



Autumn 2021/2



John Finnie Street Looking Towards Kilmaronok Station

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Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

Digital Conference – Saturday 9th October 2021

We are delighted to host our 2021 Conference online, considering ‘Ayrshire Women’ online, on Saturday 9th October. This FREE event introduces three short talks, with time for questions:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 10:15am | Chair’s Welcome (Rob Close, Ayrshire Federation) |
| 10.30 -11.00am | ‘Needle Crusaders: Women, Work and the Ayrshire Whitework Industry’
Dr Sally Tuckett (University of Glasgow) |
| 11.00-11.30am | ‘The Lady of the Big House in Ayrshire – changing times, changing roles’
Professor Annie Tindley (University of Newcastle) |

11.30-12.00 ‘The referee was generous enough to limit the ordeal’: Women’s football in Scotland, 1914-1930.’

Dr Fiona Skillen (Glasgow Caledonian University)

To reserve your place please email pamelamcintyre@rocketmail.com; a zoom link will be emailed to you nearer the event date. We look forward to seeing you!

The Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies represents societies and individuals interested in the history of Ayrshire and its dissemination to a wider public.

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Archibald Finnie of Springhill and the History of the Order of the Buildings (red and grey sandstone) John Finnie Street 1864 – 1940

By Hugh Watson

Part 2

Kilmarnock was now becoming a corporation and a more recognisably modern approach to Local Government was brought into existence. It was probably a combination of factors which shaped the decision to start the erection of red sandstone classical buildings in Ballochmyle sandstone to form John Finnie Street. Archibald Finnie of Springhill, one of the prominent citizens of Kilmarnock had a liking for the red sandstone which had been used for his house, the Corn Exchange, and St Marnock's Church all in Kilmarnock. The architect for each of these buildings was James Ingram, and it was probably he who convinced the council to make a real mark by adopting Ballochmyle red sandstone as the the required stone for the future buildings of John Finnie Street. This decision would be enforced by the local Dean of Court as the planning authority.

Archibald Finnie opened the first Ballochmyle red sandstone building, transferring his office from Braefoot behind the town hall in King Street in an area formerly known as "Finnies Land" to create an accounting house office, warehouse, and stables in

John Finnie Street for Archibald Finnie and Sons, coal merchants. All of these buildings were designed in the classical style by James Ingram in the new compulsory material Ballochmyle red sandstone and creating a fine start for others to follow. This building was arguably surpassed in splendour on 27 March 1875 when the Kilmarnock Operetta House Company Ltd opened another grand building designed once again by James Ingram and using Ballochmyle red sandstone.



2 Opera House Plaque

This was a fine example of an opera house and compared favourably with most of the other theatres in the West of Scotland. John Finnie, now living in Bowden Lodge, Cheshire, eight miles from Manchester with his wife Hannah and four servants but no children, was no longer an Improvement Trust

Trustee. He was now aged 85 years. When he visited Kilmarnock, he usually lived with his nephew who owned Springhill House then in a portion of St Marnock's Street which changed name to Portland Road about that time. John had not come back to live in Kilmarnock on his return from Rio de Janerio where he had worked as a general merchant and agent for Rothschild as part of the company called Finnie Brothers where latterly he was the senior partner sometime between 1841-1851. It was no accident he decided to settle near Manchester and the port of Liverpool to enable him to continue the Finnie Bros business in the industrial heartland of England. The formation of the vast railway structure gave both Manchester and Liverpool increasingly good links with both North and South Britain. John Finnie may well at that time specialised as a cloth merchant, so it was fitting for him to be living near the textile centre of Britain. At any rate he occurs first in the English census of 1851 when he is recorded as aged 61 with his wife Hannah Finnie (nee Fowler) and four servants at Bowden Lodge Cheshire, 8 miles from Manchester.

To return to John Finnie Street in Kilmarnock, the buildings especially the Ballochmyle red sandstone buildings were not built in the order seen today perhaps because buildings had already been built in certain plots. I have little evidence for this except numbers 25-27 which the Trustees and the man who paid for this new street, the very same John Finnie has an entry in the Trust's Minute book of helping a George Foster a tailor to move to 25-27 John Finnie Street from 93 King Street (where modern Vodaphone exists today). I have doubts that John Finnie was the driving force in introducing the red sandstone

idea for all buildings in John Finnie Street when as late as 1869 here he was arranging for planning permission (probably via the Dean of Guild Court) for the subsequent building at what is now 25-27 John Finnie Street. It still exists today situated between two red sandstone buildings (Laigh Kirk Mission Hall and Central Evangelist Church) clearly a fossil of the original preferred stone used from the date of the laying out of the new street, grey sandstone. In the valuation rolls of 1875/76 as well as the first two red sandstone building there is also existing buildings of grey sandstone buildings with again (1) Hugh Stevens being the first proprietor recorded as the tenant occupier. He is also recorded in the Kilmarnock post office directory in 1872 as Hugh Stevens house proprietor. This directory has no street numbers for John Finnie Street. It is available from the National Library of Scotland at

<https://deriv.nls.uk/dcn23/8556/85563083.23.pdf>

(2) Town Improvement Trustees proprietors and Waugh and Broadfoot the factors with varied and some surprising tenants such as Alexander Morton and Son, engineers, Robert Yuille, slater, James Wyllie coachbuilder, John Smillie, blacksmith, James Bruce, photographer, James Drennan, mason, JR & JW Wilson, potato merchants, William Thow, flesher, James Laughland, Spirit Dealer at the Caledonian Tavern according to the same post office directory (3) Proprietor, Cuthbert and Taylor carpet manufacturers (This was another proprietor whom with their single tenant at Samson's Timber Yard.) (4) Archibald Finnie and Son with two tenants - themselves and in a warehouse, Robert Reid upholsterer and in a separate unit an

office, Robert L Lindsay commercial unit (5) next proprietors are the Trustees of the Late George Foster clothier in Kilmarnock (George Foster is noted as draper and clothier in John Finnie Street in the post office directory for 1872) for William Ramsay builder one of the Trustees. Ramsay is a brother in law of George Foster who notified his death to the registrar in 1874. As usual there were tenants James Bruce, photographer who was also a tenant in another building or was he part the year there and the rest here, self (William Ramsey), John Dunsmuir, coach builder, James Laughland spirit dealer, another duplicate tenant (6) Alexander Morton and Thomas Clarkston maritime machine maker possibly a tenant becoming a proprietor and a tenant occupier. Lastly the long awaited (7) Kilmarnock Operetta House Company Limited, Hugh Shaw Commercial Bank Factor (agent) the tenant being Glover and Francis theatrical managers, Glasgow and Charles Bashford spirit dealer being another tenant. It is useful to note that the highest rate payers were Charles Bashford and Archibald Finnie with £75 but “streets” ahead was the Kilmarnock Operetta House Company Ltd with £300. How times have changed we now subsidise such institutions against taxing them out of existence, which was probably one of the factors, with many more unfortunate happenings causing insolvency and and eventual sale to Braehead Free Church at almost half price £3,700 against original price of £7000.

1876

Another red sandstone building built on John Finnie Street has

engraved on it “Smith’s Building Erected AD 1876”. The proprietor as far as I can see was James Smith of Righead Farm Irvine who appears later in the valuation rolls as ”James Smith New Zealand”. The architect of this building was again James Ingram. It is situated on the east side well down and today is numbered “100”. It contained a variety of tenants in three shops (1) Andrew Brown commission agent (2) William Sawyers cabinet maker (3) Hugh Wight and James Sawers partners of the firm Wight and Sawers clothiers. According to the post office directory for 1872 James Sawers’ house was at 24 Robertson Place Kilmarnock while Hugh Wight lived in Hope Cottage in South Hamilton Street and their business was in Queen Street (National Library of Scotland post office directories available on line at

<https://digital.nls.uk/directories/browse/archive/85563817?mode=transcription>). The other tenants probably would be in what we would call flats (4) Robert Ramsay commission agent (5) John Inglis contractor (6) Miss Agnes Glendinning milliner (7) William Jack engineer.

1877

The next building to be built was the Kilmarnock Railway Station (which some would argue is technically not in John Finnie Street but I thought worthy of inclusion) which provides a fine view from the top of John Finnie Street. This was built on the top of Sheelling (or Shiling) Hill to provide a fine vista for people travelling north up John Finnie Street and a grand

sight for passengers arriving at Kilmarnock Railway Station. Unlike the old Station, the new station was aligned to John Finnie Street and provided a grand vista down the street. John Finnie Street became a mixture of grey sandstone and red sandstone buildings with building sites lasting for at least 20 years by which time about 9 out of 20 red sandstone buildings had been completed and the ever changing view from the railway station until it became what we can see today. The railway was connected to Glasgow in 1843 over a longer journey which was shortened in 1873 when a new route was engineered via Braehead. It was completed in Ballochmyle red sandstone while the old Railway Station was built of grey sandstone. It became the offices of the company which operated the railway - the Glasgow and South Western Co Ltd. The "old" Railway Station stood for some time in what became the car park of the new Station. The old station was not in any way aligned with John Finnie Street and was not in keeping with the recently adopted decision possibly by the new Streets Committee created by the 1871 Act of Parliament to insist that all new buildings were to be built in red sandstone. So the new railway station provided a grand vista while awaiting the building of the other red sandstone buildings in the street.

The original John Finnie Street had opened in 1864 being the last street permitted under the 1802 Act of Parliament. Therefore as the most popular stone up to then was Dean Quarry grey sandstone and the initial buildings would probably be built in that material. Some of these buildings were already

built in John Finnie Street although few in number and some would have to be removed to facilitate the building of the “new” red sandstone.

1879-80

Our next building continues the Ballochmyle red sandstone material probably required by now and sits on its own and continues the high standard set by James Ingram. The proprietor was a comparatively new comer to the retail trade the Kilmarnock Equitable Co-operative Society Ltd. A real champion for working people which had seen it's business mushroom since starting in Kilmarnock on a part-time basis barely 20 years ago. It was making a real statement it had arrived and it was able to build a three storey elaborate classical building on the east side being in the vanguard of magnificent architecture which was growing on John Finnie Street being 4 out of about 20 blocks one block down from the Operetta House. Its architect Gabriel Andrew had trained in the business of William Railton (the architect who had laid out Duke Street and John Finnie Street along with civil engineer Robert Blackwood) and he was to become the architect for Kilmarnock and Equitable Co-operative as well as the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society. In 1881 he designed a substantial classical grain store for the latter company with decorative heads on it built just off John Finnie Street at the far end of Grange Place where it meets Grange Street. The only tenant in John Finnie Street building is themselves.

1880

We are blessed by these giant architecturally designed buildings going up this year in John Finnie Street. They are all on the East side where most buildings are three stories high with the ground floor usually for shops, second floor for offices and the top floor for flats. The first building we look at is next to the Kilmarnock Operetta House and it is of French Renaissance with a Mansard roof by J & R S Ingram and is Nos 14-28, the next building is Tudor/Gothic called Peden's Building by the architect/civil engineer William Railton who jointly designed John Finnie Street with Robert Blackwood civil engineer. Rob Close the co-author of *The Buildings of Scotland* (Pevsner Architectural Guides) Ayrshire and Arran Edition comments that it is "firmly in the style of Alexander "Greek" Thomson" (William Railton a follower of Thomson). This building is Nos 72-84. The proprietor of this building for many years was Matthew Muir (the original one being a town baillie) who also owned a builders and monumental sculptors on the east side of the street next in sequence to the magnificent building just mentioned. It is a bit of a puzzle why in the middle of the east side of an amazing street in a gap site but in full view of the public and visitors you had this site so in contrast to the red sandstone buildings being built to celebrate that Kilmarnock had arrived as a proud and successful town showing off its wealth for locals and visitors with the sight of a builders and monumental sculptors spoiling the view and creating almost a "Beauty and Beast" contrast. Although it

seems strange looking back that one of the finest street in Kilmarnock had a monumental sculptor in the middle of one side of it. Maybe he was a baillie with influence. It was on that site in 1975 The Royal Bank of Scotland (the “Glass” Bank) was built perhaps because of its former use it had been a builders yard/monumental sculptors, and was probably not zoned for a red sandstone building.

**The origin and early years of the Airshire and other
Horticultural Societies through reports in
The Air Advertiser, or, West Country Journal.**

by G. Michael Hitchon

In the issue of Thursday, January 12, 1815, an advertisement appeared as follows:

Horticultural Society.

THE GARDENERS in the town and vicinity of AIR having, at a Meeting held on the 28th of December last, taken into their consideration the neglected state of the science of GARDENING, particularly in the departments of FLOWERS, FRUITS, and CULINARY VEGETABLES, resolved to form themselves into a Society, under the name and title of the “AIRSHIRE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.”

The chief object of this Institution is, to advance the science of Gardening, by exciting a general emulation, both with respect to the introduction of new Hortulan Subjects, and the improvement of those at present cultivated; for which purpose, it is intended that Premiums, or Prize Medals, shall be annually given by the Society to such individuals as shall produce the best of each article named for Competition.

A sketch of Regulations has been drawn up, and will be laid before a General Meeting of the Society which is to be held in

Mrs. Simson's, Black Bull Inn, Air, on the 27th instant, at twelve o'clock.

At this Meeting, all persons wishing to become members are requested to appear; and such as may not be able to attend personally are desired to send in their names to Mr. Joseph Norman, Nurseryman, Air, or to Mr. James Smith, Nurseryman, Monkwood.

Air, 3d Jan. 1815.

Thus began the life of the Airshire Horticultural Society, following closely behind the Horticultural (later Royal Horticultural) Society of London 1804, the Caledonian (later Royal Caledonian) Horticultural Society 1809 based in Edinburgh, and the Glasgow Horticultural Society 1812 (later the Glasgow and West of Scotland Horticultural Society).

The Airshire Horticultural Society was established in Mrs Simpson's Black Bull Inn, Old Bridge End, Air, on 27th January 1815 following a preliminary meeting held on 28th December 1814, as reported in Air Advertiser. Mr. Joseph Norman, Nurseryman, Air and Mr. James Smith, Nurseryman, Monkwood, Air, were founder members.

According to Loudon ¹ "*Monkwood Botanic Garden was founded by the present proprietor Mr. James Smith, 2 acres with 2,000 hardy exotics, besides a very full collection of British and over 500 sorts of green-house plants.*" During the summer months, a coach went from the Black Bull to Newton Stewart. In 1830 James Begbie was at the Black Bull and James Ballantine, though listed as living at 3 Carrick Street.

There were two classes of Members: Honorary and Ordinary. The Honorary Members consisted of “*Ladies, Noblemen and Gentlemen, amateurs in Botany and Gardening, who may wish to encourage and support the Institution, and from whom donations and subscriptions in aid of the funds will be received.*” The Ordinary Members consisted of “*such practical Gardeners and amateurs in gardening as may be most qualified by their practical knowledge to forward the purpose of the Institution.*” The Society was governed by a Preses, Vice-Preses, a Treasurer, Clerk and six Councillors.

Honorary Members paid One Pound of entry-money when enrolled, and Three Shillings annually. Ordinary Members paid Five Shillings of entry-money when enrolled and Three Shillings annually. An Ordinary Member had to be recommended by two of the Members at a meeting of the Society, and required 2/3 votes of the Meeting of a Committee-Meeting, and a majority at a General Meeting. The six Councillors were “*taken from the roll of the Members in the order they stand upon it*”. Members elected to office were fined if they refused to serve: Preses, Vice-Preses, One Shilling and Sixpence; Treasurer, Clerk, or Director One Shilling.

“*Any Member leaving meetings before the business of the meeting be over, without liberty asked or granted, shall be subject to a like fine*”. Members who missed the AGM were fined “*Sixpence, unless they give reasonable excuse and it be accepted as such*”.

Rule 15th is titled ‘*Disturbing the peace of the Society*’: “*That harmony and good order may prevail at the Meetings of this Society Members who wish to be heard on any subject concerning the business of this Society must stand up and*

address the Preses. Any who may interrupt another whilst thus addressing the Preses shall instantly pay a fine of sixpence; neither shall any use scurrulous or provoking language to another, so as to disturb the peace and good order or retard the business of the Society, nor shall any when called to order by the Preses continue disorderly; neither shall whispering nor sub-committees be allowed, - any person or persons offending against any of these clauses shall be fined in sixpence for each offence; and should any members persist in any of these to the derangement of the good order of the meeting, such Member shall be excluded from that Meeting. All fines are to be applied in defraying the expenses of the Society”.

In the issue of June 1, 1815, an advertisement appeared for the first competition:

Airshire Horticultural Society

Competition of Fruits, Flowers and Vegetables

The Members of this Society are requested to meet at Mrs. Simpson's, Black Bull Inn, Air, on the 13th June, at ten o'clock A.M. when Competition of Fruits, Flowers, and Vegetables (as mentioned in the Regulations) will take place; after which the Members will proceed to enrol new Members.

May 31st, 1815.

In the issue of June 15, 1815, the results were recorded:

At a Meeting of the Airshire Horticultural Society, held at Air on the 13th current, Prizes were awarded to the following persons, viz.:

GRAPES – The best bunch Black Grapes, to Mr. Walter Underwood, Gardener to the Right Hon. the Earl of Eglinton.

The best bunch White Grapes to ditto.

Melon – The best Melon to Mr. William Fergusson, Gardener, Craigie

The second best to Mr. Charles Craig, Gardener to Lady Hamilton Cathcart, Rozelle.

Animonies – The best Animonies to Mr. Walter Underwood, Gardener, Eglinton.

The second best to Mr. Charles Craig, Gardener, Rozelle.

Ranunculus – The best Ranunculus to Mr. Alexander Rose, Gardener to Hugh Hamilton, Esq., Bellisle.

The second best to Mr. Walter Underwood, Gardener, Eglinton.

Turnips – The best Early Turnips, to Mr. Charles Craig, Gardener, Rozelle.

Cauliflower – The best Cauliflower, to Mr. Thomas Imrie, Gardener, Castlehill.

In the issue of July 20, 1815, the second show was announced:

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

ON TUESDAY the First August, PREMIUMS will be awarded for the following Articles, viz. –

The Best 3 sorts 12 CARNATIONS, any kind.

The Best 3 sorts RED GOOSEBERRIES, 12 each sort.

The Best 3 sorts YELLOW Do. 12 each sort.

The Best 3 sorts GREEN Do. 12 each sort.

The Best 12 Bunches WHITE CURRANTS.

The Best 12 Bunches RED Do.

The Best 6 EARLY APPLES, any kind.

The Best 12 LATE PINKS.

N.B. The Articles must be at Mrs. Simpson's by Three o'clock, P.M.

Air, 19th July, 1815.

In the issue of August 3, 1815, the results were recorded:

At a Meeting of the Airshire Horticultural Society, held in Mrs. Simpson's, Black Bull Inn, on Monday last, there was a great shew of Carnations and Pinks, a great variety of very large Gooseberries, some measuring above four inches in circumference, and several specimens of very large Currants, with some excellent Apples, when the premiums were awarded as under:

- The best Carnations, to Mr. Alex. Rose, Bellisle.
- The second best do. to Philip Whiteside, Esq., Air.
- The best Red Gooseberries, to Mr. Thomas Imrie, Castlehill.
- The second best do. to Mr Walter Underwood, Eglinton.
- The best Yellow do. to Mr. Robt. Purvis, Caprinton.
- The second best do. to Mr. – Ferguson, Craigie.
- The best Green do. to David Scott, Esq., Air.
- The second best do. to Mr. Robt. Purvis, Caprinton.
- The best Red Currants, to Mr. Chas. Craig, Rozelle.
- The second best do. to Mr. Walter Underwood, Eglinton.
- The best White Currants, to Mr Walter Underwood, Eglinton.
- The second best do. to Mr. Charles Craig.
- The best Apples, to Mr. Robt. Brown, Sundrum.
- The best Pinks, to Mr. Alex. Rose, Bellisle.
- The second best do. to Mr. Walter Underwood.

In the issue of September 7, 1815, the third competition was announced:

AIRSHIRE
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

A Meeting is to be held in Mrs. Simpson's, Black Bull Inn, on Tuesday 19th September, when Prizes will be awarded for the following articles: -

The best Melon.

The best six Peaches from the open air.

The best six Nectarines from do.

The best six Moorpark Apricots.

The best three sorts of Plumbs, six of each sort.

The best three sorts of Summer Apples, three of each sort.

The best three sorts of Summer Pears, three of each sort.

The largest and best swelled Bunch of Grapes, any sort.

The highest flavoured Grapes, any sort.

The best twelve Carnations.

The Articles for Competition must be at Mrs. Simpson's by Eleven o'clock forenoon.

In the issue of September 21, 1815, the results were recorded:

At a competition of the Airshire Horticultural Society, held here on the 19th current, the following Members of the Society being appointed Judges, viz.: -

Sir JAMES FERGUSSON, Bart., Preses

Sir DAVID HUNTER BLAIR, Bart.

HUGH HAMILTON, Esq.

DAVID SCOTT, Esq.

PHILIP WHITESIDE, Esq.

After having minutely examined the different specimens of Fruit exhibited, they made the following decisions: - For

The best Melon, to Mr. Walter Underwood, Eglinton Castle

The second best do. to Mr. Thomas Imrie, Castlehill

The best bunch Black Grapes, to Mr. Thomas Imrie, Castlehill

The second best do. to Mr. Charles Craig, Rozelle

The best bunch White Grapes, to Mr. C. Craig, Rozelle

The second best do. to Mr. Alexander Rose, Bellisle

The best three sorts summer Pears, to Mr. Walter Underwood

The second best do. to Mr. Alexander Rose

The best three sorts summer Apples, to Mr. Robert Purvis, Caprington

The second best do. to Mr. James Dodds, Bargany

The best Plums, to Mr. Robert Purvis

The second best do. to Mr. Charles Craig

The best Peaches, to Mr. James Dodds, Bargany

The second best do. to Mr Peter Ireland, Auchencruive

The best Nectarines, to Mr. Peter Ireland

Then second best do. to Mr. James Dodds

The best Carnations, to Mr. James Rentowl, Coilsfield.

A very fine bunch of the Syrian Grapes from Bellisle was much admired for its size and beauty.

Several specimens of Seedling Plums, sent by Mr. James Smith, Nurseryman, Monkwood Grove, were much approved of by the Judges.

Upon the whole, the show of fruit was highly gratifying and of superior quality, the Judges having had much difficulty in awarding the several prizes.

Thus the names of the best Gardeners and their employers owning Ayrshire estates may be identified. The pattern continued in the second year of the Airshire Horticultural Society with three competitions. The Annual Meeting was held in the Autumn. Other horticultural societies became established, some with specialist competitions, for example for tulips, auriculas, and gooseberries by weight.

The Airshire Greenhouse Lodge Society arranged competitions in the Angel Inn, Kilmarnock, reports of which helped identify more people and other estates involved. Their names appear amongst the prize winners:

Thursday, June 13, 1816

The Annual Competition for the Silver Medal, given by the Airshire Greenhouse (Lodge) Society, for Flowers, took place at the Angel Inn, Kilmarnock, on Friday June 7th. The Flower fixed on this year being the TULIP, we understand a most brilliant display of that gaudy production of nature took place, being in much variety, and in great perfection. The Silver Medal was unanimously adjudged to George Paxton, Brewer, Kilmarnock – the Second Prize to W. & T. Samson, Nurserymen, Kilmarnock – and the Third to Mr. M. Reid, Galston. After the Competition was over, the flowers were shewn to a great number of Ladies and Gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood, who expressed themselves much gratified at the perfection they had been brought to, since last season, this being the second medal given for that flower.

This Society must date from 1815. Many reports listed the best cultivars to grow locally, guidance of real value.

Thursday, September 4, 1817

The Airshire Greenhouse Lodge Society held their Annual Meeting, and shew of Gooseberries, in the Angel Inn, Kilmarnock, when the following Prizes were awarded: -

	oz	dwt.	gr.
1st To James & Allan Bowie, 6 reds	4	2	18
2d. To do do do 6 yellow	3	2	18

3d. To do do do 6 green	2	9	20
4th. William & T. Samson, 6 whites	2	11	14
The largest single red, Sportsman,		0	14
2			

By 1820 the shows were held in the Turf Inn, Kilmarnock.

During the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, enthusiasts who grew flowers for showing rather than sale were called ‘florists’ and gave rise to the establishment of Florists’ Societies, which were sociable with gatherings for a meal after judging had taken place. The eight species favoured at the time were as follows: auricula, polyanthus, hyacinth, anemone, ranunculus, tulip, pink and carnation ². Shows were held when the flowers were at their best, thus auriculas, polyanthuses and tulips were exhibited in April/May/early June. Competitions held under the auspices of Airshire Greenhouse Lodge Society and, from 1821, the Kilmarnock Florist Society were regularly reported.

In the issue of Thursday, May 31, 1821, A Florist Society for Beith, Dunlop and Stewarton was reported:

On Saturday last, the Competition of Tulips of the Florist Society of the Parishes of Beith, Dunlop, and Stewarton, was held in the house of William Millar, Main-Street, Beith, when the 1st prize was adjudged to John Crawford, Weaver, Beith – the 2d to William Bryce, Schoolmaster of Dunlop – the 3d to Donald Munro, Gardener, Beith – the 4th to Mathew Wylie of Cutstraw, Stewarton, - and the 5th to Basil Mitchell, Gardener, Dunlop. – There was a great show of fine Flowers. After the competition the Society sat down to dinner, at which they had new Potatoes and Onions, from Mr Wilson’s garden, Crumbick, Beith.

From 1821 Kilmarnock Florist Club competitions were reported, with frequent monthly meetings, three held in June – July, and the names of the cultivars included in the paper:

On the 2nd June, the Kilmarnock Florist Club had a Competition for Tulips in the Turf Inn. – From the number of competitors, the Judges, with difficulty, awarded the Prizes as under –

- 1st, To JOHN MORTON, Kilmarnock
- 2d, To WILLIAM CROOKS, do
- 3d, To ROBERT PURVIS, Caprington

Among the flowers brought forward, the following were some of the best, viz. Violet Quarto, Roi de Ceres, Bannfeet, Large Pyet, Rose Unique, Violette Sovereign, Grand Duc de Tuscany, Incomparable Corrinona, Holms King, Rean d' Artois, and Triumph Royal.

Thursday, June 28, 1821

The Kilmarnock Florist Club had a Competition for Ranunculuses, in the Turf Inn, on the 26th of June current:-

- First Prize, to John Brown, Kilmarnock
- Second do. to Robert Boyd, Kilmaurs
- Third do. to John Morton, Kilmarnock

Among the flowers brought forward, la Singulere, Melange des Beantes, Flagellie a quatre couleurs, Marbre de Paris, Pyramid, Princess of Wirtemberg, Bertha & Beroth attracted general attention.

Thursday, July 12th, 1821

The Kilmarnock Florist Club held their competition for Pinks in the Turf Inn, on the 6th July, and after a careful examination, the prizes were awarded as under:-

1st. Prize to John Brown, Kilmarnock.

2d. do to James M'Naught, do.

3d. do to Robert Boyd, Kilmaurs.

Hine's Queen Charlotte, and Sir William Wallace were the only new flowers brought forward.

Thursday, July 12th, 1821

The Florist Society of the parishes of Beith, Dunlop and Stewarton met, and held their competition of Ranunculuses in the Black Bull, Dunlop:-

The 1st Prize was adjudged to Basil Mitchel, Gairdner, Dunlop – the 2d to William Caldwell, Weaver, Beith – the 3d to William Bryce, Schoolmaster of Dunlop – and the 4th to David Munro, Gairdner, Beith.

Thursday, April 25, 1822:

The Airshire Greenhouse Lodge Society had a Competition for Polyanthuses and Auriculas, in the Turf Inn, Kilmarnock, on Wednesday the 24th ult. when the judges awarded the prizes as follow. –

1st Polyanthuses, to Mr John Brown, Kilmarnock.

2d do. to Mr. William Crooks, do.

3d do. to Messrs. Dykes & Gentles, do.

4th do. to Messrs. Wm. & Tho Samson, do.

1st Auriculas, to Mr. John Brown, Kilmarnock.

2d do. to Messrs. Dykes & Gentles, do.

3d do. to Mr. William Crooks, do.

Amongst the Flowers brought forward, the following were the names of the best Polyanthus – Thomson's Lady Nelson – Hemp's Smiler – Steed's Telegraph – Fillingham's Tantarara – and Dale's Brilliant – Auriculas – Cockup's Eclipse – Wild's Smiling Beauty – Taylor's Glory – Wild's Colonel Hamson – Clough's Defiance – Lee's Bright Venus – and Slater's Garland. There was a selection of Seedling Auriculas, from the Rev. Mr. Landsborough of Stevenston, which were much admired for colours.

As each of the different species contained so many cultivars, it was particularly helpful to publish the names of those shown to be growing well in Ayrshire.

Thursday, July 31, 1823

AIRSHIRE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

The Airshire Horticultural Society held their Competition in the Assembly Rooms here on the 25th inst.

The Dalry Free Gardener Society was a Friendly Society.

Thursday, August 11, 1825

DALRY FREE GARDENER SOCIETY.

Dalry, 4th August.

The Dalry Free Gardener Society, consisting of upwards of 300 members, held their annual procession here on old St. Margaret's day, the 2d instant, and about 1 o'clock afternoon left the parish church, where they had assembled to transact

their business, and proceeded towards Giffordland for their president. So many people in their gayest attire, with breast-knots of flowers and richly embroidered aprons, the grand display of Scots thistles and garlands, with the spirit-stirring music of a band of bugles from Paisley and two instrumental bands from Kilbirnie and Kilwinning, formed a rich and imposing treat to the immense concourse of spectators who had poured in from the surrounding country and villages to witness the dazzling exhibition. On arriving at the ancient and romantic abode of the president a circle was formed on the lawn and the bands entertained the company with a number of Scotia's favourite airs.

While o'er the blessfu' fairy scene,
 Embower'd by bank and wild woods green,
 Sweet melody's enchantment reign'd,
 And each in breathless silence chain'd.
 Even nature a' was still aroun'
 And seem'd to list the heavenly soun';
 Save down the solitary glade
 The tinkling rill in concord play'd,
 And echo in her sylvan grot,
 Awaken'd by the bugle's note,
 At times wou'd catch the immortal strain
 And waft its cadence back again.

The procession afterwards returned with the president, when, besides parading through the village, they visited the Manse, Parkhill and Greenbank, and were cordially received. On their return a circle was formed on the cross, and the bands again played several excellent airs in their happiest style, which seemed to be highly enjoyed by all around. The brethren next partook of a refreshment in their lodge, after which they again

paraded through the whole of the village and spent the afternoon with the utmost gaiety and glee.
 Our causeys were glittering frae en' to en'
 Wi' the gardeners a' in a raw man;
 And braw buskit lasses in thousands ten,
 Wi' rowth o' young lads to them a' man.

The peals o' the bugle and trumpet's clang
 Were heard seven miles awa' man;
 Like the Jericho horns sae tremendous they rang,
 'Twas a mercy our town didna fa' man.
 The dancing and ranting, like fo'k gaun mad,
 Was shaking ilk penny-reel ha' man!
 And siccan a devil o' a han'ling we had!
 Braid Scotland the like o't ne'er saw man!

A splendid ball in the evening succeeded the merriment of the day, and the whole was crowned with the utmost conviviality and harmony.

Thursday, November 17, 1825

The Annual Meeting of the Airshire Horticultural Library, was held here upon the 4th current, agreeably to advertisement, when the following office-bearers were elected: - James Andrew, Preses – Thomas Imrie, Treasurer – Wm. MacCarter, Librarian. Among the many institutions which this country can boast of for the circulation of scientific knowledge, none surely can be of more utility than that which has for its object the improvement of the produce of our soil. One happy result, tending generally to improve the cultivation of the earth, is (to use an expression of one who has done much for that purpose) “worth the labour of a whole life.” – The benefit is not confined

to individuals, but may be considered as extending to the whole human race. Many valuable discoveries and useful treatises have of late been published on Horticulture and Agriculture, to procure what has been the motive for forming the Library. It has met with very liberal support from some individuals, whose rank, and, happily, whose desire, are alike fitted to promote their “country’s weal.” It is hoped the higher classes of the community will follow their example, so as to enable the means of improvement to run into its true channel, that the farmers will find it their interest to become members of the society, and that Airshire will soon have in its possession, what, perhaps, no other county in Scotland can yet say, a flourishing Public Library of works chiefly on Horticulture and Agriculture.

Thursday, October 11, 1827

The following extract of the minutes of the last meeting of the Garden and Prize Committee of the Caledonian Horticultural Society, has just been communicated to Mr. James Smith, gardener, Monkwood Grove: - ‘The Committee examined various kinds of seedling plums, pears, and apples, raised at Monkwood Grove near Air; and two plums being considered good, and others promising, one of the pears being likewise good, and two apples being of very considerable merit, the committee unanimously voted a medal to Mr. James Smith, for the production of the seedling fruits and directed the secretary to request full particulars regarding the history and qualities of the best sorts.’

We are happy to observe that a donation of several valuable books on horticulture & has been remitted to the Airshire Horticultural Library by Messrs. Longman & Co., London and

Mr. Loudon, the Editor of the *Gardeners' Magazine*. We understand the Society is at present in a very flourishing state.

Thursday, November 6, 1828

Airshire Horticultural Library. – The following gentlemen were, on Tuesday last, elected office-bearers of the Airshire Horticultural Library, viz.: - Mr James Rentoul, Preses – Mr Thomas Skinner, Vice-Preses, Committee – Messrs James Smith, John Goudie, John Niven, John M'Ilwraith, John Girdwood, William Tillery. Mr Imrie, Treasurer – Mr Wm. M'Carter, Clerk and Librarian. We are led to understand that the members as well as the friends of the laudable institution have increased during the past year. This institution is well-worthy the attention of landed gentlemen and farmers, as it has solely for its object the advancement of the most costly and experimental works on all kinds of botany and agriculture. The subscription, which is only 5s. of entry and 2s. per quarter, is instantly laid out in the purchase of new books, thereby increasing the general stock of that kind of literature which is to be had no where else at so moderate and easy a rate.

We have met here many professional Gardeners and amateurs, all with a keen urge to show off their cultural and horticultural skills. They are predominantly all men, with the occasional female employer/land owner mentioned. The Airshire Horticultural Society was the dominant group based in Air, and the Airshire Greenhouse Lodge Society in Kilmarnock. The Kilmarnock Florist Society (sometimes reported as Club) was distinct from the Airshire Greenhouse Lodge Society and sometimes they both held displays in the same venue on the same day. The same names crop up winning prizes. I think the

florists were mainly keen amateurs. The florists were however highly skilled growers of auricula, polyanthus, hyacinth, anemone, ranunculus, tulip, pink and carnation. Other species that were later added as florists' flowers were: viola, pansy, dahlia, rose, and chrysanthemum. The decline in growing the flowers of old is said to be as a result of the move from rural dwelling with time and land to cultivate flowers to town dwelling and the trend towards cottage gardens with a more natural feel ².

In 1815, Peter Ireland was Gardener at Auchencruive and by 1823 it was Thomas Skinner in charge, so personnel changes may be noted. Most of the professional gardeners would each have had a walled garden with a range of glasshouses and frequently a staff of between 6 and 16. Susan Campbell ³ wrote that: *"Of the sixteen gardeners working at Charleston, one was the head gardener, three were foremen, five were journeymen, five were variously described as labourers, 'improvers' or apprentices, and two were 'boys'. There was a distinct division between the men who worked in the park, pleasure grounds and flower garden, under the pleasure gardens' foreman, and the two groups who worked 'inside' and 'outside' in the kitchen gardens."* They were a highly skilled group, valued members of the estate team.

To be continued.

I have styled the article in the typography and layout of the newspaper of the day to reflect something of the flavour of its time. Spelling of names is accurately reproduced, and variations can be detected. GMH

¹ Loudon, John C., 1826, 4th edition, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London.

² Duthie, Ruth, 1988, *Florists' Flowers and Societies*, Shire Publications Ltd, Princes Risborough.

³ Campbell, Susan, 1996, *Charleston Kidding: A History of Kitchen Gardening*. Ebury Press, London.

New Books Relating to Ayrshire

Black Friday – the Auchenharvie Pit Disaster

By Alex McLatchie

Alex McLatchie has been researching the story of the mining disaster at the No. 4 pit at Auchenharvie Colliery, Stevenston, for many years. The disaster, which took place in August 1895, resulted in the death of nine miners, of which four were brothers. Others trapped in the mine had to be rescued, and McLatchie's investigations have resulted in a detailed account of the whole incident. The book also gives some important information on mining in Stevenston, particularly in the Auchenharvie pits, prior to the disaster. All aspects of the disaster are considered, from the endeavour, perseverance and courage exhibited by the rescuers, to the resilience and generosity of the local community. McLatchie includes much research into the cause of the disaster, as well as personal accounts of those involved in the incident. The book makes an important contribution to the mining heritage of Stevenston, and adds to McLatchie's earlier work, *Mining and Quarrying in Stevenston*. The book, which has been produced as a paperback and extends to 148 pages, is available from the author at 8 Skye Place, Stevenston, Ayrshire, KA20 3DG. The cost is £12.50 which includes £2.50 postage and packing.

The History of Ochiltree – Village and Parish

By Dane Love

This is the fourth title in Dane Love's detailed history of some of Ayrshire's parishes. Following on from Auchinleck, Sorn and Mauchline, this title covers Ochiltree parish, which includes the large village of Drongan, as well as Sinclairston and the lost village of Drumsudden. Written in the same style as the other parish histories, the Ochiltree book gives details of Ochiltree castles, the Covenanters, ministers and churches, schools and inns. There are chapters covering the mining industry as well as agriculture, and one on more famous sons of the parish, which includes the author of *The House With the Green Shutters*, George Douglas Brown. The story of the 'new town' of Drongan is told, as well as the more detailed history of Drongan Castle and its estate. Appendices include farms and their owners and occupants over the centuries, as well as a comprehensive list of coalmines. This is the most detailed history of the parish yet written, one that the author has been compiling on and off for a number of years.

It is available from good bookshops, or direct from www.carnpublishing.com/ochiltree.

The book is hardback, retails at £25.00 and runs to 360 pages with many old and new photographs.

Well Taught the Value of a Shilling

By D Bruce McCowan

A former Chair of the Professional Engineers Ontario Education Committee, D. Bruce McCowan has produced a valuable and well researched publication in association with George McCowan (1922 –2021). This publication documents the McCowan family's progress in both Scotland and Canada where they became very successful. The title 'Well Taught the Value of a Shilling' reflects the economic pressures present in the background of the Scottish coalfield in Lanarkshire and Ayrshire in the early nineteenth century. It is amply illustrated with original documents and excerpts from relevant sources. Readers will find this publication both interesting and useful in understanding the background to many Scots Canadian families.

Jane Jamieson, Editor, Ayrshire Notes (Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society) and freelance researcher

Reviews are available online at –

Reviews of Latest Publication:

http://www.mccowan.org/well_taught_the_value.htm

Local History Societies

Since we are presently still under restrictions due to the pandemic readers are advised to check with the local societies to ensure that the details of meetings have not changed

Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society.

AANHS meetings for this year 2021-2022 will be held on Zoom for details on how to join please email:

treasurer@aanhs.org

14 Oct 2021 ‘Qwhen we goe in the shape of ane haire’
Therianthropy (Human-Animal Transformation)
Belief in Early Modern Scotland
Nicola Cumming, University of Strathclyde

28 Oct 2021 Rethinking Ayrshire’s Lost Neolithic
Dr Kenneth Brophy, University of Glasgow

11 November TBA

25 Nov 2021 Monuments on the Merging of Empire –
Decorating the Antonine Wall Distance
Sculptures
Dr. Louisa Campbell, University of Glasgow

13 Jan 2022 The Scottish Parliament, Maritime Security and

The Problem of Piracy in the War of the Three Kingdoms c 1639-1651

Dr. John Young, University of Strathclyde

27 Jan Messages from the Dead: Exploring Funerary Architecture and Symbolism in the Burial Grounds, Churchyards & Cemeteries of Ayrshire
Lorraine Evans

10 Feb The Lost Royal Tomb of Robert the Bruce
Dr Ian Fraser, Historic Environment Scotland

27 Feb Plagues and Providence in 17th Century Ayr
Dr. Michael Brock, Associate Professor of History, Washington & Lee University, Virginia

10 March TBA

Followed by short AGM

Cumnock History Group

Cumnock History Group has a new venue from September 2021 in the newly renovated Barrhill Centre. Meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Members will be notified.

<http://www.cumnockhistorygroup.org>
info@cumnockhistorygroup.org



Dundonald Historical and Archive Society

Unfortunately, Dundonald Historical and Archive Society have not resumed their meetings as yet. They meet in the castle visitor centre which is not suitable for social distancing. They are hopeful of resuming next year.

East Ayrshire Family History Society
Registered Charity No SC029609

Postal address: c/o Dick Institute, Elmbank Avenue,

Kilmarnock, KA1 3BU

Venue for all meetings at present:

Take A Bow Opportunity Centre, 2 Fraser Walk, Kilmarnock,
KA3 7PH

It is planned to restart our members' meetings at the Take A Bow Centre on Thursday 2nd September. These will be held from 1.30 pm until 3.30 pm.

We also plan to resume the programme of talks on the second Thursday of each month. For a trial period, until this December, these will also take place at the Take A Bow Centre at 2 pm in the afternoon, and not as previously.

You are welcome to come along.

The syllabus for the first few talks is as follows:

DATE	SUBJECT	SPEAKER
Thursday 9th Sept	AGM + discussion	
Thursday 14th Oct	<i>Mary Somerville</i>	Barbara Graham

Thursday 11th Nov *Ayrshire at War* Bob McMillan

Website: www.eastayrshirefhs.co.uk

Email: enquiries@eastayrshirefhs.co.uk

Annual UK Subscription: ordinary member £12.50, e-member £10.50

Kyle and Carrick Civic Society

Public meetings 2021-22

Monday 4 October **ROMAN SOLDIERS MARCH TO AYR**
Denis Rattenbury

Monday 1 November **SANNY SLOAN, THE MINERS' MP**
Esther Clark

Monday 6 December **THE ROUNDHEADS IN AYR**
Tom Barclay

Monday 10 January **SHERIFF AND LORD-LIEUTENANT**
Iona McDonald OBE

Monday 7 February **BLOOD LEGACY**
Alex Renton

Monday 7 March **THE AGE OF HORSE AND MUSKET**
Allan Dunlop

Meetings are held in the Town Hall, Ayr, at 7.30 p.m.

All welcome.

North Ayrshire Family History Society

This session NAFHS are planning to hold Zoom meetings with their members and have initially booked four speakers as a trial hoping that the technology works! Meetings take place on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30. On 14th September Alex Blair will talk about Admiral Lord Cochrane. Alex is one of our members, a past Journal editor and Chairperson, therefore the perfect guinea pig for the inaugural Zoom session. Richard Williamson has been busy researching the life of Harry Lauder and he will give a talk on this subject on 12th October. Many of us are missing being able to visit The Mitchell Library, The Carnegie Library Irvine Townhouse and The Kilmarnock Burns Centre so we have invited Dr Irene O'Brien to talk about Glasgow Archives on 9th November. Finally Tom Barclay will deliver a presentation on Robert Bruce and Ayrshire Connections on 14th December. This talk had been previously scheduled for April 2020 but had to be postponed. The autumn Journal is with the editor just now and should be ready for distribution shortly. It is always eagerly anticipated by members and usually receives positive feedback.

Fiona Williamson

NAFHS secretary

0752 796 0752

nafhsociety@gmail.com

Readers may be interested to know that the following society although not a member of the Federation has an interesting syllabus for the year. Again these meetings are available on Zoom. Details on how to access these meetings are available from treasurer@aanhs.org

Dumfries and Galloway Antiquarian Society Syllabus 2021 - 22

Date	Speaker	Title
8 October 2021 AGM	Alexander Gibbons	Clay dabbins
22 October 2021	Dr Alan Gibbs	How to travel in space and time: the geology of Dumfries and Galloway
5 November 2021	Angus E. Rex, President The Galloway Association of Glasgow	The Galloway Association of Glasgow - 1791 to 2021
19 November 2021	Claire Williamson, Rathmell Archaeology	The revelations of teacups and taxes at a ruined farmstead on the Raiders Road
3 December 2021	Martin Goldberg, National Museums Scotland	The Galloway Hoard
14 January 2022	Professor Alistair Alcock	John Campbell, the Kirkbean boy who changed the world of navigation
28	Jim Tildesley,	The saving of <i>The City of</i>

January 2022	former director of Scottish Maritime Museum	<i>Adelaide</i>
11 February 2022	Borders Forest Trust	Carrifran Wildwood and beyond!
25 February 2022 Members Lecture	John Pickin	The mining archaeology of Dumfries and Galloway
11 March 2022	Adrian Maldonado National Museums Scotland	The Whithorn Cold Case project
25 March 2022	Sam Gallagher Operations Manager Ben Lomond, Dumfries and Galloway and Glasgow, National Trust for Scotland.	Threave Landscape Restoration project



SUBSCRIPTION 2021-2022



Subscriptions to the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies for the Session 2021-2022 (1 October 2021 – 30 September 2022) are now due.

Subscription rates are currently: **Societies** **£20.00**
Individuals £15.00

Please complete this form and return it, together with your payment to **AFHS Treasurer**, Mrs Etta Strachan, 61 Flatt Road, Largs KA30 9EB. **Cheques** should be made payable to “Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies”.

Data Protection (GDPR 2016): By completing and returning this form you are confirming your agreement for Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies to hold your details on their system for communication purposes in accordance with their Data Protection Policy. Please refer to your copy of the Policy for more details.

I/We enclose our cheque for £ ____, being my/our subscription to the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies for the Session 2021/22

Individual Member: Name _____

Signature _____

Address

Email Address _____ Tel
No _____

Society: _____ **Name**

Website _____ **Address**

Details of Nominated Contact for the Society (the nominated contact will receive all correspondence (by mail & email, unless otherwise requested):

Name _____ Position _____

Signature _____

Address

Email Address _____ Tel No

Office-bearers:

Chairman

Secretary_____Treasurer_____

AANHS Publications

Publications of the Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (AANHS) are available from Mr Denis Rattenbury, 4 Ewenfield park, Ayr KA7 2QG

☎01292 280593 email: info@aanhs.org

Further information about the AANHS and its publications will be found on the society's website: www.aanhs.org.uk

Armstrong's Map of Ayrshire 1775 (reprint 6 sheets) £12.00

Antiquities of Ayrshire by Grose (edited by Strawhorn revised 2010) £4.00

11 Robert Adam in Ayrshire (Sanderson) revised 2010 £4.00

13 Toll and Tacksman (McClure) £1.50

20 Historic Ayr: A Guide for Visitors 2nd edition £2.50

30 The Early Transatlantic Trade of Ayr 1640-1730 (Barclay & Graham) 104 pages £4.50

33 Dr John Taylor, Chartist: Ayrshire Revolutionary (Fraser)
112 pages £4.00

35 The Masters of Ballantrae (Hunter) 30 pages £4.00

37 Historic Troon and Its Surroundings 40 pages £3.00

38 Excavations in Ayr 1984-1987 (Perry) 140 pages £9.99

39 The Church Buildings of Ayrshire (Hume) 94 pages £7.50

41 Mining and Quarrying in Stevenston (McLatchie) 210 pages £9.50

42 The Battle of Largs (Cowan) 95 pages £8.00

43-45 Ayrshire Collections – 128 pages £7.50

Ayr Jails by Jane Jamieson

Kilwinning Revisited by Margaret H B Sanderson

A Bonnie Lass by Petra Baillie

47 Watermills of Arran by Alastair Weir 71 pages £6.00

48 Oculous: The Musings of a Liberal Victorian in Ayr by
Carolyn O'Hara 140 pages £8.00

49 Ayrshire Castles from Kings to Covenanters 121 pages
£10.00

Ardrossan Castle Revisited by David H Caldwell

Turnberry Castle and Countryside by Piers Dixon and William Wyeth

Seagate Castle with Some Family Resemblances by Aonghas Mackechnie

Ayr as a Garrison Town by Louise Turner

Castle Restoration in Ayrshire by Michael C Davies