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Ayr Advertiser 150th Anniversary Cake

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Cover illustration

Decorating the cake for the 150th anniversary of the *Ayr Advertiser* in August 1953.

**TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF
THE AYR ADVERTISER**

Rob Close

On Thursday 5th August 1803 the first edition of the *Air Advertiser* was issued: thus in 2003 we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of our local newspaper. It is almost impossible to study the history of Ayrshire over those 200 years and not consult the files of the *Advertiser*. It seems appropriate therefore that we should devote this special issue of *Ayrshire Notes* to a history of this venerable and estimable newspaper.¹

The *Advertiser* was the first newspaper to be published in Ayrshire: Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen all had regular newspapers before the end of the 18th Century, but few local papers existed outside these main centres. One such was the *Kelso Mail*, which was founded in 1792.² Of all the papers in Scotland which preceded the *Advertiser*, only the *Aberdeen Journal* (founded in 1747, and now merged into the *Press & Journal*) and the (*Glasgow*) *Herald*, which can trace its ancestry back to 1782, are still in existence.

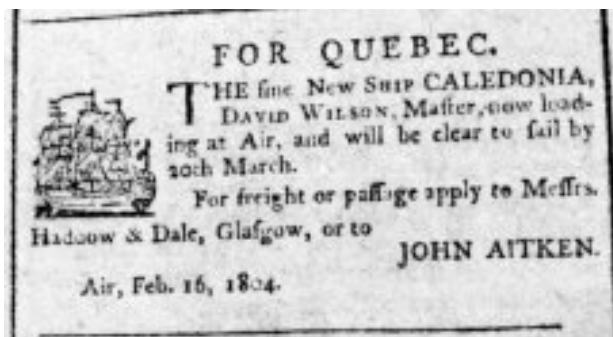


Air Advertiser 23rd February 1804

The paper was founded by two brothers, John and Peter Wilson. John Wilson has, of course, won for himself lasting fame and honour as the printer, in 1786, of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, the book which brought Robert Burns and his poetry to national attention and renown. According to contemporary sources, printing was introduced into Ayrshire in the 1780s, and the first printer, in Kilmarnock, was Peter McArthur. He, however, must have ceased business after a short time, and it may be that he sold his business to John Wilson.³ The earliest book printed by Wilson of which we have any knowledge is a sermon, *Faithful Witness-Bearing Exemplified*, of the mid 17th Century Govan minister Hugh Binning, published in 1783.⁴

Wilson remained in Kilmarnock, printing books, and also trading as a bookseller and stationer. Most of his output was of a religious nature (and thus no different from the output of many a provincial printer and publisher); however, besides Burns, he also brought out books of poetry by George Campbell (1787), John Lapraik (1788) and others, as well as an edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Wilson's brother Peter was, at the same time, in business as a bookseller in Ayr. In 1790, because '[i]t was, perhaps, more advantageous to have his printing office in the chief town of the county',⁵ John Wilson moved his printing business to

Ayr, where he moved into a closer business relationship with his brother.⁶ The Wilsons retained a shop in Kilmarnock, but the printing was now done in Ayr, at 23 High Street, under the supervision of Peter Wilson. From 1791 books appeared under the imprint of 'J & P Wilson'.



Air Advertiser 23rd February 1804

In 1803 the brothers undertook their most ambitious project. Following the example of the *Greenock Advertiser*, which had been started in 1802, they produced Ayrshire's first newspaper, the *Ayr Advertiser*, under the supervision of Peter Wilson.⁷ Thomson also quotes James Gibson, a 19th Century bibliographer of Burns, who stated that the paper 'had a hard struggle to maintain its existence, and was more than once on the eve of being abandoned, but patience and perseverance overcame all difficulties, and it ultimately realized a fortune to both brothers.'⁸

The Wilsons themselves outlined their motives and determination to succeed in an editorial marking the end of the *Advertiser's* first year:⁹

At the expiry of the first year of the Air¹⁰ Advertiser, which this number completes, the conductors of it would be wanting in gratitude, were they not to offer their acknowledgements to their subscribers, and those who have befriended their undertaking. – Unsolicited by any party, uninfluenced by any patronage, and only under the conviction that this great and opulent County ought to possess the circulating medium of a Newspaper, the proposers of it submitted their plans with deference and doubt to the Public – The interest of the Public was what they had resolved to study, and the confidence that was reposed in their professions, imposed that duty more powerfully upon them. Situated as Airshire is, at one extremity of the empire, they could not reckon on their paper finding its way, except partially, beyond its limits, and where the facilities of the Posts put it in their power to convey intelligence as early as their contemporaries. Hitherto they

have to congratulate themselves on a growing circulation through every town in the County, where the Posts go direct from Air or Kilmarnock.

The expences attending their establishment have far exceeded their computation; and although they have now a more numerous list of Subscribers than they originally imagined they could have had, yet it holds out no immediate prospect of profit:- However, they are determined to persevere; and if they are fortunate enough to render their endeavours worthy of the continued countenance of the Public, an establishment which they have every reason to think is pretty generally admitted to be useful in the County, shall not be given up, without the most absolute conviction that it cannot be supported.



Air Advertiser 19th April 1804

It is unfortunate that no copy of the first issue has survived. The Wilsons' own file copy appears to have disappeared early in the 19th Century, and the earliest issue which remains extant is number 17, which was published on Thursday, 24th November, 1803. In 1903 it was regretted that '[a] few of the earliest numbers are wanting in our first file. How this came to be, we are unable to say. We remember hearing long ago a statement to the effect that after one of the changes in the firm by which the paper was carried on, it was discovered that the retiring partner had taken away with him the complete file of the first volume, leaving an imperfect volume behind.'¹¹

What immediately strikes the modern reader looking at this first surviving copy of the Advertiser is the nature of the contents. 'The Advertiser was a four page folio, about 20 by 14 inches, headed the "Air Advertiser, or West Country Journal". ... The price was 6d, including 3½d stamp duty. On 7th September 1815 the price was raised to 6½d, following an increase in Stamp Duty.'¹² The paper carried mainly national and foreign news, little

local news. The layout did not change much in the first fifty years of the paper's existence. The front page was given over to advertisements and public notices. The middle pages were devoted to national and foreign news, while the back page contained more advertisements, editorial comment and agricultural and local news. Three small woodblocks were often used to illustrate the advertisements: a dog for advertisements for lost dogs (a surprisingly frequent occurrence); a sailing ship for shipping advertisements; and a horse for advertisements about horses and racing.¹³ The advertisements occupy perhaps a third of the paper; they are mainly local in character and contain much that gives us an insight into the workings of the world at that time. Farm lets and business advertisements are the commonest. This November 1803 paper also carries the notice: 'We understand a subscription has been started amongst the noblemen and gentlemen of Ayrshire and neighbouring counties' to provide a Gold Cup, to be run for annually on the first day of Ayr Races.

From 1803 until 1810, the paper continued to be published by J & P Wilson, but in the latter year, the first changes in ownership occurred. At the beginning of the year, John Wilson sold his bookshop in Kilmarnock to Robert Mathie, presumably to allow himself to concentrate on producing the newspaper, for by this time, Peter Wilson was seriously ill. In 1810, Peter Wilson sold his interest in the paper to the Reverend Hamilton Paul, and the edition for 26th April 1810 appears under the imprint of 'Wilson & Paul': on the back page there is this announcement:-

J Wilson is extremely sorry to announce that for want of health, his Brother Peter has found it prudent to retire from the Concern, and that he is thus deprived of the abilities of one, who had the principal share in commencing and conducting this Paper, which has every year been extending in circulation, and it is hoped has been found useful as a medium for advertising, and as a weekly summary of the Astonishing Events of the present time.¹⁴

Peter Wilson, founder and first editor of the *Air Advertiser*, died on 3rd May 1810 at Gibraltar, where he had gone in a vain attempt to recover his health. His obituary notice declares that his 'memory will long be dear to those who have taken an interest in the success of this paper.'¹⁵

With the retirement and death of Peter Wilson, the task of editing the paper now fell upon Hamilton Paul. Paul was a well-known figure in his day, but is scarcely remembered at all these days. A clergyman of the Church of Scotland, he had at this time no parish, and was able to devote himself to his literary activities. Besides editing the *Advertiser*, he was also a poet of some talent, and was an early proponent of Burns, and wrote one of the earliest biographies of the Ayrshire Bard. He was poet laureate to the Burns Club which met annually at Burns' Cottage, and for 18 successive years composed an anniversary ode for their dinners: his lament for the Old Bridge of Doon, published in the *Advertiser* at a time when the bridge was earmarked as a quarry for the new bridge, saved it for posterity.¹⁶ He also contributed many articles to the paper, beginning the tradition of series on various

topographical and historical subjects which add considerably to the value of the paper to modern scholars.

Hamilton Paul was born in Dailly in 1773: his father, John Paul, was the manager of the collieries on the Bargany Estate. After studying at Glasgow University, he was licenced to preach in 1800, and served for some time as the assistant minister at Coylton, without, it would appear, interfering with his literary and public interests and ambitions. According to one source, during the time that he superintended the *Advertiser*, 'he was whirled about in a perpetual vortex of business and pleasure, never a single day without company at home or abroad. If he could obtain three or four hours sleep, he was satisfied. He was a member of every club, chaplain to every society, had a free ticket to every concert and ball, and was a welcome guest at almost every table.'¹⁷ He conducted, according to his obituary, the *Advertiser* 'for several years with distinguished success.'¹⁸

However, in 1816 Paul was appointed to the living of Broughton, Glenholm and Kilbucho, in Peebles-shire.¹⁹ He sold his share in the business, for £2,500, to McCormick and Carnie²⁰, and took up his new living, where he remained until his death in 1854. He continued, however, to contribute to the *Ayr Advertiser*, which for many years carried accounts of the Burns Suppers at Broughton, and of the activities of the Broughton Curling Club.²¹

The first issue to appear under the imprint of Wilson, McCormick and Carnie was that of Thursday 2nd January 1817. The role of editor was taken on by Adam Carnie;²² the other new partner was William McCormick.²³ Under the new firm, the paper continued much as before, though at this time it had to face its first local competition. The *Ayr and Wigtownshire Courier* had been launched by Maxwell Dick and Alexander Cuthill in 1818, offering a Conservative alternative to the Whig-supporting *Advertiser*.²⁴ James Paterson (1805-1876: later the historian of the county) served his apprenticeship at the *Courier*, c.1821-1824.²⁵ The *Courier* survived for approximately seven years, before ceasing publication about 1825.²⁶ In 1831 James Paterson began publishing his own Radical *Kilmarnock Chronicle*, but this was short-lived.²⁷ The next serious challenge to the *Advertiser*'s position in Ayrshire came from the *Ayr Observer*, founded in 1832, on which more can be found in Appendix 3 [page 31].

The next major change occurred in May 1821, when John Wilson died. His obituary is tersely to-the-point:

Died at Wellington Square, here, on Sunday last, Mr. John Wilson, aged 62. He and his brother, Mr. Peter Wilson, who died in 1810, were the original projectors and publishers of this Journal, and their memory will be long cherished by all those who take an interest in it. Previous to his brother's death, he was a Printer in Kilmarnock, and, in the prosecution of his profession there, he printed the first or Kilmarnock edition of Burns' Poems and other works of celebrity. He was, likewise, for some time one of the Magistrates of that place; and throughout a life rather exceeding in length the ordinary lot of man, he was distinguished for unremitting attention to the discharge of a laborious duty, and for the strictest honesty and integrity both in principle and practice.²⁸



NEW COACH
BETWIXT
KILMARNOCK & GLASGOW.

THE Public are respectfully informed, that an
Elegant New FOUR-SEATED LIGHT COACH,
called the ROYAL SOVEREIGN, runs daily be-
twixt KILMARNOCK and GLASGOW, starting
from the TURF INN, KILMARNOCK, at ¼ o'clock,
afternoon; and from the BLACK BULL INN
Coach Office, 642, Argyle Street, GLASGOW, at half-
past 6 o'clock, morning—driven through by one
Coachman, and no Guard.

Air Advertiser 3rd November 1825

Wilson's death precipitated a small crisis in the paper. In his deed of settlement John Wilson had authorised his executors 'to dispose of his share of the copy-right or good will of the newspaper, either by public or private sale', but to give the chance of first refusal to McCormick and Carnie, the other partners. They refused to purchase Wilson's share and instigated legal proceedings, their argument being that while Wilson's executors or heirs might have a share in the copyright of papers which had already been published, they could have none in those which were not yet in existence, and that if a sale were permitted it might bring in a 'stranger' who would be 'detrimental to the interest of the company.' The case was decided in the Court of Session, and the decision went against McCormick and Carnie. The Court laid down that 'the copyright or good will of a newspaper is a valuable privilege or property, transmissible *inter vivos*, or to heirs; and ... like the other rights of the deceased in the dissolved company, it must be sold for behoof of his representatives.' Thomson notes that this was the first time that it was established in law that newspaper copyright could be transmitted, by sale or by transfer.²⁹

It must be assumed that, having lost their case at law, McCormick and Carnie bought Wilson's share from his executors, for the paper is continued thereafter under the imprint of McCormick and Carnie. The paper appeared under this imprint for the next 11 years or so, until July 1832, when William McCormick died. His obituary says:

At Charlotte Street, Air, on the 29th ult, after a severe and protracted illness, William McCormick, Esq., aged 41. Since the year 1816, till within the last few months, Mr McCormick conducted the 'Air Advertiser' and with what talent and success ample proof is furnished by the popularity and extensive circulation of that Journal. Prepossessing in manners, calm in language, and vigorous in intellectual faculties, he drew from the public a share of respect and esteem which will long lead them fondly to cherish his memory. His information, acquired by anxious and arduous study, was extensive and well-digested; and he applied his knowledge with such a singleness of heart, and discrimination of judgment, as invariably enlisted the affections and admiration of his numerous friends. But his soul proved too active for its earthly frame – "Science self destroyed her favourite son!" His body, exhausted by mental anxiety and exertion, fell a prey to disease, so incident to the condition of the studious; and he is thus, in the prime of life, removed from this world, leaving behind a sorrowing widow and seven helpless children to lament his early fate. The cause of civil and religious freedom has, in him, lost an upright and a powerful advocate. But, alas! To him "the uses of the world are now ended." "----- The dream is fled/ The motley mask, and the great stir is o'er."³⁰

McCormick's widow, Catherine Gemmell, inherited her husband's half share in the business, and the paper continued to appear under the imprint of McCormick and Carnie for another 6 years, until 1838. In October of that year, a notice appeared in the *Advertiser* intimating that the partnership of McCormick & Carnie had been dissolved, and that the business had been sold to a new partnership, McCormick & Gemmell, of which the partners were Catherine McCormick and her brother, Thomas Macmillan Gemmell.³¹ Following his retirement from the *Advertiser*, Adam Carnie pursued a new career as a ship-owner. He died, at his house in Fort Street, Ayr, in October 1847.³²

The purchaser of Carnie's stake in the business, Thomas M. Gemmell, had previously been an advocate in Edinburgh, but had been the editor of the *Advertiser* since 1832, having presumably come to the aid of his sister after William McCormick's death.³³ A son of Andrew Gemmell, an Ayr merchant, Thomas Macmillan Gemmell was born in 1811. He married Anne Bell Telfer in June 1839³⁴, and the couple had 3 sons and 4 daughters. With his introduction to the firm, began the long association between the *Ayr Advertiser* and the Gemmell and Dunlop families.³⁵ Gemmell's greater involvement in the management of the business also sparked a number of changes in the working practices of the newspaper.

Of these, the most obvious was the change of name. On Thursday 28th March 1839, the paper appeared under the title of the *Ayr Advertiser, or West Country Journal*. Justification for the change is given in an editorial (probably penned by T. M. Gemmell):-

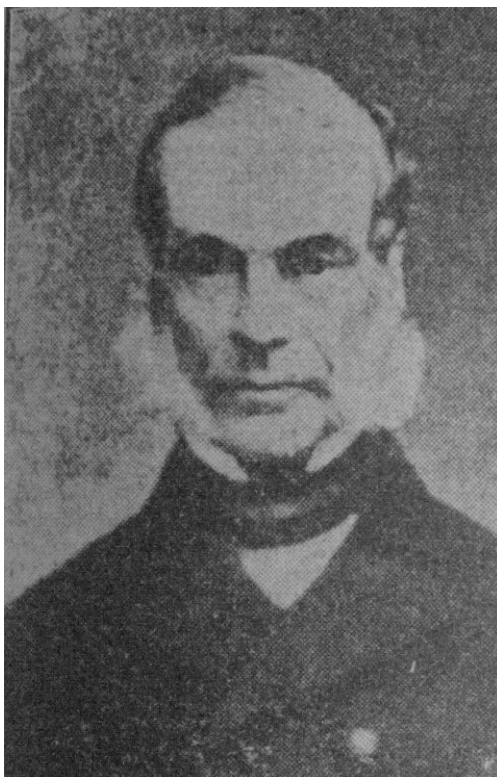
AIR or AYR. With mature deliberation, though not without some regret, we have judged it proper to change our mode of spelling the name of our good Town. Questions of Orthography resolve themselves into two points – principle and practice; and these, we are sorry to say, are often at variance with each other. In the present instance, however, in adjusting the claims of I and Y to the rights of burgearie [*sic*], both claims will be found, so far as principle is concerned, equally good, or rather equally bad – neither of them having any etymological title to possession. In regard to practice, the evidence in favour of the latter vowel is so overwhelming that ‘The Air Advertiser’ was almost left alone in support of the former ... The 18th century brushed away the final e from this [Aire], as well as many hundreds of words, and in process of time, either modish affectation, or practical utility, introduced the now almost universally received distinction between the air we breathe and the Ayr we bathe in – between the Royal Burgh of ‘Ayr’ and the ‘air’ of gentility which sits with unaffected grace upon her ‘honest men and bonnie lassies.’ Our Journal, in avoiding ‘to be the first on which the new was tried’, has run some risk of ‘being the last to lay the old aside.’³⁶

The other important change was in the printing of the newspaper. Late in 1838 the proprietors had announced that a new press, a Carr & Smith’s Patent Double Acting Machine, would in ready by the middle of January 1839.³⁷ Previously printing had been done on a hand press [see Appendix 1, page 28], of which the capacity could not have been more than 200 papers an hour.³⁸ The machine introduced in 1839, and known as a ‘Belper’, was still worked by hand, but was capable of printing nearly 1000 copies an hour; it remained in service until 1852.³⁹

The paper continued to appear under the imprint of McCormick and Gemmell until 1850. The final issue under this imprint was that of 24th October 1850. The following week, it was intimated in the paper that the partnership had been dissolved, and the copyright of the paper and other assets had been sold and transferred to Thomas M Gemmell alone.⁴⁰ The impetus for this change was probably the decision of James Fergusson McCormick, the son of William and Catherine, to leave Scotland for Australia. He had been employed on the paper as a sub-editor. The paper of 31st October 1850, which contained this notice, was issued under the new imprint of Thomas M Gemmell.⁴¹

Under Gemmell’s leadership, the Advertiser grew in maturity, and assumed his personality and creeds. His, and its, political creed became Liberalism of a moderate, progressive type, developing from the Whig interests which the original paper had espoused. The paper ‘has supported all measures of reform for which it believed the country to be prepared’, but opposed, under Gemmell and his successors, the demands of the Chartists in the 1840s, and ‘certain Radical schemes in modern times which it believed to be fraught

with danger to the best interests of the Empire.’⁴² Gemmell himself had supported Whig, and then Liberal policies, and was strongly in support of Parliamentary Reform. Once he became proprietor and editor of the paper, ‘his opinions were confirmed by contact with Richard Alexander Oswald of Auchincruive, Thomas F. Kennedy of Dunure, James Campbell of Craigie, Hugh Miller – for long Provost of the Burgh of Ayr – and other leading men of enlightened and progressive ideas.’⁴³ Under Gemmell’s ‘able and spirited management’⁴⁴ the paper continued to thrive, with a great increase in circulation, and became one of the leading newspapers in the south west of Scotland.⁴⁵ Gemmell ‘could wield a trenchant pen when he was provoked, or when the discussion of any public matter called for it, but he had formed a high idea of the functions and responsibilities of journalism and studiously avoided rancorous personalities, or anything that would inflict injury or pain on individuals ... [and] never ceased to impress on his assistants the duty of exercising the utmost discretion in making statements and comments.’⁴⁶



Thomas Macmillan Gemmell

Thomas Gemmell continued the pattern set by Hamilton Paul of including literary and historical pieces, as well as straightforward news. He, himself, contributed a number of

these articles. In the view of Hugh Allan, one of the best was his record of 'A Trip to London', which appeared in a series of 14 articles between 4th June and 3rd September 1846.⁴⁷ The descriptions 'were written in a graphic, racy style which won for them great popularity.'⁴⁸ Initially, Gemmell had acted as editor and reporter, but gradually as the paper evolved into a business, and into something akin to what we recognise today as a local newspaper, more and more the paper relied on assistants, both in the print room and the front office, and an unpaid battalion of local correspondents.

One early employee was John Moore, a native of Dundonald. He had a pawky wit, not dissimilar to that of John Kelso Hunter, and his lively and humorous pieces, 'Matthew Moreland, the Moleman', were subsequently published in book form, and remained in demand long after their initial appearance in the newspaper.⁴⁹ Moore moved from the *Advertiser* in 1843 to found his own newspaper, the *Ayrshire Agriculturalist*.⁵⁰ By 1849 this had become the *North British Agriculturalist*, and relocated to Edinburgh: Moore had however previously severed his connection with it, and had emigrated to America, where he achieved distinction as a journalist in Boston.

Other journalists from the 1840s whose names have come down to us include John Willox, who was Chief Reporter around 1848-1849. He, too, had a racy humour. He moved to a post in England where one of his sons followed in his footsteps, with such success that he was knighted and became an M.P. for Liverpool.⁵¹ The 'racy humour', noted in the works of Moore and Willox, appears to have been too much for Robert Howie Smith, who was taken on by the paper as an apprentice. 'His connection with the paper, however, was brought to a premature close owing to his taking part in issuing a humorous poetical lampoon, making fun of a number of well-known citizens, and he had to finish his training elsewhere.'⁵² On the printing room floor itself we find James Johnstone, foreman, and Alexander Guthrie, shopman, both of whom are recorded in the 1845-46 Directory for Ayr.⁵³

Following James McCormick's departure for Australia in 1850, the position of sub-editor was filled by William Howie Wylie (born c.1833), who had been the *Advertiser's* correspondent in Kilmarnock. Wylie is best known for a series of sketches, entitled 'Ayrshire Streams', which were subsequently published in 1851 in book form. From Ayr, Wylie moved to journalistic posts in Nottingham and Glasgow, before becoming a Baptist Minister, and latterly founding and editing a weekly religious paper, *The Christian Leader*. Wylie was succeeded by William Smith, who came from Dundee but left after 18 months or so to become proprietor and editor of the *Whitehaven Herald*.

Smith was succeeded by Hugh Logie Allan (1835-1908). After schooling at the Newton Free Church School, Allan began work in the offices of the *Ayrshire Agriculturalist*, but on 5th March 1849 began work as a printer's devil in the *Advertiser* office.⁵⁴ He worked up to the reporters' room, becoming an assistant reporter in May 1853, and editor (under T.M. Gemmell's watchful tutelage), probably in 1858.⁵⁵ Allan was to remain as editor for almost exactly fifty years. The beginning of this period of proprietorial and editorial stability gives us an opportunity to look at changes away from the editor's chair.⁵⁶

In August 1852, the size of the paper was increased from four pages to eight. The newspaper had invested in a steam-driven Double Acting Printing Machine, which meant that the paper could now be printed more speedily, and could also be expanded, both in the number of pages, and in the size of the page.⁵⁷ The size would be ‘the size of the Times or, in other words, to the largest size allowed by Act of Parliament.’ The proprietors gave this explanation:-

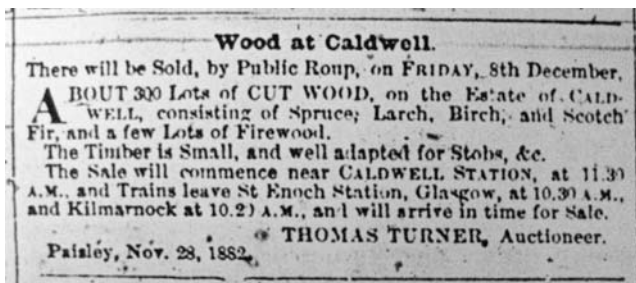
‘In being the first of the Provincial Press of Scotland to reach the maximum size - for, with the exception of the Aberdeen papers, which can scarcely be called provincial, no Scotch County paper has yet ventured on the largest sheet - we have been prompted by the consideration that at certain seasons, when advertisements are most plentiful, the space left us for General and Local Intelligence, Agricultural Information, Literature and Extracts from the Leading Journals, &c., has been quite inadequate to the growing intelligence of the Public, and to the vastly increasing importance of the interests of Ayrshire: and we venture upon the risk thus attending considerably increased annual outlay without any advance on the price of the paper, in the confident hope of a remunerative increase of Circulation. We have indeed a guarantee for this, on which we reflect with some little pride and satisfaction - that in the retrospect of a nearly completed half-century, any efforts we have made to ensure the *Ayr Advertiser* keeping pace with the spirit of the age, have always been attended by encouraging public support.’⁵⁸

Effective competition was one of the spurs: the number of newspapers competing for trade in the south west of Scotland continued to grow, while the growth of the railway network was aiding the penetration of Glasgow and Edinburgh prints. The proprietors of the *Advertiser* also admit that the monthly and quarterly magazines, with their literary articles and full reporting of political speeches, have stolen some of their thunder. By introducing into the expanded *Advertiser*, fuller political reporting and literature, coupled with local news and advertisements, they clearly were hoping to prevent a severe haemorrhage of readers.

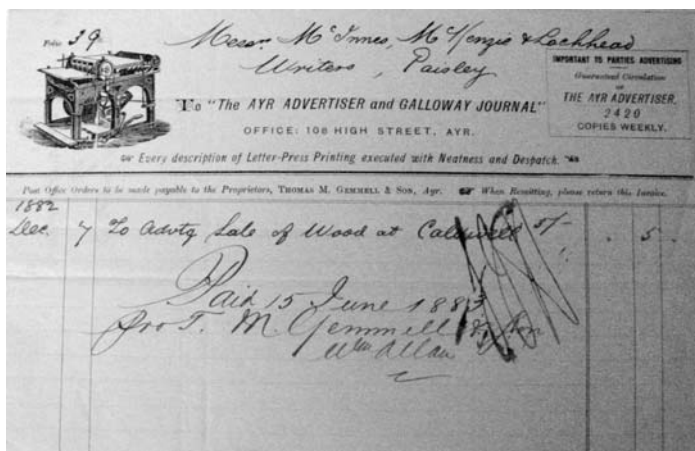
This increased competition was due in part to the prosperity of the 1850s, and changes in tax provisions. In 1853 Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, abolished advertisement duty, and, subsequently, in 1855 he abolished stamp duty, thus demolishing the two major restraints on newspaper growth. On the other hand, technical developments such as the electric telegraph enabled news to spread more quickly. The railways could bring national newspapers, with up-to-date news, quickly to every part of the country. To compete, and to compete with the growing number of other local papers, a paper such as the *Advertiser* had to find a new role, a new level to operate at. The result of these changes was a noticeable growth in the amount of local news, and a diminution of national news, especially the almost verbatim reporting of both houses of parliament.

Hugh Allan began his association with the *Advertiser* just before the advertisement tax was abolished. In his words, he began when ‘the city papers did not invade much the

province of local journals. In about two months after I entered the reporting room of the Advertiser in May 1853, the advertisement duty was abolished, and within a year or two afterwards the penny impressed stamp was done away with. This opened the door to the new journalism.' The local papers had to adapt as best they could, 'but the Advertiser held a position of its own in having a large circle of readers who depended on it for their weekly supply of general as well as local news.'⁵⁹



Advertisement for sale of wood at Caldwell, Ayr Advertiser 7th December 1882



Invoice for advertising sale of wood at Caldwell (private collection)

Through the latter half of the 19th Century, the Advertiser continually widened its scope, and the range of contributors to whom it looked for copy. Many of the local or parish correspondents were notable, within their own communities, in their own right. These included John Kerr, originally the schoolmaster at Dalry, who completed his career as H.M. Chief Inspector of Schools for Scotland; Provost McCreath of Girvan; and a host of ministers and landed proprietors. There were also the poets, such as Sarah Parker ('The

Irish Girl', 1824-1881), John Ramsay (1802-1879) and Ebenezer Smith (1835-1910). The agricultural editor for over forty years was James Drennan (c.1818-1892), a practical farmer and land valuer, who championed many agricultural improvements through the pages of the *Advertiser*.⁶⁰ In the advertising columns, the highlights for many years of the early 19th Century were the weekly 'effusions' in verse of the Kilmarnock draper and Chartist politician, Hugh Craig (1795-1858).

Under Hugh Allan's editorship, there was a succession of assistants and reporters. These included William McIlwraith (died 1914), who left for Australia, where he rose to be proprietor of the *Rockhampton Bulletin* in Queensland⁶¹; Arthur Morgan (c.1841-1904), who exchanged a career in journalism for a post as the Burgh Registrar for Ayr;⁶² Thomas Brown who died c.1895; and Thomas Kay, who ultimately succeeded Allan as editor.⁶³ William R Mackintosh left the *Advertiser* in 1877 to become the editor of *The Orcadian* in Kirkwall, and was also the proprietor of that paper from 1895 until his death in February 1918.⁶⁴

On the shop floor there was David Murray Lyon (c.1819-1903). Lyon served his apprenticeship with the *Advertiser*, beginning c.1831, before spending a short time in Edinburgh and 7 years in Aberdeen. In 1847 he was invited by Thomas Gemmell to return to the *Advertiser* as foreman printer, and he remained with the paper until 1877. During his time with the paper, he developed his literary and research skills, beginning with a national prize-winning essay on the Sabbath in 1850. He used his diligent research skills in town and kirk records to produce articles for the paper, as well as various Masonic histories, culminating in a well-received history of the Order in Scotland in 1873. In 1877 he was, in modern parlance, 'headhunted', and appointed as Grand Secretary to the Freemasons of Scotland, a post he held until he retired in 1901. A projected history of Ayr never materialised, due to the pressures of his duties once he moved to Edinburgh after his appointment as Grand Secretary.⁶⁵

During Allan's long occupation of the editor's chair, there were changes in the ownership of the newspaper. With the issue of 12th November 1874 the business became known as T. M. Gemmell & Son. It was Thomas Gemmell's second son, Alexander Bell Gemmell, who took on the family newspaper business. Initially, as a young man, he went to Australia, and tried his hand at sheep farming, but he returned to Ayr in 1871, and joined the family business. Thomas Macmillan Gemmell slowly withdrew from active involvement, finally ceased to have a formal link with the paper in 1880, but continuing to be looked upon as an *eminence gris* until his death on 12th September 1889.

Gemmell had 'imposed his individuality upon the paper, which prospered under his care, and his name became familiar throughout the county as of one whose opinions were of weight and influence.'⁶⁶ His obituarist (probably Hugh Allan) goes on to say that,

It is hardly for us to pass judgement on Mr Gemmell's qualities as a writer and newspaper manager. But in justice to his memory we may be allowed to say that he always set up for himself and those associated with a high ideal of the responsibilities of a journalist. In especial he studied to secure perfect accuracy in matters of fact, and avoided, as far as it was possible to avoid, the publication of things calculated to injure or give pain

to individuals; and he was careful to exclude all that was unsuitable for reading in the family circle. He maintained at all times the independence of his paper, and refused to be the mouth-piece of any clique or coterie.⁶⁷

Away from the newspaper, Gemmell's main interests lay in public service, including membership of Ayr Burgh Council and the Commissioners of Supply for Ayrshire. He was particularly interested in the Ragged and Industrial School movement, and took a particularly close interest in the progress of the Ragged School in Ayr, helping it develop from a single storey house in Cross Street, Wallacetown, to the purpose-built School at Commonhead. His chief sporting interest was field sports, and for many years he owned a hunting estate, Knockdhu, in the southern part of the county.⁶⁸



Alexander Bell Gemmell

Thomas Gemmell is the one person who has done most to ensure that the *Ayr Advertiser* of the 19th Century can be regarded as one of the best local newspapers in Scotland of that period, and his conduct and management of the paper, as a business, ensured that it was sufficiently strong to survive his death, and to prosper into the next century. He was, of course, well served by his editor, Hugh Allan. The *Advertiser* is, essentially, the creation of these two literate, interested and publicly-minded men.

A.B. Gemmell had assumed full management control in 1880, became sole proprietor after his father's death, and remained at the head of the business until his death in 1900, at the relatively early age of 53. Alexander Gemmell is characterised as 'rather retiring'; with regard to the conduct of the newspaper 'he has ... carried on mainly on the lines laid down by his father.'⁶⁹ The strength of the paper at his father's death, and the presence of the sterling Hugh Allan as editor, ensured that the paper continued to thrive during what seems to have been the essentially hands-off ownership of A. B. Gemmell.

The early years of the 20th Century also marked the end of Hugh Allan's reign as editor, with his death on 19th March 1908. For the last ten years of his life, and his editorship, Allan was totally blind, and relied on having the *Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* read to him each morning.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Allan's long period at the helm had ensured that the *Advertiser* was a paper of true quality. For a long period he and the paper were synonymous: his obituary spoke at length of the qualities which he brought to the post, and which have meant subsequently that Allan's *Advertiser* has remained of such value to local and national historians:

To the *Advertiser* he devoted the best that was in him. His qualifications were admirably suited to his work. As a reporter he had the perceptive sense highly developed. Amid the apparently interminable talk of a public meeting he could always be relied upon to keep hold of the main thread of discussion, to sort out the grain from the chaff, and to present to the public a concise, readable and informative record of the business. He was indeed in this sense more than a reporter: he was a photographer, if the term may be allowed. So was it with all branches of reporting work. His alert mind was quick to perceive the relative importance of things and to deal with them accordingly. In the higher branches of journalistic work also he was eminently successful. As a writer discharging the duty of public criticism of men and affairs he was actuated by the highest sense of public spirit and justice. His judgment was rarely at fault, his appreciation of the pros and cons of public question never.⁷¹

The obituarist (probably Thomas Kay) goes on to suggest that, occasionally, from a desire not to offend, Allan was less critical than he could have been. In his later years he contributed much to the paper on various aspects of the history of, particularly, Ayr. His 'Ayr Fifty Years Ago and Since' remains a standard source for study of the town in the mid 19th Century. The obituarist regrets that he could never be persuaded to go further and complete a history of Ayr, but 'he could not be induced to [do so], and the town and district is to-day poorer than it might have been.'⁷²

A. B. Gemmell was succeeded by his nephew, T. C. Dunlop, but the business continued under the firm name of T. M. Gemmell & Son.⁷³ Thomas Charles Dunlop (1878-1960) was the son of William Hamilton Dunlop and his wife, Janette McCracken Gemmell, the youngest of Thomas Gemmell's four daughters. W.H. Dunlop was a solicitor and bank agent, as well as the proprietor of the estate of Doonside, at Alloway. It was through his exertions that the Monument Trustees were able to acquire Burns' Cottage from

the Shoemakers Incorporation of Ayr. However, it was his son, Thomas Charles, who took possession of the *Ayr Advertiser* following the death of the unmarried A. B. Gemmell in 1900. According to Dunlop himself, he joined the paper on 1st April 1900.⁷⁴ At that time he was the youngest newspaper proprietor in Scotland, while Hugh Allan was the oldest editor of any newspaper in Great Britain.⁷⁵ During his long period of ownership he acquired the *Ayr Observer* in 1909. While he was able to leave the running of the paper to two long-serving editors, Hugh Allan and Thomas Kay, Dunlop 'carried on the liaison between the business and the affairs of the county. With his interest in so many activities, especially in the sporting sphere, the newspaper became closely related to various sections of the community.'⁷⁶ He remained as sole proprietor of the paper until June 1938, when the business was transformed into a limited company, T. M. Gemmell & Son Ltd., with Brevet-Colonel Thomas Charles Dunlop, of Sauchrie, Maybole, and William Herbert Dunlop, CA, of Airthrey, Corsehill Road, Ayr, as directors. The company was established with a capital of £15,000 in £1 shares, and acquired the assets of T.M. Gemmell & Son, including the copyright of the *Ayr Advertiser*, and the assets of the *Ayr Observer* Co.⁷⁷



Thomas Charles Dunlop

Under Dunlop's proprietorship, the politics of the paper drifted rightward. The Liberal Unionists became part of a resurgent Conservative and Unionist Party, and the paper

generally took the view of that party. Dunlop's obituary⁷⁸ makes little of his involvement with the newspaper. Instead, it concentrates on his sporting interests and abilities. First and foremost he was a cricketer (a wicketkeeper), and played for Scotland on a number of occasions. He captained Ayr Cricket Club for 30 years, stepping down in 1939 at the age of 61. He was also a keen racing sportsman, both as an owner and a rider, and treasurer of the Western Meeting Club from 1934 until 1960. He also played rugby for West of Scotland, and ice hockey for Ayr Doonside. He had the only squash court in Ayr, and was also a golfer, curler and huntsman: he had been both a former Captain of Prestwick Golf Club and a former Master of Foxhounds with the Eglinton Hunt.

Hugh Allan was succeeded by Thomas Kay, who had been assistant editor since 1895. Kay started his career on the *Ayr Observer*, and then spent some years at the *Ayrshire Post*, 'but escaped before it had time to develop my opinions on wrong lines.'⁷⁹ Kay died in December 1937, at the age of 64. Born c.1873 in Glasgow, but educated in Ayr, Kay initially intended to train as a schoolteacher, but began his working career in the offices of the Ayr builders, J & D Meikle. He quickly moved into journalism, firstly with the *Ayrshire Post*, before a brief period with a newspaper at Dewsbury, Yorkshire. He returned to Ayr, and to a post with the *Ayr Advertiser*. From 1904 he was effectively editor, as Allan's blindness prevented him regularly attending the office. Kay was 'a capable journalist, with a wide knowledge of men and affairs, and gifted with a facile pen, his writing was marked by fearless and independent criticism, and he played an important part in the formation of public opinion on local affairs.' In his youth a footballer with Ayr Parkhouse, in his latter days he was a regular at Somerset Park, and was also the Scottish racing correspondent for the *Glasgow Herald*.⁸⁰ Over the 79 years from 1858 to 1937 the editor's chair at the *Advertiser* was occupied by only two men – Hugh Allan and Thomas Kay. This long period of stability probably marks defines the period at which the *Advertiser* was at its best, coinciding as it does with the period during which local newspapers bore their greatest power and influence.

The editor's chair was next held, briefly, by John McCartney (c.1869-1944). He retired as editor of the *Ayr Advertiser* in March 1938. He had had 50 years in the newspaper business. He began as an apprentice on the *Ayrshire Post*, where he was under William Robertson, the journalist and historian, and the chief reporter, James McBain.⁸¹ From the Post he moved to the *Ayr Observer*, rising in time to be its editor, before coming to the *Advertiser* after the *Observer* was closed down in 1930. At a presentation to mark McCartney's retirement, his local rival, John Ferguson Macnair, editor of the *Ayrshire Post*, referred to his fellow journalists' respect for him. He could say this because he knew when he worked on the *Glasgow Herald*, that every story that came from John McCartney would be accurate, correct down to the last comma, and all they had to do was pass it on to the compositors.⁸² McCartney enjoyed six years of retirement before his death in September 1944.⁸³

Following T C (Sir Charles following the award of a knighthood in 1955) Dunlop's death in 1960, chairmanship of the firm passed to his second son, William H. (Billy) Dunlop (1907-1982). Billy Dunlop had joined the business in a managerial capacity in 1935, and became managing director of T.M. Gemmell & Son Ltd after he returned from military

service in the Second World War. Billy Dunlop retired from active involvement in the business on his 65th birthday in 1972.



William H. (Billy) Dunlop

During Billy Dunlop's period as managing director, the newspaper celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1953. The edition of the *Ayr Advertiser* for 6th August 1953 made much of this, and has been of considerable use in preparing this article. Much of the material in that paper came from a celebratory booklet produced for the paper by one of its staff, Hugh McGhee, with assistance from five pupils at Ayr Academy: J Winnerah, A Smith, F K Young, D B Young and D McCallum. At the obligatory celebratory dinner, Billy Dunlop thanked them for 'a very fine job of work'; 'they had delved into the old files and had produced a very fine booklet'.⁸⁴ The dinner was also treated to a film showing the production of the paper, 'Thro' Our Pen', made by George Crockett, assistant manager at the Gaumont.⁸⁵

John McCartney had been succeeded as editor in 1938 by George Goodfellow (1887-1967). Goodfellow retired in September 1953, shortly after the 150th anniversary celebrations.⁸⁶ The son of an estate worker, who came to Alloway from the Roxburghshire estates of the Earl of Minto, he had joined the *Advertiser* in 1903 as an office-boy, and had

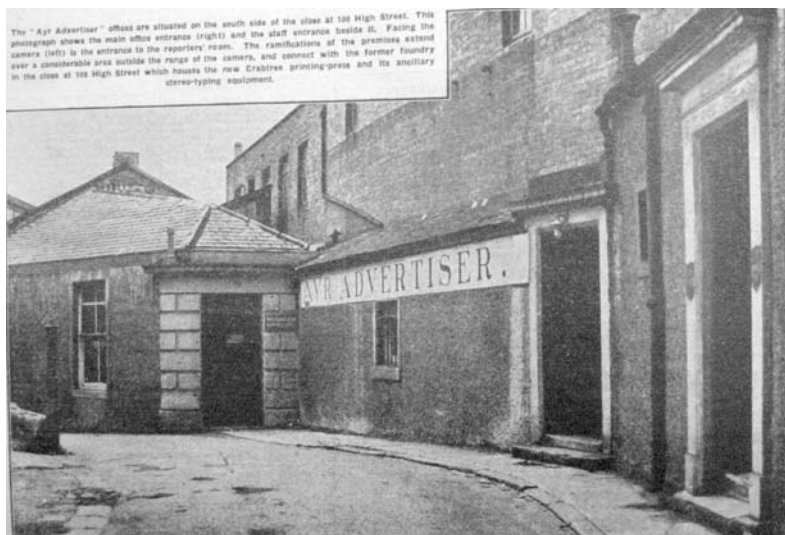
worked his way up, by assiduity and a capacity for hard work, to become editor, and also a director of T.M. Gemmell & Son Ltd.⁸⁷ Goodfellow had, of course, been editor of the paper during the Second World War, when the press, generally, had had to deal with paper shortages and news censorship. Working with Billy Dunlop, Goodfellow had overseen considerable changes in the character of the paper, changes designed to make the paper entirely local. One of the biggest changes he had overseen had been the decision to put news on the front page: the first issue to be published in this format was that of 17th April 1941. Other changes had been the introduction of photographs, taken and developed by the paper's own staff, a change to a smaller size of paper, and more prominence given to headlines and sub headings. In 1953 it was considered that the policy had paid a handsome dividend, for whereas the circulation in 1935 had been around 4000, by 1949 it had topped the 15,000 mark.⁸⁸



George Goodfellow

Towards the end of Goodfellow's period in the editor's chair, the company had appointed an assistant (and prospective) editor: much like the concept of 'Assistant and Successor' used in the Church of Scotland. The contract of the first of these had, however, not been renewed, and in 1953 George Donaldson was appointed to the post, and shortly afterwards succeeded Goodfellow as editor. A native of Kirkcaldy, Donaldson had worked

on a variety of papers, beginning in 1925 on the *Fifeshire Advertiser*, and had also studied the technical side of newspaper production at Heriot Watt College, Edinburgh. He came to the *Advertiser* from *The Scotsman*. It had been his ambition to edit a paper, and the post in Ayr fulfilled that ambition: however, relations between him and Billy Dunlop, the managing director, were soured by Donaldson's insistence on a sub-editor, against Dunlop's cost-cutting objectives, and George Donaldson resigned from the paper in the spring of 1956.⁸⁹



The "Ayr Advertiser" offices are situated on the south side of the close at 100 High Street. This photograph shows the main office entrance (right) and the staff entrance (middle). Facing the camera (left) is the entrance to the reporters' room. The ramifications of the premises extend over a considerable area outside the range of the camera, and connect with the former foundry in the close at 100 High Street which houses the new Crabtree printing-press and its auxiliary stereo-typing equipment.

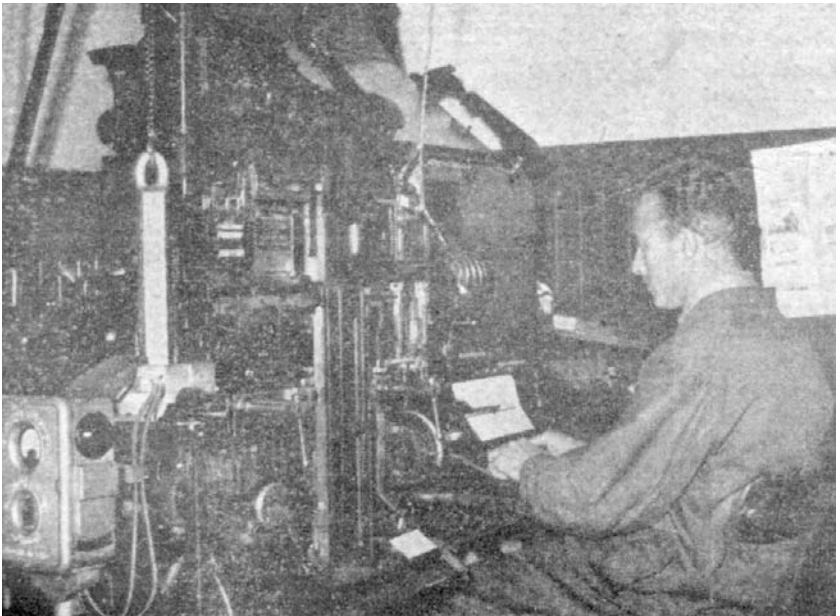
Advertiser premises in the close at 100 High Street, Ayr

Donaldson was succeeded by Stanley Ian Hughes Smith. Ian Smith was born in Troon and educated at Cambusdoon and Glenalmond, and had been on the editorial staff of the *Advertiser* for nearly four years before becoming editor. Smith was a successful editor, and increased the circulation of the paper. He had, however, to face the same issues, economic and managerial, that Donaldson had struggled with, and in May 1962 he left the paper, and took a post in the press division of I.C.I. Smith's successor was William (Billy) Hannah, a native of Ayr. Hannah had been on the staff of the *Advertiser* since 1950, with a break for National Service. He had been the Sports Editor since 1955 and, under the pen-name 'Carrick Hill', was a knowledgeable and enthusiastic reporter of affairs at Somerset Park. His *Ayr United Story* was first published in weekly instalments in the paper and subsequently in book form.⁹⁰

Billy Hannah, too, eventually fell from favour. In 1965 he was involved in a lengthy dispute over pension rights, and in the following year he obtained a post with one of I.C.I.'s in-house magazines. He was based on Tees-side, while Ian Smith's post with the company had taken him to Birmingham. Hannah later returned to Ayrshire in a very different guise, as the parish minister at Muirkirk.⁹¹

The editor in the late 1960s was John Woodburn, but he left c.1969. He was succeeded, briefly, by Adam Stewart, who was also the company accountant. He resigned from the editor's chair in the summer of 1971, and was replaced by Jim Robb. Robb had been with the paper since 1967, when he had joined the company fresh from schooling at Belmont Academy.

From Billy Dunlop, control passed in turn to his son, Michael Dunlop, who had the doubtful privilege of overseeing the sale of paper to a larger, and non-local organisation, for in March 1974 the newspaper passed from private ownership, when it was acquired by Fred Johnston & Sons Ltd.



One of the company's 5 linotype machines in 1953

Johnstons, who were based in Falkirk, had previously acquired other weekly papers in Ayrshire, including the venerable *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* and the *Cumnock Chronicle*. Behind this change in ownership, lay major changes in newspaper production. Hot metal printing was being eliminated, and replaced by web offset printing. This meant that fewer employees were needed on the print floor, while the cost and power of the new presses meant that they could, and needed to be, used for six or seven days a week, and not sit idle for six days, as the old presses had. This meant either sharing a press, or the concentration of titles in fewer and fewer hands. There was little room for sentiment in this business: T.M. Gemmill & Son had themselves acquired the *Carrick Herald* in 1972, almost immediately transferring the printing of the paper to Ayr. At the same time, they were already in negotiations with Fred Johnston & Sons, trying to establish a deal whereby

the *Advertiser* and the newly-acquired *Herald* would be printed in Ardrossan on the new web offset machinery which Johnstons had installed at Ardrossan shortly after acquiring the business of Arthur Guthrie & Sons Ltd. The *Carrick Herald* was printed at Ardrossan from 9th February 1973. Michael Dunlop could perhaps see that it was always going to be a struggle to maintain the independence and the viability of the two newspapers, and the following year the papers were sold to Johnstons.⁹²

The titles, now printed in Ardrossan, remained in the ownership of Fred Johnston & Co Ltd until November 1984, when the Ayrshire business was sold to David Campbell, who had previously worked for Scottish & Universal Newspapers Ltd, and was then chief executive of Clyde Cablevision Ltd. Under Campbell the name of the company was changed from Arthur Guthrie & Sons Ltd to West Independent Newspapers Ltd. The *Ayr Advertiser* was now just a component of a much larger organisation.

Under West Independent, further centralisation took place. The printing of their seven Ayrshire titles, including the *Ayr Advertiser* and the *Carrick Herald*, was transferred to a printing works at Greenock, outwith the county.⁹³ The titles were subsequently acquired by Romanes, a Fife-based business, owners of the *Dunfermline Press*, and were acquired from them by Clyde and Forth Press Ltd, the present owners. The *Ayr Advertiser* is presently printed at the News International printing plant at Kinning Park, Glasgow.

Jim Robb, who had become editor in 1971, was still the editor when the Dunlops sold the business to Fred Johnston & Co., and he remained as editor for 15 years, before resigning in 1986.⁹⁴ For a period of 12 to 18 months the editor was Ian Ferguson; Ferguson was succeeded by Richard Walker, who remained for 3 or 4 years.⁹⁵ Following Walker's departure, the chair was, for the first time, occupied by a woman, Ann Galbraith. Galbraith's career had begun on the *Ayrshire Post*, and her earlier experiences in the *Advertiser* group of papers had included a spell editing the *Carrick Herald*. To Galbraith has fallen the honour of being the editor during the 200th anniversary celebrations.

An editorial, presumably by George Goodfellow, at the time of the 150th Anniversary concluded with these words:

Today, therefore, the *Advertiser*, with all due modesty and thankfulness, pushes out its chest on a memorable occasion. Its directors claim, and with good reason, that it has during its century and a half of existence performed a useful function and exerted a wholesome influence. They realise the debt they owe to many readers and contributors down through the years. Editing a provincial newspaper such as the *Advertiser* is not always easy. Reasonable dignity has to be maintained and yet the newspaper must advance with the times. Offence cannot fail to be given to some, but it has been the aim, and will be in years to come, to present news for its readers with fairness. In this much perplexed world the future cannot easily be visualised but we hope, by adapting the newspaper to changing conditions, that in time it will reach its 200th birthday and that it will then be able to claim that it has held its place and with an unsullied reputation. The *Advertiser* must always be a newspaper which can be read by young and old without having the minds of its readers polluted by the reading of it.⁹⁶

The sale of the newspaper business does not quite conclude the story of T.M. Gemmell & Son. After 1974, the printing works at 100 High Street continued to do jobbing printing, with a particular speciality in race cards, reflecting one of the leisure interests of the Dunlop family.⁹⁷ The High Street site was sold for redevelopment,⁹⁸ and the company moved to new premises in Whitfield Drive. However, it failed to thrive in the era of desk top publishing and photocopying. In September 1985 the liquidators were called in, and the business of T.M. Gemmell & Son Ltd ceased to trade, with debts estimated at £140,000.

APPENDIX 1: THE BURNS PRESS CHAIR

The issue of the *Advertiser* that records the death of John Wilson also records the death, aged 75, of Walter Graham, who had been Wilson's pressman for more than 40 years. According to his obituary, Graham had worked the first printing press brought into Ayrshire, presumably that of Peter McArthur, and had, it seems, continued to work the press after it was sold by McArthur to Wilson.⁹⁹ Graham's claim to fame was, of course, that he had set and printed the 'Kilmarnock Edition', but he must also have had a hand in the setting and printing of the first editions of the *Air Advertiser*.

The press which Graham had worked, and for which he had been the first in Kilmarnock to dampen paper at a mill-dam, moved to Ayr when the Wilsons rationalised their businesses, and was used to print the early editions of the *Advertiser*. It was, however, soon replaced by a speedier and more efficient machine.

It then presumably lingered in the premises of the *Advertiser* until, in 1859, as a method of celebrating the centenary of Burns' birth, the then proprietor of the paper, Thomas M Gemmell, decided that the press should be converted into an arm chair. Through the pages of his paper, Gemmell announced that the press had never been out of the possession of the successive owners of the paper and, the framework being of fine old oak, he was going to turn it into something ornamental and useful.

'It is being converted by Messrs Wilson & Co., upholsterers, Ayr, into an antique drawing-room chair. The seat and part of the back is of Utrecht velvet. As much of the ornament as was admissible has been worked up in objects illustrative of the Poet's writings.' The chair arms were representative of the 'Twa Dogs', and had been based on drawing made by Mr Robertson, animal painter, Glasgow. On the back, ivy-twined pillars were capped with carvings of Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnny. 'The under part of the back is stuffed, but higher up is the form of a medallion, on which is engraved on wood the scene of Meg and Tam o' Shanter on the keystone of the Auld Brig. Surmounting all, and relieved by thistle and holly leaf carving, rises a miniature bust of Burns, after Nasmyth's picture, carved on wood from a clay model by Mr Harvey, of Ayr, who also made the drawings for the witches' chase on the Auld Brig. Underneath the bust of Burns will be a small silver shield, with lines engraved from the Vision.'

Not everyone felt that Gemmell's approach had been the correct one. One David Blair, who had been an apprentice on the *Advertiser*, and had known Walter Graham, felt that sending the press to a museum would have been preferable: Gemmell rebutted this in forthright terms in his editorial column in the paper. The chair was used by the chairman, Sir James Fergusson of Kilkerran, at the Burns Centenary Festival in the County Buildings, Ayr. His grandson, in 1953, thanking the paper for a copy of the celebratory booklet of that year, said 'I never realised before ... that my grandfather once occupied that peculiarly hideous chair made out of the Wilsons' old printing press.' Following Thomas M Gemmell's death in 1889, the chair was presented by his family to the Trustees of the Burns Monument, and it has been one of the bigger attractions at Burns Cottage Museum ever since.¹⁰⁰

The links between the *Ayr Advertiser* and the Burns properties at Alloway remained strong, due in large part to the interest of the Dunlop family, who lived at Doonside, in both. At the celebratory dinner held to commemorate 150 years of the paper in 1953, the grace was said by Thomas McMynn, the almost legendary custodian of Burns Cottage, who was a former employee of the *Ayr Advertiser*.¹⁰¹



The Burns Press Chair

APPENDIX 2: THE AYR NEW BRIDGE PLAQUE

Whether it was Robert Adam or Alexander Steven who designed the first New Bridge at Ayr, this much is certain: when it was built, it incorporated a number of carved representations of the arms of the Royal Burgh of Ayr. These were dispersed when the bridge was demolished and replaced by the present New Bridge in 1877. One of them came into the possession of James M Ferguson, the enterprising owner of the *Ayr Observer*. For the best part of twenty years it presumably lay in Ferguson's garden. However, in 1896, when new premises were built for the *Observer* in Smith Street, this carved stone was incorporated in the frontage of the new works.

The stone remained at these works until 1956, when the works of the *Observer* and the *Advertiser* were amalgamated, under Billy Dunlop, at 100 High Street. The stone was brought from Smith Street, and placed above the door of the reporters' room. Following the demolition of 100 High Street, the stone migrated with the business to Whitfield Drive, where it lay unused and undisplayed, until the business closed in 1985. At this time, the stone was rescued by Andrew Shearer, and moved to the gardens of the Burns Monument at Alloway, where it has been made a feature of the rose garden.¹⁰²



The Ayr New Bridge Plaque

APPENDIX 3: AYR OBSERVER

The *Ayr Observer* was founded in 1832 to provide a Conservative alternative to the Whig or Liberal views expressed in the *Air Advertiser*. As noted above, a previous attempt to meet this market, the *Ayr and Wigtownshire Courier*, begun in 1818, had failed by 1825. The *Observer* was welcomed by William McCarter in his 1832 Ayr Directory:

It has been a matter of astonishment that a county such as Ayrshire, rising in wealth and commercial consequence, has not been able successfully to maintain two newspapers. This *desideratum* is now likely to be supplied and, if properly encouraged, the county, if saddled with double advertisements, will have the satisfaction of at least hearing two sides of a story.

The *Observer* was initially edited by John Foster Fraser (1797-1859), who had previously been based in Edinburgh.¹⁰³ As a deliberately Conservative alternative to the *Advertiser*, the *Observer* flourished and ‘captured the old landed families for its readers.’¹⁰⁴ Fraser was succeeded as editor by James Paterson, who held the position from 1839¹⁰⁵ until 1846: during Paterson’s period in the editor’s chair the paper’s Conservatism was less uncompromising, and Paterson, in later years, took pride from the paper’s coverage of events such as the Eglinton Tournament (1839) and the 1844 Burns Festival.¹⁰⁶

By 1839, when Paterson became editor, there were five proprietors of the *Observer*, and ‘chiefly from mismanagement, [it] had fallen very low – so low, that several of the proprietors sold out.’¹⁰⁷ Originally there had been eight co-proprietors, but three of them had sold their shares to John Dick (1792-1860: a brother of Maxwell Dick) who by 1839 held five of the eight shares; he was also the printer of the paper. Dick, as the leading proprietor, and with a steady editor in Paterson, was able to oversee a period during which the paper matured, with a stable circulation, and clear policies. After 7 years, Paterson left:

Having passed about seven years of the best part of my life in connection with the *Observer*, I resolved at last to leave it. My salary, which began with £80 a year was, in time, augmented to £100, and latterly to £120; but this was more nominal than real. Every one said my salary should be greater; even the proprietors said so themselves; and I believe they were in earnest when they promised; but always something untoward occurred to prevent them fulfilling their intention. My successors were by no means permanent. The *Observer* company was greatly troubled and annoyed in this respect. The circumstances may be accounted for by the fact that they did not pay a proper salary. They erred, too, in the treatment of the new-comers. The proprietors were socially inclined; and it was customary for them to invite the new editor to dinner at their respective houses. Of course, it was expected that the editor should repeat the compliment to them and their friends; but this could not be done upon £80, or £100 a-year. Hence the editor came to be ultimately thrown out of the circle.¹⁰⁸

Following Paterson's departure in 1846, a succession of editors worked under Dick including Scott Henderson, who later ran the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, and, from at least 1851, the 'brilliant but erratic' William Glen. Followed Glen's departure in 1857, Dick re-appointed William Buchanan, formerly the minister of Kilmaurs, as editor.¹⁰⁹ Buchanan was a belligerent editor: he appears to have resented an earlier slight on him made by the *Advertiser*, and during his tenure the *Observer* regularly carried articles and editorials attacking the *Ayr Advertiser*.¹¹⁰ These differences were, of course, partly political, but were also due to Buchanan's forthright nature and personal animosity to the *Advertiser*.¹¹¹

John Dick died in August 1860,¹¹² and was succeeded by his son William Maxwell Dick..

By 1870 ownership of the *Observer* had passed from the Dick family to James M. Ferguson. Originally published on Tuesday, under Ferguson the *Observer* became for a period a bi-weekly paper, with a second edition appearing on Saturdays. However, as the *Ayrshire Post*, formed to advocate the Liberal interest in the county, grew and prospered, especially after it was re-launched in 1890, the *Observer* declined, reverting to appearing weekly.¹¹³

The offices of the *Observer* moved about considerably. Initially they were in New Bridge Street, but c.1860 they were moved to Sandgate, and again, c.1870, and probably coincidentally with the change of ownership, from Sandgate to Newmarket Street. About 1887 new premises for the paper were built at the foot of Kyle Street,¹¹⁴ but in 1896 the paper's offices were moved again, this time to Smith Street.

In 1909 the interests of the *Ayr Observer* were acquired from Ferguson by Colonel T.C. Dunlop, and merged with T.M. Gemmell & Son. The *Observer* continued to appear as a weekly newspaper until the final issue on 28th October 1930. During this period, Colonel Dunlop was given valuable assistance by Miss Ferguson, the manageress of the paper, the daughter of James M Ferguson. The last editor of the *Observer* was John McCartney, who was transferred to the *Advertiser*, and eventually became, briefly, editor of that paper. [See above] The printing works in Smith Street were maintained and used for general commercial and jobbing printing.

In 1956, as we have seen, the general printing business was brought under the same roof at 100 High Street as the newspaper business. The premises were sold; the first subsequent owner appears to have been John J Inglis & Sons, seed merchants.

APPENDIX 4: CARRICK HERALD

The *Carrick Herald* had been started in 1909, by Hugh Wallace, stationer, of 23 Dalrymple Street, Girvan. The second son of Archibald Wallace, a stationer in Saltcoats, he had presumably moved to Girvan to start, or acquire an existing printing business. He continued the paper until the First World War, when after persistent efforts, he was finally accepted for military service in January 1917. However, in France he developed a chest infection, and died on 31st August 1917.

The paper was acquired from Wallace's heirs in 1920 by Thomas Gourlay, a native of Muirkirk who had established his printing business in Girvan c.1904. Gourlay ran the paper until 16th January 1934, when, attending a funeral in Dunure, he and his car fell into the water of Dunure Harbour. 53-year-old Gourlay was dead before he could be released from the car.¹¹⁵

Ownership of the paper passed to his son, David Gourlay, who had already become associated with his father in the business, but was at that time a footballer with the Glasgow team, Petershill Juniors. David Gourlay remained as owner until 1972, when he sold the title to Thomas M Gemmell & Son Ltd.

1 I am heavily indebted to a number of sources. The 100th and 150th anniversaries of the paper were also occasions for celebratory comment. Hugh Allan's article in the *Ayr Advertiser* of Thursday 6th August 1903, 4efg, has been especially useful. The *Ayr Advertiser* of Thursday 6th August 1953 also contains much material, as well as a number of photographs of the printing works at 100 High Street. Personal communications from Bob Blane and Jim Robb have helped enormously with the recent past, and I am very grateful to them for their assistance. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Carnegie Library, Ayr, and the Baird Institute, Cumnock, for their help and assistance in the preparation of this article. Also particularly relevant have been John Ferguson Macnair, 'Newspapers', in Annie I Dunlop, ed., *The Royal Burgh of Ayr*, Edinburgh, 1953, 279-284, and Carreen S Gardner, *Printing in Ayr and Kilmarnock*, Ayr, 1976. The wider picture is less well covered. William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland*, Aberdeen, 1986, has much interesting material on Scottish newspapers in the late 19th Century, but its specific examples are mainly from the north-east.

2 The *Kelso Mail* ceased to exist as a separate entity in 1934 when it merged with the *Kelso Chronicle* to form the *Border Counties & Kelso Chronicle and Mail*. [<http://prodigi.bl.uk/nlcat>, seen 25th September 2003]

3 McArthur removed to Paisley, where he was still in business as a printer in 1798. [Scottish Book Trade Index, www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti, seen 25th September 2003]

4 This section on John Wilson relies heavily on Frances M Thomson, 'John Wilson, an Ayrshire printer, publisher and bookseller', in *Bibliothek*, vol 5, no.2 (1967), 41-61.

5 Thomson, 'John Wilson', 43.

6 'John Wilson, printer' was made a Burgess and Guild Brother of Ayr in October 1790; Peter Wilson was made a Burgess in December 1791, becoming a Guild Brother in September 1804. [Alistair Lindsay and Jean Kennedy, *The Burgesses and Guild Brethren of Ayr 1647-1846*, Ayr, 2002, 187, 188 and 194.]

7 Thomson, 'John Wilson', 43. In 1860 James Paterson had in his possession a letter from Peter Wilson to Hamilton Paul, dated 14th July 1803, regarding the proposed publication of one of Paul's sermons, in which Wilson says: 'were you to print it, we would like it out of hands before the 27th [July], when we engage with our paper.' [See James Paterson, 'Historical Notes of the Newspaper Press of the County of Ayr' in *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, Saturday 1st December 1860, 2d.]

8 James Gibson, *The Bibliography of Robert Burns*, Kilmarnock, 1881, 300.

9 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 26th July 1804, 1a.

10 As we shall see, the name of the paper was not changed from *Ayr Advertiser* to *Ayr Advertiser* until 1839.

11 Hugh Logie Allan, 'Centenary of the "Ayr Advertiser"', in *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1903, 4e.

12 'The Publishers are sorry to announce to their Readers, that owing to the additional duty imposed by Government, they are under the disagreeable necessity of making a small advance on the price of their Journal. From a principle of gratitude to their respectable Subscribers, they are solicitous that the pressure should prove as light as possible; accordingly the proposed rise, as may be seen from the Title, will be so trifling as to be scarcely felt by any who are desirous of still honouring with their countenance a Provincial Register of passing Events, which, for a dozen of years, has been favoured with an extensive circulation.' [*Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 7th September 1815, 4b]

13 Thomson, op cit, 48-49.

- 14 *Air Advertiser*, Thursday 26th April 1810, 4a, quoted in Thomson, 'John Wilson', 45.
- 15 *Air Advertiser*, Thursday 28th June 1810, 4d. The same paper also refers to the recent death of James Chalmers, who had edited the *Aberdeen Journal* for the previous 46 years.
- 16 John Macintosh, *The Poets of Ayrshire*, Dumfries, [1910], 163-4.
- 17 My thanks to Bobby Logan, Kilmarnock, for this information.
- 18 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 9th March 1854, 4d.
- 19 It is said, as an example of his wit, that when Paul was leaving Ayr, he gave a farewell evening sermon to the young ladies of the town, taking as his text, 'And they all wept sore and fell upon Paul's neck'. (Acts, xx, 37) (John Macintosh, *The Poets of Ayrshire*, Dumfries, [1910], 163) The full verse concludes 'and kissed him.'
- 20 Thomson, 'John Wilson', 45-46.
- 21 His obituary, in the *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday, 9th March 1854, 4d, says that 'few men in his position in life enjoyed a more extensive acquaintance than Mr. Paul. Hospitable, kind and charitable to a fault, he was the friend alike of rich and poor; while the ease of his manner, the variety and extent of his information, the readiness and point of his wit, attracted men of taste and learning from all quarters.' Of Paul's poetry the obituarist wrote: 'Volumes might be filled with selections from Mr. Paul's poetical compositions. They are to be found scattered over magazines, reviews, and newspapers, for upwards of sixty years. He wrote on every kind of subject, and in every species of measure. His compositions are characterised by great elegance, but they exhibit versatility of talent and facility of versification rather than capacity to reach the higher flights of poetry', while his sermons 'were not of the kind calculated to attract the million. His manner was calm and unimpassioned – his composition chaste and elegant, and abounding with touches of great beauty. His sermons exhibited extensive learning and singular originality of thought; but occasionally his eccentric genius led him to utter opinions and to support them by illustrations, however abstractedly correct, which verged upon the ludicrous and weakened the general effect of his discourse.' Hamilton Paul's sister May was the grandmother of the Kilmarnock poet Marion Paul Aird (1815-1888) (See *Ayrshire Notes*, 14, Spring 1998, 8-10, and *ibid*, 16, Spring 1999, 4-6.)
- 22 Adam Carnie, bookbinder, was made a Burgess of Ayr in December 1815. His father was John Carnie, tailor. (Lindsay & Kennedy, *Burgesses*, 200)
- 23 William McCormick, printer, was made a Burgess of Ayr in September 1817. The claim was made through his wife Catherine Gemmell, who was the daughter of Andrew Gemmell, merchant and burgess. (Lindsay & Kennedy, *Burgesses*, 200)
- 24 Maxwell Dick (1798-1870) was a man of many talents, and is perhaps best known for a variety of patented inventions, of varying degrees of practical worth. He had a bookselling business in Irvine, where in the 1820s he attempted to publish a newspaper, and evade the Stamp Duty, by publishing under four different titles, each of which appeared monthly, hence providing a weekly paper. [See James Paterson, 'Historical Notes of the Newspaper Press of the County of Ayr' in *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, Saturday 1st December 1860, 2e] Alexander Cuthill (c.1786-1852) was the minister of the Second Charge, Ayr, from 1814. The failure of the *Courier* caused Cuthill severe financial embarrassment. He is best known today for 'the excellent description of Ayr Parish' he contributed to the *New Statistical Account*. [*Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 19th February 1852, 4c]
- 25 James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 85.
- 26 John Ferguson Macnair, 'Newspapers', in Annie I Dunlop, ed., *The Royal Burgh of Ayr*, Edinburgh, 1953, 281. Many of the proprietors of the *Courier* were also involved in the launch, in 1832, of the *Ayr Observer* [See Appendix 3]

27 Carreen S Gardner, *Printing in Ayr and Kilmarnock*, Ayr, 1976, 11-12. Paterson
printed the *Chronicle* on an iron printing press, a Columbian: the first to be used in
Ayrshire.

28 *Air Advertiser*, Thursday 10th May 1821, 4d.

29 Quotations from Thomson, 'John Wilson', 47-48, in turn quoting from 'Court of
Session Papers, no.590, 1822, pp 541-2.'

30 *Air Advertiser*, Thursday 2nd August 1832, 4ef.

31 *Air Advertiser*, Thursday 4th October 1838, 1e. The witnesses to the formal document
of dissolution were Hugh Henry, Robert Leyburn, Joseph Erskine and James
Robertson. Joseph Erskine (1795-1872) was a writer (solicitor) in Ayr: 'a most trusty
advisor' [Hugh L. Allan, 'Ayr Fifty Years Ago And Since', XI, in *Ayr Advertiser*,
Thursday 22nd May 1890, 5a.], while Robertson cannot be conclusively identified.
Henry and Leyburn were employees of the paper: Henry (1815-1880) came from
Kilmarnock, where he had worked for James Paterson, before joining the *Air
Advertiser* as a 'turn-over apprentice' in 1833. 'He was an excellent compositor', and
remained with the Advertiser until 1843, when he took a position as foreman with the
Ayr Observer. Subsequently, he established his own printing business, which survived
into the 1980s in Newmarket Street, Ayr. [*Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 16th December
1880, 5b] Leyburn switched careers from compositor to clerk at the Fort Brewery,
before drowning in Ayr Harbour in 1845. [*Kilmarnock Herald*, Friday 15th August
1845, 4d]

32 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 28th October 1847, 4g. The brief death notice gives no
further information on Carnie's time at the paper, nor does it suggest reasons for the
change from newspaper editor to ship owner.

33 *Air Advertiser*, 4th October 1838, 4b.

34 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 13th June 1839, 4f.

35 Thomson, 'John Wilson', 48.

36 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 28th March 1839, 4b.

37 *Air Advertiser*, Thursday 27th December 1838, 4a.

38 When D. M. Lyon joined the paper as an apprentice in the early 1830s, the wooden
press was still in use: 'The paper was then printed on a wooden hand press, and he
used to tell of the hustle there was on publication day to get the paper ready to send
away by the stage-coaches which were the only means of getting them conveyed to
different parts of the county.' [Obituary of Lyon in *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 5th
February 1903, 5a.]

39 Allan, 'Centenary', 4f.

40 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 31st October 1850, 4e. The witnesses to Mrs McCormick's
signature were James Fergusson McCormick, her son, and Anderson Kirkwood. The
witnesses to Gemmell's signature were J F Murdoch and Robert Ross. James F
Murdoch was the procurator-fiscal for the county, and a near neighbour of Gemmell's
in Racecourse Road. Kirkwood and Ross cannot be satisfactorily identified.

41 Catherine McCormick moved to Glasgow, latterly living at 2 Queens Terrace, Glasgow.
She died on the 5th February 1867 at Hastings, Sussex, where she was presumably
spending the winter months. *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 7th February 1867, 5f.

42 Based on Allan, 'Centenary', 4f. The discussion of 'certain Radical schemes in
modern times' rushes us ahead of the narrative, but refers, I believe, to the split in the
Liberal party caused by Gladstone's support for Irish Home Rule. The *Advertiser*
aligned itself with those in the Liberal party, who became known as Liberal Unionists,
and who opposed Home Rule for Ireland. This split led to a major realignment in
national politics, almost fatally weakened the Liberal Party, and allowed a nascent
Labour Party to emerge.

43 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 19th September 1889, 4c.
44 Allan, 'Centenary', 4f.
45 By the 1830s, other newspapers were beginning to appear locally, and, more importantly, to thrive. The most immediate rival was the *Ayr Observer*, founded in 1832. [See Appendix 3]. By the end of the 1840s there were also papers in Kilmarnock, Stranraer and in Kirkcudbrightshire, all of which affected the circulation of the *Advertiser*.
46 Allan, 'Centenary', 4f.
47 'A Trip to London' was published in book form in 1847. This trip was made at a time when part of the journey still had to be made by stage-coach and consequently the sketches 'had a freshness which similar things do not possess now-a-days.' [*Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 19th September 1889, 4d.]
48 Allan, 'Centenary', 4f.
49 Moore's pieces were usually in the vernacular. William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland*, Aberdeen, 1986, has a long chapter, 'The Scoatch Department', on 'The Press and the Vernacular.'
50 Correspondence from Moore, from the years 1844-1845, seeking finance for the establishment of the *Ayrshire Agriculturalist* exists in the papers of Houstoun of Johnstone at the City of Glasgow Archives, TD 263/293. This collection also includes an early edition of the *Ayrshire and Renfrewshire Agriculturalist*, no 17 of January 1845, which was printed for Moore by David Guthrie, 1 High Street, Ayr. [TD 263/260].
51 Willox's son was Sir John Archibald Willox, 1842-1905, who was the M.P. for the Everton Division of Liverpool from 1892 until his death. Sir John began his career in journalism on the *Liverpool Courier*. [*Who Was Who*, vol. 1 1897-1915, London, 5th ed., 1966, 769]
52 Allan, 'Centenary', 4f. R.H. Smith returned to Ayr in 1857 as the editor of the *Ayrshire Express*; while there he also crossed swords with William Buchanan of the *Ayr Observer* [see Appendix 2 for Buchanan]. Smith also edited one of the earliest of golf year books, *The Golfer's Year Book* for 1866, published by his company of Smith & Grant in 1866. In 1877 he acquired the *Chelsea News*. [*Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald*, Saturday 22nd December 1877, 5d]
53 [*Ayr Observer Office*], Directory for Ayr, Newton, Wallacetown, St Quivox, Prestwick and Monkton, 1845-46, Ayr, 1845.
54 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 26th March 1908, 5a.
55 Some sources suggest that he became editor in late 1853. The date of 1858 is based on the fact, quoted in Thomas Kay's obituary, that the combined length of Allan and Kay's tenure of the editorship was 79 years. Kay died, in post, in 1937.
56 These paragraphs are based on Allan, 'Centenary', 4f.
57 There appears to be no comprehensive history of the development of printing presses in the United Kingdom. The first revolving type presses, in which the type was placed on a cylinder which rotated on a horizontal axis were developed in the United States by Richard Marsh Hoe in the 1840s. A Swiss-American, Ottmar Mergenthaler, developed linotype from the late 1870s, but the development was resisted by compositors, and the machinery only came into widespread use in the 1890s. Linotype used a keyboard to create a unique type matter, which was used once and then melted down for re-use, and so obviated the need for the labour-intensive redistribution of the type to the cases. It was reckoned that one linotyper could do the work of five compositors. The only major development for the first two-thirds of the 20th Century was the introduction of electricity in place of steam power. The 1970s saw the introduction of web-offset printing and photo-composition, bringing many changes to the publishing

world in their train. This account is based on Peter Mercer, History of Printing, in
<<http://ink.news.com.au/mercury>>, a history of the *Hobart Mercury*. [Seen 16th
58 October 2003]

59 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 12th August 1852, 4d.

60 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 6e. The original source of this quote from
Allan has not been traced.

61 'Perhaps the most important regular correspondent was James Drennan of Auchinlee,
who for forty years in the second half of the 19th Century reported experiments and
improvements in tillage, breeding, farm implements and particularly early potato
culture.' [*Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 1c]

62 Between 1868 and 1871 McIlwraith was co-proprietor, and later proprietor, of the
Ayrshire Express. [Carreen S Gardner, *Printing in Ayr and Kilmarnock*, Ayr, 1976,
53-54] He presumably left for Australia in, or shortly after, 1871.

63 Morgan joined the *Advertiser* as an apprentice in 1852. He had been recommended by
John Regan, his schoolmaster at Whitletts, who was then having a revised edition of
his 'Backwoods and Prairies' printed and published by the firm. Morgan remained
with the *Advertiser* for about 10 years, before leaving to spend about 2 years as a
reporter in Whitehaven. He returned to Ayr and was, for 10 years, in charge of the
reporting department of the *Ayr Observer*, before setting up in business as a
bookseller. c.1890 he took the position of Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths
for Ayr, a post which he held till his own death. [*Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 7th July
1904, 4g]

64 Allan, 'Centenary', 4f.

65 www.orcadian.co.uk, seen 14th October 2003. There appears to be no obituary of
Mackintosh in the *Ayr Advertiser*.

66 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 5th February 1903, 5a.

67 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 19th September 1889, 4c.

68 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 19th September 1889, 4c.

69 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 19th September 1889, 4cd.

70 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 11th January 1900, 4g.

71 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 9e.

72 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 26th March 1908, 5b.

73 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 26th March 1908, 5b.

74 Allan, 'Centenary', 4f.

75 *Ayrshire Post*, Friday 7th August 1953, 7e. Dunlop had, he recounted, a black eye
when he appeared for duty at the office for the first time – a football injury. [*Ayr
Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 9e.]

76 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 9e.

77 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 6e.

78 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 23rd June 1938, 4c. The paper for 30th June 1938 was the
first to appear under the imprint of T.M. Gemmill & Son Ltd.

79 *Ayrshire Post*, Friday 19th August 1960, 10ab.

80 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 6e. The original source of this quote from
Kay has not been traced.

81 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 9th December 1937, 6f.

James McBain (1849-1941) was the author of *The Merrick and Neighbouring Hills*.
Born in Aberdeen, he began work in a woollen mill before learning shorthand, and
carving out a career for himself as a reporter. He worked for the *Kelso Chronicle*, the
Edinburgh Courant and briefly in Irvine before coming to Ayr in 1878 as the local
representative of the *North British Daily Mail*. He was one of the first reporters for
the *Ayrshire Post* when it was established in 1880, and briefly a co-proprietor during

its difficult early years. For nearly 25 years he was the chief shorthand writer to Ayr Sheriff Court (where he was the first to introduce a typewriter) and the Ayr representative of several national newspapers. It was an article in the *Glasgow Herald* by McBain which first suggested the suitability of the links at Turnberry for a golf course. [*Ayrshire Post*, Friday 17th January 1941, 6c]

82 *Ayrshire Post*, Friday 25th March 1938, 12c.

83 My thanks are due to Bob Blane for this information. There is an obituary of McCartney in *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 21st September 1944, 1c.

84 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 9c. No copy of the booklet has been located.

85 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 9c. Crockett's film was also shown at a gathering in the Boswell Hall, Ayr. The film has not been located.

86 He died on 26th March 1967, after 14 years of retirement. My thanks to Bob Blane for this information, and much else on George Goodfellow.

87 *Ayrshire Post*, Friday 2nd October 1953, 11d.

88 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 6e.

89 I am indebted to Bob Blane for information on George Donaldson. After leaving the *Advertiser* he returned to the east coast, where he worked for the *Glasgow Herald*, reporting Court of Session and other legal business.

90 Information on Ian Smith as been supplied by Bob Blane.

91 Again, I am deeply indebted to Bob Blane for information on Billy Hannah. Bob's information has been of unaccountable value in putting together the history of the paper during the 1950s and 1960s. Hannah's dual career as journalist and minister echoes, of course, that of Hamilton Paul.

92 Fred Johnston & Co Ltd was the parent company. Their Ayrshire titles belonged to a subsidiary, Arthur Guthrie & Sons Ltd., which carried on the name of the publishers of the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*.

93 The other five titles were the *Largs and Millport Weekly News*, *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, *Irvine Times*, *Troon and Prestwick Times* and *Cumnock Chronicle*.

94 Jim Robb moved from the *Advertiser* to the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*. He later returned to Ayr as editor of the *Ayrshire Post*, a position he still holds.

95 Walker left for a position as a features editor with the *Glasgow Herald*.

96 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 12b

97 On one occasion the firm won the contract to produce the race cards for the Grand National meeting at Aintree.

98 Following the sale of 100 High Street, the offices of the *Ayr Advertiser* moved to Fort Street, where they remain, occupying what was once Ayr's Wesleyan Methodist Church. As the printing was now being done elsewhere, the paper no longer needed premises of the size of those at 100 High Street.

99 *Air Advertiser*, Thursday 10th May 1821, 4d.

100 Bob Blane, 'Robert Burns, The Press Chair and the Ayr Advertiser' in *Ayr Advertiser*, Wednesday 24th September 2003, Supplement, 24f.

101 *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th August 1953, 9c.

102 A second carved stone from the first New Bridge can be seen at the junction of Monument Road and Chapelpark Road. [Bob Blane, 'Robert Burns, The Press Chair and the Ayr Advertiser', in *Ayr Advertiser*, Wednesday 24th September 2003, Supplement, 25ef.

103 Fraser, from Edinburgh, had previously been involved with the *Ayrshire Courier*. He had advanced £100 to the *Courier* company, and had been appointed foreman. [James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 85.] Paterson and Fraser were not exactly close, Paterson believing that Fraser engineered his dismissal

from the *Courier* at the end of his apprenticeship, and after one week as a journeyman. [Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 89.]

104 Carreen S Gardner, *Printing in Ayr and Kilmarnock*, Ayr, 1976, 47. The imprint on the paper itself in the early years reads 'published for himself and the other proprietors by John Dick'.

105 'It so happened that a deputation from the proprietors of the *Ayr Observer* found me out one day, with a very kind letter from Mr. John Dick, inviting me to accept their offer of editorship. The *Observer* had sprung out of the *Courier*. Most of the late shareholders of that paper were proprietors of it, so I was well acquainted with most of them. The *Observer* had been in existence for the previous four or five years, and had been conducted chiefly by ... Mr John F. Fraser, who had joined the concern from Edinburgh at its commencement. He had not been careful of himself for some time, so I learned, and had been so frequently absent, that he was quite aware of the feeling against him.' [James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 156-7.]

106 Carreen S Gardner, *Printing in Ayr and Kilmarnock*, Ayr, 1976, 51. 'I had resolved to steer clear of local squabbles as much as possible, by which the paper had so often suffered, and to make it readable chiefly as a literary and antiquarian journal.' [James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 163.] Paterson had developed this character in his writing during three years in Edinburgh working on *Kay's Edinburgh Portraits*.

107 James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 162.

108 James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 214.

109 William Buchanan (1821-1866) had been the minister at Kilmaurs from 1844 until 1850, when he was deposed due to persistent drunkenness. His subsequent career as a newspaper editor took him firstly to the *Ayr Observer*, then to the *Edinburgh Courant* and the *Dumfries Herald*, before he returned to the *Observer*. [Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, new ed., vol. III, Edinburgh, 1920, 115.]. His first, brief, involvement with the *Observer* must have been c.1850-51, probably succeeding Scott Henderson, and preceding Glen.

110 'Many years afterwards, being in Ayr, I happened to meet my old contemporary, Thomas Gemmell, Esq., of the *Advertiser*, in Newmarket Street. He shook hands very cordially, and said, "Well, Mr. Paterson, I never had an opportunity before, but I now say, that the *Observer* has *not had an editor since you left*." I thanked Mr. Gemmell for his good opinion, and certainly, when I recollect the many newspaper feuds we had, I gave him credit for sincerity.' [James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, Glasgow, 1871, 215.]

111 Carreen S Gardner, *Printing in Ayr and Kilmarnock*, Ayr, 1976, 51. The *Advertiser* had this to say following Buchanan's death: 'Though in opposition to us for many years, and a vigorous and uncompromising partisan, it would be unfair to his memory to deny him the possession of a highly cultivated mind and a most untiring zeal for the success both of his paper and his party.' [*Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 19th July 1866, 4e.]

112 There are obituary notices of Dick in *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 30th August 1860, 4e, and *Ayr Observer*, Tuesday 4th September 1860, 4f, but neither reveals much of interest.

113 These paragraphs owe much to John Ferguson Macnair, 'Newspapers', in Annie I Dunlop, ed., *The Royal Burgh of Ayr*, Edinburgh, 1953, 279-284.

114 The premises in Kyle Street were known as Observer Buildings, and are now known as 61-63 Kyle Street. It was acquired by Edward Senior, a local music-seller, and used as a piano warehouse. During the Great War the building was used for the issue of service vests, and in 1931 became the local headquarters of the British Legion. [See

Ayrshire Post, Friday 13th November 1931] It presently houses a health centre and a hairdresser.

115

Ayr Advertiser, Thursday 18th January 1934, 5b.

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