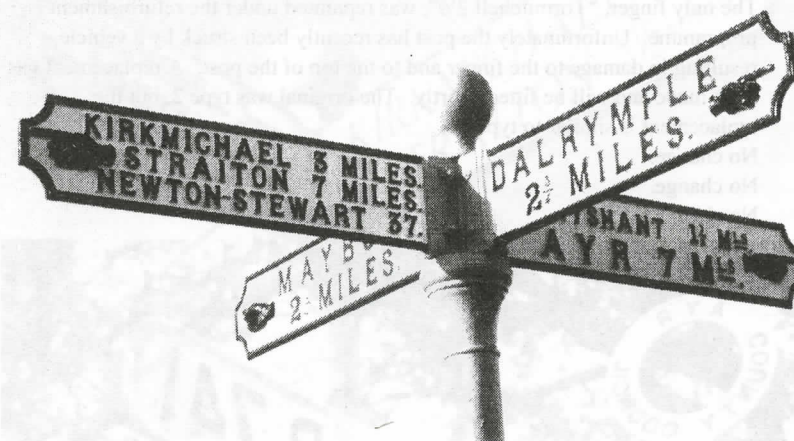
There are two distinct styles of fingerpost in Ayrshire (see illustrations below). In the first case the post is topped by a spherical boss and the fingers have scalloped ends. In the second, the post is topped by an annular finial, bearing in all but one case the words "Ayr County Council", while the ends of the fingers are rounded; the exception is fingerpost number 5 - its finial is broken, leaving a piece bearing the word "District" (possibly "Carrick District of Roads"). Numbers 1, 3, 7, 8, and 11 are of type one, and the remainder are of type 2.

From correspondence with Tony Froud in 1994, the Type 2 fingers were probably manufactured in 1927. Fingers of similar design appear in a photograph of the RLF stand at an exhibition that year. A memorandum on the standardisation of road direction posts issued by the Ministry of Transport in 1930, specifies that the fingers should have squared ends.<sup>2</sup> Mr Froud thinks the Type 1 fingers are an earlier design, though only by a year or two. They predate any he has seen in England.

Both types of fingers were cast in spelter, the most common commercial form of zinc (though the term spelter is also used for a zinc alloy used as solder). They are extremely heavy: Type 1, 22Kg.; Type 2, 20Kg.

It is curious that 14 of the fingerposts surviving in Ayrshire are in Carrick. It might be supposed that they survived because there is less traffic there, and there were fewer road-widening schemes to displace them. But one of them, number 8, is on the busy trunk road A77, and two others, numbers 9 and 10, on the A714, while there are many quiet junctions in other parts of the county where they might have had a greater chance of survival.

One final point concerning the posts is the spelling of Minnyshant (no.1) and Killkerran (no.8). Did these variants reflect the deliberate use of older spellings, or clerical errors by those producing the lists to be sent to the RLF?



2. Type 1 fingerpost number 1.

### *The 1999-2000 refurbishment*

This exercise, which was initiated by the Rural Affairs Committee of South Ayrshire Council, is part of a wider programme which includes the repainting of milestones, of which there are many in the district. Some work is outstanding, so the comments below may be overtaken by events.

All surviving fingers have been repainted. Apart from this, the present condition of the fingerposts is as follows:

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| No.1. | No change.   |
| No.2. | No change.   |
| No.3. | Finger A ("Ayr 9 miles") survives.<br>Finger B had been lost and has been replaced.<br>Finger C was absent at the time of the author's survey and has been replaced. |
| No.4. | No change.   |

- No.5 The fragment of finial bearing the word "District" has been lost. Otherwise no change.
- No.6. There was only one finger at the time of the author's survey. Finger B has been added ("Kilkerran; Crosshill 2½ miles").
- No.7. There was only one finger at the time of the author's survey. Two fingers have been added:  
Finger B: "Barr 1½ miles"; Finger C: "Dailly 6 miles".
- No.8. Finger A had been lost and has been replaced.  
Finger B had been damaged and has been replaced, though now the text is "Kilkerran" (previously "Killkerran 6 miles; Dailly 6 miles").
- No.9. The only finger, "Tormitchell 2½", was repainted under the refurbishment programme. Unfortunately the post has recently been struck by a vehicle, resulting in damage to the finger and to the top of the post. A replacement has been made and will be fitted shortly. The original was type 2, but the replacement is similar to type 1.
- No.10. No change.
- No.11. No change.
- No.12. No change.



3. Type 2 fingerpost no.6, October 1994.

- No.13. The broken finger C has been replaced in approximately the same style (type 2) except that it has squared corners.

- No.14. Finger A was found to be damaged and has been replaced. It was type 2 but the replacement is similar to type 1. Two new fingers have been fitted, again similar to type 1. B: "Ayr 11 miles"; C: "Straiton 4 miles".
- No.15. No change.
- No.16. No change.



4. The refurbished fingerpost no.3, showing two new fingers similar in style to type 1.

### *Manufacturing the replacement fingers.*

The work of making replacement fingers for the posts has been undertaken by David Ogilvie Engineering Ltd. of Kilmarnock, under contract to South Ayrshire Council. David Ogilvie took a close interest in the job, and a great deal of care was taken to produce work in the style of the originals.

It was impracticable to have new fingers cast with the heavily embossed lettering found in the old ones. Instead the effect was recreated by cutting new fingers from mild steel and spot-welding in place individual letters and hands, plasma cut by Nichol McKay, Prestwick Airport. The fingers were then galvanised and painted.

If illustrations (2) and (4) are compared, it will be seen that the new fingers are certainly different from the old, but that they are sufficiently similar to pass for contemporary work of a somewhat higher quality than the originals.

In conclusion, South Ayrshire Council must be complimented for undertaking the refurbishment of these old fingerposts. One small plea might be entered: if the necessity arises to replace any more of the old fingers, let type 1 fingers be replaced in the

style of type 1, and type 2 in the style of type 2, and the text of the originals be retained. "Patna 5¼" has already become "Patna 5" (fingerpost no.14); let us retain "Crosshill 11¼; Maybole 14¼; Newton-Stewart 24¼" (no.7) as a reminder of an age when the precision of such distances mattered.

David McClure

1. A Brief Historical Sketch of the Royal Label Factory (April 1949). Photocopies of part of this publication were supplied to me by the library of The Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, labelled with the following: "Records Office, Class P.87.3 ROY, Acc. No. 4903".
2. Ministry of Transport; Memorandum No.291 (Roads), 14th April 1930.

## Sources

Information on the Royal Label Factory was provided by Miss C. James, Information Officer, Warwickshire County Council Department of Libraries and Heritage; by Robert Bearman, Senior Archivist, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; and by A. A. Froud, Manager, The Royal Label Factory, Chipping Norton, Oxon. Stewart Hands of the Devon Roads Museum provided photographs of annular finials and gave me a contact at East Lothian. B. Aspinall, Transportation Development Manager, East Lothian Council, provided information on the council's policy on 'Rural Fingerpost Signing'. Stuart Hamilton at the Charlotte Street, Ayr offices of South Ayrshire Council talked to me about the present refurbishment programme for fingerposts and milestones. David Ogilvie of David Ogilvie Engineering Ltd., Kilmarnock, gave me a tour of his works and showed me work in progress on new fingers for Ayrshire fingerposts.

## A Traveller's View of the Ayrshire Coast in 1758

With my interest in aspects of the maritime history of the south-west of Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries, it is always a pleasure to stumble upon a fresh account of visiting travellers to the area during that period. With maritime history, there is a tendency to believe that, as the passage of time has made little impression upon the tides and seascapes of an area, contemporary comment will add little to what can be seen or deduced in modern times; this is not so, and can be demonstrated by studying the recent publication of 'Sir William Burrell's Northern Tour, 1758',<sup>1</sup> and noting the entries relating to the Ayrshire coast and its surroundings.

Sir William Burrell was born in 1732, graduated LL.B from St John's College, Cambridge in 1755, took his LL.D in 1760, and subsequently practised in the English Admiralty Court. In 1768 he entered Parliament, but resigned his seat in 1774 to become a Commissioner of the Excise. In 1789, he succeeded to his father-in-law's baronetcy; he died in 1796. It is not at all clear why he, with a friend and two servants, undertook his visit to Scotland in 1758; it was an arduous undertaking, almost entirely conducted on

horseback, lasting over four months, and the distance travelled was in excess of 2500 miles. Throughout his lifetime, he was very interested in antiquarian pursuits, and it has been suggested that his visit to Scotland arose from the lack of knowledge in English circles of Scottish antiquarian affairs. His diary reveals his additional interests in agricultural and industrial matters, and his detailed comments on Carlisle Castle, the battlefield at Culloden, the construction of Fort George, and the development of the military road system, both in Northern England and in Scotland, hint at an interest in military engineering.

The journey started in London on 8th July 1758, and proceeded via Grantham, the Yorkshire coast and Durham. Scotland was entered north of Carlisle, and the travellers continued through Dumfries to Portpatrick, where a short diversion was made, using the long established ferry service to Donaghadee, to Belfast, Antrim and the Giant's Causeway. Returning to Portpatrick, Sir William and his party proceeded north on the Ayrshire coast to Greenock and Glasgow, up into Perthshire, and then via Stirling to Fort William and Inverness. The north-east coast was followed to Aberdeen, and the party progressed through Dundee, St Andrews, Edinburgh, Kelso and Berwick. The return journey was made through Newcastle, Richmond, Doncaster and Grantham, arriving in London at the end of October 1758.

The sensitive and detailed account given in Sir William's diary is a treasure house for local historians with an interest in the mid 18th century. In the following paragraphs, I will recount some of the comments he made on his 1758 journey from the Scottish border to Greenock and Port Glasgow, paying particular attention to his remarks on maritime matters.

Crossing into Scotland by fording the Rivers Esk and Sark, Burrell comments: 'the first village produced a strong mark of the poverty of the inhabitants. The houses were built entirely of mud, without chimneys or windows, unless holes in the wall deserve that appellation'. Proceeding to Dumfries, Burrell comments that there was a 'good road, the lands generally cultivated and produce flax, barley, wheat, oats and potatoes. Dumfries is a very neat town ... The Kings Arms is the best in Scotland, kept by Mr McKune, a very civil man'. Proceeding westwards, Sir William's luck ran out, and the quality of accommodation dropped rapidly: at one place, he 'was forced to taste Scotch chicken broth bad enough to poison a Hottentot', while later, he comments that the room offered for accommodation 'was our dining room and bedchamber, and probably at other times performed the office of stable and hogstye conjointly'. He proceeded to Glenluce 'over a horrid stony moor', and on to Stranraer, having passed Castle Kennedy, remarking that the Castle was 'delightfully seated ... and through the woods are cut several vistas to the water'.

Stranraer is reported as 'seated at the head of a spacious bay of the same name capable of containing 1000 sail of ships. It is landlocked on every side except the entrance, which is spacious but not too wide, so that they might be protected from the violence of the wind on every side'. It is interesting to note that Sir William does not use the name Loch Ryan, which was certainly in use at the time; his suggestion that this great anchorage was named Stranraer Bay does not seem to be supported by any other writing or charts of the time.

From Stranraer, Burrell proceeded to Portpatrick. He describes Portpatrick as 'a village remarkable for nothing but being the place of safest passage from Scotland to Ireland', noting that 'it were pity the government did not establish the packet regularly from that port as the conveyance is more quick and a safer passage than from Holyhead, the distance being only 10 leagues.<sup>2</sup> At present, from the badness of the roads and accommodations, travellers choose to go through Wales'. As to the ferry itself, Sir William reports that 'the packet boats are quite open, into which are men, women and children and all manner of beasts crowded promiscuously. The first village that presents itself on the Irish coast is called Donaghadee, almost as bad as Portpatrick'.

Back in Scotland, the party returned to Stranraer, and on to Ballantrae. Burrell was obviously impressed by Glen App, 'the situation of which is agreeable and romantic. At one end a hill terminates the prospect, the other is open to Stranraer Bay'. Sir William proceeded north along the coast, almost to Girvan, and 'here we saw a prodigious barren rock in the sea called Ailsa Hill, where are found great flocks of solan geese<sup>3</sup> at certain seasons of the year. It is quite barren and uninhabited'. At the time of Sir William's visit, neither the lighthouse nor the curling stone quarry had been established. His party then went via Bargany and New Dailly, noting the existence of a colliery that met local needs, and onwards to the county town of Ayr, which 'is tolerably built, [and] has a handsome bridge of 4 arches over the River Irvine'. Burrell clearly got confused over his Ayrshire rivers, but he goes on to report that Ayr 'was formerly a place of great trade, but is now decayed. There is a good port, at the entrance of which is a large bay on each side and [a] small quay for landing goods, close to which are the remains of a fortification erected by Cromwell, which commanded the entrance to the river, in which West Indian ships of no great burden may ride safely'. Burrell reports that Ayr had 9 vessels trading with Virginia, and 19 other vessels carrying coal to Dublin, herrings to Jamaica, and merchandise to England, the latter returning with corn, provisions and merchandise. He also reports that 'from the quay, you have a fine prospect of the highlands of the Isle of Arran and the flat coast of Lady Isle'.

While in Ayr, our intrepid diarist had a mild brush with local authority. The local provost, referred to by Burrell as the mayor, had spotted Burrell 'writing in the street and making observations'. The provost supposed that Burrell was a spy and asked an officer of a regiment quartered in the town to investigate the matter. As the investigation was about to commence, a senior officer arrived, summoned Sir William from his bed, and upon a short examination 'was sufficiently satisfied of the mayor's mistake, and hoped I would excuse the affront'. Burrell ends his account of this incident by reporting that 'I retired to rest, the major and his brother officers to their bottle'. His account of Ayr ends with the comment 'I observed more people of the poorer sort with shoes and stockings at Ayr than in any other part of Scotland I had yet seen'.

Burrell went on to Irvine 'over the sands when the water is low'. This was a recognised route, but other records indicate it was treacherous, due to the presence of quicksands. He found Irvine had 'a good harbour, to which between 70 and 80 sail belong. They trade to Ireland with coal (which the neighbouring hills abound with) and get money in return. To the West Indies they carry bale goods, and bring back rum, sugar and mahogany'. Sir William also noted that the bridge over the River Irvine had four arches,

there was a good tolbooth, and that there were two rope walks and a sail cloth factory. Reference is also made to Eglinton Castle, 'a poor edifice, but the spacious plantations that surround it are remarkably beautiful'. Kilwinning is noted for the large ruins of an abbey, and the 'country about it is very fruitful and there are large crops of all sorts of grains, particularly oats'.

Our travellers progressed up the coast to Largs, but 'saw little worthy of notice'. Kelburn Castle is dismissed as 'a paltry house', and the village of Largs is 'as paltry as the house, and so much out of repair that it would tempt one to believe [it] the property of the same person'. Burrell does report however that 'there is a good view of the isles of Cumbrae and Bute, the first so clearly that any beast grazing there may be easily distinguished'.

Burrell very seldom gives dates in his account but does record that on the 10th August 1758 he covered the 15 miles from Largs to Greenock. The distance on the modern direct road is 14 miles, but these distances do not give an inkling as to whether he went coastwise or used what is now locally known as the old Greenock road via the Brisbane Glen and Loch Thom. His diary does record that he experienced a 'violent storm of rain', and that the travellers 'were most agreeably entertained with several natural cascades, which the violence of the rain drove from the tops of the rocks'. This description does fit the Loch Thom route where, on the east side of the road, magnificent waterfalls can be seen as the water from the high plateau drops over the edge of the basalt cliffs into the Brisbane Glen. From a high point on his route, Burrell reports a good view of Ardgowan House and 'Cathcart Isle': this island reference is puzzling, in that Cathcart is located almost due south of the centre of Glasgow, and cannot be seen from the hills above Greenock. It may be a reference to one of the large sand banks in the Clyde that proved such an obstacle to opening the upper reaches of that river to navigation, and which have now been removed as the river was deepened.

I will conclude this series of extracts from Sir William's diary with his comments concerning Greenock. 'At this place and [Port Glasgow] are the ships belonging to merchants of Glasgow unloaded and the goods carried thither by hoy. 250 sail belong to [these two ports], 30 of these of 500 tons burden each, the property of the inhabitants of Greenock, which trade to the West Indies and America, exporting bale goods and the commodities of the country. In return [they] bring rum, tobacco and sugar. From Lisbon they import wine and fruit. From Denmark, Sweden and Holland, timber and send them part money, rest in tobacco. From Virginia, logwood, tobacco and mahogany. From Jamaica, cotton. There is a manufactory for making ropes, duck [cloth] for sails, anchors and all things belonging to shipping. The herring fishery is carried on here. there are three quays, east, west and middle, so placed that in the greatest storms ships in the harbour will ride safe'.

It is hoped that these few extracts, covering only a fraction of the journey that Sir William and his colleagues made, and concentrating on maritime matters, will illustrate the tremendous amount of detail recorded by this most observant traveller. There is a wealth of detail on living conditions, agricultural matters, land valuations and wage

structures that must be of interest to local historians. A detailed study of the entire diary is to be recommended.

Bill Laing

1. Sir William Burrell's Northern Tour, 1758, edited by John G Dunbar, East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 1997.
2. 30 miles.
3. gannets.

## Kilmarnock Gas Works

Astute readers of *Ayrshire Notes* will have noticed the regularity with which Kilmarnock Gas Works has cropped up. In *Ayrshire Notes* 16, Spring 1999, Stuart Wilson rightly drew attention to the error in James Keith's list of Ayrshire gas works (in *Ayrshire Notes* 10, Spring 1996). Keith dates the Kilmarnock Gas Works to 1901, whereas the Kilmarnock Gas Light Company was formed in 1822, and the works in Park Street opened in 1823. Further reference to the Company was made in Dane Love's history of W G Walker & Co. (in *Ayrshire Notes* 17, Autumn 1999), as William Glassford Walker was manager of the Kilmarnock Gas Works from 1849 until it was taken into municipal ownership in 1871. Further information on the Company can also be gleaned from William Gilchrist, 'Kilmarnock Gas Undertaking', in *Kilmarnock - Aspects of Local History*, c.1980.

What now follows is a transcription of the original contract between the Kilmarnock Gas Light Company, and Robert Galt, a builder in Kilmarnock, for the erection of the gas works. This contract is held by the National Archives of Scotland, under the reference GB 1/89/10. It is printed here in its entirety - itself a comment on the lengthy and voluminous contracts which are standard in the modern building industry - with some extra punctuation and paragraph breaks to improve its readability.

### *Contract betwixt the Gas Light Company and Robert Galt, 1822*

*It is contracted and agreed between the parties underwritten vizt. William Brown, manufacturer, Thomas Greenshields, brewer, George Paxton, brewer, Charles D. Gairdner, banker, William Rankine, druggist, Thomas Morton, engineer, James Reid, surgeon, Robert Roger, innkeeper, Robert Thomson, manufacturer, David R. Andrews and Alexander Hamilton, writers, all in Kilmarnock, and James Dunlop of Annanhill, or any five of them subscribing, being the Committee of Management of the Kilmarnock Gas Light Company, and as authorised by said Company to enter into all contracts and agreements relative to the affairs of the said Company in name and on behalf thereof on the one part, - and Robert Galt, builder in Kilmarnock, as principal, and with and for him, Robert*

*Young, schoolmaster in Symington as his cautioner, on the other part, in manner following, that is to say,*

*Whereas, the said Gas Light Company has resolved to build two gasometer tanks, a gasometer house, a tar vault, chimney stalk, and to sink a well, conform to a plan and state of measurement, designed and drawn by John Neilson, engineer in Glasgow, which plan consists of three different parts, which are all subscribed by the said Committee, or a quorum thereof, and the said Robert Galt as relative hereto: Therefore and in consideration of the price herein aftermentioned, the said Robert Galt and the said Robert Young his said cautioner surety and full obligant with and for him, bind and oblige themselves conjunctly and severally, and their respective heirs, executors and representatives whatsoever, that he the said Robert Galt shall in a good sufficient and workmanlike manner erect, build and finish the said gasometer tanks, gasometer house, tar vault, chimney stalk and well conform to the plan and measurement above referred to, and at his own proper costs and charges shall provide all stones, bricks, sand, lime and all other materials whatsoever, which shall be necessary and fit to be used in and about the said erections, save and except the scantlings of the roof of the gasometer house, which he is to be furnished with free of expence, to be used by him for scaffolding and gangways in building and finishing the said gasometer tanks, gasometer house and tar vault, and that he shall also carry away all rubbish which shall arise by reason of said erections.*

*And more particularly that the said Robert Galt shall erect and finish the said works in the following manner, vizt.*

*First, the building of the tanks to commence by a course of headers twenty four inches long by twelve inches thick, with their radius lines running to the centre and laid in good searched lime; another course of the same description to be laid half way up the building, but diminished in length in proportion to what the regular outside batter of the wall may take off. The top course to be finished at twelve inches long, over which the pavement will be laid, finishing with the inside circle of the tank; each of the courses to be in thickness from nine to eighteen inches, with the exception of the heading ones, which are to be from twelve to fourteen inches, and all the stretchers to be wrought true to the radius lines running to the centre; all the courses must be well bedded and square jointed, and the inside face of the circle neatly broached. The bottom of the tanks to be laid with good pavement, closely jointed, on clay and averaging about six inches thick. The balance wells accompanying the building of the tanks to be lined from the bottom to the top by a nine inch brick wall, and laid headers the whole way up. The puddle of the tanks and balance wells to be twelve inches thick, which must come up to the bottom of the pavement, and the clay to be well soured and prepared for the purpose. If the soil in*

which the tanks are to be cut should not be of solid materials, the strength of the wall must be considerably increased.

Second, the gasometer house to be executed of good strong rubble work, with through bands at every six feet distance in each course, and with hewn corners back filleted three-fourths of an inch deep, and six inches in the head, and finished at top by a hewn plint five inches thick projecting on the house building two and three-fourth inches; the breadth of the plint not to be less than eighteen inches, and to have a header every five or six feet equal in length to the projection and thickness of the wall. The gables of the house to be finished with good skewes neatly hewn twelve inches broad by five inches thick. The walls and gables of the gasometer house to be two feet thick, and the foundation walls to be two and a half feet thick. The pavement of the floor of gasometer house to be laid on a bed of sand six inches thick, except so much of it as shall be on the top course of the tanks, which will be laid in lime.

Third, the tar vault to be built of rough ashlar well bedded and laid with good lime; the bottom of the vault to be laid with pavement from five to six inches thick, and the whole inside of the vault to be plastered with roman cement.

Fourth, the foundation of the chimney stalk to be executed in three courses of large stones, first course sixteen inches thick, second course twelve inches thick, and the third course ten inches thick. The bottom course to be ten and a half feet square, second course to be nine and a half feet square, and the third course eight and a half feet square; the stones to be selected to suit the band from three to four and a half feet long, and from twenty four to thirty inches broad. The brick work to be executed according to the plan given for regulating the height, the thickness and the outside decline.

Fifth, the well to be twenty seven feet deep, its diameter to be eight feet within the wall till within six feet from the top, when it will be tapered to seven feet; it must be finished with a ring pen at the mouth in the same manner as the top of the gasometer tanks. The craddling to be fifteen inches thick, and the stones to be got either from Hurleford or Kilmaurs quarries. Should it be necessary to make the well deeper than twenty seven feet, the price for the extra depth to be in the same proportion with the rest of it. The well to be covered with Woodhill hard flags six inches thick having an oak beam eight inches square to support them, and the flag stones to project six inches over the diameter of the wall.

Which said gasometer tanks, gasometer house, tar vault and well, the said Robert Galt binds and obliges himself to finish betwixt and the nineteenth day of October next, and the chimney stalk betwixt and the [blank] day of [blank], also next, and that under the penalty of four pounds sterling for every day after said period that the said works are not finished. And it is hereby agreed that the said Gas Light Company shall be

at liberty to inspect the said works by tradesmen whom they shall appoint for that purpose on all occasions when they may think proper.

Farther, it is hereby understood and conditioned that if any part of the said plan shall not be built or executed, the expence of such part shall be deducted from the price, and in the event of more mason work, brick work, joining or other kind of work herein referred to being necessary than what is above described, or laid out in the plan, then the said Robert Galt shall be paid for such work as shall be executed according to the kind and additional extent thereof at a price to be fixed and ascertained by men who are mutually chosen by the said parties.

For which causes, and on the other part, the said several persons above named composing the Committee of Management of the said Gas Light Company, or any five of them subscribing, bind and oblige the said Gas Light Company to make payment to the said Robert Galt or his heirs, executors or assignees whomsoever, of the following sums for the different pieces of work before specified, vizt., the sum of four hundred and eighty four pounds sterling for making and erecting the said gasometer tanks, gasometer house, and tar vault. Item, the sum of one hundred and twenty three pounds for erecting the said chimney stalk. Item, the sum of seventeen pounds for the said well, being the agreed-on prices of the said works; and that at the terms and by the proportions following, vizt., the sum of one hundred and sixty seven pounds sterling when the tanks are finished to the surface, the like sum of one hundred and sixty seven pounds sterling when the gasometer house is ready for the roof, and the sum of two hundred and ninety pounds sterling in full of the remainder of the price, when the whole buildings are finished and taken off the said Robert Galt's hands, with a fifth part more of the said stipulated payments of penalty in case of failure, and the legal interest of the said several payments from and after the respective terms of payment during the not payment of the same, and in case any difference shall arise with respect to the true meaning of the present contract or the execution of any part of the work hereby contracted for, the said parties hereunto submit the same to the determination of John Neilson, engineer, Glasgow as sole arbiter, and bind and oblige themselves and their foresaids to abide by and acquiesce in such decision as the said John Neilson shall pronounce on the matters hereby submitted to him, and the said Robert Galt binds and obliges himself and his foresaids to free and relieve the said Robert Young of his cautionary obligation for him in the premises, and of all damages and expences he may any way sustain or incur thereanent, and both parties bind and oblige themselves and their foresaids to implement and perform their respective parts of the premises to each other under the penalty of one hundred pounds sterling to be paid by the party failing to the party observing the contract or willing to do so besides performance, and both parties consent to the registration hereof in the books of Council and

*Session or others competent therein to remain for preservation, that letters of horning on six days charge, and all other necessary execution may pass hereon in common form, and thereto constitute [blank] their procurators. In witness whereof [blank]*

Each of the four pages of the contract is signed by R Galt, Robt Young, William Brown, Robt Thomson Jr, Robt Roger, Wm Rankin and Thomas Morton. On the final page, these names are witnessed by A Hamilton, Robt Smith, David Love, and William Walker.

Besides giving us an insight to the methods of construction employed in this early gas works, the contract also reveals other information not to be found in Gilchrist. The plans of the works were drawn up by John Neilson, engineer in Glasgow. He is probably the John Neilson, engineer, who occurs in Glasgow Directories in the early 19th Century: in 1807 his address is given as 'near the Canal Old Bason'. It is not clear whether he is related to James Beaumont Neilson, the inventor of hot blast iron smelting, who had been engineer to the Glasgow Gas Light Company, established in 1817.<sup>1</sup>

The works were built by Robert Galt. He can be tentatively identified as the Robert Galt, mason and builder in Content, Ayr, who died in March 1865, and is buried in Ayr Auld Kirkyard, along with his spouse, Margaret McSkimming.

The Contract, as transcribed above, is not complete. The space between 'whereof' and the signatures should be completed by a proving clause, where the dates and places of signing, and descriptions of the witnesses are recorded. That the document includes witnesses' signatures would seem to indicate carelessness on the part of whoever drew up the contract, probably Alexander Hamilton, writer and town clerk of Kilmarnock. He is one of the witnesses: it is also worth noting that the witness signatures have abbreviated dates along them: '20 Sep' in the case of Hamilton and Smith, '10 Oct' in the case of Love and Walker. The proving clause could not have been completed until the final signatures were collected: presumably Hamilton never got round to completing it.

**Rob Close**

1. See John R Hume, *Industrial Archaeology of Glasgow*, Glasgow, 1974, pp 137-138.

## Short Notices

The following recently published books have been brought to our attention

**KILMARNOCK: ASPECTS OF LOCAL HISTORY 2.** Published in 1999 by Kilmarnock and District History Group, and edited by Pat Adams, David B Smith and Stuart J Wilson. This is a second collection of articles which have originally appeared in the Newsletters of the History Group. The first article is A Historical Survey of Kilmarnock, by the late Dr John Strawhorn, while the other 16 articles cover a wide range of subjects, from the Mures of Rowallan to the Kilmarnock Abstainers Union. A must for anyone with an interest in

Kilmarnock. Copies are available at better bookshops in Kilmarnock, and also from the History Group themselves. The price is £10.00.

**GALSTON PARISH CHURCH: AN HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS.** By Irene Hopkins. Published in 1999 by Galston Kirk Session. This is, as the name suggests, a history of Galston Parish Church up to and including its restoration in 1999. It covers the building, the furnishing and fittings, and the ministers and others associated with the church over the years, including Robert Stirling, minister, inventor and scientist. This is a remarkably well produced little volume, with many coloured photographs. Copies can be obtained from the Kirk Session.

## KIRKMICHAEL CHURCHYARD - MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS STRAITON CHURCHYARD - MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS

Both compiled by Gordon and David Killicoat. Published in 2000 by Ayrloom. Family Historians and others will be familiar with volumes of monumental inscriptions: the churchyard plan, the tombstone inscriptions and the indices. The Killicoats have now added two further volumes, dealing with two large and interesting parishes in north Carrick. That for Kirkmichael is based on work done by the OIR, while the value of the Straiton volume is enhanced by an index to the deaths recorded in the pre-1855 Old Parish Records. These are welcome additions to the research tools available to historians of Ayrshire. Copies are available from Ayrloom, c/o Dave Killicoat, 11 Chalmers Road, Ayr KA7 2RQ. Prices including postage: Kirkmichael, £3.26; Straiton, £3.76.

## Diary

- AANIIS: Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. Meetings in Carnegie Library, Ayr, at 7.45 p.m.
- CCD: Cathcartston Centre, Dalmellington. Meetings in the Centre at 7.30 p.m.
- CSD: Catrine Sorn & District History Society. Meetings in A M Brown Institute, Catrine, at 7.30 p.m.
- DHIS: Dundonald Historical Society. Meetings in Sheltered Housing, Dundonald, 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.
- LDHIS: Largs and District Historical Society. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
- L(MS): LDHIS, Marine Section. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
- PHIG: Prestwick History Group. Meetings in 65 Club, Main Street, Prestwick, at 7.30 p.m.
- RSGS: Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Meetings in Carnegie Library, Ayr, at 7.30 p.m.

- SHS     Stewarton Historical Society. Meetings in St Columba's Church Hall, Stewarton at 7.30 p.m.
- WKAS    West Kilbride Amenity Society. Meetings in Community Centre, West Kilbride, at 7.30 p.m.

#### March 2000

Thu 2nd	PHG	Graham Humphreys	The Covenanters and Four Millennia
Mon 6th	SHS	Ian Macdonald	David Dale and Stewarton
Mon 6th	KCCS	Caroline Kelly	Community Arts in East Ayrshire
Tue 7th	KDHG	Charles McKean	Decoding late C16 Scotland: The Maps of Timothy Pont
Wed 8th	DHS	Martin Bellamy	North Ayrshire Museum
Wed 8th	RSGS	Ian Evans	The Magic of Mountain Light
Thu 9th	AANHS	Mike Callan	Forest, Ben and Glen
Tue 14th	CCD	Tom Smith	Old Waterside
Tue 21st	KDHG	Brian Moffat	Healthcare in the Middle Ages: Pointers from the Unique Soutra Investigations
Thu 23rd	CSD	Tom McClatchie	Countryside Slide Show
Tue 28th	WKAS	Jane Greig	The Sleeping Beauty Gradually Awakens
Thu 30th	LDHS	A A M Duncan	William Wallace

#### April 2000

Mon 3rd	SHS		AGM and Social Evening
Mon 3rd	L(MS)	Bill Laing	No Ohms but More Watts
Thu 6th	PHG	Jim Goodlad	Prestwick to Shetland - A Historical Voyage
Wed 12th	DHS	John Barbour	Hospital Radio
Thu 13th	CSD	Rob Close	J & R S Ingram
Thu 27th	LDHS		AGM. Speaker to be arranged

#### May 2000

Thu 4th	PHG		Blether of 2000
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Most societies will have summer outings, but these are often, for various reasons, limited to Society members.

Kilmarnock & District History Group, following up their talk on the excavations of the mediæval hospital at Soutra Hill, are proposing to run a coach to the site. They have generously thrown open this visit to members of other societies. The date has not yet been confirmed, but details can be had from Gabrielle McCracken, 11 Charles Street, Kilmarnock, tel. 01563 523364.

The Friends of the Whithorn Trust have asked us to publicise their 9th Annual Whithorn Lecture, which will be given in St Ninian's Priory Church, Whithorn, on Saturday 16th September 2000, at 7.45 p.m. The lecturer will be John Higgitt, from the University of Edinburgh, and his topic: "Imageis maid with mennis hand": Saints, Images and Popular Devotion in Later Medieval Scotland'.

The diary for Winter Season 2000-2001 will appear in the next issue of Ayrshire Notes. Secretaries of all societies are encouraged to send syllabuses to Rob Close.

## Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is given that the Annual General Meeting of the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies will be held on Sunday, 21st May 2000, at 2 p.m., in the Parish Church Halls, Kirkgate, Irvine. All members and friends of the Federation are welcomed and encouraged to attend. We are the guests of Fullarton Historical Society, and it is hoped that the Parish Church will be opened, and that we will be shown something of the history of Irvine. More details can be had from Rob Close or Stuart Wilson.

### CONFERENCE 2000

A reminder that the Federation's Conference will be held on Saturday, 7th October 2000, in the Walker Halls, Troon. The cost of the conference will be £10, and bookings can be made through Rob Close.

The speakers will be Frances Wilkins on Smuggling Wherries; Guthrie Hutton on the Forth and Clyde and Union Canals and the Millennium Link; Ian Middleditch on Kilmarnock Locomotive Engineers; Bill McGregor on the Ayrshire Bus Co-operatives. The Chairman will be Professor Derek Hall from Auchincruive.

Member societies and others are encouraged to take stalls for the display of publicity material, sale of books, &c. Again, details can be had from Rob Close.

### AYRSHIRE NOTES

As always, the editors make their plea for material for *Ayrshire Notes*. We particularly want to improve our coverage of areas such as the north of the county, Cumbrae and Arran. You have seen the varying approaches to history, and historical writing, in this issue. We look forward to hearing from you.

# PUBLICATIONS of the AYRSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

available from Ronald W. Brash MA, Publications Distribution Manager  
10 Robsland Avenue, Ayr KA7 2RW

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