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## THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY FAA

### An excerpt from the unpublished "The History of the Kennedys" by Debbie Camp

John Kennedy, 6th Earl of Cassillis from 1615 to 1668, was a zealous Covenanter, and earned the nickname "Cassillis the Solemn". He supported Oliver Cromwell, and was a member of his Union Parliament until 1658. But, even though there was no tabloid press in his day, his name lives in popular memory not because of his political and religious works, but because of a family scandal related in the legend of Johnny Faa as follows.

In around 1662, the Earl married Lady Jean Hamilton who was the daughter of the 1st Earl of Haddington. Haddington was a brilliant man of law who had raised himself to the peerage and made a great fortune; he now wished to connect himself to a family of more historic lineage.

Lord Cassillis shared the politics and religion of Haddington, and was pleased to share some of this man's great fortune, so a bargain was struck. Unfortunately neither man thought to consider Lady Jean's feelings on this matter. Women in landed families were used like pawns in those days, and were married off to the man considered to be "the best match". A young woman was rarely consulted regarding her marriage, and often she hardly knew her husband beforehand. Although Lady Jean was in love with young Sir John Faa of Dunbar, she followed her father's wishes like a dutiful daughter, but Sir John was devastated and vowed that he would never give her up.

A few years passed by, and Lady Jean was a good wife to the Earl. But one day, when the Earl was attending the Assembly of Divines in London, she heard some gypsies singing at the castle gate. She went down to the gate to hear them more clearly, and there she recognised her lover, Sir John Faa, disguised in gypsy costume. Sir John begged her to leave her loveless marriage and elope with him, and eventually she consented. She gathered a few simple possessions and set off with Sir John, but almost as soon as they had left her husband returned home early. On being informed of his wife's elopement he gave chase, and caught the two lovers and the party of gypsies before they had left the castle grounds. Lady Jean was taken back to Cassillis and imprisoned in her bedchamber, which has been known ever since as the Countess's Room. It overlooked the ancient Dule Tree and Lady Jean was forced to stand at the window and watch while, one by one, the fifteen gypsies and finally her lover were hanged from the tree.

Afterwards Lady Jean was sent to the family's castle in Maybole. She was put in a room high above the main street, and around the window were carved the heads of the gypsies, with one larger head at the top of the window representing Johnny Faa. She remained there for the rest of her life, spending her lonely days weaving tapestries to cover the bare walls of her prison. Meanwhile the Earl of Cassillis, counting her as dead, took another wife.

At the Kennedy seat of Cassillis House, the Countess's Room is still there. It is said that sometimes the ghost of Lady Jean re-appears at the window and watches her lover's body hanging on the Dule Tree. This great plane tree was used for centuries by the Kennedys as a gallows, and a place where their supporters could pledge their allegiance to the Earl. It blew down in a gale some years ago, but its roots remain to mark the spot. Another tree was planted in its place. In the grounds of Cassillis House are the Gypsies' Steps where the Earl caught his Countess and Johnny Faa.

## THE BALLAD OF JOHNNY FAA

The legend was made into a ballad which is popular all over Europe. The words and the tune vary in different parts of Britain and the Continent, but the basic story is always the same. It is a good tale of romance and revenge which has captured the imagination of generations of listeners. Cassillis is not always mentioned. Below are the first lines of three versions:

(Scottish 1740) The gypsies came to our good lord's yett

(Scottish 1817) The gypsies they came to my Lord Cassillis' yett

(English 1950's) Three gypsies stood at the castle gate

The second version was sung in Ayrshire and Galloway. It has been suggested that the Ayrshire people simply altered the ballad and put in the Cassillis connection, though why they should have done this has never been explained. When Burns was collecting old Scottish ballads, he included this Ayrshire version in James Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, and there stated in the second volume (1788) that "neighbouring tradition strongly vouches for the truth of this story". Later, sending a ballad to a friend (22 April 1791) Burns signed himself "Johnie Faa".

The ballad has several titles, the most common being "The Gypsy Laddie". This gypsy laddie is not always called Johnny Faa or Faw; sometimes he is gypsy Davie! In some versions, Lady Jean is styled Jean Faw. If you wish to study this more closely, the definitive collection of the various versions is *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, edited by F J Child (1899) - The Gypsy Laddie: Child 200.

## TRUE OR FALSE?

You can make up your own mind as to how much truth there is in the legend or ballad, but the following facts should be taken into consideration:

1. Faa was a common surname amongst the gypsies along the Scottish borders. Johnny was also a common name with them. No knight of that name in the 1640's is recorded.

2. The leader of the gypsies was styled "Johnny Faw, Lord and Erle of Little Egypt" in an official letter from King James V. But this letter, dated 15 February 1540, was about a hundred years too early for the 6th Earl of Cassillis.

3. Gypsies were feared by many people in those days. The gypsies (or Egyptians) had come to Britain from distant lands and had their own laws and customs. They were seen as thieves and vagabonds. They were believed to have the power to bewitch people by casting a "glamour" over them, and might have bewitched the Countess of Cassillis, in the Ballad of Johnny Faa, making her believe that their leader was her lover. Stories about the strange powers of gypsies were always very popular.

4. In 1541 the Lords of the Council ordered the gypsies out of Scotland within thirty days on pain of death. In 1609 the Scots Parliament passed an Act expelling all the gypsies. After this there are several accounts of gypsies (some with the name of Faa or Faw) being hanged for the crime of being within the borders of Scotland. In 1615 a man was charged with harbouring gypsies, especially their notorious chieftain Johnny Fall. Then, in January 1624, according to legal records in Edinburgh, eight men including Captain John Faa were condemned to be hanged under the barbaric laws governing the gypsies. Shortly after their trial his wife Helen Faa and ten other gypsy women were sentenced to be drowned, but were reprieved and exiled. Captain Faa was well known in the borders, and no doubt a few songs were composed about his hanging. Ballads were a good way to pass news around when few could read.

5. In some versions of the story only eight men were hanged. In some, all but one were hanged: the one who escaped told the story.

6. In 1630, the 6th Earl of Cassillis, as Bailie of Carrick, asked the Privy Council how to deal with certain gypsies. This could well have given rise to the ballad later, especially if he hanged them.

7. In some versions of the ballad, Lady Jean is addressed as Jeanie Faw. The 6th Earl's son (later the 7th Earl) married twice. His second wife created a scandal in London, and was arrested twice, for debt and for keeping a gaming house unlawfully. Her name was Mary Fox or Faux, and it is possible that her name and conduct became incorporated in the story.

8. Lady Jean has been described as a gentle and religious woman.

9. According to one story, Lady Jean eloped whilst her husband was attending the Westminster Assembly of Divines, but this was held in 1643, the year after her death.

10. In a letter (now in the Eglinton Papers) to the 6th Earl of Eglinton dated 15th December 1642, the Earl of Cassillis wrote regretfully of her death, saying that his "dear bedfellow" had been called home. He was unlikely to do this if he had imprisoned her and re-married. He invited Eglinton to her funeral, to take place at 10 am on the 5th January, with a procession from Cassillis to Maybole (probably to the Collegiate Church).

11. In 1744 the 12th Earl of Glencairn married Elizabeth McGuire who had been enriched by Governor James McCrae. "On one occasion when the Earl of Cassillis reminded him that he had married a fiddler's daughter, he retorted with the observation that one of his father-in-law's favourite tunes was 'The Gypsies cam' to Laird Cassillis' Yet'. (Wm Robertson, *History of Ayrshire*, vol. 2, 1908, p.322).

## CONCLUSION

Legends often become distorted over the years. Perhaps Lady Jean did have a lover, and perhaps he was hanged from the Dule Tree. Who can say?

However, it is ironic that legend and mystery should surround Cassillis the Solemn. This stern Covenanter was so opposed to any lack of sincerity that, according to his son-in-law Bishop Burnet, he would never allow any man "to take his words in any other sense than he meant them."

Mrs Debbie Camp is Education Officer at Culzean Castle (N.T.S.), and a Member of the AANHS.

## AANHS 1995 SUMMER EXCURSIONS

The first full-day excursion will take place on Sunday June 11 to Culross, visiting the newly refurbished palace.

On Saturday August 19 the second day visit will be to sites in Dumfries and to the spectacular 13thC Caerlaverock Castle.

Details for non-members from Bill Layhe, 30 Woodend Road, Ayr, KA7 4QR, Tel. 01292 441072.

## AYRSHIRE DOWN UNDER

There are few local families without relatives overseas. Sometimes links with home have been broken and many descendants of exiles have returned to search for their roots". Irene Turvey of Kyneton, Victoria, Australia, has written a book *Home Before Dark* which tells the story of her grandfather, John McAlpine, a native of Mauchline who emigrated to Australia in 1887.

The district History Centre, Baird Institute, Cumnock, holds a copy of this fascinating book which records the story of a typical Ayrshire emigrant to Australia. John McAlpine started at the Mauchline boxworks at the age of 14, after ten years moved to Newcastle where he married, then to London before the couple and their three children left for Australia. After an arduous voyage of six weeks and five days they reached Melbourne. He found work in a sawmill, then moved into the outback of Victoria, first at Mildura, then at Nyah where he grew grapes, oranges, lemons, olives, grapefruit and almonds, on a farm he called Mossgiel.

There follows an absorbing description of pioneering life in Australia. The men had to turn their hands to whatever work they could find; the housewives brought up families in tented villages before graduating to corrugated iron shacks. Everyone had to cope with dust-storms, drought, floods, forest fires, ants, snakes, and with few doctors to assist in times of need. The book tells the story of children and grandchildren -- none of them winning either fame or fortune, but managing to survive and able to enjoy circuses and early cinemas, football and duck-shooting, with horse-and-cart giving way to bicycle, motor-bike, then motor cars. Nell, one of John's daughters, married, Jim Donald, whose father had come from Ayrshire in 1852 to join in the gold rush, and his life in the mining camps around Ballarat is vividly described. 'Grandfather John' survived until 1934. He was in his 78th year and the Mossgiel where he died was far distant and very different from the Mauchline he had known so many years before.

Irene Donald Turvey describes a wedding present her grandparents took to Australia with them: "a wooden musical photo album made by William Smith's Box Works. The McAlpine tartan of dark green with a yellow line was embossed on the cover." When the cover was lifted the music box played the tune of Annie Laurie, which she seems to think was written by Burns! "How often John had heard it sung in Mauchline, with all the nuances of an undying love as only their own Bard could write." The box is lost, but an old tin trunk survived when the family left Mossgiel, filled with letters, photographs and other relics which have enabled her to write this fascinating account of a Mauchline emigrant in Australia.

An earlier emigrant was Andrew Strawhorn whose family farmed Mossbog in Tarbolton parish. He was born in 1823, married Jane Cochran, and with their first two children emigrated to Australia in 1852. Nothing more was heard of them till a century later a grandson returned from Melbourne in search of his ancestry.

The family in Victoria had grown and multiplied, some still raising sheep on Andrew's farms. Even earlier a relative, John Strahorn, born near Mauchline at Craighead Farm in 1816, married Margaret Harper from New Cumnock and in 1837 they set off for Sydney.

There were already local settlers in the interior of New South Wales. Patrick Boswell, son of the Collector of Taxes in Ayr, went out, married there, and returned in 1863 to inherit Garrallan Estate near Cumnock. Another was George Rankin from Whitehill in New Cumnock parish. He became established near Bathurst in New South Wales, and indeed it was he who sponsored John Strahorn and brought him out as a 'Bounty Immigrant'. Archibald Campbell, another local man, gave him employment on the farm he called Sorn Bank. In one of its barns presbyterian church services were held, and there in 1838 was baptised the first of John and Margaret's eleven children.

John rose to become supervisor of Campbell's various farms, and decided to set up on his own. Some miles away was another township called Cumnock, and there John and Margaret took over the farm of Wandoo Wadong. It was visited in 1872 by a journalist whose report in the Sydney 'Town and Country Journal' reveals how well John was doing, and how he kept his Scots accent and maintained presbyterian traditions.

Wandoo Wadong covered nearly 50,000 acres and had a stock of 2,000 cattle and 18,000 sheep. The journalist also noticed that "the homestead though not pretentious is substantial and comfortable, and contains a library of much value". His visit proved to be an interesting one.

"It was Saturday evening when I arrived at this hospitable residence. There were two of Mr Strahorn's sons and two daughters, who receive me very kindly. After tea the two young men devoted an hour or two to reading, while the young ladies amused themselves at the piano. Before retiring to rest I expressed an intention of continuing my journey early next morning. 'Nay mon,' said Mr Strahorn, 'ye wadna trovel on the Sabbath. Ye'll hae nae luck.' I therefore remained and had a day of rest, and I shall never forget that day.

"The working hands and all on the station by breakfast time (7 am) were dressed as if to proceed to some place of worship. There was a halo of peace and contentment which hung over the silent homestead all day". A bush fire to the south was noticed, but since it was several miles distant, it could be left to burn until the Sabbath was over.

“A short time after tea the family, together with a lady visitor and myself, assembled round the table. The big ha’ bible, a book of sermons and a prayer book were produced, two or three chapters were read by one of the sons, then a sermon, and then prayers were offered. This service lasted about three-quarters of an hour. Shortly afterwards each bade the other good night, and all retired to rest; but reflections of a salutary nature upon what I had heard and the devotion I had seen in this bush home prevented me from sleeping till long after midnight.”

John Strahorn was then a widower, and died in 1891 at the age of 75. Seven of his eleven children married and had families, so that there are now several hundred descendants in New South Wales, with the name still pronounced Straehorn as it once was in Ayrshire.

Only recently did the Strahorns of New South Wales discover they had distant relatives in the Strawhorns of Victoria -- through one with an even more remote family connection who lived in California. He was descended from Andrew’s younger sister Elizabeth who married Thomas Cochran, a farm labourer at Mossbog, and emigrated to Canada. That descendant arrived in Ayrshire, and like many returning exiles had romantic delusions of grandeur. He wondered whether there was still a Lord and Lady Cochran living in the mansion house of Mossbog!

JS

**AYRSHIRE FEDERATION  
OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES  
SWAP SHOP 1995**

We have made preliminary arrangements for the Swap Shop to be held on Sunday 12 November 1995 at Loudoun Castle near Galston. Further details will be circulated nearer the date, but again we ask you to note this date in your diaries.

## ROADSIDE HERITAGE: 2

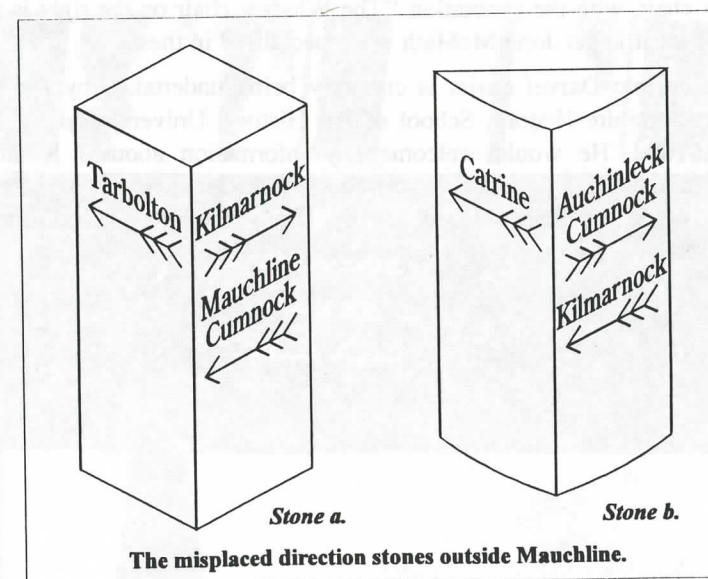
There are many direction stones to be found in Ayrshire. Though they are often obscured by long grass and weeds (particularly nettles, a hazard to anyone determined to read them), they are invariably in the correct location. At least, so I thought until I noticed two stones about a mile south of Mauchline on the A76, one on either side of the road and neither at a junction.

*Stone a* (see figure) is on the west side of the road. Its proper location is on the north side of Mauchline, outside the National Burns Memorial where the road forks to Mossgiel and Tarbolton.

*Stone b* is immediately across the A76 from the other, and belongs beside the war memorial in Mauchline, at the junction of the A76 and B705.

There has been no road realignment which would account for the removal of these stones to their present situation. I would be interested to know if anyone can provide an explanation.

David McClure



## DARVEL CHAIRS

Cumnock pottery and Mauchline boxes are each sought after by collectors. To the list of antique objects manufactured in Ayrshire can now be added Darvel chairs.

Comb-back chairs appear to have been manufactured by a craftsman named J K Black between 1760 and 1840. They were made from ash and cherry wood, and bear the maker's name on the side or back edge of the seat.

Darvel was established by John, 4th Earl of Loudoun, in 1752 so J K Black must have set up his workshop in this new village quite soon afterwards. But there is no mention of chairmaking in Rev. Dr George Lawrie's report of the parish in 1791 in the *Statistical Account (OSA Ayrshire, 1982, pp. 436-444)*. George Robertson's *Topographical Description of Cunninghame, 1820*, has another report of 'Derval', as it was usually spelled (p. 356), which is equally silent on the subject. The *New Statistical Account* (Vol. 5, Ayrshire, 1842, pp. 850, 851) lists occupations, mainly weavers, no one specifically listed as a chair-maker, though there are 4 sawers, 12 wrights, 1 cooper, so that wood was obviously in use. A list of 'Darvel People copied from a record about 1845' included in John Woodburn's *History of Darvel, 1967*, (pp. 40, 41) has no one called Black. A G McLeod's *Book of Old Darvel, 1950*, and James Mair's *Pictorial History of Darvel, 1989*, have no information, though the latter has a picture (p. 55) which contains a comb-back chair, with the annotation "The Windsor chair on the right is probably the work of local joiner John McMath who specialised in these."

Research into Darvel chairs is currently being undertaken by David Jones, Lecturer in Furniture History, School of Art History, University of St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9Al. He would welcome any information about J K Black, his workshop, and surviving variants of the comb-back Darvel chair. Write to him at the above address, or phone 01-334 476161. If any new information turns up, we should like to have the details in a future *Ayrshire Notes*.



## NEWS FROM THE SOCIETIES

### AYRSHIRE FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: SALTCOATS, 10 MAY 1995

The Federation's Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 10th May, at 7.00 p.m. in the North Ayrshire Museum, Saltcoats. The meeting will be preceded by a guided walking tour of Saltcoats, and followed by a guided tour of the North Ayrshire Museum. We are very grateful to Cunninghame District Council Leisure Services for allowing us to hold this meeting in the Museum. This promises to be an interesting and informative evening: Saltcoats is one of Ayrshire's hidden treasures, and this is an opportunity to learn something more about the town, its industrial and sea-faring past, and the people, such as Betsy Miller, who have contributed to its history.

The meeting is open to anybody who wishes to attend: it is your chance not only to learn something about Saltcoats, but also to comment on the activities of the Federation. There is no charge for attending, but, in order that we give an estimate of numbers to Cunninghame District Council, who are providing coffee and biscuits, any one planning to come is asked to contact Rob Close.

#### ANNUAL CONFERENCE: TROON, 28 OCTOBER 1995

The Federation's Committee has organised a day conference, to be held in the Walker Hall, Troon, for the 28th October 1995. Entitled, "Driving Forces", the conference will look at the contribution developments in transport and power have made at various times to social and industrial changes. David McClure will speak on the development of the turnpike system in Ayrshire, and John McGown will tell us about the history of the Galloway Hydro-Electric Schemes. John Hume, Chief Inspector of Historic Buildings for Scotland, will talk on the surviving architecture and archaeology of public utilities, while we hope that other speakers will tell us about the gas industry and the restoration of the Laigh Milton Viaduct on the Kilmarnock and Troon Railway.

We hope that this line-out will bring out a large attendance: further details will be circulated in due course, but we ask you to note the date in your diaries now. The cost will be £12, to cover conference fees, a welcoming coffee and a buffet lunch. More details can be obtained from Rob Close, who will also be pleased to take bookings

**TROON & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY** has now published the Dundonald Mortality Register, and also Monumental Inscriptions for the following graveyards: Symington, Monkton, Prestwick St Nicholas, Crosbie, Dundonald, St Quivox. We hope to publish Coylton this spring. Copies of all these, which are a useful reference tool for the local as well as the family historian, can be obtained from Mr N Wallace, TDFHS, c/o MERC Troon Library, South Beach, TROON, Ayrshire KA10 6EF. Each volume costs £2.10, including postage.

Anyone with an interest in the subject is also invited to attend the **SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION of FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES Conference**, Hands Across the Water, to be held in Aberdeen on Saturday 22nd April. The speakers include Dr Marjory Harper and Professor Donald Meek, both of Aberdeen, who will speak on emigration and emigrants to North America in the 19th century; Prof. Allan MacInnes, who deals with the subject from the 18th century, and Dr Margaret Mackay, from Edinburgh, whose interest is emigration from Tíre to Canada. The cost of the day is £6.00, and lunch will be available at £8.50. For further information and booking forms please contact Aberdeen Family History Research Centre, 164 King Street, Aberdeen AB2 3BD.

#### BURNS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 1996

The 200th anniversary of the death of Robert Burns is to be commemorated by an impressive series of national and local events. All the local authorities in Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire in association with Scottish Enterprise are sponsoring the year-long Festival.

The Festival Director, Mr John C Struthers, 24 Sandgate, Ayr, KA7 1BY, Tel. 01292 288080, wishes to hear from any local organizations with their own plans for commemorating Burns in 1996, and to publicise them in comprehensive programmes which he is preparing for widespread distribution. He may also be available to address your society on what is planned.

## MILLER OF BARSKIMMING

### The Davidson and Garden Archive

The Department of Special Collections of Aberdeen University Library has a collection of papers relating to Thomas Miller of Barskimming and his son William. The purpose of this note is to draw the attention of local historians to the collection, which contains items they may find of use.

Davidson and Garden, advocates in Aberdeen, deposited the archive in the university library in 1970. In 1961 it had been surveyed by the National Register of Archives (Scotland), but some of the collections the NRA(S) surveyed were not deposited, while other collections it had *not* surveyed *were* deposited. The whole archive has the reference no. MS 2769, and the collection described as *Miller of Glenlee, Kirkcudbright, family* is MS 2769/1/28/1-3.

The Miller collection consists of three boxes of extremely dusty papers which had not been surveyed or listed when I saw them in September 1993. In the main the papers date roughly from 1770 to 1850, and concern the inheritance of William Miller, a merchant and Provost of Glasgow. Murdoch's estate included money owed to him by Arthur Park of County Clare, some of whose property was in Greenock and whose estate went into sequestration on his death. Correspondence concerning the recovery of this spans the whole period.

I went through the collection looking for information on the building of the new bridge of Barskimming. The outcome was positive only in the sense that I am positive that there is nothing there relating to that bridge. Before I list some of the other items which caught my eye, a few biographical details of the Millers might be useful.

Sir Thomas Miller was a Scottish Law Lord, President of the Court of Session and Lord Justice Clerk, and took the title of Lord Barskimming and Lord Glenlee. Apart from enjoying a very successful legal career, which took him to the highest post in the Scottish legal establishment, he was active in road development in Ayrshire and Kirkcudbright in the late eighteenth century. He attended meetings of the Ayrshire Road Trustees between 1767 and 1780 and was a subscriber to the road from Kilmarnock by Mauchline to Cumnock. He was responsible for the making of the road from Mauchline by the Old Bridge of Barskimming to Schaw. In Kirkcudbrightshire he was one of the largest subscribers to the bridge over the Ken near St John's Town of Dalry. His Ayrshire neighbour Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck, was also on the Court

of Session. After a decision which displeased him, Auchinleck's son, James Boswell, wrote a scurrilous attack on Miller which led to his being challenged to a duel by the young William Miller, an episode which caused Boswell much anguish. It is recounted in his journals. William Miller was also appointed to the Court of Sessions, taking the title Lord Glenlee.

The following list is a personal selection of a very few of the papers in the collection:

- ♦ \* Tack of the Mains of Barskimming by Lord Justice Clerk to Henry Hann (his overseer) commencing at Martinmas 1772.
- ♦ Account of Lord Justice Clerk's court expenses amounting to £21:11:3, 1786.
- ♦ Memoranda relating to the completing of titles in the person of Sir William Miller to the Estates of Glenlee and Barskimming.
- ♦ 25 October 1779: Letter from Sir John Whitefoord offering Caldwell's farm to Mr Miller at £1650 sterling.
- ♦ \* Advertisement of sale of named farms in Stair, Sorn, Auchinleck and [Galston?], all the property of Sir John Whitefoord; 1779.
- ♦ \* Valuation of Sir William Miller's lands in Ayrshire, 30/10/1789 [the year in which Thomas Miller died]
- ♦ 3rd November 1779: Letter from Sir John Whitefoord offering Glenstang to Mr Miller at £1600 sterling [which was accepted].
- ♦ Extract Contract of Marches Betwixt Lord Justice Clerk and Sir Thomas Wallace 1770 [concerning Barskimming and Smithston].
- ♦ \* Thomas Miller's Edinburgh tax assessment, 1st October 1789 [bridge and rogue money; duty on windows and lights, inhabited houses, four-wheel carriages, male servants, female servants and horses].
- ♦ \* An account for the building of a seat in Mauchline church by John Miller, wright in Mauchline, for James Miller of Laugholm, 4th October 1773.

\* I have copies of these items.

David McClure

## FINDING OUT ABOUT AYRSHIRE

### (7) James Boswell (1740-1795)

Of the several celebrated figures from 18th century Ayrshire, James Boswell is one who gets little local recognition. Though "without honour in his own country" his reputation has this century been enhanced by the work of American scholars. To commemorate the bi-centenary of his death on 19 May 1795 it is appropriate in *Ayrshire Notes* to draw attention to some books which will interest those who wish to find out more about this colourful but impressive literary figure. Though born in Edinburgh, he regarded himself as an Ayrshireman, spending much of his time at Auchinleck which his father inherited in 1748 and where he himself became laird in 1782. Though law and literature attracted him to Edinburgh and to London, he was proud of his role as an Ayrshire laird and the active part he played in parish and county affairs.

For Boswell's life one must dip into two very readable books: *James Boswell, The Earlier Years, 1740 - 1769* by F A Pottle (1966), and *James Boswell, The Later Years, 1769 - 1795* by F Brady (1984). Both authors make use of their intimate knowledge of the Boswell papers at Yale to present a rounded account of a character whose skills and complexities have hitherto been only partially recognised.

For long Boswell's reputation has rested on his mammoth *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). 19th century critics considered that its brilliance was because Dr Johnson was such an outstandingly interesting subject, while the author was merely a toadying taker-of-notes. But Boswell was much more highly regarded by his contemporaries. He combined his busy legal duties with journalism, and for eight years was a columnist in *The London Magazine*. He first won acclaim with *An Account of Corsica* (1768) which described his visit and friendship with Pasquali Paoli, leader of the fight for Corsican independence. This was followed by his *Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides* (1785), that very readable narrative (now available in paper-back) of his trip with Dr Johnson, including their visit to Ayrshire and the memorable clash between Johnson and Lord Auchinleck.

Discovery of a mass of private papers in the 1920's has added a new dimension to the recognition of Boswell as a major literary figure. The story of these papers and their ultimate acquisition by Yale University has been recorded in David Buchanan's *The Treasures of Auchinleck* (1974) and F A Pottle's *Pride and Negligence, The History of the Boswell Papers* (1982). With the progressive publication by Yale scholars of Boswell's manuscript journals and of his extensive correspondence, his stature has continued to grow.

*Boswell's London Journal, 1762 - 1763*, edited by F A Pottle (1950) was first to appear. Its vivid picture of life in 18th century London and his life-like depiction of the people he met made this an instant success; while his revealing accounts of his own philanderings helped make it a best-seller, and it remains a popular paper-back. Those eleven further volumes of his journals which have been subsequently issued have also been well-received, though reaching a more limited readership. Yet they, and the several volumes of Boswell's correspondence so far published (with about thirty volumes planned) contain much of interest. For Ayrshire readers, they record his visits to Auchinleck, his relations with his tenants, and his association with so many of his (and Robert Burns's) Ayrshire friends.

1995 as the bicentenary year will see the publication of number of new books on Boswell. First to appear is one that can be strongly recommended: Roger Craik, *James Boswell, the Scottish Perspective* (HMSO, 1994, £12.95), which concentrates on his life in Edinburgh and in Ayrshire, and is lavishly illustrated.

(Note: Discerning readers will have spotted a stupid error in *Ayrshire Notes*, No. 7, p. 7: Col. Fullarton, born in 1754, was nearly forty when he wrote his agricultural report of 1793.)

#### TROON AND DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

The Troon Society has had a successful season so far. On April 17th they welcome Mr Spans whose subject is Heraldry, and on May 16th Marion Stewart, the Archivist from Dumfries is their speaker. They meet on the third Tuesday of each month in the Youth Centre at Troon at 7.30 p.m. Anyone interested in genealogy, family and local history will be made welcome.

## NEW BOOKS ABOUT AYRSHIRE

### SMUGGLING AND THE AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC BOOM OF THE 1760'S AND 1770'S

by L M Cullen, AANHS, Ayrshire Monograph 14, 1994, £4

ISBN 0-9502698-6-7

Many who pick up this monograph will experience some initial disappointment. That is, if they were expecting a tale of swashbuckling adventurers beaching their cargoes on night-time shores, their accomplices taking away casks of spirits to secret hiding-places, sometimes challenged by excisemen in fights with cutlass and pistol. Professor Cullen provides a more sober but in its way a quite fascinating account of what was a major business enterprise. Before this, how many of us had even wondered how the smugglers purchased their stocks and how they made a living out of their activities? Now we know about the financing of their activities. We learn about the significance of the Isle of Man as an entrepôt until 1765 when the British government took over the smugglers' headquarters. Thereafter larger vessels were required and the trade involved shipments from places as far apart as Guernsey and the Faroes. The Author has diligently searched Customs and other records, including those of Robert Arthur, an Irvine merchant who (like several others in Ayr) combined legitimate with illicit trading. In examining how the contraband trade was financed, Professor Cullen devotes a section to the role of the Ayr Bank, and incidentally provides a new look at this ill-fated enterprise of Douglas, Heron and Company. A glance through the notes appended to this monograph reveals just how authoritative is this latest AANHS production.

### THE HISTORY OF PRESTWICK

by John Strawhorn, 1994

John Donald, Edinburgh, £18: ISBN 0 85976 4052

*The History of Prestwick* is a well-researched publication, both for students of Scottish history and those interested in the local history of Ayrshire. It coincides with the centenary of Reverend Kirkwood Hewat's *A Little Scottish World* and brings his modern era of the 1890's up to the 1990's.

Eight thousand years of human involvement in the area are covered, much of which has been lost in the mists of time. Twenty-two years before Columbus discovered America we find that Prestwick had The *Liber Communitatis*, extant

records of the Burgh Court Book starting in 1470, with its wealth of information regarding land, freedoms, freemen, lepers, officials, people, and which gives an insight to what happened over the centuries.

This book complements Hewat's book and research by the present author is gleaned from sources used in the 1890's, namely Presbytery and Session Records, *Liber Communitatis*, 1834, Ayr Advertiser from 1803 and Ayrshire Post from 1880. They both had the memories of living people although one hundred years apart, and their record is in the book. This is a small part in the jigsaw of history both locally and nationally: it enhances Ayrshire History linked with histories of Irvine and Ayr, and on a national scale will find its niche in Scottish History while at the same time keeping alive the identity of Prestwick for future generations. This book is a must for Prestwickians, local history enthusiasts, students and readers interested in Scotland.

(A W R Cochrane)

### SCOTTISH LOCAL HISTORY, Vol. 32, Oct. 1994

Scottish Local History Forum: Chantal Hamill, Editor

£3 or annual subscription of £10: ISSN 0266-2027

Ayrshire is well represented in this issue with three local contributions on quite different subjects.

Sheriff David Smith transcribes from the journal of William Douglas, an Edinburgh bookseller, an account of a jaunt to Ailsa Craig in 1889. On his way he stopped at Lugton and visited the curling-stone factory of a Mr Thorburn in Beith, then Mr John Pollock's cabinet factory — in each case describing the processes of manufacture. Then on to Girvan to embark on Willie Girvan's boat for a trip to Ailsa Craig, and what was then on the island is fully described.

Another journal — the diary of a Kilmarnock business man — was found in the Scottish Record Office by Rob Close, who has cleverly been able to identify its author as William Finnie (c.1774 - 1854). The diary covers the years 1819 and 1820 and has references to weather, the kirk, coffee house, fishing, bowling, curling, politics, brewing, gardening and other topics which make us hope that we may sometime (preferably sooner rather than later) be able to read the entire diary in print.

Valerie Bickers of Largs presents a study of the Turnpike Trusts in Largs and West Kilbride. Written before publication of David McClure's recent AANHS monograph on Tolls and Tacksman, it provides a useful supplement to that work, looking closely at one particular district, with special reference to 19th century

developments. One interesting section deals with the road from Largs to Kilbirnie and alterations made at Haylie Brae. As well as the minutes of the County Road Trustees, the author has made use of those of the trustees for Largs, West Kilbride and Beith, and found references in the local press — a model for others to follow.

(Scottish Local History is published three times annually, and is free to members of the Scottish Local History Forum. Membership is £10 annually; individual journals are £3 each. Details from Doris Williamson, Dept. of Scottish History, University of Edinburgh, 17 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LN)

## SCOTLAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

**J A Haythornthwaite, Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1993, £49.50**

**ISBN 0-85967-870-9**

Jo Haythornthwaite's book boasts an enviable title, but the reader immediately wonders whether anyone could write a book which covers all aspects of Scotland, and the vast changes that took place between 1800 and 1899. Further investigation will show that this is not what the author has attempted, but will also show that no-one with serious interest in researching that period will be able to do without recourse to this book. For, as she says in her preface, "there is an immense treasury of fascinating historical material relating to Scotland buried in Parliamentary papers", and the purpose of the book is to help guide the researcher through the maze, and to identify what this material is and where it is. This is a Herculean task, and we all owe an immense debt to Jo Haythornthwaite, and the Scolar Press, for bringing it successfully to completion. The price perhaps puts it beyond the reach of many, but badger your local library into getting a copy.

The papers are arranged in chapters, beginning with Agriculture and going via, among others, Education, Mining, and Poverty, to Transport. There is much which will excite researchers in Ayrshire: Keir Hardie's evidence to the 1889 Select Committee on Immigration and Emigration that the employment of Russian Poles [sic] at Glengarnock had driven down wages; in 1844 the Commission on Public Health examined Robert Thom on the water supply to Greenock, Paisley and Ayr; from the 1896 Royal Commission on Vaccination we learn that of the 622 people in Kilmarnock who died of smallpox between 1728 and 1763, only 7 were over ten years old.

This is a rich seam: Jo Haythornthwaite has provided us with a combined pick-axe and torch: it is over to us to make full use of it.

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

William McKendrick, *Ardrossan The Key to the Clyde: A Case Study of the Ardrossan Dock Strike, 1912 - 1913*, Cunninghame District Council District Libraries, 1993, £3.50

Cecil Sinclair, *Tracing Scottish Local History*, HMSO, 1994, £7.95: a guide to local history research in the Scottish Record Office.

David Martin, *Auchincruive: The History of the West of Scotland Agricultural College*, SAC Edinburgh, 1994, £20 hardback; £8 paperback.

*Kilmarnock and District History Group Newsletter*, 104, Dec. 1994: includes an article on Kilmarnock Burgh Maternity Home.

*The Auld Kirk of Ayr (St John the Baptist)*, Ayr Kirk Office, £5

David Rose, *Killie, The Official History*, Yore Publications, £15.95: Details every match played by Kilmarnock Football Club from 1895 till 1994.

J R D Campbell, *Clyde Coast Smuggling*, £4.95 including post, from author, 23 Crawford Street, Largs.

*Reflections on Beith and District*, Beith High Church Group, £5 plus 60p postage, from 7 Manuel Avenue, Beith.

Roy Lachlan, *The Kilwinning No. 0 Masonic Lodge in Old Picture Post Cards*, £9.95, Biblios Ltd, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex.

James Gracie, 'The Gruesome Tale of Sawney Bean', in *Scots Magazine*, Sept. 1994.

James Gracie, 'Ayrshire's Dick Whittington', in *Scots Magazine*, Jan. 1995: the story of James Shaw from Riccarton who became Lord Mayor of London.

In the latest of a series of books on Scottish topics, Hugh Douglas, a member of the AANHS, examines Charles Edward Stuart's relationships with women. His hardback *Bonny Prince Charlie in Love*, £17.99, has just been published by Alan Sutton.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

**IRVINE NEW TOWN:** The Commission for the New Towns is preparing a record of the 33 New Towns established between 1947 and 1991, before memories fade and existing records become lost. If you have worked or lived in Irvine (or any other New Town) and have any interesting information or opinions these are wanted to complement those of persons involved in planning and management. This survey is being conducted by a non-profit-making company The Planning Exchange who would welcome contributions sent to them at Tontine House, 8 Gordon Street, Glasgow G1 3PL. The record will be unique as it will be contained on a multi-media compact disk to be used with a computer, storing thousands of pages of text, sound recordings, photographs, plans and video clips; allowing information on any aspect to be extracted quickly. Besides the Scottish New Towns, there is a very distinctive Scottish element in the history of one of the English New Towns, Corby, which should not be forgotten.

**HISTORICAL HOWLERS:** Every now and then one comes across a newspaper item which either ignores or distorts the facts of history. Recently *The Herald* reported (2 Jan) that "The Co-op was formed in Rochdale, Lancashire in 1842" and had to be reminded of the Fenwick weavers who formed the first recorded cooperative society in 1769, followed by others in Scotland before Rochdale. Again, *The Herald* "Inside Business" (19 Jan) on the Scottish lace industry claimed that "lace making was introduced into Ayrshire by Normans from France", whereas the traditional craft of lace-making was never practised here; production on power looms was introduced from Nottingham into the Irvine Valley in 1876. And they were never driven by water-power (as is suggested). Also, if local weavers emigrated to America it is unlikely they did so "to Fort Loudon in the US where the Earl of Loudon was governor", which was in 1756. Nearer home the *Ayr Advertiser* (18 Jan) advises us "It's time to brush up your Burns". The anonymous author is weak on punctuation and in spelling ("Tam's unfortunate mare Maggie lost her tale"). We are told nothing of Burns's life except that he was born in Alloway and the following: "It is believed he fathered over 15 illegitimate children. As an exciseman he travelled around the country a great deal and it was probably this that kept him away from the march down the aisle with a shotgun in the small of his back." Really! The Editor of the *Advertiser* should tell her staff: "It's time to brush up your Burns".

◆ Contributions for the Autumn 1995 issue of *Ayrshire Notes* should be sent before the end of July to Dr John Strawhorn, 51 Connell Crescent, Mauchline, KA5 5BN, or if "News from Societies" or similar, to Mr Rob Close: see foot of this page.

◆ Local Societies may obtain additional copies of *Ayrshire Notes* for their members at reduced rates by prior arrangement with Dr Trevor Mathews, 10 Longlands Park, Ayr, KA7 4RJ.

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