

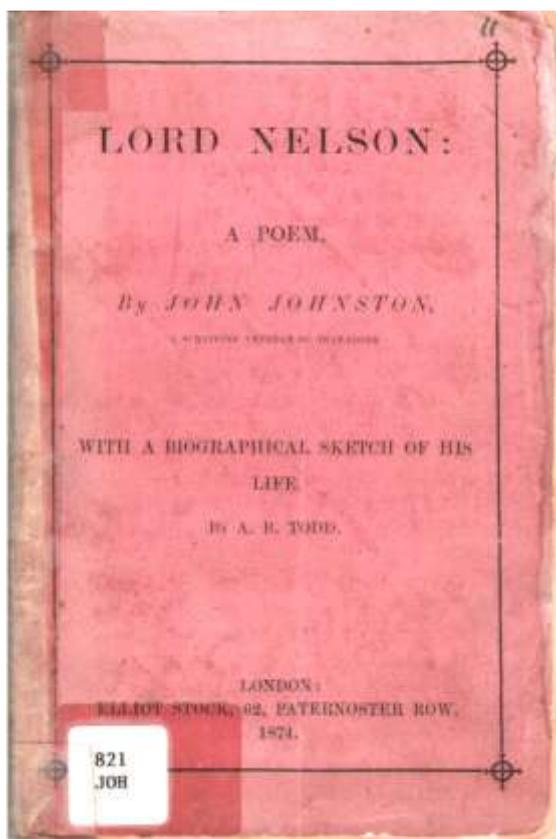
HISTORY § Ayrshire § ANTIQUITIES
NOTES
ARCHAEOLOGY • NATURAL-HISTORY

No. 39

Spring 2010

ISSN 1474-3531

£2.00



Lord Nelson: A Poem by John Johnston (1781 - 1880)

Contributions for the Autumn 2010 issue of *Ayrshire Notes*, including information about the activities of Member Societies, should be sent before the end of July to Rob Close, 1 Craighrae Cottages, Drongan, Ayr KA6 7EN, tel. 01292 590273, (email: thelearnedpig@googlemail.com) or Gary Torbett, 165 Bank Street, Irvine KA12 0NH.

The print order may be increased to provide additional copies of *Ayrshire Notes* for members of local societies at cost price by arrangement before publication with David Courtney McClure, 7 Park Circus, Ayr KA7 2DJ, tel. 01292 262248.

AYRSHIRE NOTES
is published in Ayr by
AYRSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
in association with
AYRSHIRE FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
and
KILMARNOCK & DISTRICT HISTORY GROUP

AYRSHIRE NOTES 39, 2010, ISSN 1474–3531

© 2010. The copyright of the articles belongs to the individual authors.

Further information about the AANHS (Ayrshire Archaeological & Natural History Society) and its publications will be found on the society's website: www.aanhs.org.uk

AANHS President	Ian Holland
AANHS Secretary	Mrs Sheena Andrew, 17 Bellrock Avenue, Prestwick KA9 1SQ. Tel. 01292 479077
AFHS Chairman	Kathryn Valentine
AFHS Secretary	Pamela McIntyre, 5 Eglinton Terrace, Ayr KA7 1JJ. Tel. 01292 280080
KDHG President	Stuart J. Wilson
KDHG Secretary	James Torbett, 24 Ottoline Drive, Troon KA10 7AW

Cover illustration

Johnston's poem is the subject of the article by Rab Wilson which begins on page three. The pamphlet (4¼ x 6¼ in.) is in the collections of East Ayrshire Arts and Museum Services whose permission to reproduce the image of the cover is gratefully acknowledged. It is at present in the Baird Institute, Cumnock, where it is expected to be exhibited later in the year in association with a recently acquired Trafalgar painting by an Ayrshire artist.

Contents

John Johnston, The ‘Harry Patch’ of Trafalgar <i>by Rab Wilson</i>	4
Ayrshire Archives Branches Out	22
Black Friday: the east coast fishing disaster of 1881 <i>by Peter Aitchison</i>	23
Lilias Hamilton, 1858 – 1925 <i>by Rob Close</i>	24
Edinburgh Gazette <i>by Rob Close</i>	26
Rob’s Book Club: an occasional series <i>by Rob Close</i>	29
Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies	32
Robert Bryden Exhibition	33
Diary of Meetings of Historical Societies	33
AANHS Publications	36

John Johnston, The 'Harry Patch' of Trafalgar

by Rab Wilson

My name is Rab Wilson.* I am currently the 'Robert Burns Writing Fellow: In Reading Scots' for Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association, and live in Ayrshire, Scotland. The story I am about to relate is a yarn befitting the greatest sea-faring traditions of this 'sceptred isle'! In November, 2009, whilst engaged in researching a proposed new book about the Ailsa Hospital, at Ayr, I was trawling through the micro-fiche collection of *Ayrshire Advertiser* newspapers from the mid 1860s, trying to find information relating to the building of the hospital. Occasionally I would chance upon other articles of interest; I found several relating to our Scottish National poet, Robert Burns, that I photocopied for my archives, but then whilst scrolling down through the endless newspaper columns, purely by serendipitous chance an article caught my eye, printed 9th April, 1868; its title was 'A SURVIVING HERO OF TRAFALGAR'. I paused the machine, and read on, intrigued. The letter had been inserted by a venerable local man of letters, A.B.Todd (well known for his own poetry and newspaper connections) who was writing on behalf of a John Johnston.† Here is the letter in full:

A SURVIVING HERO OF TRAFALGAR

(To the Editor of the Ayr Advertiser)

Sir, - It is now some considerable time since I noticed in the newspapers the death of the last of the French who fought at the battle of Trafalgar. As that great and decisive event took place more than sixty-two years ago, the survivors in this country cannot be many, and I know of only one, - John Johnston, resident at Benston, Cumnock. He was born at Clackleith, in the parish of Sanquhar, Dumfriesshire, on 22nd July 1781, and is now, therefore, in the 87th year of his age. His father was one of the most extensive sheep farmers in the south of Scotland, and was also proprietor of a small estate near Moffat. He was able, therefore, to give his family an excellent education, and John, the eldest, having good parts, became a fine classical scholar; but, unfortunately, he was somewhat of a wild youth, and so in 1802, unknown to his family, he entered the Royal Navy as a common marine. Here he continued till 1814, and saw a good deal of service in different quarters of the globe, and was present on board the Colossus, at the ever-memorable battle of Trafalgar. He received a severe flesh wound on the thigh, which strangely broke out afresh in 1860, fifty-five years after it had been received. For a time it was so painful that it was feared that it would carry him off; but before very long it healed up again, and the old sea-soldier, of nearly 87 years of age, is still able to walk about with a firm step and with all his faculties unimpaired. After twelve years spent on the sea, he left the service without a pension. Meantime circumstances had occurred in his father's family to blast the worldly

* r.wilson475@btinternet.com

† 'Adam Brown Todd (1822-1915)', Dane Love, *Ayrshire Notes* 25, 2008, 14-17.

prospects of his son, and as a means of living he betook himself to teaching, in which profession he has laboured ever since till within the last three years, with the exception of some two years spent as a lecturer on Temperance about thirty-five years ago. The sea seems to effectually to have tamed the somewhat wild young man, for ever since he left the navy, now fifty-four years ago, his life and conduct have been most exemplary. His natural abilities being good, and his mind having been well cultivated in his younger days by extensive reading in almost all the walks of literature, it was impossible for any one ever to be any time in his company without discovering that they had met with no ordinary man. Many years ago he wrote, though never published, a poem in two Cantos, entitled "Lord Nelson." We have perused the poem, which has very considerable merit, as the following lines which form the conclusion of it will show:-

*In torrid climes where nature pants for breath,
And tainted gales bring pestilence and death,
Nelson had sought, but long had sought in vain,
The still retreating fleets of France and Spain,
When found at last he crushed them on the flood,
And sealed the awful conquest with his blood!*

It seems nothing less than a shame, that perhaps the last survivor of Trafalgar's glorious fight should be left to end his days, "which now have dwindled to their farthest span" in the chill shade of penury. Those of his family now alive have not the means to make him as comfortable as he ought to be; but we feel sure that there are plenty of kind-hearted and patriotic people in the country able, and who would also be willing to give a little to keep the wolf of want from his door, and we can assure those who feel inclined, that whatever they give will not be misapplied. Their gifts might either be sent direct to himself, or to the Rev. James Murray, minister of the parish of Old Cumnock, who is ever glad to be the channel of doing good to the deserving. – I am, Sir, your obdt. servt.

A.B.Todd, Old Cumnock, 7th April, 1868.

Various things in this letter immediately excited me. I realised straight away, with my limited Burns knowledge, that this man must have been the son of Robert Burns' Sanquhar companion, Johnston, the Laird of Clackleith; one of the original subscribers to Burns' 'Kilmarnock edition' of poems. The fact that this man, John Johnston, had appeared to live such an eventful life, and had himself courted the muse, also intrigued me and I was curious to see and read this mysterious poem about 'Lord Nelson'. I photocopied the article, paying my 20p for the privilege! And took it home to investigate further.

Shortly afterwards I was sitting with my wife watching some Sunday morning television: a rerun of extracts from the BBC magazine programme, 'Countryfile'. There was a feature on a guy called Simon Alper (mine host at the 'Lord Nelson' pub and restaurant at Burnham Thorpe, King's Lynn) who was speaking about the Nelson connections in the area. I recalled my newspaper article and within ten minutes had 'Googled' Mr Alper's pub, found an email address for him, and sent an email asking him if he knew of anyone who might know anything of my 'lost' poem. Simon emailed back, was

extremely courteous and helpful, and gave me some contacts to approach; namely, The Nelson Society and the 1805 Club. This quickly led to my emailing and making contact with Rachael Stone, Keith Wood and Peter Goodwin, people who are all well-known in Nelson related circles. Unfortunately, I then hit a dead end – they were not aware of the poem by John Johnston. Back to the drawing board!

Having now gained access to the East Ayrshire archive collection, in connection with my Ailsa Hospital book, their senior archivist, Pamela McIntyre, put me in touch with local history buff and architectural historian, Rob Close. Rob is a master at finding his way round the musty archive sections of libraries and institutions; skills that I sadly lacked! I told Rob about the Johnston poem and he said he would see what he could do. He was as good as his word and within a few weeks had contacted me to say ‘Good news!’ – the poem had been published by A.B.Todd, in a little, obscure local pamphlet in 1874! Now all I had to do was try and find this literary needle in a haystack!

Rob also gave me a photocopy of John Johnston’s obituary from the *Ayrshire Advertiser* of Thursday, 9th September, 1880, and a map of Cumnock’s old 19th Century cemetery, showing the whereabouts of Johnston’s grave. By now the great freeze of winter 2009/2010 had arrived – fate stepping in to hinder my search yet again!

Nelson must have known a thing or two about ‘delegation’, so I took a leaf from his book! I passed on the information I had garnered thus far and passed it on to my friend Mr. Bruce Morgan, archaeologist and Museums Officer at the Dean Castle Museum, Kilmarnock. Bruce has an unsurpassed knowledge of local lore and information. He in turn passed the information on to Mrs Anne Geddes, senior librarian at the excellent new Burns Monument Centre at Kilmarnock (the ghost of Robert Burns features strongly in this tale – if you are familiar with his writings!). By now travelling on East Ayrshire’s roads was a thing to be done only at your great peril! Within a day though of Anne receiving Bruce Morgan’s communication I received an email from Bruce – ‘The lost poem was found!’

I phoned Anne Geddes who animatedly told me that she was as surprised (and delighted!) as myself that the original small pamphlet, published by Todd in 1874, had turned up on the shelves of their extensive (and wonderful!) local collection. I couldn’t wait to see this! I arranged to go down the next day, braving the roads of the local countryside in a temperature of -14 degrees! Enroute to the Burns Monument Centre I stopped off at Cumnock old cemetery to try and find Johnston’s grave, which, thanks to Rob Close’s map was quickly done; though the gravestone itself was covered in thick ice and snow, preventing me at this time from getting a decent image – a follow up trip is planned as soon as the snows melt!

Anne Geddes warmly welcomed me at the Burns Monument Centre, and presented me with Johnston’s poem, ‘Lord Nelson’. The little red pamphlet was worn and discoloured with age, and it was with some trepidation that I opened its pages. Was this going to be some dire piece of 19th Century ‘Kailyaird’ poetry? Poorly scanned, rhymed and constructed? Was it going to be more McGonagall than Milton? Pensively, I opened the book.

The poem is an utter joy! A lost gem! It is set out in two long cantos. Similar in style to Robert Burns epic poem ‘The Vision’, utilising the ‘duan’ structure of

McPherson/Ossian. Those familiar with Burns will readily spot the influences of the great man in Johnston's piece! The storm scene near the end is pure 'Tam O'Shanter'! But this is no criticism! Johnston, obviously a deeply read and very well educated man, had a tremendous grasp of poetics. The poem is written in a tight iambic pentameter. His powers of observation are extremely acute; the first canto, detailing the Battle of the Nile, is wonderfully descriptive, and gives us a birds eye-view of the regions that Johnston sailed, and fought in. There are some mild un-PC religious and xenophobic passages (typical of the age in which they were written) but these do not overpower or taint Johnston's narrative. He is a man of his time, who obviously has a great pride in his country, and views the slavish conditions of other nations with disdain and sympathy in equal measure. The Nile poem is great! But the Trafalgar poem is, in my humble opinion, something of a lost masterpiece! Were this poem to be a painting it would be lauded as one of the great finds of the age – a Titian turning up on 'Antiques Roadshow'!

Johnston's acute eye for detail (and never forget, this is a man who personally fought at Trafalgar, and saw these events with his own eyes – as he says of this epic maritime battle, "All which I saw, and part of which I was.") is incredible! I am sure Nelson scholars will have much to say, and think about, when they read this lost work. His pace of narrative is tremendous – we have a poem here of spirit and action, that never at once flags! The events leading up to the actual battle are chronicled in such a style as to draw you totally into the piece! The immediacy of the battle scenes, its pace and unremitting drama make for real page-turner of a poem! Epic poetry, superbly well written! Several things shine through this work though: the love, respect, devotion and loyalty that ordinary seamen and soldiers had for Nelson. The patriotic pride of the men, their bravery, and utter self-belief in their cause is quite astounding.

All of this, this most curious and serendipitous tale I have related, happened purely by chance – as many good things do! John Johnston lived to the venerable age of 99 years and 41 days, and his long life ends in ease and contentment. Our country, with the recent loss of the 'last Tommy', Harry Patch, knows how it feels when the last remaining soul from a major event in our history passes away – there can be little doubt that John Johnston was the 'last surviving hero' of that most momentous sea battle of his generation. Such stories are humbling, and inspiring!

But I shall say no more! I am happy to be fate's conduit for the re-telling of a story that thoroughly deserves a much wider audience. There now follows the biographical sketch written by Johnston's great friend, and champion, A.B.Todd, who tells Johnston's story far better than I ever could. Todd's estimation of his country's leaders for their abandonment of one of its undoubted heroes in his hour of need is touchingly poignant, and totally resonant of dire events that we read of daily today. This is followed directly by the 'lost' poem 'Lord Nelson', written by John Johnston, 'a surviving hero of Trafalgar'. I hope you find as much enjoyment in this as I have!



John Johnston's gravestone in Cumnock Old Cemetery. The inscription reads: Erected by William Johnston in memory of his father John Johnston. Born at Clackleith Sanquhar 21st July 1781. Fought under Lord Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805. Received a pension from the Admiralty in 1871 and died at Benston Cottage Cumnock 1st September 1880 aged 99 years and 41 days. Also of his mother Agnes Maxwell who died 5th Jan. 1849 aged 52 years and of his maternal grandmother Agnes Black who died 9th Jan. 1864 aged 93 years.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JOHN JOHNSTON

A Surviving Veteran of Trafalgar

*Since the great and decisive Battle of Trafalgar was fought, sixty-eight years have gone by, and twofull generations of men have come upon and passed away from off the busy stage of time into the silent land. Very aged men have only a cloudy recollection of it, as one of the great events of their boyhood; whilst young men, and people in the full prime of their manhood, think of it as one of the great historical occurrences of a distant past. The First Napoleon had then but recently begun to dazzle the world, and strike mankind with awe, by the vastness of his ambitious designs. The Peninsular War had not then commenced, and the great Duke of Wellington had, in Europe, achieved none of those transcendent victories which have long since filled the world with his fame. The voices of Pitt and Fox were then still thundering in the senate house, and George the Third had not yet completed his long eventful reign by fifteen years. Lord Byron's name as a poet was then unknown, and Sir Walter Scott had only just been heard of as the author of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and of some minor poems; whilst Waverley, the first of his long array of surpassing prose fictions, was not given to the world till nine years after Lord Nelson had fallen at Trafalgar on the 21st of October, 1805. The widely different, but true, heart-stirring, and almost matchless strains of Burns, and Cowper, had then been but recently hushed in the valley and shadow of death! How does it strike and surprise us then to think that the still living author of the following poem was at that time fighting on board the Colossus, and in the full might and manhood given by four-and-twenty years!*

John Johnston (or Johnson, as the name is written in England) was born at Clackleith, in the northern part of the parish of Sanquhar, Dumfriesshire, on the 21st of July, 1881. His father was a very extensive sheep-farmer, renting several farms in the sweet green pastoral Vale of Nith, and in other parts of the south of Scotland. For several generations past, the family has been noted for its long livers. In the churchyard of Moffat, in which parish his ancestors formerly possessed some land, lie the bodies of his grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather; and the record on their tombstone shows (or did so lately) that the youngest of these had attained to the patriarchal age of ninety-one years at the time of his death. Mr. Johnston's own father had reached considerably above the age of eighty, at the time of his decease. Of the numerous family which he left, two still survive the author of the following poem, and a sister, resident in the Royal Burgh of Sanquhar, thirteen months his senior, and who is therefore considerably advanced into the ninety-fourth year of her age. Mr. Johnston's father being in easy, if not wealthy circumstances, and a man of great good sense and possessed of a full amount of proverbial Scottish shrewdness, gave each one of his family an excellent education. John, who was the eldest son, acquired a good knowledge of the classics, and of mathematics. Having a great thirst for knowledge, and a love of literature, he early stored his mind with all kinds of historical, antiquarian, and poetic lore, which a then (for the place) rare, and unusually good public library in the neighbouring borough town, enabled him to do.

The stirring events of the first French Revolution, with the wars, political changes, and opinions which followed in its train did not fail to affect and rouse the mind of young Johnston, as it did the minds of most of the youth of that period so big with fate, and so

pregnant of surpassing changes and occurrences in the political world. Not having received the consent of his parents to enter the King's service, either by land or sea, and being of a somewhat headstrong, fiery, and restless disposition, though possessed of the most kindly heart; and having a mind imbued with a lofty, though somewhat indiscreet patriotism, he left the paternal roof without the knowledge of any member of his father's family, crossed the Scottish border, and enlisted in the Royal Marines at Bolton, Lancashire, in October 1802. Although this took place seventy-one years ago, he was then in the twenty-second year of his age. He was first put on board the Princess guardship, at Liverpool, and soon after he was sent to Plymouth, and there joined the 74-gun ship Terrible, then belonging to the Channel Fleet. He was next sent on board the Hibernia of 100 guns, and shortly before the escape of the French fleet from Toulon he was drafted on board the Colossus of 74 guns, on which he was at the Battle of Trafalgar, where he received a severe flesh wound on the thigh. He continued in the navy till the year 1814, when he obtained his discharge, having become threatened with something which then appeared like an affection of the heart. Hitherto, however, he had been all along in the possession of the best of health, even when on the pestilential West Indian Station. Many a time we have heard him narrate how, when there, they would be sent ashore to bury a dead mate; they would oftentimes have to bury several before returning on board again, so suddenly were they often smitten down, and carried off by the deadly diseases incidental to that unhealthy climate.

Mr. Johnston had been a long time in the service before he had any communication with, or from his friends; and when he first heard from home he was surprised to find that, of the family he left all, save himself, nestling under a father's roof-tree, there was now one, including himself, in each quarter of the globe; and that two of his brothers were then in the army. For a while after obtaining his discharge, he settled in the borough town of Sanquhar, of which he was subsequently elected one of the magistrates. Having given offence to his father by a marriage highly displeasing to the old man (though it proved a happy match for himself during the many years of his married life), he left his native place and betook himself to the arduous, and, though important, then generally ill-paid duties of teaching. The schools in which he taught were simply adventure ones, and, as they were situated in rural districts where the population was never very numerous, and where the fees were low, and often ill-paid, his income, as a consequence, was both small and precarious.

For some years he taught in the village of New Cumnock, in the south-eastern part of the County of Ayr, and near to the sources of the silvery Nith, and where its infant stream is augmented by the waters of the classic Afton, the charms of which are so sweetly celebrated in song by Robert Burns. Having become an earnest advocate of the Temperance Cause he was, about the year 1832, engaged as travelling agent and lecturer for The Western Temperance Union of Scotland. In this situation he continued for some two years, and was much esteemed for the ability, and readiness in argument, with which he endeavoured to promote the Temperance Cause. He again, however, betook himself to teaching; this time at Benston, in the parish of Old Cumnock. Here, after a time, he attracted the attention of the late amiable and benevolent Marchioness of Bute, who was so much pleased with the man, and, interested in his history, that she built and endowed a new

school-house for him, and attached to it a dwelling-house and garden. Here he has continued to reside ever since; and here, with diligence, he long taught his little school till the burden of more than eighty years compelled him to lay his labour aside for ever. His good and kind benefactress had by this time, however, been called away to the spirit land, which proved to be the cause of much anxiety and disquietude to the old man, as repeated attempts were then, and for a good while after, made to turn him out of his cottage, which he well knew, having been told by her ladyship, was intended for him for life. This was the work of an individual whose Christian calling might have been expected to have been productive of more kind and sympathetic conduct. Mr. Johnston's claim to retain possession of his cottage having ultimately been investigated by the present Lord Bute's factor, he rightly, and we believe gladly, declared in favour of the old veteran, and he has not only had his claim of right confirmed by the Marquis, but has also had a yearly sum most kindly added by the noble lord to the free possession of his cottage for life. In maintaining his rights during this dispute, he showed not a little of that pluck which gained the Battle of Trafalgar, and he is not a little proud of this new victory, whilst his vanquished opponent, perhaps magnanimously, consoled himself by saying, "surely he can't live for ever!"

After resigning the school, Mr. Johnston was without any means of making a livelihood, and his family having mostly gone to foreign lands where, having succeeded but indifferently, neither they, nor those who remained at home, were able to do anything for his support; so that notwithstanding the generous gifts bestowed upon him by those of his neighbours who could best appreciate his worth, he became, in the course of time, reduced to such a state of privation as forced him to apply to the parish for relief. Before he did so, however, the writer of this notice, knowing his necessities, and having long known and highly esteemed the man, made an appeal in his behalf to the public, through the leading newspapers. One or two donations were at once sent in, but the appeal, which promised so much, was speedily rendered abortive by a letter from the old man's grandson, which (prompted no doubt by false pride) he sent to the newspapers, stating that the public were not required to contribute anything towards the support of his grandfather, as his own family were able and willing to do everything that was needful for his comfortable support. The same gentleman too, who, if he did not covet the old man's cottage, did at least work strenuously to secure it for another party, appeared in print, and with seeming eagerness supported the grandson's letter, and refused to be the channel through which any further gifts should be conveyed to the old veteran. The springs of benevolence were therefore at once dried up, and the old patriot, "Whose life was dwindled to its shortest span," was left to perish of want, or apply to the parish for aid. Pressed by old age and absolute want (for the boastful grandson and friends could give him no help) he did apply to the parish for relief though to do so nearly broke his heart, and crushed his lofty spirit. The parish having allowed him only three shillings and sixpence weekly, the writer again appealed to the public in his behalf and sent the following letter to most of the leading newspapers in Scotland, and to some in England :

A SURVIVING HERO OF TRAFALGAR.

Sir, In the spring of 1868 I called the attention of the public to the case of Mr. John Johnston, of Benston, in the parish of Cumnock, one of the very few surviving heroes who fought under Lord Nelson at Trafalgar, sixty-six years ago.

Mr. Johnston is descended from a highly respectable family, and was born in the parish of Sanquhar, in July, 1781, and is thus now in the ninety-first year of his age. In 1802 he entered the Royal Navy, and when in 1805, the French fleet escaped from Toulon, and, joining the Spanish fleet, passed the Straits of Gibraltar, and sailed for the West Indies, Johnston, under Lord Nelson, traversed the whole of the Mediterranean Sea in search of them. Returning to Palermo for provisions, the British fleet pressed across the Atlantic with all speed, only to find that the combined fleet, though greatly superior in force, had retired with precipitation at the report of Lord Nelson's approach. After this long and fruitless chase, he returned to Europe, and finally came upon the enemy near to Cape Trafalgar, on the 21st of October, 1805. We need not here tell how signally the combined fleet was defeated, and Britain freed from the fear of invasion. Johnston was then on board the Colossus, and received a severe flesh wound, which, strangely enough, broke out afresh in 1860, fifty-five years after he had received it. In 1814 he left the Navy without a pension. Having received an excellent classical education in his youth, he betook himself to teaching as a means of livelihood, and has ever since been so engaged up till six years ago, when the infirmities of age forced him to give it up. Though now, as we have said, in the ninety first year of his age, his mind is as vigorous as ever, but his iron frame, which neither torrid climes, or "the battle and the breeze," had ever in the least impaired, is now sadly shaken by the burden of so many years. When, three years ago, I appealed to the benevolent and patriotic to open their hearts and hands and help to keep the wolf of hunger and want from his door, his grandson inserted a letter in the newspapers the day after mine appeared, in which he asserted that Mr. Johnston's family were both able and willing to support him, and to provide for his every comfort. Notwithstanding this boast, however, the old man has been allowed to become the recipient of parochial relief, and the grandson has gone off to Australia and left the old man destitute, whilst those nearly related to him at home, have either not the will or the ability to support him. He has one dutiful daughter who resides with him, who would gladly go out and labour for his and her own support, but his frailty prevents her from leaving him to do so. What a pity, nay what a disgrace it is, that one who imperilled his life for his country in the most eventful crisis of her history, should, from no fault of his, be forced "To join the poor, and eat the parish bread." And what a paltry pittance after all, does the parish allow him? We blush to name it, though in the interest of humanity, we must - three shillings and sixpence a week! while perhaps it is the dread of stern compulsion which plucks even this miserable scrap from the Parochial Board of his parish. This then, this utterly insufficient sum, is all his country has to bestow on one who took part in the great and glorious achievement, and the lofty and generous aspirations which animated the defenders of our much loved sea-girt isle. The blood of multitudes of these brave men who battled so long for their country's freedom, has tinged the ocean waves in almost every clime, while their bones repose far down in the deep sea waves, or whiten the hills of almost every country under heaven. In the eloquent language of General Sir

William Napier, "their merits are forgotten, and the few survivors wander, for the most part, indigent and neglected, or insulted by those who wallow in the wealth protected by the valour of the now despised veteran. To the god of armies he must look for sympathy and help; almost all other is denied him." Mr. Johnston must feel his position all the more acutely as he is not only a man of excellent education, but is possessed of great independence of spirit, and has a richly cultivated mind, as the following lines from a poem which, many years ago, he wrote, though he never published it, entitled "Lord Nelson" will show: [Here appear the lines quoted in the first letter (above, page 5).]

Mr. Johnston, we may add, is a person of the most unblemished reputation, and for forty years has been an entire abstainer from all intoxicating drinks. When his circumstances are known, we do hope that there are individuals who will do something to cheer and comfort the closing days of his long life, before he goes down (as soon he must) into the valley and shadow of death.

I am, Sir, Your very obedient Servant, A. B. TODD.

This letter had the desired effect, and from all parts of the three kingdoms large and liberal donations, with letters of sympathy, were sent to him, through the writer: none were, this time, sent through the former clerical channel. From the most hopeless and pinching poverty, and gloomy foreboding for the future (for he knew nothing of our intention again to appeal to the public on his behalf) he was at once placed in a position of comfort and comparative affluence. We, at the same time, made his case known to the Admiralty. We used no influence or intercession of the great in doing so, but plainly and earnestly stated his case and pleaded his cause; and to their ever lasting honour, they, in less than a month from the date of our application, conferred on him a Greenwich Hospital Pension of £27 7s. yearly, for the rest of his life.

When he had recovered from the stunning surprise which the first knowledge of his great good fortune occasioned him, he piously exclaimed that "Verily it was the doing of the Lord, and was wondrous in his eyes.", And truly there is indeed a trace of the hand of providence in the whole matter, for not until the very minute when we began to write the second letter to the newspapers had the slightest idea of writing either it, or to the Admiralty, entered our mind. We had sat down at our desk, taken the paper to us, and dipped our pen in the ink, for the purpose, not of writing to the newspapers, or to the Admiralty, but of penning a petition to the parochial board of the parish, to augment his scanty allowance. All at once the purpose came with great force into our mind, to write again to the newspapers, and not to the parochial board; and on the instant we began, and without stop or alteration, wrote the foregoing letter, and by that day's mail despatched several copies of it to different newspapers. As his intellect is still vigorous and unclouded, and his health excellent, his days are closing around him in comfort, quietness, and peace. Often as we accidentally drop in upon him, when his Bible is not spread out before him, we have been surprised to find him deeply engaged in the perusal of Paradise Lost that sublime song which Lord Macaulay has truly and beautifully said, is so pure and holy, that it might not inappropriately be sung at the gate of the Celestial City. Often, too, when a champion worthy of his skill calls upon him, he engages in a game at draughts, of which he is passionately fond. We were recently much amused to find him so engaged with a brother

pensioner, an octogenarian. The skill displayed by both was very considerable, and the contest long and doubtful. He is possessed of the most happy frame of mind possible, and he looks forward with the most unshrinking and perfect composure to that day, which cannot now be far distant, when "the silver cord must be loosed" and when he must be ushered into the spirit world, to which almost every contemporary and companion of his early life have long since taken their departures.

*The poem which follows was written many years since, and soon after the author left the navy, now nearly sixty years ago. The two canto's of which it consists, contain a narrative of the great battles of the Nile, and Trafalgar; and, while following the cruises of the British fleet, there are some vivid descriptive passages, and fine thoughtful reflections on the past and present condition of the countries passed, while voyaging in the Mediterranean and Atlantic seas. With the exception of Falconer, who wrote *The Shipwreck*, few naval men have cultivated the muse with such success. Had Mr. Johnston courted the tuneful maidens with assiduity in his youth, it is evident that he might ultimately have gained an honourable niche in the Temple of Fame.*

Cumnock, Ayrshire, December, 1873.

LORD NELSON

A POEM BY JOHN JOHNSTON. A Surviving Veteran of Trafalgar

Canto 1. BATTLE OF THE NILE.

Whilst some attune the harp in lofty strains,
To sing the loves, the joys, of rural swains ;
Others, again, in loftier strains, advance
Throughout the boundless regions of romance;
Whilst there are others, who delight to trace
The planets wheeling in eternal space.
Others record what dire destruction springs
From proud ambition and the pomp of kings;
What misery reigns, where devastating war
Convulses nations, when their interests jar !
And frequently such desolation make,
As states and empires to their centre shake !
Whate'er's the theme, the Sisters still inspire
Whoe'er inclines to strike the trembling lyre.
Come, then, ye Nymphs, from the Pierian
plains,
And in soft numbers animate my strains;
My hands unskilful, strike the trembling strings,
As I ne'er tasted sweet Castalia's springs.
In vivid colours clothe my simple verse,
Whilst I attempt great actions to rehearse,
Where hostile navies form th' embattled lines,

And for destruction each his force combines,
Without your kind assistance, how can he
(Who doom'd twelve years to the tempestuous
sea,
And ne'er set foot on the Parnassian plains),
Record such mighty deeds in measured strains.
Your aid, I crave, whilst I attempt to tell
How bravely Nelson fought, how greatly fell ;
For hard's the task his actions to recount,-
So great his conquests, and so vast th' amount.
Yet though harsh critics should my rhymes
degrade,
I shall begin and trust your generous aid;
And beg to this the readers will attend,
And gently censure what they can't commend.
When Buonaparte his legions did embark,
With hideous guillotines, concealed in dark,
And during night the English Channel crost,
Then straight directs their course for Egypt's
coast ;
Great Nelson's squadrons all securely lay,
Under their moorings deep, in Causand Bay;

A ship with signal, and with canvas prest,
Informs, - "The Gallic fleet had sailed from
Brest,"
On which brave Nelson's ships got under
weigh,
And with spread canvas soon they clear the Bay
;
Straight for Gibraltar Straits their course they
keep,
And urge their passage o'er the briny deep;
When, lo ! a merchant ship appeared in view,
And having closed, our admiral hove to,
And gave these tidings :- she, three days before,
The Gallic squadron passed, which southward
bore.

Bold Nelson then, the signal did display,
To urge the chase, with all the speed they may;
And to the southward still their courses steer,
Until Gibraltar's lofty cliffs appear,
Where news they get, that days since, scarcely
three,

The French had passed into the middle sea.*

[* Mediterranean Sea.]

The gallant Nelson this no sooner heard,
Than round Europa Point he quickly steered,
And ordered that the fleets in two divide,
To scour the middle sea on either side.
The one was destined along Afric's shore,
The other European coasts explore.
The first, from Ceuta Mount the coast surveys,
At Fez, small kingdom, for a space delays,
Where fertile vales, high hills, and wells
profuse,
Afford protection to detested Jews :
Still eastward, Afric's coast, this squadron
steers,
And passes Tunis and the famed Algiers,
Bold promontries, secure on either side
A spacious bay, where ships in safety ride.
Afric, who can thy rocky coast explore,
And not a bounteous providence adore !
All kinds of fruits thy spacious vales adorn,
With fertile basins, rich in nodding corn.

Their sloping sides ascend the spreading vines,
Clad in huge clusters, full of luscious wines ;
Yet, wretched natives, never lift their eyes,
To that great Being who their wants supplies ;
No thanks, nor aid propitious they invoke,
But bow submissive to the Turkish yoke !
Within thy realms are Christians held in chains,
Whilst savage cruelty o'erspreads thy plains.
The other fleet sails along Europe's shore -
The creeks, the bays, and harbours, to explore.
First Malaga they pass, and thence resort
Round Cape le Gate, and Carthagen's port.
As still along the coast their course pursue,
Valencia's brazen domes appear in view.
Valencia, ranked the second town in Spain,
Stands on the verge of an extensive plain;
Full sixty level miles rich herbage shrouds,
Whilst in the background hills appear like
clouds.

On jutting rocks, where ocean beats the strands,
Far to the eastward, Tarragona stands
Impregnable ; her bold defenders stood
Behind three walls, though shrouded in their
blood.

Then eastward still, advancing by degrees,
'Twixt France and Spain, they see the Pyrenees;
Peering in snow their lofty peaks are seen,
Their sides are brown, and base perpetual green.
And next the rapid Rhone, with ample sweep,
Mixes its mighty torrent with the deep.
Marseilles they pass, where trade and
commerce smile,

Its ports defended by an armed isle ;
Then round Cape Circe sweep the southern
shore,
And Toulon's Road, and Hyra's Bay explore.
This done, they veer to gain the western breeze,
And pass the little states of th' Genoese.
Piedmont, northward, forms a bold frontier,
When fast approaching Alpino mounts appear.
Their lofty brows a silvery lustre shows,
Clad in their mantles of eternal snows.

Huge towering wreaths, like milky clouds
 appear -
 The sweeping avalanche, the bright glacier.
 The terrific grandeur of this awful scene,
 Fills the beholder with this lofty theme,
 That the high top with vaulted heaven debates,
 - Such are the boundaries of Helvetian states !
 Next Barcelona's towers attract the view,
 And peace and calmness in the breast renew.
 Still coasting eastward they, without delay,
 Arrive in front of noble Naples Bay ;
 Where crystal fountains, amid myrtle bowers,
 Beskirt the Bay; behind are Naples' towers.
 Far in the distance huge Vesuvius moans,
 Shaking the states with her internal groans ;
 Dark smoky clouds invest her lofty cones,
 But grosser darkness envelops her sons,
 For long their free-born spirit has been broke -
 They bow beneath the Roman Pontiff's yoke ;
 That man of sin, who held the world in chains,
 Now sways the sceptre o'er these dark domains.
 Next Etna's blazing top obscures the view,
 Fills with amazement each astonished crew;
 From various craters belching fire and flame,
 Whilst roaring Stromboli emits the same.
 The southern ships pass the Sicilian shores,
 The north Messina's narrow strait explores.
 Eastward of Sicily the fleets combine,
 And sail the Grecian seas in lengthened line.
 Whilst through these seas the combined
 squadron glides,
 The sportive dolphins gambol round its sides,
 Turtle and. flying-fish their front adorn,
 And huge voracious sharks enclose the stern.
 Still in advance the Gallic squadrons flew,
 Which galled each captain and his gallant crew,
 For Egypt's coast they still direct their course,
 Fully resolved to curb the tyrant's force;
 By force of arms the contest to decide,
 And on these shores to humble Gallic pride.
 August the first, the bell struck four p.m.
 The *Zealous*, look-out ship, discovered them-
 Th' *L'Orient*, towering in the centre, lay

Within the precincts of Aboukir Bay ;
 The other ships were ranged on either hand,
 At anchor riding, near a hostile land.
 Bold Nelson, quickly made his signal fly,
 (Each British hero, with a sparkling eye,
 Sprang to his post, his weapons grasped in
 hand),
 To break their line, and 'tack them next the
 land.
 The first, the famed *Culloden*, caught the shore,
 Her chief, the gallant Trowbridge, stamped and
 swore,
 Whilst his whole crew looked on in black
 despair,
 To view the fight, and thus to lose their share.
 The stately *Theseus*, next in order came,
 Shattered she was beneath the wings of Fame.
 Her hands impatient cried, "Shall we let fly";
 The captain sternly gave them this reply,-
 "'Tis yet too soon, we'll lay us close on board:
 Stand to your quarters, and attend my word."
 Then, long before the *Guirier* she had passed,
 Down came the *Guirier*'s main and mizenmast;
 Her crew astonished, now begun to quake,
 Such thunder made the elements to shake.
 Lord Nelson's vanguard led the weather line,
 And to *L'Orient* did his course incline.
 On this huge hulk his shots began to play,
 And small *Leander* 'thwart her quarter lay ;
 With hand grenades they made their foe retire,
 Then set this floating castle all on fire !
 The speedy flames ascend the loft pines !
 Light all the bay, and spread along the lines.
 Terrific grandeur strikes the astonished gaze,
 As when red meteors flash through midnight
 blaze.
 Whilst *L'Orient*'s flames thus beam along the
 shore,
 Brave Albion's sons their brazen thunder pour,
 Strew Gallic decks with mangled corpse the
 while,
 And shake the sedgy margins of the Nile.
 The trembling Gauls in dismal terror wait,

The awful issue of impending fate !
Shrieking in dread, each to his fellow turns,
Flames seize the hull, and all around them burns
!

As when volcanic mounts eruptions throw
Their boiling lava on whole towns below;
As when huge avalanche, tremendous, sweeps,
The cots and villas down the Alpino steeps ;
As when the Dardan hero loud exclaims,
“Troy is no more, our city’s wrapt in flames !”
As when convulsive Nature shakes the ground,
The terror-stricken natives stare around.
So stood the Gauls, in awful, dread suspense ;
No hand to save, - none near for their defence
Except their fears, - deprived of every sense
Alas ! what tongue can paint that sad event,
When *L’Orient* into the clouds was sent ?
Blown up, she to another region went.

The dread explosion seems to rent the skies,
Whilst her sad crew around in hundreds flies ;
Doomed thus, in Ether, to resign their breath,
Or headlong hurled into the gulf of Death.
The vivid glare, the darkness gross pursues,
And death-like silence, for a space ensues.
Th’ amazed crews around in terror look,
And Nile’s dread caverns to their centre shook!
Thus Nelson did, on Ham’s affrighted shore,
Renew the wonders of the days of yore ; .
When stubborn Pharaoh roused Jehovah’s
wrath,

In blood, in frogs, in lice, in hail, in death.
The Gauls no more their hostile arms oppose.
But yield, submissive, to their conquering foes.
Four of their line, in darkness, got away,
While thirteen sail became the victor’s prey.
This action lustre adds to Nelson’s name,
And seven-mouthed Nile records the hero’s
fame.

At nine p.m. this action did commence,
At one a.m. the French gave o’er defence ;
At once acknowledging their own defeat,
And Nelson owned their conqueror complete.
Prizes secured, the Gallic anchors weigh,

Whilst Phebus’ light proclaims approaching
day;
And whilst the fleets prepare to leave the shore,
Let us the state of Egypt now deplore.
Where are thy Goshen’s vales, thy Delta’s
plain,
That once supplied the world with wholesome
grain?
Stupendous pyramids on every side,
Meet the astonished view - the Egyptian’s
pride.
Each top, to us, surmounting clouds appears,
Has stood the tempests of three thousand years;
Thy numerous statues all to us impart,
Thy former knowledge of the sculptor’s art ;
Thy wretched natives, now a barbarous band
Of ruthless plunderers, invest thy land;
Thy lands are sterile - niggard to produce
What life sustains, or what is fit for use ;
Whilst o’er thy regions gross delusion reigns,
And superstition dark o’erspreads thy plains.
Such prospects drear within the visions range, -
What eye can view, and not lament the change !
Despotic sceptre sways the banks of Nile ;
Her sons outvie the feigning crocodile.
Adieu, till freedom basks upon thy shore,
And furious tyrants rule thy realms no more !
All things in order, hence they sweep their way’
And with their prizes soon they leave the bay;
For Hercules’ Pillars, - straight their courses
keep,
And in full sail they plough the foaming deep ;
That point attained, their course they northward
steer,
Till Albion’s chalky cliffs in sight appear.
Each heart elated with their late success,
To gain the harbour all their canvas press ;
And now the port is made, their anchors gone,
And each relates the wonders they have done-
With wives and sweethearts they the hours
beguile;
And each is hailed a hero of the Nile.

Canto II. BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR, OCTOBER 21st, 1805.

Whilst I attempt again to strike the lyre,
May some kind muse the lofty theme inspire,
To tell how hostile fleets in battle join,
And hurl their brazen thunder through each line,
Where boist'rous elements around them roar,
Repelled, impetuous, from a rocky shore.
Near Cape Trafalgar, and St. Mary's Bay
Conclude my story through that dreadful day ;
And whilst I strive this contest to relate,
Where many gallant heroes met their fate; -
Hundreds that morning saw bright Phoebus rise,
Who, long ere night, in death had closed their
eyes ;
And amongst these it is my lot to tell,
That here the brave, the noble, Nelson fell !
"Whilst pomp of battle swells the exalted
strain,"
Apollo, come with thy immortal train :
In terms pathetic cause these numbers glow,
And in smooth cadence make the verses flow;-
Censure not jarring words, nor uncouth strains,
Whilst truth unsullied all protection claims.
Ere we begin this battle to review,
The fleets through various windings let's
pursue.
And first, the French, from Brest their anchors
weigh,
A British squadron in the Channel lay,
Which saw, when the French fleet from harbour
stole,
Pursued, and forced them into Port Ferrol;
Whilst here from harm the Gallic squadron lay,
The British fleet came to in Iris Bay;
Cape Ortegal, far to the northward bore,
And famed Corunna formed the southern shore,
Here, a few days, Sir Robert Calder lay,
Then weighed, and, cruised around broad
Biscay's bay.
One morning whilst Sir Robert's fleet stood
north,
From Port Ferrol the French ships sallied forth,-
Stood to the southward; breezes very light ;

The British fleet to windward full in sight;
And though the Gallic ships remained in view,
Sir Robert Calder dreaded to pursue.
The *Caesar*, *Malta*, and, the *Toudroyant*,
Tho *Dreadnought*, *Mammoth*, and the famed
Tonnant,
Colossus, *Royal George*, and, *L'Spartiate*, -
All eager were to join in the pursuit ;
But Calder's signals kept his ships at bay,
Till on the evening of the second day,
The *Caesar* signals seemed to disregard,
Burst forth like fury on the rearmost guard ;
Had she but been supported in this plight,
No doubt there soon had been a general fight;
But Calder's fears, or judgment, did prevail,
And caused the *Caesar* soon to shorten sail.
For one day more the Gauls remained in view,
But Calder never dared the fight renew.
The French made sail, to southward ploughed
the main,
And joined their forces with the fleets of Spain.
Calder was sent to England in a trice,
And by court-martial tried for cowardice.
Whilst the court-martial sits, let us survey
The coast from Ortegal to Cadiz Bay ;
Ferrol and Iris, and Corunna here,
Round bays and headlands reach Cape
Finisterre,
The northern boundary of the Portuguese,
Whose western shores repel the Atlantic seas.
Next the Broad Douro to the ocean shines,
Where stands Oporto, famed for generous
wines;
Figuerear's Isle withstands the tempests' shock,
And next, contiguous, famed Coimbra's rock ;
Then Cintra's plain, then Tagus' ample sweep,
Mixes its torrents with the foaming deep.
From hence to Cadiz, all along the shore,
Resemblance bears to what we've passed
before:
Where pumpkins, melons, cucumbers arise,
Garlic and onions, of stupendous size,

With various corns, prepared for human food,
All flowing from the Giver of all Good.
The orange, lime, the grape, the fig, the date,
The citron, and delicious pomegranate:
Such are the stores thy golden harvests bring,
And clothe thy valleys with perpetual spring.
But oh ! thy sons in Popish darkness held,
Spurned by free subjects, and by heaven
repelled !

At thy fell woes sad mem'ry here recoils,
Thy cursed Inquisition's cruel toils:
Engines of torture fill thy cells with groans,
Whilst o'er devoted heads pale misery moans.
Popish delusions and traditions mark
Thy natives, sunk in superstitions dark -
Darker than chaos ere this world began;
Obscures God's noblest image, reasoning man !
Let us retire from scenes of barbarous brood
To navies rolling in the boist'rous flood.
Now Calder's tried, the court heard his defence.
Error in judgment given as his offence ;
And by the court received this reprimand :
That he should ne'er again a fleet command.
Nelson was sent for, and request was made
To take command, and Cadiz Port blockade.
Nelson, on this, on board the *Vict'ry* hied,
Collects the ships o'er which he should preside;
But these arrangements caused so much delay,
The combined fleet in meantime anchors weigh,
And cross th' Atlantic, straight they shape their
course

Nelson pursued with his collected force.
Himself in th' *Vict'ry* led the weather line ;
The *Royal Sovereign* did the lee incline,
With her commander, Admiral Collingwood,
In press of canvas after them pursued.
Quickly they pass bold Afric's western shore,
Where raging seas around tremendous roar ;
Through the West India islands make their way,
Only a-head the British fleet one day.
No time to stop, so close they urge the chase,
Then for European shores their course retrace;
As when Actaeon scorned his legs, but said

He prized the branching horns upon his head,
When lo ! he hears behind the opening hounds,
And seeks the forest with alternate bounds, -
So fled the Gauls with Nelson on their rear,
Dread his approach, whilst still of him they
hear;

Till European shores appear in view,
Also bold Nelson and his hardy crew,
Hove full in sight. Each fleet now does its best,-
This to join battle, that to shun contest.
Just as their rearmost ship made Cadiz Bay,
The *Vict'ry* shot her mizen-mast away.
Gladly would I retrace the courses passed,
Review each tempest and record each blast;
But time would fail, the tale too much extend,
So I forbear, and hasten to the end.

A strong south-wester, but a steady breeze,
Impelled them, furious, through the Atlantic
seas,

Whilst foaming billows whitened in their track,
Their press of sail made masts and yards to
crack.

Now safe in Cadiz they repose a space,
Whilst Nelson keeps blockade upon that place ;
Though now at anchor here they ride in state,
The day approaches that must seal their fate.
Come, then, my muse, begin the exalted lay,
Conduct me through the terrors of that day,
"Where hostile fleets in flaming combat join,"
And thund'ring cannon roar from either line ;
Pouring destruction through their jaws of death,
With boiling elements around, beneath, -
Go through the whole without one instant's
pause ;

"All which I saw, and part of which I was."
Twas now October, and the eighteenth day,
The combined fleets again their anchors weigh;
Their movements *Polyphemus* soon perceives,
And to Lord Nelson information gives.
With his full force he eagerly pursues ;
The breezes light, and then a calm ensues ;
Nelson, impatient, caused the boats to tow,
With hawsers fastened to each lofty prow ;

But vain th' attempt such lofty ships to stay,
 As even one tiny knot adds to their way ;
 But on the twentieth springs a gentle breeze,
 Which south conducts them smoothly through
 the seas;
 The twenty-first, when morn began to clear,
 The combined fleets to leeward did appear ;
 In a bold crescent ranged, their squadrons lay
 Near Cape Trafalgar, along Mary's Bay.
 Bold Nelson's telegraphic signal flew,
 " England expects each will his duty do."
 In two divisions down on them we bore,
 Whilst tremulous dread each nervous system
 tore ;
 Five hours of calm suspense our Seamen wait,
 Whilst o'er their heads thus hung suspended
 fate!
 All sail we made, the breeze being very light,
 Whilst every heart seemed eager for the fight.
 To break their line it was our sole intent ;
 They closed, this bold manoeuvre to prevent;
 Their shots flew thick around us all the while,
 As we approached them in majestic style ;
 Nor dared we fire, lest that would keep us back;
 The breeze so light, such would our motion
 slack.
 Lord Nelson chose *Saint Tissima Trinidad*, -
 Four tier of guns, two thousand men she had ;
 Orders his ship to lay along her side,
 Resolved to humble her gigantic pride.
 The *Royal Sovereign*, first of the lee line,
 In gallant style did through the crescent shine ;
 Opened her fire with such tremendous roar,
 As made the rocks resound along the shore.
 In swift succession followed all the line ;
 Nelson's division last in battle join.
 Each picked her mate, on purpose to subdue ;
 The *Temeraire* assaulted was by two.
 For two long hours betwixt their fires she stood,
 Defends her colours, though deep stained with
 blood.
 At last the *Caesar* came to her relief,

Did her rescue, but proved the Frenchmen's
 grief,
 This new attack did not resist at all,
 But yields at once, and down their colours haul.
 Whilst Nelson paced the quarter-deck alone,
 Three blazing stars upon his left breast shone,
 Hardy, respectful, whispered in his ear
 "My lord, put off those trophies which you
 wear,
 For now the action presses close and hot,
 They but expose you to the soldier's shot."
 "No," said brave Nelson, "I such act disclaim;
 Should I my country's trophies thus disdain ?
 Such the respectful mark our king bestows,
 I'll ne'er put off to face my country's foes."
 Thus had he spoke, and scarcely yet turned
 round,
 When, 'midst the stars, received the fatal
 wound;
 Upruned his eyes when first he felt the check,
 Then sunk down backward on the quarter-deck.
 Hardy beneath him did a sail cloth throw,
 And cautiously had him conveyed below;
 The surgeon probed the sore, by which he found
 His lordship had received a mortal wound;
 "Is it a mortal stab ?" Lord Nelson said,
 The doctor answered not, but shook his head.
 "Go then," said Nelson, "Leave me to my fate ;
 Attend to those whose hope gives longer date."
 The battle now raged sore throughout the line;
 In all the ships did dreadful carnage shine -
 The French and Dons fought hard in their
 defence,
 While victory seemed as held in dread
 suspense.
 At last the combined fleets their fears display,
 No longer doubtful fate hung o'er the day.
 When Nelson to the deck for Hardy sent,
 To hear from him what way the contest went.
 "My lord," says Hardy, "things auspicious look,
 Full fifteen colours are already struck."
 "I'm satisfied, in victory's arms I die ;
 My body hence in Westminster shall lie.

Pray, do not think my destiny severe,
 My grateful country will a trophy rear –
 'Tis all I crave of her - all I desire, -
 Adieu !” then did in Hardy’s arms expire.
 This sad event was to the fleet made known,
 By his broad flag being lowered to half-mast
 down,
 But this no time in sorrow to bemoan,
 Each one’s engaged with feeling all his own.
 Though now the centre line no warfare waged,
 Still in the wings the furious conflict raged !
 But British ships so hot their broadsides ply,
 That six more combined ships for quarter cry.
 Thus closed the battle that auspicious day,
 And twenty-one to the British arms gave way,
 Far other scenes must now our strains employ,
 The signal’s made the prizes to destroy ;
 The breeze, late light, increases to a gale,
 The wounded ships no longer can make sail ;
 Their danger’s greater than it was before,
 They now are threatened by a leeward shore !
 The gale increases, furious raged the sea,
 And frowning capes, and shelves beneath their
 lee,
 And now dark night involves the lowering sky ;
 The vivid lightning’s flash alternate fly ;
 Along the shore the thunder loud rebounds,
 Hell yawns, rocks echo, and the depths resound.
 Whilst language fails, conception faint may
 dream
 The awful horrors of that midnight scene.
 Now morning, glimmering through the dusky
 clouds,
 To their astonished view their state unshrouds ;
 The gale increasing, with a boisterous sea,
 The shelving rocks of Spain beneath their lee. -
 Nature may smile to hail enlivening morn,
 With all the beauties which her train adorn ;
 Imparting joy around the happy plains,
 Dispensing health among the rustic swains,-
 But navies toiling on a boist’rous main,
 Beset with dangers, labouring to regain
 Some safe retreat, to shun the tempest’s rage,

No rays can cheer their fears, or toils assuage.
 Great source of light no gladsome beam
 displays,
 Nor mock their labours with thy living rays !
 Whilst roaring oceans foam their hulls beneath,
 And jarring elements contend with death !
 For three long nights and days the fleet
 withstood
 The grievous tossings of the stormy flood,
 When freed from harm and danger, make their
 way
 To an asylum in Gibraltar Bay.
 Now they lament their generous Nelson lost,
 Their brave commander, and their country’s
 boast ;
 But they reflect, while thus they mourn his
 doom,
 The heart of every Briton is his tomb.
 Vain were the attempt his actions to run o’er,
 His toils severe on many a foreign shore,
 Where Polar frosts congeal eternal snows,
 Or where the Tropic’s scorching sunbeam
 glows ;
 Through every clime his glorious fame was
 known,
 Had braved the hardships great of every zone.
 These hardships to enumerate were vain ;
 His wondrous perils on the raging main.
 One instance here his arduous labours show,
 And make his fame in vivid colours glow.
 In torrid climes, where nature pants for breath,
 And tainted gales bring pestilence and death,
 Nelson had sought, but long had sought in vain,
 The still retreating fleets of France and Spain ;
 When found at last, he crushed them on the
 flood,
 And sealed the awful conquest with his blood.

 The End.

Ayrshire Archives Branches Out

The main repository for Ayrshire Archives will reopen from the 26th January, at its new premises at the Watson Peat Building on the Scottish Agricultural College Campus, Auchincruive, Ayr. The Ayr centre will be open to researchers on Tuesdays from 9.30am-1pm, 2pm-4.30pm by appointment only.

With the opening of a new archive facility in May 2009 at the Burns Monument Centre, Kilmarnock, many records relating to East Ayrshire that were previously held in Ayr have been transferred there, along with the Kirk Session Records, Customs and Excise and Justice of the Peace collections. An Archivist is based at the Burns Monument Centre every Wednesday, although access to the records is available via library colleagues Monday to Friday. The Burns Monument Centre, built around the iconic W.G Stevenson statue of Robert Burns, houses a state-of-the-art archive store, family & local history research room, a spectacular conference and ceremony suite and is also the new venue for the Kilmarnock Registration Services. This unique Family & Local History facility allows researchers to retrace the footsteps of their ancestors under one roof.

In North Ayrshire, our archives collection can be accessed at the Vennel Local and Family History Centre, Irvine. This centre opened in December 2008 and is partly formed by a former heckling shed where Robert Burns worked for a brief time. Here visitors can undertake family and local history research using the wide range of resources available. The centre also has close links with the Registration service for a seamless approach to family history research.

With the recent changes in Ayrshire, anyone looking for historical records should contact Ayrshire Archives HQ at Auchincruive in the first instance for guidance on where records relating to their research are located.

Useful Numbers:

Ayrshire Archives HQ, Watson Peat Building, SAC, Auchincruive, AYR. KA6 5HW.

Tel 01292 521819. archives@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Burns Monument Centre, Kay Park, Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire, KA3 7RU.

Tel 01563 576695. Fax 01563 576690. burnsarchives@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

www.burnsmonumentcentre.com

The Vennel Local & Family History Centre, 10 Glasgow Vennel, Irvine, KA12 0BD

Tel 01294 275059. localhistory@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Black Friday: the east coast fishing disaster of 1881

by Peter Aitchison

Peter Aitchison delivered a lecture to Kilmarnock Local History Society on Tuesday 6th October 2009 on the Eyemouth Fishing Disaster of 1881. Here he reflects on Black Friday.

For most people the Scottish fishing industry means that knuckle of coast around the north east promontory. Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Aberdeen and Buckie. Few think of Berwickshire and the still substantial fleet that is based at Eyemouth, a town of 4,000 folk just a few miles north of the English border. Yet had it not been for a remarkable series of events and coincidences, culminating in the worst tragedy to strike the sea going communities of Scotland, the whole nature of the fishing economy might have been radically different.

For many decades in the nineteenth century Eyemouth was a boom town. Fortunes were made from huge catches of haddock and herring and the population swelled with migrants who arrived on virtually every tide and from every part of Britain. But while tens of thousands of pounds was expended by the state creating safe new piers at a rash of other havens, Eyemouth got nothing. It was, for all its success, a pariah port; the people as renowned for being rebels as expert seamen.

In the 1840s a simmering row with the Church of Scotland, which claimed a right to a tenth of the local catch, erupted into violent confrontation. This 'teind' was an historic anomaly which had long since been abolished elsewhere and the men of Eyemouth, led by their leader William Spears, came together to rid themselves of the hated tax once and for all. It led to almost 40 years of trouble. Eyemouth became a by word for riots and lawlessness. Eventually the Lord Advocate intervened and brokered a compromise, with the Kirk agreeing to surrender its right on payment of substantial compensation from the fishermen.

Only in the late 1870s, with the row settled, could application be made to the government for money to improve Eyemouth's crumbling piers and unsafe harbour entrance. By then the place that had once been pre-eminent in the fishing industry had fallen far behind Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Aberdeen. In the interim the Eyemouth men became used to taking risks. They sailed in the fiercest weather, they put to sea when others would not, and they prospered in spite of the poor state of their piers. But they also knew that they were testing fate.

A plan to create a deep water port, accessible at all states of the tide, was finally published in August 1881. Six weeks later a massive hurricane swept down over Berwickshire. By dusk on Friday 14th October, 1881, 19 local boats had been sunk and nearly 200 men killed – many were drowned in the approaches to the bay, in full view of their wives, mothers and children. The storm, which might have been a tragedy with some lives lost, had become a disaster of unparalleled magnitude because of the inadequate state of Eyemouth harbour. Seventy widows and close on 300 children were left in penury. In spite of countless memorials and petitions, the works that would have prevented the carnage were never started.

Whitehall decided that a town which had lost half its fleet and a third of its men was no longer viable. The harbour of refuge was instead to be built at Peterhead. It was a decision that

dismayed the *Scotsman* newspaper, which said: ‘A harbour there would be of no use to boats running for shelter south of the Tay. It is to be hoped that the government will see their way to construct a harbour accessible to the Berwickshire fishing fleet.’ But it did not – at least not until the 1960s, and those works are a pale shadow of plans that were pasted outside the fishery office on the very eve of the storm.

It took a century for the population of Eyemouth to reach the level of 1881, but the legacy of the disaster has neither dimmed nor diminished. The families who live in the town today are the descendants of the lost and of the sorrowful who watched the men drown when the heavens opened in a most hellish way on 14th October, a day still recalled by many as Black Friday.

Peter Aitchison’s book *Black Friday: The Story of the Eyemouth Fishing Disaster* is published by Birlinn, price £7.99.

Lilias Hamilton, 1858 – 1925

by Rob Close

A chance reference led me to Lilias Anna Hamilton, who, through her family, has Ayrshire connections, but appears not to have been well recorded in Ayrshire literature, nor to merit an entry in the excellent *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*,¹ perhaps understandably as she was born on an Australian sheep station and died, and is buried, in Nice.

Lilias Anna Hamilton was born on 7th February 1858 at Tomabil Station near Forbes, New South Wales. Her father, Hugh Hamilton (born in 1822, married 30th August 1853) was the son of John Hamilton of Sundrum (1764-1837), and youngest brother of John Hamilton, also of Sundrum (1806-1898). Her mother, Margaret Clunes, was the daughter of George Innes, a settler from Yarrow, also in New South Wales. Lilias was the second of eight children, four sons and four daughters.²

Shortly after Lilias’s birth, Hugh Hamilton returned to Scotland with his family, and for some years they lived in Ayr, but in the 1870s they moved, finally, to Cheltenham, where Lilias was enrolled as a student at Cheltenham Ladies College. While at college, she was greatly influenced by the school’s forceful principal, Dorothea Beale, who imbued in Lilias a high regard for the value of service to others.³ So inspired she entered into medical training, training firstly as a nurse at the Workhouse Infirmary in Liverpool.⁴ She then continued her training as a doctor, at both Edinburgh University, and at the London School of Medicine for Women, and qualified as a doctor in 1890.

In the same year, she met Colonel Charles Joubert of the Indian Medical service, and as a result, recognised that her wish to serve could be granted by medical work in India. She travelled to India, and established her own general practice in Calcutta (Kolkata), as well as, for a period, acting as physician-in-chief to the Lady Dufferin Zenana Hospital. During her time in Calcutta she met Abdur Rahman Khan, Amir of Afghanistan, a meeting that resulted in the most adventurous part of her life.⁵ In 1894 she contracted cholera, and, to help her recover, the Amir

suggested that she make a visit to Kabul, his capital. There is a suggestion that this was done partly because the Amir was amused at the manner in which western women of good breeding behaved themselves, and wished to show this to his wives, but whatever his original motives, Liliias remained in Kabul for three years. During her time in Afghanistan, helped by her sister,⁶ and by one English nurse, she was employed by the Amir as his personal physician, but also organised a hospital in the city, and oversaw a national, obligatory programme of smallpox vaccination. She travelled to England with the Amir's second son, Nasrullah Khan, on an official visit to Queen Victoria in 1895, but returned with him to Kabul, where she remained until the strains of life there meant that she herself required medical and surgical treatment, and returned to England in 1897.

After she had recovered from this, she practised for a short period as a consultant in London, before the travelling bug bit again, and she travelled to South Africa, settling in the east Transvaal, where she bought and started a farm, called Caledonia, which was subsequently continued by her brother James.

In 1908 she was appointed as Warden of Studley Horticultural College for Women, in Warwickshire, which had been founded by the Countess of Warwick in 1898 to offer training to "surplus women in the lighter branches of agriculture", and moved to Studley Castle in 1903.⁷ Liliias remained there until the First World War. She then volunteered to assist the war effort, and, on behalf of the Wounded Allies Relief Committee, ran a hospital at Podgoritsa in Montenegro. While she was overseas, the management of the college at Studley was left in the hands of her sister: after the war, Liliias returned to Studley, and remained there until her retirement in 1924.

Her short retirement seems to have been spent mostly in the south of France, presumably for the sake of her health, which had been badly affected by her adventurous life, and she died on the 13th January 1925 in the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, Nice, and was buried in the English Cemetery there.

Liliias Hamilton published a couple of books on her adventures: *A Nurse's Bequest* (John Murray, 1907) deals with her nursing experience in Liverpool, while *A Vizier's Daughter* (1900) records her experiences in Afghanistan. She also published accounts of Afghanistan in the magazine of the London School of Medicine for Women (now held by the Royal Free Hospital), while some of her photographs from the same country are held by the Wellcome Library of Medicine in London.

Her obituary in *The Times* speaks of her "mingled desire for adventure and service" and of "her deep and generous understanding of human nature, her gay courage, her unconquerable zest for life", all of which "brought even those who might be differing from her under the spell of her persuasive character."

This is, necessarily, a rather sketchy account of an adventurous and unusual life, but one which I felt was worth bringing before readers of *Ayrshire Notes*. It is based on mostly secondary sources, especially her entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and the obituary which appeared in *The Times*, 9th February 1925. The chance reference was in 1914-1918invasionzone.com/forums .

- ¹ Elizabeth Ewan, Sue Innes, Siân Reynolds, eds., *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
 - ² Her elder brother was Hugh Montgomerie Hamilton (1854-1930), who was a judge in Sydney, with an illustrious and adventurous career of his own. He was educated at Marlborough College, England, and in 1874 was selected by both Scotland and England for the rugby union international between the nations: he chose Scotland, and is credited with introducing the passing game into the sport. In 1890 he was on the first expedition to climb the Murchison Glacier, New Zealand. The other brothers were George Innes Hamilton (1856-1945), James Dundas Hamilton (1860-1924) and Claud Lorn Campbell Hamilton (1874-1954), who in 1918 succeeded his aunt as laird of Rozelle, Ayr. The younger sisters were Margaret Eliza (1862-1877), Roma Florence (1865-1921) and Selena Frances (1868-1932).
 - ³ The school was founded in 1853, and Beale was principal from 1858 until her death in 1906. “She transformed [it] from a small establishment concentrating on developing traditional women’s skills ... into the first academic school offering courses equivalent to those in boys’ schools ...” (Wikipedia, accessed 19 January 2010)
 - ⁴ The use of trained nurses in workhouses was pioneered, from 1865, at Liverpool, and was supported financially by a local philanthropist, William Rathbone. The workhouse was demolished in 1931; the Roman Catholic cathedral stands on the site. (www.workhouse.org.uk/index.htm?Liverpool/Liverpool.shtml , accessed 19 January 2010)
 - ⁵ The Amir reigned from 1880 to 1901, and his reign is counted among the most successful in his country’s turbulent history, as he re-established effective control of the country in the aftermath of the second Anglo-Afghan war (1878-1880).
 - ⁶ It is unclear whether this was Roma or Selena.
 - ⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studley_College, accessed 19 January 2010. The college closed in 1969, but the Studley College Trust remains, offering grants to students of agriculture and horticulture.
-

Edinburgh Gazette

by Rob Close

Most of our readers will be familiar with the *London Gazette*, *Edinburgh Gazette* and *Belfast Gazette* as the official newspapers of our government, and as an outlet for royal proclamations and other official notices. I think that the *London Gazette* also carried winning premium bond numbers, but I’m willing to be corrected on that. They are, perhaps, no-one’s first thought when it comes to either local or family history, but in 2009 the full archive became available on-line, and I thought it would be interesting to see what could be learned from them.

The website is gazettes-online.co.uk, and the home page offers portals into the three different publications. Choosing one, e.g. Edinburgh, leads to another page, with various options,

of which the ‘search the archive’ button is the most useful. I decided to read every issue for 1961, a year chosen at random. The *Edinburgh Gazette* is published twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, so that meant just over a hundred issues, running to 824 pages. Each year is paginated continuously, so page 1 appeared in the issue for 4th January, and page 824 on 29th December 1961. I found it easiest to search by page number, beginning at page 1, and ‘refining’ the search for each successive issue, for having accessed one page, you can see other pages in the same issue, but cannot jump forward or back to contiguous issues. This is a little cumbersome, but the site worked reasonably quickly.

Much of each issue is taken up with matters of national relevance, such as appointments to the Privy Council, or details of who is able to give the Royal Assent to Acts of Parliament while the Queen is abroad. Political change is suggested by the lists of those with diplomatic immunity from not only the established dominions such as Canada and New Zealand, but also newly independent states such as Ghana and Nigeria, while technological change is apparent in the notices stating that telephone links have now been established between the United Kingdom ‘and the Isle of Man’, and such disparate places as Mongolia or Surinam. Certain professional appointments also come within the remit of executive government, especially posts with H.M. in the title, such as Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools, and Inspectors of Factories, and these appointments are recorded in the Gazette. At a ceremonial level, appointments to the lieutenancy are also announced: in Bute in 1961 there were two new Deputy Lieutenants: Air Vice Marshall Ronald Graham, of Woodside Cottage, Sannox (*Edinburgh Gazette* (hereafter *EG*), 21st July 1961) and the Marquis of Bute (*EG*, 8th September 1961). In February (*EG*, 10th February 1961) it was announced that Sir Alexander Fleck KBE had become, by letters patent of 3rd February, Baron Fleck of Saltcoats; the previous month it was intimated that Hugh Fraser, of Dineiddwg, Stirlingshire, had been awarded a baronetcy (*EG*, 27th January 1961). Also recorded are changes at the higher levels of the judicial service: John O. M. Hunter, Sheriff of Ayr & Bute was promoted to be a Senator of the Court of Justice (*EG*, 15th September 1961), and succeeded as Sheriff by Ian MacD. Robertson (*EG*, 26th September 1961).

Notices of a national (or pan-national) scale include lengthy lists of exemptions under the Factory Acts,¹ lists of newly naturalised citizens, and lists of estates which have fallen to the crown. The Naturalisation lists appear monthly, and often contain Ayrshire names. These are mostly displaced nationals from central and eastern Europe, such as the Latvian Arturs Perns, a labourer in Ayr (*EG*, 29th September 1961), or the Polish Edmund Grzywacz, a bulldozer driver in Prestwick (*EG*, 21st April 1961), but also include members of Scotland’s Jewish and Italian communities, such as Barnett Adler, a company director (*EG*, 29th September 1961), and Maria Tortolani (*EG*, 25th August 1961), both from Ayr. Also naturalised during 1961 was the German Walter Brauer, head ferryman at Kylesku (*EG*, 19th May 1961). The lists of estates fallen to the crown, as *ultima heres*, are inserted by the splendidly-titled Queen’s and Lord Treasurer’s Remembrancer. There is a poignancy to these lists of people who appeared to have died without relatives or friends, and they are often from inner city addresses, or died in mental hospitals, such as Marion Stewart, of Fullarton Street, Kilmarnock, who died in the Ailsa Hospital (*EG*, 21st July 1961).

Notices from the Secretary of State for Scotland, and from local authorities, tend to be less interesting to the family historian. Many deal, invariably in minutely specified detail, with the

introduction or alteration of parking and speed restrictions, and others with changes to long-forgotten local authority areas such as Special Scavenging Districts. Others relate to proposed new roads, such as the Whitletts to Holmston section of the Ayr bypass (*EG*, 10th March and 25th August, 1961) and, elsewhere in Scotland, the Tay Road Bridge (*EG*, 1st December 1961). Others notify of boundary changes, such as those to the burghs of Dalbeattie (*EG*, 17th January 1961) and Inverurie (*EG*, 31st January 1961). Bute County Council gave notification of their scheme to acquire, from the Hamilton estates, the right to extract water and introduce a water supply to Slidery (*EG*, 31st March 1961).

Many of the notices refer to the sequestration, liquidation or winding-up of businesses and individual people's estates. In some cases these are under a warrant from a sheriff, and in other cases are instigated by the company or individual themselves. Ayrshire businesses which appear in these files in 1961 include a number of lace manufacturers, such as Goldie Son & Co Ltd., of Darvel (*EG*, 10th January 1961) and Pollock & Ling, of Newmilns (*EG*, 12th December 1961), Frank Codona's Pleasurelands (Ayr) Ltd. (*EG*, 7th July 1961) and The Picture House (West Kilbride) Ltd (*EG*, 8th December 1961), an Ayrshire example of the many cinema companies included. A particular personal note is struck in the voluntary winding-up of John Anderson & Sons Ltd., of 42 Bank Street, Kilmarnock: agreeing to voluntary liquidation, a general meeting of the company agreed that ex gratia payments of £100 each be paid to William Mitchell, clerk, and Andrew Galloway, lorryman, "for long and valued service." (*EG*, 30th June 1961).

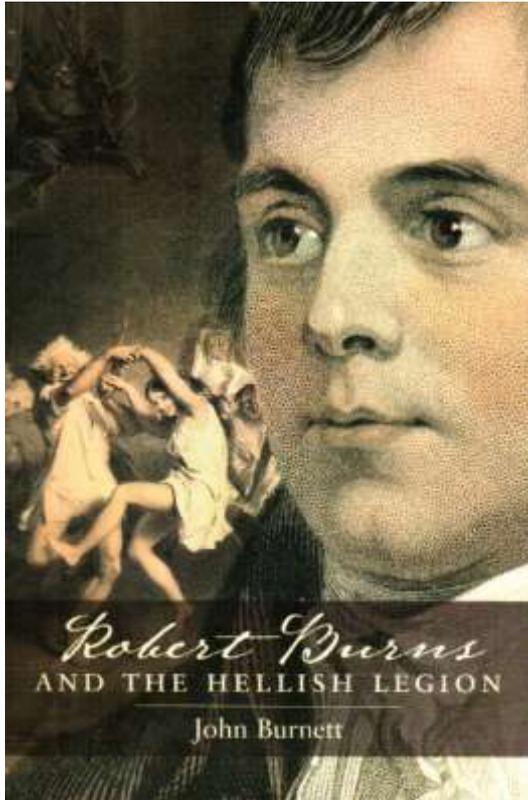
Finally, the Gazettes are used by private individuals and businesses to give notice of changes in their circumstances: changes of name are one such example, though there were none from Ayrshire in 1961. Changes in the make-up of partnerships is another: one example being J. L. Logan & Son, bakers, 167 Main Street, Kilwinning, where the son, J. L. Logan, junior, is retiring from the business, which is being continued, under the same firm name, by his father, J. L. Logan, senior (*EG*, 7th July 1961), and another the merger of two Ayr solicitors' businesses, R. & J. A. MacCallum (where the sole partner is William G Thomson) and John Scott, into one firm, also to be called R. & J. A. MacCallum, with Thomson, Scott, Andrew G. B. Cairncross and Hew S. Campbell as partners.

It's there, it's quite easy to use, and I'd be pleased to hear of any discoveries that readers of *Ayrshire Notes* may find by exploring the *Edinburgh* (or, indeed, *London* and *Belfast Gazettes*).

¹ Though the nature of the exemptions are not specified, they seem to relate mostly to the employment of women. Exemptions noted in June (*EG*, 9th June 1961, included Ardeer Foundry Ltd., of Portland Place, Stevenston, and 'Butlins' Photographic Services Ltd., of Bognor Regis, Clacton on Sea and Ayr.'

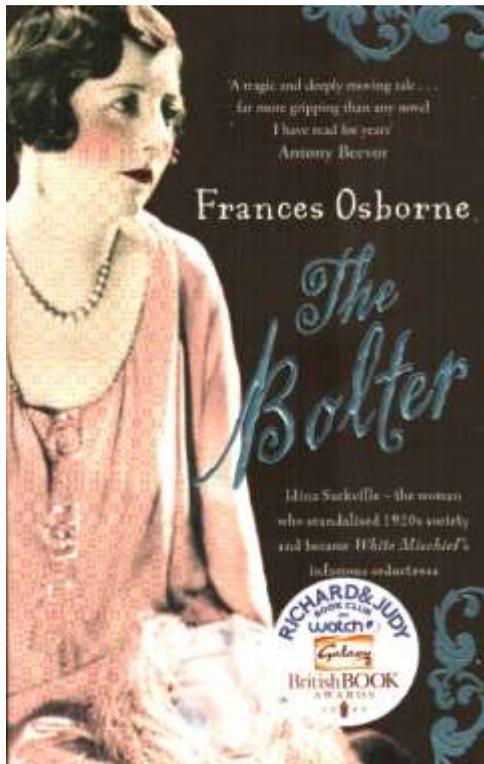
Rob's Book Club: an occasional series

by Rob Close



We have to begin with an old friend. John Burnett will be well-known to many of our readers as an impassioned and entertaining speaker, and as a good friend of Ayrshire. His most recent book, *Robert Burns and the Hellish Legion* (978 1 905267 31 6), published by the National Museums Scotland, 2009, uses Burns' life and work to explore the folk tales and beliefs which, he contends, are as important a part of Scotland's cultural history as novels and organised religion. He examines the supernatural beliefs of the people, and considers how the ordinary people of Scotland fitted these into their everyday lives, and how they used them, as they washed their clothes at the burn or harvested their corn in the field, to help understand a world which was often inconsistent, mysterious and malevolent. These superstitions, and these beliefs in deils, witches and the like, were not confined to Ayrshire, and while John takes as his central theme, their

influence on the poetry of Burns, this is a book which has much to say about the wider Scottish experience. It is written with John's customary style, attractively accompanied by well-chosen illustrations, and is available through all booksellers for £9.99. I commend it to you.



Ghouls and ghosties probably played little part in the life of Idina Sackville, whose ‘scandalous’ life is told in Frances Osborne, *The Bolter* (Virago, 2008; paperback 2009). Idina (1893-1955) was the daughter of the 8th Earl de la Warr, and was married five times, as well as having many lovers. She was one of the pace-setters amongst the white settlers in Kenya – the Happy Valley set, well captured in James Fox’s 1981 novel, *White Mischief*. Nearer to home, her first husband was David Euan Wallace of Kildonan, whom she married in 1913, and with whom she discussed the detailed planning of the house being built on the estate by James Miller. This planning, according to Osborne, had a particular purpose: on the first floor “were eight main guest bedrooms on the outwards-looking, lawn side of the house, half with dressing rooms attached in which a husband could sleep, allowing couples used to different partners to separate for the night, and serviced by a row of bathrooms on the courtyard side of the house – which in themselves provides a reason for guests to be wandering the passageways after lights out.” (p.45). “Reminiscences of Kildonan House, Barrhill”, which appeared in *Ayrshire Notes* 23, Autumn

2003, is credited in the bibliography; perhaps our first mention in a Richard & Judy Book Club recommendation..

From recent obituaries I noticed that of Springburn-born Kay Carmichael, the progressive social policy advisor from the 1960s and 1970s, who died on 26th December 2009, aged 84: “Aged four (i.e.c.1929), she was sent to a convent school at Girvan, Ayrshire. This proved to be another awful experience thanks to a mother superior whom Kay later described as ‘brutal’, though one of the nuns encouraged her to read, advice that Carmichael followed for the rest of her life.”¹ Was this Trochrague?

To conclude, some random discoveries from reading the *Ayr Advertiser* of 1876. For New Years Day, “Mr Mortimer Murdoch, ex-tragedian, announced an entertainment in the Queen’s Rooms in which he was to figure as the sole performer. A large number of lads and young men were present, and a preliminary row was occasioned by some crowding in without payment. This difficulty arranged, the ‘entertainment’ commenced; but New Year influences were neither favourable to the exercise of the performer’s powers, nor to a display of patience on the part of the audience, and after some verbal disputation, a regular ‘row’ ensued, in which the seats were thrown hither and thither, and some of the cushions torn to pieces, and Mr Murdoch got his coat rent off in shreds. Ultimately the gas was turned off, and the appearance of the police shortly after put an end to the disturbance.”² This editorial comment on a forthcoming performance suggests that there is less difference between now and then than we may suspect: “THE BLONDINETTES. It will be seen that this company of female melodists, whose entertainment has drawn large audiences in our large cities, is to appear in the Queen’s Rooms, Ayr, on Wednesday and Thursday evenings next. The Blondinettes are said to be good-looking young ladies who do not think it necessary to disfigure themselves by blackening their faces; and their entertainment is described as clever, attractive and refined.”³ In February, James Hardie, photographer in St Andrews, offered a “portrait of the late Tom Morris, champion golfer, post free for seven stamps”,⁴ while Hugh Paterson, the post-runner between Ayr and Dalrymple, who had been unable because of an ailment in one of his legs, which doctors thought was unlikely to get better, was presented by well-wishers with a pony and cart: they obviously believed the mail should get through.⁵

¹ Brian Wilson, *Guardian*, 13th January 2010.

² *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 6th January 1876, 4f.

³ *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 17th February 1876, 4f.

⁴ *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 10th February, 1b

⁵ *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 3rd February, 5e.

Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

Swap Shop

The 2009 Swap Shop was held in the Maritime Museum, Irvine, and attracted around 30 members and friends of the Federation. As well as the usual, but informal, business of the meeting, we were treated to guided tours of the museum's main buildings: the mighty Linthouse Building which houses the greater part of the collections, including all the large objects, the restored Shipworker's Flat in Montgomerie Street, and the other, new, buildings in Montgomerie Street. We were made very welcome by the Museum's staff and volunteers, and encourage our members, if they haven't done so, to visit the museum.

A.G.M.

The 2010 Annual General Meeting will be held in May 2010: the date has yet to be confirmed, but it is hoped that it can be held in Muirkirk. Federation members will be informed as soon as possible.

John Strawhorn Quaich

The award for 2010 will be made, and the quaich presented, at the May Annual General Meeting. Nominations, as always, are sought, and should be sent to Pamela McIntyre, at 5 Eglinton Terrace, AYR KA7 1JJ. They should explain why the person is being nominated, and list their achievements in the fields of local, community and family history and conservation.

Conference 2010

This will be held in the Walker Halls, Troon, on Saturday 16th October. As usual it will be an all day conference, and we think we have an exciting topic – Scotland and France – and an exciting line-up of speakers including well-kent faces such as Tom Barclay from the Carnegie Library, John Burnett from the Museums in Edinburgh, and Simon Taylor, whose talk on place names to last year's South Ayrshire History fair was reprinted in the last *Ayrshire Notes*. New faces at a Troon conference are Charles McKean, whose talks are always lively, Godfrey Evans, also from the Museums, and Jean Britton, of Kirkoswald, whose passion is Hew Kennedy of Ardstinchar and the other Scots who fought with Joan of Arc. As usual, places at the conference will be a bargain £10, and can be reserved from Rob Close, at 1 Craighrae Cottages, Drongan, AYR KA6 7EN. Cheques should be made payable to AFHS (and you should write to your MP objecting to the proposal to phase out cheques).

Emergency Speakers

The Federation has been asked by one of our members to consider preparing a list of people who are willing to speak at short notice. As we all know, booked speakers sometimes have to cancel for various reasons, especially illness, which cannot be foreseen. We think that a list of local speakers who could step in at the last minute would be useful to our members, and easier to maintain than a full list of all potential speakers. Stuart Wilson has agreed to co-ordinate this list, and we welcome suggestions for inclusion on it, which

can be sent either to Stuart (34 Glebe Road, Kilmarnock, KA1 3AZ) or Rob Close (address above).

Roy Lauchlan MBE (1927-2009)

Local history in Ayrshire, and particularly in Kilwinning, has suffered a blow by the death, at the age of 82, on the 14th November 2009. Roy was born and lived all his life in Kilwinning, where he ran a confectionery shop with his wife, but he was involved in all aspects of life in Kilwinning. He was heavily involved in the Red Cross, the British Legion and the local horticultural society, but it was as a local historian that we remember him. As Johnston McKay says in his obituary (*Herald*, 5th December 2009), his “house in King Street was packed with documents and records connected with the town ... and he was regularly contacted by people researching their family trees.” In recent years he had become president of the Robert Service Appreciation Society, and ensured that The Bard of the Yukon was appropriately remembered in the town where he grew up.

Robert Bryden Exhibition

There was an exhibition of works by the Ayrshire-born artist Robert Bryden at the North Ayrshire Museum, Manse Street, Saltcoats, from 26th February to 6th March 2010. Bryden was born in 1865 and travelled widely before returning to his homeland, where he produced works depicting local scenes and people in a variety of media. Bryden’s relief in bronze of John Galt was the subject of the cover photograph in *Ayrshire Notes* 37 (Spring 2009), and this issue also contained an article on the collection of Bryden medallions belonging to South Ayrshire Council Museums and Galleries Service.

Diary of Meetings of Historical Societies

AA	Arran Antiquarians. Meetings in Brodick Public Hall, Brodick, at 2 p.m.
AANHS	Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. Meetings in Carnegie Library, Ayr, at 7.45 p.m.
ASA	Alloway & Southern Ayrshire Family History Society. Meetings in Alloway Church Halls, Alloway, at 7.45 p.m.
BHS	Beith Historical Society. Meetings in lounge of the Eglinton Inn, Beith at 8.00 p.m.
CHS	Cumbrae Historical Society. Meetings in Hiccups Lounge, Newton Bar, Millport, at 7.00 p.m.
CSD	Catrine Sorn & District History Society. Meetings in A. M. Brown Institute, Catrine, at 7.30 p.m.
DHS	Dundonald Historical Society. Meetings in Dundonald Castle Visitors’ Centre, Dundonald, at 7.30 p.m.

EAFHS	East Ayrshire Family History Society. Meetings in Gateway Centre, Foregate Square, Kilmarnock, at 7.30 p.m.
FHS Joint	Joint Meeting of Ayrshire Family History Societies. Carnegie Library, Ayr, at 7.45 p.m.
KCCS	Kyle and Carrick Civic Society. Meetings in Loudoun Hall, Ayr, at 7.30 p.m.
KDHG	Kilmarnock & District History Group. Meetings in Kilmarnock College at 7.30 p.m.
Largs HH	LDHS Hakon Hakonsson Lecture. In Vikingar!, Largs at 8.00 p.m.
Largs Jt	Joint meeting of LDHS and LNAFHS. In St. Columba's Session House, Largs at 7.30 p.m.
LDHS	Largs and District Historical Society. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
L(MS)	LDHS, Marine Section. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
LNAFHS	Largs & North Ayrshire Family History Society. Meetings in Largs Library, Allanpark Street, Largs at 7.30 p.m.
MHS	Maybole Historical Society. Meetings in Maybole Castle, High Street, Maybole at 7.30 p.m.
NCHG	New Cumnock History Group. Meetings in New Cumnock Community Centre at 7.00 p.m.
PHG	Prestwick History Group. Meetings in 65 Club, Main Street, Prestwick, at 7.30 p.m.
SHS	Stewarton Historical Society. Meetings in John Knox Church Hall, Stewarton, at 7.30 p.m.
SWT	Scottish Wildlife Trust: Ayrshire Members' Centre. Meetings in The Green Room, Auchincruive, Ayr, at 7.30 p.m.
TAFHS	Troon @ Ayrshire Family History Society. Meetings in Portland Church Hall, South Beach, Troon, at 7.30 p.m.
WKCS	West Kilbride Civic Society. Meetings in Community Centre, Corse Street, West Kilbride, at 7.30 p.m.

March 2010

Mon 1 st	L(MS)	tbc	
Mon 1 st	KCCS	David Bell	Ayr Renaissance
Thu 4 th	PHG	members	Pot Pourri
Tues 9 th	KDHG	tbc	
Wed 10 th	DHS	Douglas Fraser	History of Urban Gardens
Thu 11 th	AANHS		The Silk Road
Thu 11 th	EAFHS	Robert Ferguson	Costumes of the Past
Mon 15 th	CHS	Dane Love	Lost Ayrshire
Mon 15 th	LDHS	Angela Callaghan	The Skelmorlie Aisle
Tues 16 th	SWT	Simon Jones	The Return of the Beaver
Tues 16 th	TAFHS	Bob Gemmell	The Arms and the Man
Tues 23 rd	KDHG	David Smith	The Roarin' Game: Scotland's Ain
Thu 25 th	BHS	Tbc	Castle Semple Ranger Service
Thu 25 th	FHS Jt	Gerlad Cummins	Old Roads of Ayrshire
Tues 30 th	WKCS	H Doyle	Admiral Cochrane – Founder of the Chilean and Argentinian Navies

April 2010

Thu 1 st	PHG	tbc	Ayrshire Archives
Mon 5 th	L(MS)	Bill Laing	
Thu 8 th	EAFHS	Gareth Hunt	John Hastie Museum, Strathaven
Wed 14 th	DHS	Wendy Sandyford	'Following the Drum'
Thu 15 th	ASA	Ron Ferguson	Dating Old Photographs
Mon 19 th	LDHS	---	AGM
Tues 20 th	TAFHS	Irene McMillan	Dean Castle
Tues 20 th	SWT	Gill Smart	Ayrshire Reserves Round-up
Mon 26 th	CHS	Tom Davidson Kelly	'Eat your Heart out, Toshie!': Glasgow's other great architect and Millport's Marine Station
Thu 29 th	BHS	Nancy Williamson	Coldstream Mill
May 2010			
Thu 6 th	PHG	members	Blether of 2010
Thu 13 th	EAFHS	---	AGM
Thu 20 th	ASA	Gerald Cummins	Lost Ayrshire

AANHS Publications

Publications of the Ayrshire Archaeological & Natural History Society (AANHS) are available from Ronald W. Brash MA, Publications Distribution Manager, 10 Robsland Avenue, Ayr KA7 2RW. Further information about the AANHS and its publications will be found on the society's website: www.aanhs.org.uk

36 Burns & the Sugar Plantocracy of Ayrshire (Graham) 124 pages	£6.00
35 The Masters of Ballantrae (Hunter) 30 pages	£4.00
34 The Loans Smugglers (Wilkins) 144 pages	£4.50
33 Dr John Taylor, Chartist: Ayrshire Revolutionary (Fraser) 112 pages	£4.00
32 Ayr and the Charter of William the Lion 1205 (Barrow) 20 pages	£1.00
31 Tattie Howkers: Irish Potato Workers in Ayrshire (Holmes) 192 pages	£4.50
30 The Early Transatlantic Trade of Ayr 1640-1730 (Barclay & Graham) 104 pp.	£4.50
29 Vernacular Building in Ayrshire (Hume) 80 pages	£4.50
28 Historic Prestwick and its surroundings, 64 pages	£2.50
27 Ayrshire in the Age of Improvement (McClure) 192 pages	£4.00
25 The Street Names of Ayr (Close) 128 pages	£5.00
24 Historic Alloway, Village and Countryside: A Guide for Visitors	£2.00
23 The Last Miller: The Cornmills of Ayrshire (Wilson)	£3.00
22 The Rise and Fall of Mining Communities in Central Ayrshire (Wark)	£1.00
21 A Community Rent Asunder: The Newmilns Laceweavers Strike of 1897 (Mair)	£2.00
20 Historic Ayr: A Guide for Visitors, 2nd ed.	£2.50
19 Robert Reid Cunninghame of Seabank House (Graham)	£1.00
18 Cessnock: An Ayrshire Estate in the Age of Improvement (Mair)	£2.00
15 The Port of Ayr 1727-1780 (Graham)	£2.00
14 Smuggling and the Ayrshire Economic Boom (Cullen)	£2.00
13 Tolls and Tacksmen (McClure)	£1.50
12 The Cumnock Pottery (Quail)	£2.00
11 Robert Adam in Ayrshire (Sanderson)	£1.50
10 The Barony of Alloway (Hendry)	£1.50
9 Plant Life in Ayrshire (Kirkwood/Foulds)	£1.50
6 A Scottish Renaissance Household (MacKenzie)	£1.00
Antiquities of Ayrshire (Grose, ed. Strawhorn) (reprint)	£2.00
Mauchline Memories of Robert Burns (ed. Strawhorn) (reprint)	£2.00
Armstrong's Maps of Ayrshire (1775: reprint, 6 sheets)	£12.00