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**A Scottish-built puffer boiler at the Scottish Maritime Museum in Irvine**

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Contributions for the Spring 2011 issue of *Ayrshire Notes*, including information about the activities of Member Societies, should be sent before the end of January to Rob Close, 1 Craighbrae Cottages, Drongan, Ayr KA6 7EN, tel. 01292 590273, (email: [thelearnedpig@googlemail.com](mailto:thelearnedpig@googlemail.com)) or Gary Torbett, 165 Bank Street, Irvine KA12 0NH.

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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](http://www.aanhs.org.uk)

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***Cover illustration***

The Scottish Maritime Museum purchased this boiler in 2009 for conservation and display as part of the museum's puffer exhibition. See the article on page 16.

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## Jean Kennedy 1934-2010

The death on 4th April of Jean Kennedy has robbed the Federation of one of its regular supporters, and the first recipient of the John Strawhorn Quaich (1998). Jean Blackley Martin was born in Glasgow on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1934, but raised in Kirkfieldbank and Uddingston, before moving to Ayrshire, firstly to Cumnock, where on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1960 she married Robert Innes (Bobby) Kennedy, and subsequently to Ayr.

With Bobby she began to collect postcards of Ayr, and of the surrounding county, and from this came their *Postcards of Old Ayr*, published by the local authority, and a fine example of how a well-researched postcard book can illuminate local history. With Bobby, she also developed an interest in family history, and was one of the founding members of the Troon (now Troon @ Ayrshire) Family History Society in 1989 and, as a naturally meticulous and diligent person, took a prominent role in the organisation of the second (1990) Annual Conference of the Scottish Association of Family History Societies, which the fledgling Troon group had enthusiastically offered to host.

Learning from Alastair Hendry and Rob Urquhart, Jean quickly became an expert palaeographer, and it was Rob who suggested that Jean was the ideal candidate to complete the work on the Burgesses of Ayr left incomplete by the death of Alistair Lindsay. Her abilities with old, often difficult, handwriting, combined with her attention to detail, and assiduous proof-reading, were indeed ideally suited to the task, and *The Burgesses and Guild Brethren of Ayr 1647-1846* (2002) is a testament to those abilities. It is a book I am proud to be associated with, and the project that brought with it, for me, Jean's advice, encouragement and friendship.

Jean was not content to rest on her laurels, and continued to transcribe, both from written records and from graveyards, for the Troon society, for Opportunities in Retirement, and for the Carnegie Library, Ayr. All are indebted to her for setting such high standards of transcription.

Jean's passion though was for tennis, which she played to a high standard, coached and, of course, helped to organise throughout Ayrshire. She will be missed in many ways, and our condolences are extended to her two sons, David and Alan.

**Rob Close**

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## Notes on a Journey from Irvine to Bath in 1789

*by David Courtney McClure*

On Monday 12th October 1789 Elizabeth Boyle said farewell to her husband, the Hon. Patrick Boyle of Shewalton (1717-1798), left their house near the tollbooth in Irvine and set off for Bath. She was accompanied by her son John and daughter Elizabeth. In the course of their long and arduous journey they wrote at least four letters to Patrick Boyle, of which two are found in a small bundle of documents in the National Archives of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The surviving letters are transcribed below.

Boyle's estate lay in the neighbouring parish of Dundonald on the left bank of the River Irvine, where there was an old tower house. The building was probably unoccupied and ruinous; it was not liable for window tax, which it would have been had it been occupied and boasted at least seven windows.<sup>2</sup> The family resided outside the parish, just across the river in the burgh of Irvine, where they had one of the most substantial houses in the centre of the town.<sup>3</sup> We know, from a comment by Mrs Boyle in one of the letters, that there was a garden. Curiously this appears to have given the house its name; Strawhorn informs us that 'David Boyle was born in Boyle's Parterre in the High Street in 1772.'<sup>4</sup> 'Parterre' survives to the present in the name of a modern residential development on the site. An earlier historian of Irvine, McJannet, does not mention the Boyles of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, or their house, and by the time of the Woods' plan of the town (1819), which shows individual feus and the names of feuars, the Boyles had departed for the new house built at Shewalton for Col. John Boyle in 1806.<sup>5</sup> Other evidence for the location of Boyle's Parterre will be discussed below.

Elizabeth was Patrick Boyle's second wife.<sup>6</sup> His first was Agnes, sister of William Mure of Caldwell, who died without issue in 1758. His marriage in 1763 to Elizabeth Dunlop, daughter of Alexander Dunlop, professor of Greek in the University of Glasgow, of which Patrick was for some time rector, was more productive. They had four sons and four daughters. William, the eldest, died at the age of 19. The next was John (1765-1837), aged 24 at the time of the journey. Elizabeth, known as Bess, was the second of four daughters, and was probably born before 1770 so at least 19 years old in October 1789.

They spent the first night at New Cumnock. Their probable route was east to Kilmarnock and then south-east through Mauchline, Auchinleck, and Cumnock, taking them along two of the turnpike roads under the care of the Ayrshire Roads Trustees.<sup>7</sup> The turnpike roads were made of broken stone, compacted by the passing traffic, but prone to breaking up or becoming water-logged, so there would have been much jolting of the chaise,

not making for a comfortable journey. The committee of trustees on a stretch of road would find a contractor to undertake its maintenance (or ‘upholding’) for a period. In July 1789 the trustees meeting at Mauchline, including James Boswell, engaged George Findlay to repair the road from ‘Howfoordbridge to Dappleburn’ at £5 sterling per English mile and to keep it in repair for four years at £2 10s per mile, and in April 1790 they engaged Alexander Peden to put the road from Dappleburn bridge to Cumnock in ‘compleat repair’ by 1<sup>st</sup> September 1790.<sup>8</sup> The road trustees had two sources of funds: first, the tolls which by Act of Parliament<sup>9</sup> they were permitted to collect upon a given road; secondly, a portion of the statute labour money in each parish through which a road passed, expendable only within the particular parish.

Of their accommodation at New Cumnock we learn nothing,<sup>10</sup> but we know the food was disappointing. Whereas on a previous visit with his father John had enjoyed grouse and partridge, on this occasion the party had ‘ham and a tough chicken’. At any rate they had arrived safe and well.

The following morning they set off towards Dumfries. They were posting: that is, hiring from an inn-keeper a chaise with post-boy<sup>11</sup> and either one or two horses to carry them to the next posting inn. They appear to have made the journey to Sanquhar without mishap, although the road was not always good; in March 1789 Robert Burns described this stretch of twelve miles as passing through ‘the wildest moors & hills of Ayrshire’.<sup>12</sup> In June 1791 it was ‘in great need of Repair’, and in June 1792 it was ‘almost impassable.’<sup>13</sup> About a mile beyond Sanquhar, however, one of the back springs on their chaise gave way, and they had to wait by the side of the road for an hour while ‘the Boy’ returned to the ‘Town’ (perhaps the underlining was an ironic comment upon the place) for another. Since the post-boy had only to return to Sanquhar, it is likely they had commenced a fresh hire there at Bailie Edward Whigham’s inn. They continued the rest of the stage ‘in a most miserable Cheese tho the horses got on pretty well.’ The condition of the road in the vicinity of Drumlanrig was poor; it was ‘much broke and very wet’. Since an Act of 1789, the road between Sanquhar and Dumfries was in the course of being remade.<sup>14</sup> When the work was completed, John Ainslie (the noted mapmaker) surveyed the road and was impressed. His report was quite poetical:

The Road from Sanquhar to Thornhill is beyond description beautiful and very judiciously laid off. The Traveller will be astonished and struck with amazement to see the great expense the Trustees have put themselves to in cutting down the Banks of solid rock upon the side of the Nith to make a level road, particularly at one place called Craig Carron, which curiosity prompted me to take the perpendicular height of, which I found to be Eighty two feet, Sixty feet of which was solid rock, which [has] a very tumedious [tremendous?] appearance. The road from Thornhill to Clouden Bridge is mostly finished but from said Bridge to Dumfries about Two Miles in length the tract is not exactly fixed upon, which way it is to go to the new intended Bridge over the River Nith at Dumfries.<sup>15</sup>

In Brownhill they stopped for a sandwich<sup>16</sup> in ‘Menteaths house’ (presumably an inn), and enquired about the family living at Closeburn.<sup>17</sup> They were in good health, but absent: ‘the Chimnies [*sic*] were not smoking as they do not go into it for a month yet.’ The entire parish had belonged to Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick of Closeburn, but had been sold in 1783 to the Rev. James Stewart Monteath, rector of Barrowby in Lincolnshire.<sup>18</sup> He is recorded as the occupier of the house of Closeburn at the time; Sir James Kirkpatrick also resided in the parish.<sup>19</sup> It was therefore perhaps the Monteath family in which the travellers were interested, though there is one letter in the bundle which reveals a much earlier connection with the Kirkpatricks. In 1757 Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick had written from Closeburn Castle to Patrick Boyle, recommending a Mr Williamson for a vacancy in ‘Glasgow College’.<sup>20</sup> That was the year in which Boyle was elected unopposed as rector of Glasgow University.

They spent the second night of their journey in the King’s Arms in Dumfries, where John Boyle wrote the first letter to his father.<sup>21</sup> His mother added a tender postscript the same night: ‘my warmest wishes to you and your fireside. I feel more & more weary the farther I remove from you’. They appear to have shared a concern for her daughter’s health, for she reassures him that Bess has stood the travelling ‘fully as well as we could expect and complains less than I do of being tired’.

On Wednesday morning Mrs Boyle added a further postscript to the letter ‘as the post does not go till this after noon’. After a stormy night it was a fine morning. They planned to breakfast between 8 and 9 o’clock, and then to proceed to Annan, before journeying on to Carlisle where they stopped for the night.

All we know of the remainder of the journey is what can be gleaned from the second of the surviving letters, written on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1789, the day after their arrival in Bath.<sup>22</sup> They had spent 11 days upon the road (Monday 12<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October), and had spent £30, more than the annual earnings of an industrious shoemaker or mason (which is a better indication of the amount spent than the inflation-adjusted figure of £2100 in June 2010).<sup>23</sup> On the way they had written letters to Patrick Boyle from Kendal and Stafford, and another to ‘Mrs Dunlop’ from Worcester. The table below has been constructed from these known points on their route, with other possible overnight towns interpolated.<sup>24</sup> Their departure from Stafford was delayed by the indisposition of Bess: she had a headache and was obliged to ‘take a vomit’. Wolverhampton, only 16½ miles distant, is here suggested as their resting place that night.

Day	Night spent at	Miles	Notes
Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> October	New Cumnock	27.5	
Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Dumfries	37.5	Letter (found)
Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup>	Carlisle	36.4	
Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Kendal	45.7	Letter (not found)
Friday 16 <sup>th</sup>	[Preston]	49.6	
Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup>	[Northwich]	41.3	
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup>	Stafford	43.6	Letter to ‘Mrs Dunlop’ (not found)

Monday 19 <sup>th</sup>	[Wolverhampton]	16.4	
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup>	Worcester	30.7	Letter (not found)
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup>	[Stroud]	35.6	
Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Bath	29.8	Letter (found)

In Bath they ‘got into Mrs Young’s apartments at Miss Kirkpatrick’s No. 37 Milsom Street’, where their accommodation consisted of a small room with two beds and a ‘night closet’ for the women, a very small bedroom for John, and a small parlour. They were not to be boarded, but to have any food they chose prepared for them by her cook. Mrs Kirkpatrick advised them that this would amount to less than boarding, which would have cost 18s a week for each person. Mrs Boyle was concerned at the expense, and assured her husband that she would be careful in her expenditure.



**Milsom Street (from a drawing by John Claude Nattes published in 1806).**

Milsom Street, which was built in 1762 by Thomas Lightoler, is at the heart of the fashionable old town today. The buildings were originally grand town houses, but most are now used as shops, offices and banks. They have 3 storeys with mansard roofs and Corinthian columns. Numbers 37 to 42, known as Somersetshire Buildings, have been designated as Grade 1 listed buildings.

Bess had recovered her good health.<sup>25</sup> On the day after their arrival she walked a good deal about the streets and visited the pump room. Seeing and being seen was an important part of a visit to Bath, which was a thriving spa resort, popular with fashionable society. Jane Austen paid two long visits there towards the end of the eighteenth century, and it was her home from 1801 to 1806. *Northanger Abbey*, written in 1796 though not published until 1803, was largely set in Bath. In chapter 3 she described the pattern of life of the leisured visitors there: ‘Every morning now brought the regular duties – shops to be

visited; some new part of town to be looked at; and the pump-room to be attended, where they paraded up and down for an hour, looking at everyone and speaking to no one. The wish of numerous acquaintance in Bath was still uppermost with Mrs Allen, and she repeated it after every fresh proof, which every morning brought us, of her knowing nobody at all.’ However with their close links to titled society, the Boyles did not lack a numerous acquaintance, as is clear from the letters, particularly the third reproduced here, written in January 1790 from London by John Boyle when his mother and sister were still in Bath.<sup>26</sup>



**A section of Woods' *Plan of the Town of Irvine*, surveyed 1819.  
X marks the approximate site where the statue was erected in 1867.**

Leaving them to over-winter there, we return to Irvine and the question of the location of Boyle's Parterre. It is the fame of John's younger brother David that provides the evidence. He became a celebrated lawyer, and occupied the highest offices in the law in Scotland. In 1867, some years after his death, a statue of him was erected outside Boyle's Parterre, his birthplace.<sup>27</sup> The statue can be seen in an early postcard of Irvine (below), from which its approximate location at the corner of Kirkgate and High Street has been indicated above on an extract of Woods *Map of Irvine* (1819). Note that Wood has drawn two trees at the front of the house, perhaps a representation of the 'parterre' that gave Boyle's house its name.

The statue was later removed and placed where it stands today, in Castle Street at the foot of Seagate.<sup>28</sup> Of the Boyles' house on Irvine High Street only the street name 'Parterre' remains.



**The statue of David Boyle in Irvine High Street.**

**Note that the Tollbooth (jail) has gone, replaced by the 1861 Town House.**

**Source: Photo collection, The Vennel Local & Family History Centre, Irvine.**

*The Letters*

GD1/481/34

The NAS catalogue supplies the date of 12<sup>th</sup> October 1789, which was a Monday. However the letter was clearly written on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October.

Honorable Mr Boyle  
Irvine  
Ayrshire

My D[ear] Sir,

We arrived here safe about an hour ago. Both the Ladies are well and Elizabeth seems not to disagree with the travelling. We slept last night at New Cumnock [Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October], but were not so fortunate in our supper as when you and I were there last. We had neither Grouse nor Partridge but a ham & a tough chicken. About a mile this side of Sanquhar this morning, our Chaise broke down with us. No damage was sustained by any of us, only a delay of an hour on the roadway occasioned till such time as the Boy could return to the Town for another Chaise. It was one of the Back springs wh[ich] gave way. Old Elliot had passed about five minutes before it happened. We performed the rest of the stage here in a most

miserable Cheese [definitely ‘cheese’; perhaps jocular term for a miserable chaise], tho[ugh] the horses got on pretty well. I suppose we shall tarry tomorrow night at The Bush Carlisle. We have had very little rain these two days. The Farmers however do not seem to take the advantage of the weather, as a vast deal of grain is still out, and a good deal to cut down. In the neighbourhood of Dumfries they are pretty clear. We found the road about Drumlanrig much broke and very wet. We stopt at Brownhill, Menteaths house and had a Sandwich. We were informed of the family living at Closeburn [underlined] and in good health. We had a peep of the neighbourhood from the Road but the Chimnies [sic] were not smoking as they do not go into it for a month yet. We shall continue to inform you of our motions as we get on. My Mother and Sister affectionately join me in Love to you all. Believe me ever, your most sincerely J[ohn] Boyle.

Kings Arms Dumfries

Tuesday 7 o’clock at night [13<sup>th</sup> October]

I need not My Dear add any thing to what Jack has said only that Bess stands the travelling fully as well as we could expect and complains less than I do of being tired. I shall write you in a few days, mean time my warmest wishes to you and your fireside. I feel more & more weary the farther I remove from you. Pray take care of yourself, and I pray god to preserve you & yours, I ever am most faithfully yours while E B.

Wednesday morning [14<sup>th</sup> October]

as the post does not go till this after noon I left the letter open that I might tell you we are all well this morning. It has rained these two nights but we have always had fine weather in the day & this is a bright morning tho[ugh] it rained & blew all night. We are just going to breakfast between 8 & 9 & then proceed to Annan. Farewell.’

GD1/481/35

The Honourable Mr Boyle

Irvine

N. Britain

Ayrshire

Bath October 23<sup>rd</sup>

We arrived here last night [Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October] but I delayed till to day to write you My Dear Friend, that I might inform you where we are fixed. Bess had a bad fit of the headach [sic] at Stafford, & was obliged to take a vomit, which made us lye bye for most part of a day; but she very soon got on to her usual health, and has this day walked a good deal about the streets and into the pump room. We have got into Mrs Young’s apartments at Miss Kirkpatrick’s No 37 Milsom Street, consisting of a small bed room with two beds in it, & a night closet for us,<sup>29</sup> and a very small bedroom for Jack, & the

use of a neat parlour. I was sorry to find that she could not board us, as she has given up that way, but we are to have a dish of any thing we chuse dressed by her cook, and she has convinced me that in point of expence it will be less than boarding, as within these two years boarding is raised from 16 to 18 shillings a week for each person, & she thinks in the way we are to do it will not come to so much; I believe Jack and Bess would have preferred a more publick way of life, but the former seems convinced that this way will be more elligible [sic] for us; our Landladys are extremely civil & are respectable people, and are to give us every information that is necessary for conducting ourselves; I am concerned at the great expence we are unavoidably obliged to incur, but you may depend I will not throw my money away unnecessarily; we have spent about thirty pounds on our journey, which I fancy is not a great deal more than you would expect, when you consider we were so long as eleven days on the road [Monday 12<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October]. I was this morning made happy by your letters, under Sir Adam's cover;<sup>30</sup> and you will before this time have received ours from Kendal, and Stafford. I wrote Mrs Dunlop from Worcester, & desired her to let Helen know.<sup>31</sup> Tell Helen to mention particularly in her next how you, and all of you are; I hope David will be properly fixed, but I think I have heard that Mrs Hamilton is a silly sort of woman, a Daughter of Cross the minister.<sup>32</sup> I think Mrs Jardine's friends would do better, & then Jardine would take some notice of him. I am to send for Mr Hay this afternoon, apothecaries don't get any fees, but what you chuse when you are done with them; Jack insists on our employing his friend Dr Smith of Oxford who gets a guinea as a retaining fee, & what you chuse when you dismiss him. I shall write you particularly in a few days again. I wish I had a frank,<sup>33</sup> I must inquire if there is any members of Parliament here. I had a letter from Lady Dumfries this morning as she had not time to write to me at Cumnock, she said if she had known of our going to Bath, she would have recommended us to Miss Kirkpatrick's, so I hope we are as well situate as we could be. I thank you for your remittance. I hope we shan't want it for some time. Jack and Bess join me in love and Duty to you, and your fireside; I shall write Helen soon, Bess thanks Agnes<sup>34</sup> for her letter, I was mortified that neither Jack nor I were mentioned it. Farewell My Dearest, take care of yourself, I hope you do not walk in the garden with your slippers, it is very wrong, remember to avoid wet feet. God bless and preserve you and yours prays yours truly, affectionate & faithfull [sic] E Boyle.

GD1/481/36

Hon<sup>ble</sup>. Mr Boyle,  
Irvine,  
Ayrshire,  
N.Britain.

York Coffee House, St. James's Street

Jan'y 21<sup>st</sup> 1790

My dear Sir

I have been to hear the King make his Speech, and it was literally hearing him, for I had not the felicity of seeing him owing to the crowd of Ladies that were present and who intercepted the view of the Gentlemen at the Bar by their high headdresses and their standing up on the Benches. The King spoke low, and appeared to me to speak feelingly in the beginning of his harangue when he took notice of the troubles in the different parts of Europe. I shall not trouble you with any thing relating to the matter of the Speech as you will hear at length in the papers. I went afterwards with Sir George Douglas and Lord Glasgow,<sup>35</sup> whom I found by accident at the Bar of the House of Lords, to the House of Commons. No kind of debate ensued on the address – Lord Volletort was speaking when I got to the Gallery but I could not discover what he was about. In short, in other words, I could not hear him. Mr Cawthorne seconded the motion. The King's voice was weaker than the last time. I had heard it, but I really take it he had a cold. It was very observable that he was affected when he first began. I have been two days in town from Bath – I left my Mother and Sister in pretty good health and spirits. Elizabeth had been free from headaches for a considerable time. Lord and the two Lady Glasgows did not come to town till the day after the Birthday.<sup>36</sup> I dined with them on Wednesday in Manchester Square. There was nobody there but Mr Hay, a brother of Lady Glasgow's. He asked after Helen and Elizabeth. Dowager Lady Glasgow has removed from her house in Wigmore Street and is now in Duke Street, Manchester Square. So you see they are all got together. Lord Boyle is grown a charming little fellow. I carried him up and down the room last night. Lady Glasgow said I would make an excellent nurse. I don't see much appearance of a foundation being laid for another. Lord Errol was married three weeks ago to Miss Blake of Ireland, a Roman Catholic. She came over to Port Patrick, as it was against an Act of Parliament that he should be married in the Country. He returned immediately to the Kingdom. His friends I perceive do not at all wish it, but they must now make the best of a bad bargain. I shall touch up Seton, your Man of Business, with regard to Morrison's affair in a day or two. Lady Helen Douglas appears very anxious to finger a little of the Cash. My Mother wished also to have laid hands on some of it, but your extreme liberality to us has anticipated every desire of that kind. Hilary term begins on Saturday. I shall attend the King's bench regularly while I am in town. There is no such thing as getting Chambers in any of the Inns of Court at present. I was enquiring the other day. I have got lodging at St Jermyn Street, St. James's. Adieu for the present.

Yours eternally affect<sup>e</sup> – Love, [sgd] Jno, Boyle

Love to all with you.



**Statue of David Boyle in Castle Street (photo DCM).**

- <sup>1</sup> National Archives of Scotland [NAS], GD1/481/1-47. 1-42 letters, mostly written to the Hon. Patrick Boyle of Shewalton (1717-1798) fifth son of the 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Glasgow. The remainder are miscellaneous documents.
- <sup>2</sup> NAS, E326/1/16, window tax records, Ayrshire.
- <sup>3</sup> It was a house of 19 windows; NAS, E326/1/186, window tax records for Irvine burgh.
- <sup>4</sup> John Strawhorn, *The History of Irvine Royal Burgh and New Town*, Edinburgh 1985, 99.
- <sup>5</sup> Arnold F. McJannet, *Royal Burgh of Irvine*, 1938.
- <sup>6</sup> Biographical information from *The Scots Peerage*, Vol. IV, 1907, 206-214.
- <sup>7</sup> David McClure, *Tolls and Tacksmen*, AANHS, 1994.
- <sup>8</sup> Ayrshire Archives, CO3/5/1, Kilmarnock to Mauchline Road Turnpike Trustees minute book 1769-1791,
- <sup>9</sup> The 1767 Ayr Roads Act, 7 Geo. 3 c. 106, as amended by the 1774 Ayr Roads Act, 14 Geo. 3 c.109. The toll allowed on the road from Irvine to Kilmarnock for a chaise (or any other wheeled vehicle) pulled by one horse was ninepence; on the road from Kilmarnock to Cumnock it was sixpence. There would have been a further toll due on the road from Cumnock to the county line between New Cumnock and Kirkconnel; this was a section of the road leading from Ayr, by Ochiltree, Old Cumnock, and New

- Cumnock, towards Sanquhar, so far as that road is within the said County of Ayr', and the toll allowed for a single-horse chaise or carriage upon the whole length was ninepence. Where two or more toll-bars were erected upon a road, the total amount allowed was divided between them as the trustees saw fit. Once the travellers crossed into Dumfriesshire they would have been liable for the tolls prescribed by Dumfriesshire Road Acts, and so on as they continued south. However in England the Turnpike Acts were not county-wide, but more limited in scope.
- <sup>10</sup> The parish minister, James Young, does not mention an inn in his statistical account: *The Statistical Account of Scotland* [OSA], 1791-1799, New Cumnock, Vol. IV, 98-101.
- <sup>11</sup> A post-boy was invariably of mature years.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Complete Letters of Robert Burns*, 1987, 259. Burns had been obliged to give up his room at Baillie Whigham's inn when 'the grim evening and howling wind were ushering in a night of snow and drift' and ride to seek accommodation in New Cumnock by the arrival of the 'funeral pageantry of the late great Mrs Oswald'. This gave rise to his bitter 'Ode, Sacred to the Memory of Mrs Oswald of Auchencruive'.
- <sup>13</sup> Ewart Library, Dumfries, D2/7/2, Sederunt book [of the] Road from Grateney [Gretna] to Sanquhar, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1791, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1792.
- <sup>14</sup> 29 Geo. III c.87: An Act for Repairing and Widening the Road from Grateney, by Annan, Dumfries, and Sanquhar, in the County of Dumfries, to the Confines of the County of Ayr, and the Road from Corsenarget to Wanlockhead, in the said County of Dumfries.
- <sup>15</sup> D2/7/2, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1791.
- <sup>16</sup> The word 'sandwich' dates from 1762; *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition revised with corrections 1969 (SOED).
- <sup>17</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth, her brother William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge spent a night in 'a lonely inn' at Brownhills in August 1803. Of the parlour she wrote: 'It was as pretty a room as a thoroughly dirty one could be – a square parlour painted green, but so covered over with smoke and dirt that it looked not unlike green seen through black gauze.' Dorothy Wordsworth, *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland, A.D. 1803*
- <sup>18</sup> OSA, Vol. XIII, 232.
- <sup>19</sup> NAS, E326/1/36, Window tax records, Dumfriesshire. For the year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 1790 there were 9 entries for the parish of Closeburn, including 'Revd. W. Monteath Closeburn, 16 [windows] and Sir James Kirkpatrick, 12'.
- <sup>20</sup> GD1/481/9.
- <sup>21</sup> GD1/481/34.
- <sup>22</sup> GD1/481/35.
- <sup>23</sup> The earnings were taken from OSA Vol. I, 94 (Ayr) which gives a range extending to £26 at most. The inflation figure was obtained to February 1999 from (1), and adjusted to June 2010 according to (2). (1) 'Equivalent Contemporary Values of the Pound; A Historical Series 1270 to 1999', Bank of England (undated; received March 1999). (2) Retail Prices Index Table rp02.pdf, downloaded from [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk).
- <sup>24</sup> Distances were determined on Google Maps, excluding motorways.
- <sup>25</sup> Elizabeth married, had children, and survived until 1858, outliving her brothers John and David (*The Scots Peerage*).
- <sup>26</sup> GD1/481/36.
- <sup>27</sup> Strawhorn, *Irvine*, 142.
- <sup>28</sup> The inscription is: *The Right Hon. David Boyle of Shewalton, Lord Justice Clerk A.D. 1811, Lord Justice General of Scotland and Lord President of the College of Justice A.D. 1841, Born Irvine A.D. 1772, Died A.D. 1853. This statue was erected by public subscription A.D.1867.*
- <sup>29</sup> NAS transcript had 'tight' then corrected to 'light', but the present author read the original as 'night'.

- <sup>30</sup> Sir Adam Fergusson of Kilkerran. He was an M.P., and could send letters at no charge to himself or the recipient. See endnote 33 below.
- <sup>31</sup> Helen: presumably her daughter, Elizabeth's older sister. Helen was married at Irvine on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1791 (*The Scots Peerage*).
- <sup>32</sup> David Boyle had begun his studies at Edinburgh University.
- <sup>33</sup> A frank: the signature of a person entitled to send letters post free, such as Sir Adam Fergusson (endnote 30 above); a letter or envelope bearing such a signature. 1755 (*SOED*).
- <sup>34</sup> Her daughter Agnes, born 13<sup>th</sup> May 1774, died 5<sup>th</sup> May 1791 (*The Scots Peerage*).
- <sup>35</sup> Lord Glasgow was John Boyle's cousin, the 4<sup>th</sup> earl of Glasgow.
- <sup>36</sup> The two Lady Glasgows were the widow of the 3<sup>rd</sup> earl and the wife of the 4<sup>th</sup>.
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## Conservation of the VIC 32 Boiler at the Scottish Maritime Museum

*by Linda Ross*

In 2009 the Scottish Maritime Museum [SMM] purchased the original vertical cross tube marine boiler from the puffer VIC 32, with the help of the National Fund for Acquisitions (see cover illustration). The boiler was built by Cochran of Annan in 1942-3 and is an excellent example of a Scottish-built puffer boiler. It is a substantial piece of machinery which is 15.7 ft high by 7.2 ft diameter, and weighs 6.7 tons, and is very important in terms of its industrial heritage and history.

A puffer is a steam coaster which carried cargo around the west coast of Scotland; they were vital lifelines for the island communities and as a result have gained a secure place in Scottish culture. They were popularly named after the very simple steam engines that the earliest canal-based boats used. These were single-cylinder engines with no condenser. This meant that the steam used was simply exhausted to the atmosphere through the funnel, leading to a distinctive 'puff-puff' sound. Later puffers used compound engines with condensers. This meant that the 'puffing' sound stopped, but the name puffer remained. The development of ro-ro ferries, road transport and containerisation of goods meant that the puffer trade came to an end in the 1960s, and puffers were consigned to history.

Around 400 puffers were built between 1857 and 1965 and they have left a permanent mark on Scottish folklore and history. VIC 32 is the only remaining sea-going steam-operated puffer, and it was incredibly important that the SMM was able to secure her boiler. It was the last opportunity for the Museum to obtain an original boiler from a puffer, and it is certainly the only example on display in Britain. As a result it was essential that the Museum took steps to restore it to good condition in order to present it in the best light and preserve it for the future.

*VIC 32* is a well-known vessel which currently takes passengers on puffer holidays around Scotland [for more information see <http://www.savethepuffer.co.uk>]. While she was not built in Scotland – she was built by Dunstons of Thorne, Yorkshire, in November 1943 – the boiler was built by Cochrans, and she plied much of her trade in Scotland. Her current owners believe that she worked out of Corpach during World War II, taking ammunition from barges moored at the head of Loch Eil and supplying the Atlantic fleet with victuals at the Saint Christopher's Base at Corpach. She also worked in Scapa Flow, Orkney, delivering aviation spirit to the ships in the fleet, and definitely worked as a day boat in Rosyth Naval Dockyard after the war, until she was sent over to Whites of Inverkeithing to be scrapped in the 1960s. She was rescued by a man who bought her and steamed her down to the Whitehall shipyard at Whitby, from where the current owners bought her in October 1975.

The SMM has a duty of care to its objects, and as a result conservation of this new acquisition was an absolute must. With this in mind the Museum contacted Dorothea Restorations, who visited Irvine to survey the boiler and make conservation recommendations. Their company director, Peter Meehan, concluded that most of the original surface of the boiler was lost due to corrosion, caused by the fact that the boiler lay outside at Corpach for two years after it was removed from the vessel before the Museum secured it for the collection. He put together a series of recommendations, and the Museum was able to act on these once funding from the Association for Industrial Archaeology had been gratefully obtained.

Staff from Dorothea came to the Museum and carried out the recommended work in situ in January 2010. Loose corrosion products were removed to recreate a sound surface; a layer of micro-crystalline wax was applied to the external surface; a wax-based corrosion fluid was applied to internal surfaces; and fibrous washers were sealed using a polyvinyl acetate solution. This work has stabilised the boiler's condition, and will minimise any further deterioration.

The boiler is an integral part of the SMM's puffer exhibition. It is positioned alongside the engine from the puffer *Skylight* for dramatic visual effect; visitors will be amazed by the large boiler required to power such a small engine. Other relevant items, including a coal bucket and auxiliary machinery, also feature in the display so that people can visualise how different items of machinery work in relation to one another. We are also working with the donor to acquire relevant gauges, pipes and other additions to add to its visual authenticity.

The SMM's collections represent a very important aspect of Scottish history that is not handled as a specialism by any other body. As a result this is the only place where the public can view an original puffer boiler, and link it with relevant machinery and the Museum's own puffer *Spartan*.

Once the restoration work is complete its condition will be maintained by the Museum's curatorial team, with possible delegation to trained volunteers. All future work will be carried out on the instruction of a professional conservator. The boiler's condition will be monitored on a monthly basis to check for signs of deterioration or damage, and a

conservator's expertise sought where necessary as part of the Museum's ongoing aim to improve the condition of the collection.

The display area is potentially subject to future redevelopment as part of Phase Two of the project. This will involve marking out Spartan's 66 ft by 18 ft footprint within the Linthouse Building. This will be furthered by the construction of frames to partial illustrate *Spartan's* hull shape, and contain the exhibition and boiler within this skeleton structure.

Had the Scottish Maritime Museum not acquired the boiler then it would have been taken out of the heritage sector. We are delighted that we have been given the chance to carry out conservation work to ensure that it does not deteriorate, and are pleased that we have been able to preserve it for the future.

[This article originally appeared in *Industrial Archaeology News*, no.153. The author is the Curator of the Scottish Maritime Museum, and it is reprinted here with her permission.]

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## The Birmingham Affair of 1883

*by Rob Close*

‘Much is known about the start-up at Ardeer, but knowledge of the men and women who helped is far from comprehensive. Tales and legends, founded on fact, have grown around these people of character, yet much material of interest has been mislaid or completely forgotten.’

‘Occasionally we come across old photographs and documents which tell us something more about the people who made dynamite before the twentieth century began.’

‘When Ardeer was celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary much reminiscence helped to fill in the story of the early days: photographs and yellowed papers were studied and items of historical interest sought out. At that time the Chairman of the Division, Dr J. W. McDavid, received through the post a subpoena to a Mr Robert McCreadie instructing him to appear as a witness for the British Dynamite Company and Nobel's Explosives Company Limited in an action brought by them against Francis Krebs and others, presumably for a breach of patent rights. Mr Justice Fry heard the action in the High Court of Justice, Chancery Division, on Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1877.’

‘Mrs Margaret Sim, 56 Loccard Road, Stevenston, sent the document and recently she told us something about her father, Robert McCreadie. Mr McCreadie had come to Stevenston in 1872, intending to earn his living by expanding the salmon fishing in Stevenston Bay and off Irvine Bar. Despite his energy and application to a seasonal job, because only in the spring and autumn runs were salmon plentiful, he found the living to be meagre, uncertain and difficult. The new explosives factory at Ardeer had started production early in 1873, and in 1874 Mr McCreadie secured a job on the ‘hill’. He continued to work at Ardeer until 1911 or 1912, when ill-health forced him to retire.’

‘Self-educated and intelligent, Mr McCreadie gained the confidence of his employers and he made several business visits on their behalf. His daughter, Mrs Sim, who is now eighty, remembers that when he was about to travel he came home carrying a little canvas bag which contained golden sovereigns for the journey. Of all the journeys made, none was more remarkable and exhilarating than a trip to Birmingham in 1883. These were days of national trouble, disturbed by intense feeling and violence.’

‘In Birmingham, following certain clues which included several small india-rubber bags full of nitro-glycerine which had been sent by rail from London, the police directed their attention to a house-painter and decorator’s workshop in a built-up area. This shop was tenanted by one Alfred Whitehead, and suspicion deepened when detectives saw much unusual activity not obviously connected with an apparently innocent calling. They had been told of purchase of carboys of acids and quantities of glycerine, and in these troubled times such purchases were sinister.’

‘They entered the shop, found a vat of unstabilised nitro-glycerine, and Whitehead was arrested in the act of manufacture. Incidentally, he and four colleagues were sentenced to penal servitude for life under the Treason and Felony Act of 1848. Understandably, once the nature of the police find had been identified by Dr Hill, the Birmingham Burgh Analyst, there was much public concern and people were evacuated from nearby houses. On 2<sup>nd</sup> April a message was telegraphed to the Home Office and immediately Col. Majendie, C.B., H.M. Chief Inspector of Explosives, and Dr Dupré, the Home Office Chemical Consultant, set off for Birmingham. What they found there was distinctly alarming, and realising the immediate need for action, Dr Dupré, assisted by Dr Hill, set about skimming all the nitro-glycerine and washing it free from acid. When this job was done a search was made in the shop and among the acid carboys one was found to be filled with 150 lbs of nitro-glycerine.’

‘The Home Office experts then decided to have the nitro-glycerine made into dynamite, and they asked for help from Nobel’s Explosives Company Limited. Mr R. McCreadie, who was chosen for the job, took a supply of keisulguhr with him on the journey to Birmingham and as soon as he arrived, there began what must surely be one of the most original dynamite-making operations ever performed. It was indeed a tense, uncomfortable business for Mr R. McCreadie, ‘nitro-glycerine and dynamite operator’, for the Birmingham Burgh Analyst, Dr Hill, for the police, and for the Home Office experts who were present.’

‘Mr McCreadie worked steadily throughout the Saturday night, and on Sunday morning, the work completed, his newly-made batch of dynamite was loaded on a police van and carried to the Birmingham sewage farm, far from houses, where it was destroyed. Naturally, after all the fear and mounting tension the successful removal of a threat to life and property was hailed joyfully. In a day Robert McCreadie became the ‘hero of Birmingham’ and the newspapers gave glowing descriptions of the heroic work, together with terrifying stories of the destruction and havoc which would have come had the risk failed.’

‘For these notable services, Mr McCreadie received an award of £10 from the Watch Committee, and £10 then was indeed a large sum of money.’

The source of the above is a pair of photographic copies of two pages of what appears to be an ICI, or similar, house magazine, presumably of after 1948, in the Stevenston files at Glasgow Vennel, Irvine. They are annotated on the rear as “contents of an 1894 time capsule of Ardeer Parish Church: capsule was opened in 1994”, but this is clearly an error. The story is briefly mentioned in John Millar’s *In the Shadow of the Dynamite*, noticed elsewhere in this issue of *Ayrshire Notes*. Further context is given in the following, based on a report of the London correspondent of the *Timaru Herald* (New Zealand), which appeared in that paper on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1883 and gives some background to the Birmingham case and Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s Fenian dynamite campaign in England, which he masterminded from New York.<sup>1</sup>

Irish-American Dynamite Conspiracy. “O’Donovan Rossa recently suggested that rooms should be engaged in different parts of London in which large quantities of explosives should be stored” and fired at a given signal, laying large parts of the metropolis in ruins.

The Government became suspicious that there was a secret manufactory in Birmingham, and closely watched Albert Whitehead, a young man, thought to be Irish, who opened in February 1883 a small shop in Ledam Street, selling wallpaper, &c. He appeared to do little or no trade, yet was plentifully supplied with money, and was able to place, and pay cash for, large orders for valuable chemicals, &c.

Using skeleton keys, while Whitehead was absent, detectives entered the shop and found unlawful manufacture of nitro-glycerine.

On Wednesday, a young man, Norman, left the shop with an unusually heavy box, and went to London, to Dr La Motta’s private hotel, Southampton St., Strand. He was arrested, and his trunk was found to contain 2 cwt of nitro-glycerine, which he had “conveyed, with a carelessness which was perfectly appalling, from the Birmingham factory to the Strand hotel in an India-rubber travelling bag.” It had been “made by an inexperienced hand [and] was peculiarly dangerous.”

Back in Birmingham, Whitehead was arrested. In his shop were 14 great vats of sulphuric and nitric acids, tins of glycerine, and in the scullery, a 10 gallon vat of nitro-glycerine in the process of manufacture.

On Thursday, London police arrested Henry Hakward Wilson, in whose Southwark garret they found items such as India-rubber fishing leggings, filled with explosives, Thomas Gallagher, an American physician, and Henry Dalton, alias John O’Connor, at Bowles’ American Reading Room, Strand. In Gallagher’s room in a Charing Cross hotel they found more India-rubber bags and stockings, but empty.

<sup>1</sup> This was the first reference I found on Google, from PapersPast at natlib.govt.nz

# Alex Frew – Kilmarnock’s Springbok Captain

*by Gary Torbett*

Few rugby followers in Scotland will be aware that a Scotland internationalist captained South Africa against the British Lions, now known as the British and Irish Lions. Even fewer will be aware that this man hailed from Ayrshire.

Alex Frew was born on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1877 in Kilmarnock. He was already established as a top-class rugby footballer, having represented the South West District as a Kilmarnock player, prior to attending Edinburgh University to study medicine. His passion for the game meant that he played for Kilmarnock at the start of the season and during holidays, representing Edinburgh University for the bulk of the season. In 1899 he gained his first inter-city cap in the Glasgow-Edinburgh fixture, a match then considered to be an international trial. In 1901 he gained his first cap, against Wales, and he went on to win caps against Ireland and England that season in the Triple Crown-winning team. Records show that he played out of Edinburgh University when winning these caps, but he was the town’s first Scottish cap.

Later that year Alex was back with Kilmarnock RFC permanently and playing for the Western District team. However, in December 1901, with a second season in Scotland’s colours literally weeks away, he was on his way to South Africa, and to the Boer War. His brother, J. M. Frew, had returned to Kilmarnock from the war and was hotly tipped to gain his first cap in the 1902 series. However, a worsening situation in South Africa meant he returned before he could follow in his brother’s footsteps. Another brother, Hector, followed the same route to war, and all three eventually made their homes in South Africa.

Alex played for Diggers RFC, and represented the Transvaal. After captaining Transvaal to victory over the touring British Isles team, Alex was selected to captain South Africa in the first of a three-test series. He scored a try in a drawn game. It must have been strange for Alex captaining an international side against his home country, and particularly pitting his wits against the Lions captain, Mark Morrison, who had been his captain with the successful Scottish team of two years earlier. He did not play in the two other tests in the series, which was won by South Africa, and it is not clear why the try-scoring captain of an undefeated team did not win any further caps in his adopted country. Perhaps he opted not to play any further part. It would be interesting to learn the reason. Alex was the 68<sup>th</sup> player to be capped by South Africa.

Transvaal originally played in blue and white jerseys but switched to a white jersey with a single red hoop. It is unclear when exactly this change took place, but was this in homage to Alex Frew whose hometown team in Scotland, coincidentally, wear the same style of jersey? To this day, the Super 14 side Golden Lions, the professional team from Transvaal, wear those same colours.

Alex died at Hout Bay, South Africa, on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1947, aged 69.

A final interesting fact about Alex is that the tennis champion Frew McMillan is a direct descendant of his brother, J. M. Frew.

The Kilmarnock-South Africa rugby connection continued in 1924, when Andrew Ross toured with the British Lions as a Kilmarnock player. One wonders whether if he and Alex shared a beer and discussed far-away Killie.

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## Robert Thom 1774–1847

It was an epidemic that ravaged the nation, sweeping through the filthy and densely populated industrial cities of Victorian Britain and claiming the lives of more than 33,000 people in just three months.

The cholera outbreak of 1849, one of three major epidemics of the disease to hit Britain in the mid-1800s, was a stark illustration of the dire consequences of polluted water supplies. The disease is thankfully a thing of the past in the U.K., but if such devastation has now been consigned to history in this country and many other parts of the world, it is thanks in no small part to one Ayrshire engineer who developed an ingenious way of cleansing water. So effective was Robert Thom's technique that it is still in use today across the globe, from village communities in Afghanistan to the city of London.

Robert Thom began his working life in the cotton spinning mills, but the industrious young man from Tarbolton had an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and educated himself by attending evening classes at Anderson's College (now the University of Strathclyde). He went on to forge an extremely successful career in the textile industry, during which he attracted attention for his skill in hydraulic engineering, eventually designing a water system to supply Greenock that is still in operation today.

Arguably his greatest achievement, however, was the development of the slow sand filter – a simple, cheap, electricity and chemical-free device that can remove up to 99 per cent of bacteria from water. The filter works by making use of a naturally occurring barrier of fungi, bacteria and protozoa to collect any impurities in the water. In 1804 Thom's version of the filter was used to create the first ever city-wide water filtration plant, providing a flow of clean water to the whole of Paisley.

The plant was such a success that other cities soon followed suit and, after dirty water supplies were finally identified as the principal means by which diseases such as cholera and typhoid spread, municipal water filtration was finally made obligatory across Britain in 1852.

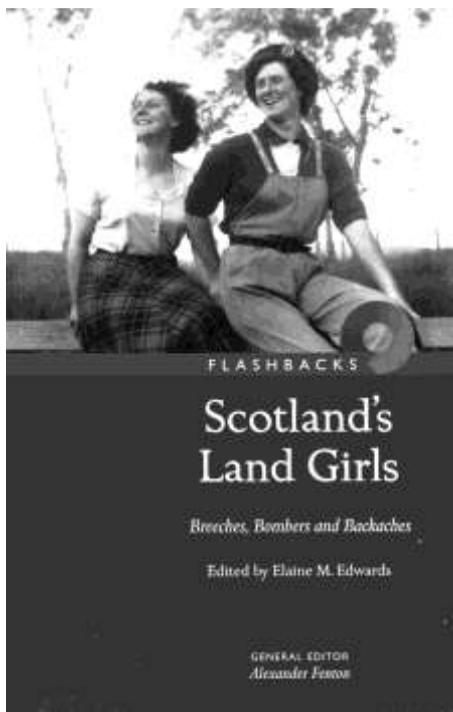
Today, over 200 years since Thom's innovation, slow sand filters are still used as an effective method of providing clean water. A significant proportion of the London metropolis is served by a filter largely based on Thom's principles. More importantly, perhaps, the relative simplicity of its design, its minimal environmental impact and low cost of installation also make the device ideal for poorer communities. However, it is arguably in the developing world - where water-borne diseases still account for four-fifths of disease - that the ingenuity of a former cotton spinner from Ayrshire could yet have its greatest impact.

[From *Strathclyde People*, Autumn 2009]

## Rob's Book Club: an occasional series

*by Rob Close*

In the last issue of *Ayrshire Notes*, the book club began with a book published by the National Museums of Scotland (NMS Enterprises Ltd, nms.ac.uk/books , 0131 247 4026), and we begin this time with two more from the same publisher. The first is *Showfolk: An Oral History of a Fairground Dynasty*, by Frank Bruce (£10.99). This is a volume in the Museums' Flashbacks series, and is based on the memories and recollections of various members of the Codona family, who came to Scotland from the continent in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and are now among the best known of Scotland's show families. Bruce's volume illustrates the world of the showfolk, and shows that this was a business that required constant innovation and a careful juggling, within a closely knit community, between competition and co-operation.



Also published as part of the Flashbacks series is *Scotland's Land Girls: Breeches, Bombers and Backaches*, edited by Elaine M. Edwards (£8.99). Recognition of the Scottish Women's Land Army is long overdue, and Edwards' book will go a long way to help put the

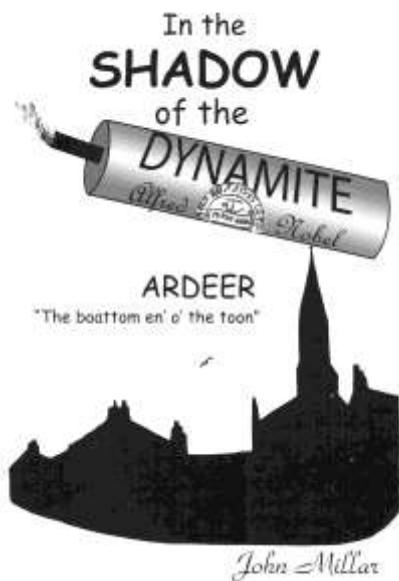
SWLA into a proper perspective, and to show the vital role it played in feeding the nation during the Second World War. This is a book full of lively accounts of working and living on farms, and how the experience shaped these girls' subsequent lives.

Both books contain references to Ayrshire – indeed Auchincruive House graces the frontispiece of Edwards' book. Both authors have confirmed that they are happy to give talks based on their books, and these are their email addresses:

Frank Bruce: [bruceandfuchs@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bruceandfuchs@tiscali.co.uk)

Elaine Edwards: [e.edwards@nms.ac.uk](mailto:e.edwards@nms.ac.uk)

Anyone with an interest in shows and funfairs should also note in their diary Edwin Lawrence's talk to Kyle and Carrick Civic Society on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011.



Already on the Ayrshire lecture trail is Stevenston's John Millar, whose latest book, *In the Shadow of the Dynamite*, is a loving account of his native town, and the relationship between the town and the dominating presence of the Nobel Explosives factory on Stevenston Moor. John's book is a fascinating amalgam of his own patient research, and the recollections of other inhabitants of Ardeer and Stevenston. Many of these were collected by John himself in the late 1990s, and are as valuable, in bringing the recent past vividly to life, as the recollections in the two NMS books. *In the Shadow of the Dynamite* is available from North Ayrshire's Museum and Library service at £9.99, with profits going to Children in Need.

Also published by North Ayrshire Council is *Saints Monks & Knights*, by Mark Strachan, which aims “to highlight the carved stone artefacts and structures in North Ayrshire that have survived from medieval and early Renaissance times. This, the most fascinating period of North Ayrshire’s history, is reflected in the stones and the tales bound to them. Here we find ancient stones relating to saints and their followers, a magnificent Norman Abbey, castles for knights to fight over and beautiful Renaissance structures.” Though avowedly populist in tone, if it succeeds in encouraging more people to visit Kilwinning Abbey, Lochranza Castle, Kilbirnie Auld Kirk or, even, Irvine’s securely-locked Seagate Castle, it will have done a valuable job.

#### BUILDING A NOBLES CLASSIC



The wheelhouse is craned aboard. (Courtesy Alexander Noble & Sons Ltd, Girvan)

#### From *Built by Nobles of Girvan*, page 125.

One for the specialists perhaps is *Built by Nobles of Girvan* by Sam Henderson and Peter Drummond (Stroud, The History Press, £16.99), which details all the fishing boats built by Alexander Noble and Sons Ltd since they were established in Girvan in the summer of 1946. It is full of technical details, and the histories of each boat, including the *Seascan*, launched in 1962, and registered as a fishing boat, but used by the UK Atomic Energy Authority to sample marine life in the seas off Sellafield. She was sold in 2007 and is now used as a pleasure boat based in Fleetwood. For me, as a non-specialist, the highlight of the book is the selection of fascinating photographs, many from the company’s own collection.



— BUILT BY —  
NOBLES OF GIRVAN



SAM HENDERSON AND PETER DRUMMOND

**The front cover is in full colour.**

Finally, we return to NMS Enterprises Ltd. whose *Robert Burns in Time and Place*, by Frances and Gordon Jarvie (£5.99), is firmly aimed at children, but is a book we can all read and learn something new about Burns, or have our conceptions of his time challenged. It is one of a new series – Scotties Activity Books for Children, with others on, for instance, the Vikings, Mary Queen of Scots and Jacobites. The Jarvies’ book is well-presented, with crisp, well-chosen illustrations, and places Burns both in his own time, and our own, with useful hints on holding a Burns Supper, as well as sections on farming in Burns’ time, sea-bathing in the Solway, and much more – there is even a Burns wordsearch!

It’s been a poor few months for stray Ayrshire and Arran references. “Hilly Kilmarnock” turned out not to be a slightly erroneous topographical comment, but the obituary of Hilary Bardwell, who was married firstly to Kingsley Amis (and was the mother of Martin Amis) and thirdly to Alastair Boyd, Lord Kilmarnock, best known as a travel writer, whose life was largely lived in southern Spain [see *Ayrshire Notes*, no.38, p.29]. I wonder whether Lord and Lady Kilmarnock ever visited Ayrshire.

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## Ayrshire Archives

### Burns Monument Centre, Kilmarnock

*by Gary Torbett*

The Kilmarnock and District History Group were given a guided tour of Kilmarnock’s Burns Monument Centre in March 2010. The one area of the complex which took most people by surprise was the excellent archive storage facility and the ease with which items can be accessed. Curious to see the process in action, I re-visited the Centre with a view to put the system to the test. What I discovered was that there is a treasure trove of archives quite literally at our fingertips.

All items stored are listed in ring binder folders and all have a unique serial number. It is simplicity itself to request an item to be brought from storage for you by completing a straightforward pro forma and handing this to a member of the team who takes a few minutes to bring the archive to you. You can then study your requested document, and take notes and so on, in the comfort of the research room. The whole process is a bit like shopping in a catalogue store in the high street, but you receive your goods just that bit quicker.

Although the archives held are fascinating, there is always room for more and I would encourage you to drop into the Centre with any items you may have which you think would benefit from being held in a secure environment and which others may delight in viewing. These can be absolutely anything from collections of minute books to simple letters your grandparents may have written. Basically, anything which helps us look back and get a better picture of the past is most welcome, and can be gifted or simply loaned to the Archive.

The Burns Monument Centre is located in Kay Park, Kilmarnock, and has the following opening hours: Monday to Thursday, 9.15 a.m. to 4.45 p.m.; Friday, 9.15 a.m. to 3.45 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 01563 576695 [www.burnsmonumentcentre.com](http://www.burnsmonumentcentre.com)

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## Over fork over

*by David Courtney McClure*



### **The Glencairn Coat-of-Arms in Ochiltree**

The opaque motto 'Over fork over' has intrigued me, if only mildly, for years. It was just recently that I discovered the following explanation:

*‘Over fork over. Cunyngham, m[arquis]. Cunninghame, b[arone]t, Cunninghame, of Kilmaurs, Milucray, Corshill, etc.*

Malcom Mac Friskin, an ancestor of this family, aided Malcolm, the son of Duncan, afterwards called Malcolm Canmore, to escape from Macbeth, the murderer of his father. The prince, being closely pursued, took refuge in a barn, where the faithful Malcolm covered him up with straw, which he kept tossing about with a fork. Hence the motto.’<sup>1</sup>

The faded board bearing this coat-of-arms is on the curved leading edge of the house in Burnock Street at the junction with Mill Street. You will probably have noticed it if you have travelled east through Ochiltree on the A70, particularly as a front-seat passenger (because you will be on the left-hand side of the car and not looking at the road). The central device is described thus in heraldic terms:<sup>2</sup> ‘Argent, a shakefork sable’ (i.e. a black Y with pointed ends not touching the sides of the shield). The supporters of the shield are ‘Two cunnings (coney) proper’. The combination of the motto with two rabbits gives this coat-of-arms a pusillanimous air, though we have to consider that in hiding the prince from Macbeth, Malcolm Mac Friskin is performing a brave act.

But what are the Glencairn coat-of-arms doing in Ochiltree? The connection lies in the generosity of James Macrae, who returned to Ayr in 1733 a rich man, having been Governor of Madras.<sup>3</sup> His mother, a poor washerwoman, was dead. His only living relatives were a cousin, her carpenter spouse Hugh McGuire and their children, to all of whom he gave estates. To their eldest daughter Elizabeth he gave the Barony of Ochiltree, making her the proprietor of most of that parish. In 1744 she married William Cunningham, 12<sup>th</sup> earl of Glencairn, thus linking the Glencairn arms with Ochiltree. She identified herself with the parish, becoming its ‘Lady Bountiful’.<sup>4</sup>

It appears however that the wooden board bearing the arms was the sign of a hostelry established in the village. According to Murdoch, the board was on the building in Burnock Street known as the ‘Noble House’ of Ochiltree; he thought this was intended to serve as the ‘principal hotel’. It was erected about 1807 by John Samson, ‘a well-known parishioner, who, after occupying for some years the farm of Ochiltree Mill, had removed to Cooperhill.’ Whether it survived long as an inn is not clear from Murdoch, nor whether the building on which the board is fixed presently is the ‘Noble House’. Suffice it to say that it appears to have survived in Burnock Street, Ochiltree, for more than 200 years.

<sup>1</sup> C.N. Elvin M.A., *A Handbook of Mottoes, born by the Nobility, Gentry, Cities, Public Companies etc., Translated and illustrated with notes and quotations*, 1860 (reproduced by Heraldry Today, London, 1963), 144.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scots Peerage*, Vol. IV, 1907, 252.

<sup>3</sup> John Strawhorn, *The History of Ayr*, Edinburgh 1989, 117.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Murdoch, *Ochiltree; Its History and Reminiscences*, Paisley 1921, 79, 86-88.

# New Project digs around Kilwinning's exciting past

An exciting new project is being launched which will see local people dig into Kilwinning's historic past as part of the work to shape the town's future. The idea for the Kilwinning Community Archaeology Project was initiated by Kilwinning and District Preservation Society and Irvine Bay Regeneration Company [IBRC] as part of the wider regeneration plans for the town. Following initial feasibility work completed by local archaeology specialist Rathmell Archaeology, the project is now going ahead run by Kilwinning and District Preservation Society during the summers of 2010 and 2011.

The project will cost £90,000, funded equally by the Heritage Lottery Fund and IBRC, and with other support from North Ayrshire Council, Historic Scotland, and West of Scotland Archaeology Service. The project will explore the main visible historic remains in and around the town, including Kilwinning Abbey.

[From *Ayrshire World*, May 2010. Beneath the journalese there is a worthwhile project, which could be imitated elsewhere in the county, and also, in the fullness of time, a potential subject for winter meetings.]

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## Black Willie

We have to thank Robert Laird for the following, which he came across in the *Air Advertiser* of 20<sup>th</sup> March 1834:

“[Deaths] At Newton, on the 6<sup>th</sup> inst., William Johnston. The deceased was better known by the name of Black Willie, being of African extraction, born in America, and, with a hale appearance, had arrived at the advanced age, according to his own account, of 100, though a score of these years would require to be struck from the account, to make it tally with the well-accredited story that he is among the last – if not the very last – of those who shared the hazardous fortunes of the renowned Paul Jones in 1779, having been pressed into his service, in the capacity of cook, off some part of Galloway, when 24 years of age. He deserted from his vessel, while ashore on the Island of Arran; went to Glasgow and thence to Ireland; has been thrice married, and has now left a widow and family. He was almost as true to his stance on the New Bridge as its key stone and unobtrusively solicited the charity of passengers; and the wistful gaze of his full black eye often touched the feelings of the passenger, where a more clamorous supplication would have failed ‘to extract the indispensable.’”

# Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

## *Conference 2010*

This will be held on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October in the Walker Halls, Troon. As usual it will be an all day conference, with an attractive and interesting topic – Scotland and France – which covers all periods and many aspects of history. The speakers are Jean Brittain and Denis Reid (Sir Hugh Kennedy of Ardstinchar), Thomas Clancy (French in Medieval Scottish Names), Charles McKean (French Influences on 16<sup>th</sup> Century Scottish Architecture), Godfrey Evans (The 10<sup>th</sup> Duke of Hamilton and Napoleon), Tom Barclay (The Wine Trade), John Burnett (Popular Culture) and Robin Urquhart (the Auld Alliance in Scottish Wills and Testaments).

The fee is £10, for the day, and a booking form is enclosed with this issue of *Ayrshire Notes*.

We look forward to a large attendance at what we expect will be a popular, enjoyable and relaxed day.

## *Swap Shop 2010*

This will be held on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, at the Burns Monument Centre, Kilmarnock, where we will be given a tour of the facilities (see Gary Torbett's article on page 27), as well as holding our usual round-up of news and information.

## *Subscriptions 2010-2011*

These are now due, and a pro forma will be set out to individual and society members. Rates remain at £15 for societies and £10 for individual members.

## *A. G. M. 2010*

The 2010 Annual General Meeting was held in the Day Centre, Furnace Road, Muirkirk, on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May, where we were warmly welcomed by members of the community. After the formal element of the afternoon, we were shown round the village's museum, with its remarkable collection of village memorabilia, and the parish church. Our thanks are due to Stephanie Essex for organising the day, and ensuring that we were made most welcome.

## *John Strawhorn Quaich*

The Quaich is usually awarded at the A.G.M., but this year's recipient, **Trevor Matthews**, was unable to be present, so the presentation was made, at the June committee meeting of the Kyle and Carrick Civic Society, by the Federation's office bearers. Trevor, as he himself said in his letter of acceptance, is one of the 'back-room boys', an efficient and capable organiser who ensures that the paperwork is in order, the rooms booked, and that everything runs smoothly, and this he did, with cheerful good-humour, for fourteen years as Secretary of the Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. A native of Halifax, Trevor worked for ICI from 1948, moved to Ardeer in 1968, when the Nylon factory there

was opened, and has lived in Ayrshire every since. He is a worthy recipient of the quaich, and we wish him and Annie continued good health.

Nominations for next year's award can be made at any time, and should be forwarded to our secretary, Pamela McIntyre.

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## 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 (\*7.30 p.m).
- CHS Cumbrae Historical Society. Meetings in Hiccups Lounge, Newton Bar, Millport at 7 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. St Columba's Church, Largs, 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 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.
- PHG Prestwick History Group. Meetings in 65 Club, Main Street, Prestwick, at 7.30 p.m.
- SHS Stewarton & District 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.

**September 2010**

Thurs 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Largs HH	Olwyn Owen	Known Knowns and Known Unknowns
Mon 6 <sup>th</sup>	SHS	Mrs G O'Donnell	The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson
Tues 14 <sup>th</sup>	LNAFHS	John Millar	In the Shadow of the Dynamite
Tues 21 <sup>st</sup>	TAFHS	Charlie Kelly	Researching Irish Ancestors
Tues 21 <sup>st</sup>	ASA	Chris Paton	DNA and Genealogy
Tues 21 <sup>st</sup>	SWT	Andy Christie	Hessilhead Wildlife Rescue
Thurs 30 <sup>th</sup>	BHS	tbc	

**October 2010**

Mon 4 <sup>th</sup>	KCCS	John Durie	Cumnock Regeneration
Thurs 7 <sup>th</sup>	PHG	David W Purdie	The Open Championship – Prestwick Born and Raised
Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	CHS	Derek Alexander	Archaeology at Culzean Castle
Thurs 14 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Tom Addyman	Progress in the Work of Kolkata Cemetery
Thurs 14 <sup>th</sup>	EAFHS	Gordon Thomson	Ayrshire Railways
<b>Sat 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>AFHS</b>	<b>Scotland and France</b>	<b>Walker Halls, Troon</b>
Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	Largs Jt	John Rattenbury	Burrell and His Collection
Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>	TAFHS	Members	Question Time/Brains Trust
Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>	ASA	Irene O'Brien	Poor Law from 1845
Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>	SWT	Simon Jones	The Return of the Beaver
Thurs 28 <sup>th</sup>	BHS	Robert Ferguson	The History of Pollok House
Thurs 28 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Richard Oram	Emergence of the highland Clans

**November 2010**

Mon 1 <sup>st</sup>	KCCS	James Knox	The Eglinton Tournament
Mon 1 <sup>st</sup>	SHS	Robert Ferguson	Costume and Dress at Dalgarven Museum
Thurs 4 <sup>th</sup>	PHG	Fay Reid	Tee'd Off in Manila and Hooked on Hong Kong
Mon 8 <sup>th</sup>	CHS	Judith Bowers	Glasgow's Music Hall: The Britannia Panopticon
Tues 9 <sup>th</sup>	LNAFHS	Carolina Borwick	Blair Castle and its People
Thurs 11 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Tom Clancy	Place Names in Ayrshire
Mon 15 <sup>th</sup>	LDHS	Lord Glasgow	The Life and Times of David, 9 <sup>th</sup> Earl of Glasgow
Tues 16 <sup>th</sup>	TAFHS	John Smillie	Down Memory Lane
Tues 16 <sup>th</sup>	ASA	David Webster	Military Records
Tues 16 <sup>th</sup>	SWT	Gavin Anderson	Around the World under Water
Thurs 25 <sup>th</sup>	BHS*	Dane Love	Legendary Ayrshire
Thurs 25 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Kenneth Brophy	The Forteviot Excavation

**December 2010**

Thurs 2 <sup>nd</sup>	PHG	John Kellie	St Kilda
Mon 6 <sup>th</sup>	SHS	John Smillie	Kilmarnock Memories
Mon 6 <sup>th</sup>	KCCS	Bill Duncan	Recycling in South Ayrshire
Mon 13 <sup>th</sup>	CHS	Duncan Dornan	The History of the National Museum of Rural Life, East Kilbride

**January 2011**

Mon 10 <sup>th</sup>	CHS	Members	The Lost Shops of Millport
Mon 10 <sup>th</sup>	KCCS	Jackie Ruddock	Trading Standards
Tues 11 <sup>th</sup>	LNAFHS	Ian Hunter	Wills and Their Terminology
Thurs 13 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Carolina Borwick	Blair House, Dalry
Thurs 13 <sup>th</sup>	EAFHS	Linda Fairlie	Textiles within Ayrshire
Mon 17 <sup>th</sup>	LDHS	Charlotte Rostek	Dumfries House – The Story Continues
Tues 18 <sup>th</sup>	ASA	Dougal McIntyre	Flight over Everest and Scottish Aviation
Tues 18 <sup>th</sup>	TAFHS	Mrs W Sandford	Following the Drum
Tues 18 <sup>th</sup>	SWT	Joe Connelly	Wildlife Crime in Scotland
Thurs 27 <sup>th</sup>	BHS	Bob Carruth	History of Scottish Farming
Thurs 27 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Derek Hall	Monastic Landscapes

**February 2011**

Thurs 3 <sup>rd</sup>	PHG	David Rowan and Alisdair Cochrane	Posted in Prestwick
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>	KCCS	John Pelan	The Scottish Civic Trust
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>	SHS	I Dickson	The City of Petra
Tues 8 <sup>th</sup>	LNAFHS	Mrs N Cameron	Wemyss Bay Station
Thurs 10 <sup>th</sup>	EAFHS	Valerie Campbell	Thomas McDougall Brisbane
Thurs 10 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Fraser Hunter	Romans in Scotland
Mon 14 <sup>th</sup>	CHS	Jim Walker	The Antonine Wall: Rome's North West Frontier
Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>	ASA	Brenda Kidd	History of St Andrews Ambulance
Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>	TAFHS	Carolina Borwick	Blair Castle and its People
Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>	SWT	Paula Baker	Alternative Lochwinnoch
Mon 21 <sup>st</sup>	LDHS	James Brown	Crossraguel Abbey – Ayrshire's Ancient French Connection
Thurs 24 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Gordon Stewart	Dundonald Castle
Thurs 24 <sup>th</sup>	BHS	Lesley Charlton	The Importance of Place

**March 2011**

Thurs 3 <sup>rd</sup>	PHG	Members	Pot Pourri
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>	KCCS	Edwin Lawrence	All the Fun of the Fair
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>	SHS	Bill McGregor	Trams and Buses, Part II
Thurs 10 <sup>th</sup>	AANHS	Ian Cornforth	Bats (Chiroptera)
Thurs 10 <sup>th</sup>	EAFHS	Joyce Brown	Hamilton Palace

Mon 14 <sup>th</sup>	CHS	Dugald Cameron	Scotland's Aviation – From Pilcher to the planets
Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>	TAFHS	tbc	
Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>	ASA	Sheena Andrew	Auld Ayr
Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>	SWT	Davy McCracken	Chough Stuff: Developing Chough Conservation Strategy in Scotland
Mon 21 <sup>st</sup>	LDHS	Shirley Watson	The Scottish Battlefields as Cultural Artefact
Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup>	FHS Joint	Chris Paton	Researching Your Irish Ancestry
Thurs 31 <sup>st</sup>	BHS	Alex Grey	New Riverside Museum
<b>April 2011</b>			
Mon 4 <sup>th</sup>	SHS	A Adamson	Scottish Civic Trust – 20 years of Buildings at Risk
Thurs 7 <sup>th</sup>	PHG	Jean Lockley and Graham Humphreys	Man's Mark
Tues 12 <sup>th</sup>	TAFHS	Susan Liquorish	Fairlie House and its People
Tues 12 <sup>th</sup>	LNAFHS	Donald Cameron	Street Names of Largs
Thurs 14 <sup>th</sup>	EAFHS	John Stevenson and Daniel Mackay	Strang's Foundry, Hurlford
Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	CHS	Pauline Hunter	The Hunters of Hunterston
Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>	SWT	Scott Shanks	Small Blue Butterfly Reintroduction at Gailies Marsh
Tues 26 <sup>th</sup>	ASA	John Hume	Victorian Churches in Ayrshire
Thurs 28 <sup>th</sup>	BHS	Gerald Cummings	Old Roads of Ayrshire
<b>May 2011</b>			
Thurs 5 <sup>th</sup>	PHG	Members	Blether of 2011
Mon 9 <sup>th</sup>	SHS	David Clement	Local Place Names and their Origins, Part II.
Thurs 12 <sup>th</sup>	EAFHS	Dane Love	tbc
Tues 17 <sup>th</sup>	ASA	Sheila and Andrew Dinwoodie	The Girvan – Boer War Connection

## 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](http://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
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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
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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
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Armstrong's Maps of Ayrshire (1775: reprint, 6 sheets)	£12.00