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Archibald Finnie, Provost of Kilmarnock 1837-1840

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***Cover illustration***

See the article by Chris Hawksworth on Archibald Finnie and Son, page 25. The image, from a portrait by James Tannock, was supplied by the author. The original is in the Dick Institute, Kilmarnock.

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# Janet Little and the Burns Connection

*by Agnes M Wilson*

*A glimpse at the life of the poet Janet Little (1759 - 1813), known as the Scotch Milkmaid, with relevant poems, touching especially on her association with Robert Burns.*

## **Foreword**

Because of their gender, female writers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century have been frequently ignored. One example is Janet Little, who was born in Dumfries-shire but spent much of her life in Ayrshire. She has been little studied, partly for the reason suggested above, but also because there is a paucity of available information. When her work has been studied, it has been largely in the context of the greater subject of 'peasant poetry', and posterity has not always been kind to her. Hilton Brown, in the first recent biography, begins his paragraph on her verse, "How bad was the Scottish Milkmaid as a 'poetess'? Let us be kind and say she could have been - as many were - much worse"<sup>1</sup>. Valentina Bold, writing over 40 years later, is kinder, remarks that "Little's finest work is her Scots poetry, in the vernacular tradition of Ramsay and Fergusson", while "[h]er work has not yet received the appreciation it deserves"<sup>2</sup>. Bold also contributed the account of Little in the Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women<sup>3</sup>. This article attempts to bring Janet Little before an Ayrshire audience, especially as her major work, *The Poetical Works of Janet Little the Scotch Milkmaid*, originally published at Ayr in 1792 by J. & P. Wilson, is now freely available online.

## **Early Life**

Janet Little, known as Jenny, was born at Ecclefechan, in the parish of Hoddum, in 1759, the same year as Burns, and was baptised there on the 13<sup>th</sup> August of that year. Her father was George Little in Nether Bogside<sup>4</sup>. Very little is known about her upbringing, or the domestic conditions in which she was raised, though no doubt her life at home would be in common with other females of her station in life. Little is a common name in eastern Dumfries-shire, and her antecedents have not been traced. It may be supposed that she received a basic parochial education. Subsequently she entered the employment of the Rev. John Johnstone (1730-1812), who was the minister of the secessionist Associate Congregation in Ecclefechan. Born in West Linton, Johnstone came to Ecclefechan in 1761, and though called to Cumbernauld in 1765, chose to remain in Dumfries-shire, and his ministry spanned 52 years<sup>5</sup>. He was a much respected minister and his memorial inscription in Hoddum cemetery reads;

All that was mortal of the reverend John Johnstone, minister of the Associate Congregation, Ecclefechan, rests here in hope of the resurrection of life. He was born A.D. 1730, ordained A.D. 1760 and he died 28<sup>th</sup> May, A.D. 1812 in the 82<sup>nd</sup> year of his age and 52<sup>nd</sup> year of his ministry. Endowed with strong natural talents which were

cultivated by a liberal education as sanctified by divine influence. He was as a scholar respectable, as a theologian learned and as a minister able, faithful and labourious<sup>6</sup>.

Secessionist churches were interested in education; they established several schools including one in Ecclefechan which was, no doubt, attended by Janet Little. As a secessionist minister, John Johnstone would have been expected to know Latin and Greek, and to be able to read the Old Testament in the original Hebrew. Johnstone was particularly admired for his skills in Latin. He, and his son (also John), were the much revered teachers of Latin to another native of Ecclefechan, the essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle, too, had been a devout member of the secessionist church, and had originally intended studying for the ministry. He could not grasp Greek, Hebrew or Latin, but it was thanks to the Johnstones, father and son, that he finally became a very good Latinist. In a letter to David Hope, Carlyle wrote of Reverend Johnstone:

I still recollect vividly and with gratitude how the first grounds of the Latin tongue began to dawn on me, under his care; ... The venerable John Johnstone is my model of an Apostolic Priest; more priestlike in his humble simplicity than Archbishops to me; and more honoured too, for I have seen the Cuddylane population (most brutal of the creatures of God) suspend their quarrelling and cursing till he had passed thro' them, and touch their hat reverently to him. Had it been the Archbishop of Canterbury with all his gilt coach-panels, they would have thrown dead cats at him<sup>7</sup>.

Carlyle makes other references to Johnstone senior in his letters, and describes him as a 'good natured man'<sup>8</sup>. When Johnstone's son, by then also a minister, left his charge in Glasgow to sail for America in 1841, Carlyle provided the following testimonial to him:

The Rev. John Johnstone, lately minister in Glasgow, now about removing to America, has been known to me, either directly by personal intercourse, or indirectly from a distance ever since my boyhood and his early youth. I clearly understand him to be a man of natural intelligence and faithfulness of character; a man of affectionate, graceful disposition, of good talent, usefully as well as gracefully cultivated; whose while past life has been spent in honourable and well-accepted labour as a Christian minister; and whose repute among men, judging even by that strict standard, is without any flaw. To me he was a benefactor - my first good instructor in the Latin language: his father was my father's venerated minister, and still dwells in my memory as one of the most venerable and truly Christian men I have ever seen in the world. If Mr Johnstone fail to do good in his new country, verily he will much differ from his parents and all their connections in this old one; for they, in piety, sobriety and every modest virtue, were among the chosen of our Scotch people<sup>9</sup>.

Little's first employment as a servant in the minister's household may have given her access to books<sup>10</sup>. We know that she 'was early distinguished for her superior capacity and love of reading'<sup>11</sup>, and we can see from her poetry that she must have had a reasonable understanding of the Greek and Roman gods referenced in her work. She also refers to writers such as Jonathan Swift and Addison, as well as, today less well-known,

contemporaries such as Elizabeth Rowe and Lady Mary Montagu, whose poetical characters frequently re-appear in Little's work.

### *Ayrshire*

After work at the manse, Janet's arrival in Ayrshire may have been as a result of escorting the Johnstone children to Glasgow<sup>12</sup>, as she appears to have found employment with Mrs Frances Anna Dunlop, a daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, through one of the feeing fairs<sup>13</sup>. These fairs were normally held twice a year to provide farm and domestic servants an opportunity to find other work, and employers new staff. Mrs Dunlop, who is discussed further below, was a fond and frequent correspondent of Robert Burns.

Janet's initial employment in Ayrshire would have been in the household at Dunlop House, and was perhaps occasioned by Mrs Dunlop showing an interest in Janet as by this time she was already known as the 'rustic poetess' for her poetic abilities. The first reference to her poetry is found in a letter of Mrs Dunlop to Burns, dated 24<sup>th</sup> December 1788:

Dear Sir, I have found out a rustic poetess whose ambition aspires to be a chambermaid or bairns-woman but if you are at the fair you shall know all I know about her and see some of her works; not that I admire them except for being hers. Besides, she writes blank verse, which I don't like<sup>14</sup>.

She later wrote again to Burns, explaining why she had employed Little, and the reasoning that led her, within six months or so, sending her to Loudoun, as a maid to her daughter:

I thought to tell you of a humble poetess who came from Ecclefechan to be my chamber-maid on the merit of her attempting what seemed beyond her line in the way or writing or thinking. I parted with her to my daughter, thinking a child's maid, if she was fit for it, a better place than I had to offer. [ ... ] Her outside promises nothing; her mind only bursts forth on paper, of which I send you a specimen in her own hand. She is industrious, and seems good-temper'd and discreet, but betrays no one indication that I could discover of ever having opened a book or tagged a rhyme; so that I hope she will not be less happy for having tryed it<sup>15</sup>.

Mrs Dunlop's daughter was Susan, born c. 1761. She was married, in Edinburgh, on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1788, to Jacques Henri, a refugee from south-west France. They leased Loudoun Castle, which was vacant following the death in 1786 of the Earl of Loudoun. Jacques was born c. 1749, but died, after less than two years marriage, on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1790: his only child, James, was born posthumously on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1790. It is not obvious, from this chronology, that there was a position for a child's maid within the Henri household, and it is perhaps at this point in her life that Janet Little settles into the life and routine of a milkmaid. She appears, however, to have retained some role as an occasional clerk in Mrs Dunlop's household: she pens a letter to Burns for her in August 1791, Mrs Dunlop rejoicing "that Jenny's great fist has filled up the paper,<sup>16</sup>" and again in September 1791, though Mrs Dunlop admits to holding back, "for, spite of Jenny's being the most punctual

clerk in the world, I felt it impossible to dictate what my own pen would of itself have tried to express.<sup>17</sup>”

Additionally, the household at Loudoun changed in late 1790, following the death of Jacques, and the birth of his son. It was felt that Susan, and the young baby, could best ensure possession of the family lands in France in person, and so she travelled to Muges, near Aiguillon, in the present day department of Lot et Garonne, and it was there that she died on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1792.

Janet, who was 30 in 1789, was a tall, dark-haired masculine woman with rather coarse features, described by a contemporary as “no bad representation of some of Sir Walter Scott’s gigantic heroines, but without their impudence.<sup>18</sup>” Mrs Dunlop, in a letter to Burns, refers to “Jenny Little’s great fist”<sup>19</sup>, and in another reports that:

Speaking of tragedy, do you know poor Jenny Little has cut her foot on a broken bottle, that it was feared she would be obliged to have it amputated, and, what was still worse, I, imagining it a trifle, laughed at her about it. This incident seems to have left her lame, for, again in a letter from Mrs Dunlop to Burns, Little is said to be annoyed with Burns for not coming to see her when in Mauchline, and that “had she not been lame she would have gone on purpose to Mr. Alexander’s” to see him<sup>20</sup>.

Little continued to manage the dairy at Loudoun Castle after Susan Henri left for France. In 1792 a book<sup>21</sup> of her poems was published by J. & P. Wilson of Ayr, with a subscription list of around 700, working class and gentry alike, the latter no doubt encouraged by Mrs Dunlop’s continuing patronage. Burns was a subscriber, encouraged to be so by Mrs Dunlop, as shown by a letter of his from January 1792: “I am glad to hear so good an account of Jenny Little’s affairs. I have done next to nothing for her as yet, but I shall now set about and soon fill up my Subscription bill.<sup>22</sup>” She was advised by James Boswell to dedicate the book not to Burns, as she no doubt wished to do, but to a titled lady. It is dedicated to Lady Flora Mary Campbell, countess of Loudoun, who was 12 at the time of publication.

In 1792 Little married a widower, John Richmond, who was also a worker on the Loudoun estates. She was a devoted stepmother, and well liked in the community. She was a member of the dissenting Burgher congregation in Galston and was considered one of its more devout and intelligent members. She had a remarkable memory, so that on hearing a sermon for a second time, she could remember if the speaker omitted a sentence: an ability she shared with Thomas Carlyle. When the Reverend Mr Schaw asked what she thought of a particular sermon, she replied “I thoct it was rather flowery. Ye ken what I mean, Mr. Schaw - a wi’ hue mair soun’ than sense.” After such an astute answer, and a little taken aback at this reply from a servant woman, he warned his successors, on his departure, that they would have to beware of their sermons with such a critic as Janet Little<sup>23</sup>.

When John Hamilton was appointed factor to the Countess of Loudoun in 1807 Janet was still employed to supervise the dairy; however she was friendly enough with the Hamiltons that, according to Paterson, “she was almost regarded as one of the domestics”. Mrs Hamilton gave birth to twin boys in April 1809, and this may be the reason Janet spent so much time with them. The Countess’s husband, Francis Hastings, 1st Marquis of

Hastings, was in military service, and much of the management of the estate was carried out by Hamilton. Unlike many other factors, he instigated a regime of improving the houses and land. Houses were in a terrible condition and these he either repaired or rebuilt and although the tenants were allowed “their own plans” on the principal farms, he would overrule them if they did not appear to be “proper.” Roads, farmyards and everything around the farm house was “dressed up in proper style.” He offered premiums to those that had their farmsteads in best order and reprimanded the slovenly. Miles of new roads were built and lime works were opened. Draining was enforced, and assistance given to tenants where this was difficult or proved expensive. Many trees were planted; premiums paid for ploughing matches, best cows, &c. This encouraged the tenants to be more enthusiastic about taking an interest in improving both house and farm, as quoted in the *Farmers Magazine* which gives a very detailed account of the improvements to roads, fields, houses, farms and livestock<sup>24</sup>.

Janet Little died on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1813, aged 54, after suffering one day “cramp in the stomach”; John Richmond died on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1819, aged 78. They are buried along each other in the Old Loudoun Kirkyard, Galston.

## ***Poetry***

As we have seen, the earliest reference to Little’s poetry is in a 1788 letter of Mrs Dunlop, in which it can be inferred that the talents of the ‘rustic poetess’ were already known to Mrs Dunlop, and perhaps to others. It is Little’s poetic ambition that encourages Mrs Dunlop to employ her at Dunlop and, subsequently, at Loudoun.

In her poetry, Janet addresses other poets: for instance in “Given to a Lady who Asked me to Write a Poem”, she names Pope, Swift, Addison, Thomson and Young. In spite of her own difficulty in being recognised as a poet, she also realises that, since the death of Dr. Johnson, there has been a lack of strong literary criticism, and that it is easy for the ‘dunces’ to take up a pen and write to please the ‘times’. She, as a milkmaid, has to make sure her work does not suffer for the sake of writing. The limitations of her gender are evident and she acknowledges that until “the manners of our age do mend”, this will be case.

Frances Dunlop received a poem from Janet while she was ill:

### **To a Lady, A Patroness of the Muses, on Her Recovery from Sickness**

While sickness, madam, on your vitals prey’d  
The sympathetic sisters shar’d your pain;  
I mark’d them then in sable weeks array’d  
In concert sad assume the plaintive strain.

From Elly’s Land was heard the harp of wo;  
A shepherd, once the blithest of the throng,  
Did mirth inspiring, sportive notes forego,  
And steep’d in tears the melancholy song.

From Irvine’s verdant banks, a doleful lay

Re-echo'd through the groves and distant dale;  
Each vocal throat was fill'd with dire dismay,  
And heart-felt signs proclaim'd th'unwelcome tale.

Quick and unstable are the turns of Fate;  
'Twixt well and wo and thin partitions rear'd;  
I mark'd the drooping choir with hearts elate,  
Exulting o'er the ills so lately fear'd

When brooding on the verge of deep despair,  
A gladd'ning voice did through the groves resound;  
Loud acclamations fill'd the ambient air,  
And joy and pleasure triumph'd all around.

Health, blooming goddess, re-assum'd her sway,  
And did the tender, captive frame release;  
All seem'd intent the tidings to convey,  
In notes more grateful than the whisp'ring breeze.

Some greet a patroness, all hail a friend,  
Whose bosom feels seraphic virtues glow;  
Nor further, madam, do your smiles extend;  
Vice dreads your frown, and shuns you as a foe.

Long may you live admir'd by all, and lov'd,  
The honour of a long illustrious race;  
Your worth innate, by Envy's self approv'd,  
Which time nor sickness never can efface<sup>25</sup>.

Janet used the names of gods in her work, showing that she was well acquainted with classical history, and had command of knowledge of various English writers. She moves easily from one style of writing to another, from Augustan English to the Scottish vernacular, and pens verses in various rhyming patterns. Much of her work can be seen as imitative, as is perhaps the case with minor poets at all period. In her poem, *An Epistle to Robert Burns*, she mimics his *To a Haggis* when she writes “Fairfa’ the honest rustic swain,/ The pride o’ a’ our Scottish plain.”

Little’s reading and inspirations included two earlier female writers: Lady Mary Montagu (1689 - 1762) and Elizabeth Rowe (1674 - 1737). Montagu, daughter of the Earl of Kingston, had an adventurous life, which included elopement and much travel abroad. During a visit to a Turkish harem she discovered that the women were inoculated against smallpox, and subsequently campaigned for the practice to be brought to Britain. By contrast, Rowe was the daughter of a dissenting minister in Somerset: her marriage to another poet, Thomas Rowe, was cut short by his early death, in 1715, whereafter she remained a recluse, although she is known to have kept up correspondence with poets and writers such as Pope, Richardson and Johnson. Today, Montagu is best known for her travel writing, while Rowe languishes in neglect, but, as her poem *On Reading Lady Mary*

Montague and Mrs Rowe's Letters suggests, Little's admiration is for both, but her preference for Rowe is perhaps due to her being the more religious of the two.

### **On Reading Lady Mary Montague and Mrs Rowe's Letters**

As Venus by night, so Montague bright  
Long in the gay circle did shine;  
She tun'd well the lyre, mankind did admire;  
They prais'd and they call'd her divine.

This pride of the time, in far distant climes,  
Stood high in the temple of Fame;  
Britannia's shore, then ceas'd to adore,  
A greater the tribute did claim.

To sue for the prize, fam'd Rowe did arise,  
More bright than Apollo was she;  
Superior rays obtain'd now the bays,  
And Montague bended the knee.

O excellent Rowe, much Britain does owe  
To what you've ingen'ously penn'd;  
Of virtue and wit, the model you've hit;  
Who reads must you ever command.

Would ladies pursue the paths trod by you,  
And jointly to learning aspire,  
The men soon would yield unto them the field,  
And critics in silence admire.

Following the birth of her grand-son, James Henri, Mrs Dunlop wrote to Burns, enclosing a poem of Janet's, "Mrs Henri has just brought us a fine boy. ... [H]e is already a favourite of the Muses, laid in the lap of Jenny Little, and there addressed by [her] as follows:

Thou gentle babe, whose lovely face  
Smiles thro' cold winter's storm,  
While foreign nations anxious wish  
To hear if thou are born;  
Impatient fame flies o'er the seas  
Thy natal hour to tell;  
May peace and joy forever rest  
Where thou are doom'd to dwell<sup>26</sup>.

Burns, whose relationship with Little is addressed below, may have felt a little piqued. He responded with a poem of his own, and wrote that "Mrs Little's is more elegant, but not a more sincere, Compliment to the sweet little fellow than I, extempore almost, poured out to him"<sup>27</sup>. The following month, December 1790, he returned to these poems,

writing that “for though Mrs Little and I have planted a Parnassian bower round him, yet I fear the laurel will prove a defenceless shade; at least, it has ever turned out a thin shelter for its Owners, and poorly qualified to fence off”<sup>28</sup>.

In a further letter to Burns, Mrs Dunlop enclosed a poem that Little had written for “a poor half-witted creature that lives at the coal pit”:

### **Poem on Content inscribed to my good Friend Jannet Nicole**

O Jennet, by your kind permission.  
My Muse in tatter'd low condition  
Would fain attempt, if you'll allow,  
To dedicate a Song to You.

Jennet farewell, you've lint and tow  
O keep your tokre well frae the low;  
While turmoils torture Land and sea  
Content may smoke a pipe with thee.<sup>29</sup>”

Janet never forgot her humble station and many of her poems reflected the working life on the estate.

### **The Rival Swains**

While o'er the plains stern winter bore the sway,  
And Sol from Capricorn diffus'd his ray  
Nigh Bolton Gate, beneath a hawthorn shade,  
Two rural swains sad lamentations made;  
Each for an absent damsel seem'd to mourn,  
While throbbing breast did sigh for sigh return.

Young D\_\_\_\_y's notes and T\_\_\_\_'s fond praises prov'd  
That D\_\_\_\_h T\_\_\_\_r was the maid below'd  
Says D\_\_\_\_y, “O had I these sweet hours again,  
I've spent with her; but ah! I wish in vain.  
The nymph is fled; to Manchester she's gone,  
Nor heeds my sighs, nor yet regards my moan,  
Her cruel aunts did contribute their aid,  
To banish from my sight the lovely maid,  
O little Cupid, choose two fatal darts.  
And with a vengeance, send them to their hearts;  
May they endure the agonizing pain  
Of love, yet ever unbelov'd remain.  
And, when far hence, by death they're doom'd to go,  
Then let their task be leading apes below.

Young D\_\_\_\_h was the fairest on the plain,  
Admir'd and lov'd be ev'ry wond'ring swain,

Her charms exterior might a hero bind;  
But ah! The beauty that adorns her mind,  
To paint does far exceed my Muse's skill.  
To you, dear T\_\_\_\_, I'll now resign the quill."  
Says T\_\_\_\_, "On her the Graces seem to wait;  
Her form, how fair! Enchanting is her gait.  
Her youthful charms, no tongue could e'er express  
Nor does her absence render them the less.  
The soft impression with me still remains;  
I'm captive, yet I glory in my chains.

With fond delight I retrospect the day,  
When we to E\_\_\_\_\_n took our way,  
With hearts elate, to view the Scottish fair;  
Lov'd D\_\_\_\_h sweeten'd all the pleasure there.  
Blest with her company upoin the road,  
How charming seem'd each rugged path we trode?  
Nor could the Scottish fair such charms display;  
My darling reign'd the empress of the day.

But ah! Recollection animates my pain,  
Such happy days I'll ne'er behold again,  
Alas! I languish now in deep despair;  
O that I could forget my absent fair!"  
While these two youths rehearsed their plaintive tale,  
A third came stalking o'er a distant dale;  
R\_\_\_\_\_n his name, whose anxious looks did show  
His beating bosom much suppress'd with wo.  
Of J\_\_\_\_y's charms, he in soft concert sung;  
J\_\_\_\_y the gay, the beauteous and the young;  
She who of late, with parson F\_\_\_\_\_r stay'd  
In the low station of a dairy-maid,  
Yet there it was she gain'd young R\_\_\_\_\_n's heart,  
And in her absence nought can ease his smart.

O hapless lads! Can nought allay your pain,  
Till thse two charming maids return again?  
Is there none else can ease your tortur'd mind?  
None else so fair, so virtuous and so kind?  
So may you think, and thus in sighs lament,  
Till Hymen's fetters make you all repent.  
Better bewail an absent love for life,  
Than be tormented by a fractious wife.

Janet's final poem in the book was in reply "To a lady who sent her some paper with a reading of David Sillar's poems."<sup>30</sup>

Dear madam, with joy I read over your letter;  
Your kindness still tends to confirm me your debtor;  
But can't think of payment, the sum is so large,  
Tho' farthings for guineas could buy my discharge.  
But, madam, the Muses are fled far away,  
They deem it disgrace with a milkmaid to stay;  
Let them go if they will, I would scorn to pursue  
And can, without sighing, subscribe an adieu.  
Their trifling mock visits, to many so dear,  
Is the only disaster on earth I now fear.  
Sure Sillar much better had banish'd them thence,  
Then wrote in despite of good manners and sense;  
With one or two more, whose pretensions to fame  
Are slight as the bubble that bursts in the stream,  
And lest with such dunces as these I be number'd,  
The task I will drop, nor with verse be encumber'd;  
Tho' pen, ink and paper are by me in store,  
O madam excuse, for I ne'er shall write more.

In keeping with other female writers of the time, Little was aware of male critics who did not approve of women writers. The following poem addresses this issue.

### **To The Public**

I  
From the dull confines of a country shade;  
A rustic damsel issues forth her lays;  
There she, in secret, sought the Muse's aid,  
But now, aspiring, hopes to gain the bays.

II  
"Vain are her hopes" the snarling critic cries;  
"Rude and imperfect is her rural song."  
But she on public candour firm relies,  
And humbly begs they'll pardon what is wrong.

III  
And if some lucky thought, while you peruse,  
Some little beauty strike th'inquiring mind;  
In gratitude she'll thank th'indulgent Muse.  
Nor count her toil, where you can pleasure find

IV  
Upon your voice depends her share of fame.

With beating breast her lines abroad are sent;  
Of praise she'll no luxuriant portion claim;  
Give but a little, and she'll rest content.

### ***Robert Burns***

Mrs Dunlop, in, predictably, a letter to Burns reports that Little “says ten guineas would make her as happy as worldly circumstances could do” and “were her rhymes properly put out, as the phrase is, she might be made happy and indebted to none but herself, since her modest wishes are placed within such humble bounds.<sup>31</sup>” By, we assume, assuring the publication of her poetry, Mrs Dunlop was able to satisfy the second of these, but it was the approbation of her peers, and especially Burns, that Little sought, and which was, ultimately, not forthcoming.

It is not clear when Little first became aware of Burns’s poetry. The early editions may have circulated in Ecclefechan before she left the service of the manse (and such a possibility can be read into her first letter to Burns, below), but it is more probable than she first came across his work at Dunlop House. When she was transferred to Mrs Henri’s at Loudoun Castle, she was “glad to go to Loudoun, because she heard you lived near it, and, as she told me, hoped to see you.<sup>32</sup>” Janet had quickly become an admirer of his work. She identified herself with him, as they were both working class and had an interest in poetry. However her efforts to befriend him were not initially encouraged by him. Perhaps he did not think a milkmaid would have the ability to produce any work of quality. She wrote to him, from Loudoun Castle, in July 1789:

Though I have not had the happiness of being personally acquainted with you, yet, amongst the number who have read and admired your publications, I may be permitted to trouble you with this. You must know, Sir, I am somewhat in love with the Muses, though I cannot boast of any favours they deigned to confer upon me as yet; my situation in life has been very much against me as to that I have spent some years in and about Ecclefechan (where my parents reside) in the station of a servant, and am now come to Loudoun House, at present possessed by Mrs Henri; she is the daughter of Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop whom I understand you are particularly acquainted with. As I had the pleasure of perusing your poems, I felt partiality for the author, which I would not have experienced had you been in a more dignified station. I wrote a few verses of address to you, which I did not then think of ever presenting; but as fortune seems to have favoured me in this, by bringing me into a family by whom you are well known and much esteemed, and where perhaps I may have an opportunity of seeing you, I shall in hopes of your future friendship, take the liberty to transcribe them.

#### **An Epistle to Mr. Robert Burns**

Fair fa' the honest rustic swain;  
The pride o' a' our Scottish plain;  
Thou gi'es us joy to hear thy strain,

And notes sae sweet;  
Old Ramsay's shade, reviv'd again,  
In thee we greet.

Lov'd Thallia, that delightful Muse,  
Seem'd long shut up as a recluse;  
To all she did her aid refuse,  
Since Allan's day.  
Till Burns arose, then did she choose  
To grace his lay.

To hear thy song, all ranks desire;  
Sae well thou strik'st the dormant lyre.  
Apollo, wi' poetic fire,  
Thy breast did warm,  
An' critics silently admire  
Thy art to charm.  
Caesar an' Luath weel can speak;  
'Tis pity e'er their gabs should steek:  
They into human nature keek,  
An' knots unravel;  
To hear their lectures ance a week,  
Ten miles I'd travel.

Thy dedication to G\_\_\_\_ H\_\_\_\_,  
In unco bonny, homespun speech,  
Wi' winsome glee the heart can teach  
A better lesson,  
To heav'n present a humble prayer,  
That a' the blessings mortals share  
May be, by turns,  
Dispens'd with an indulgent care.

Sir, I hope you will pardon by boldness in this, my hand trembles while I write to you, conscious of my unworthiness of what I must earnestly solicit, viz., your favour and friendship, yet hoping you will show yourself possessed of as much generosity and good nature as would prevent your exposing what may justly be found liable to censure in this measure, I shall take the liberty to subscribe myself, Sir, your most obedient humble servant, Janet Little.

P.S. If you would condescend to honour me with a few lines from your hand, I would take it as a particular favour; and direct to me at Loudoun House, near Galston.  
Loudoun House, July 12 1789.

Burns did not reply to Janet but instead wrote to Mrs Dunlop, making feeble excuses:

Dear Madam, I had some time ago an epistle, part poetic, and part prosaic from your poetess, Mrs J. Little, a very ingenious, but modest composition. I should have written her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country; and I am happy to add, always to the honour of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and, except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp. R.B<sup>33</sup>.

Mrs Dunlop, although happy to praise Burns most of the time, is equally equipped to criticise and promptly replies two weeks later, stating that “I have much nonsense crowding my pen in consequence of your writing to me or of your not writing poor Jenny Little, for which you gave a true female reason, because doing what is right is like beating hemp. ... I should rather write poor Jenny myself than employ myself preaching duties to you<sup>34</sup>.”

In her “Given to a Lady who Asked me to Write a Poem”, Little praises Burns, though she is not blind to the fact that he writes in a manner that she considers uncouth, and yet he gets praised for it. She also laments her own perceived lack, and the difficulties of getting her work, and herself, accepted as a poet.

#### **Given to a Lady who Asked me to Write a Poem**

In Royal Anna’s golden days,  
Hard was the task to gain the bays;  
Hard was it then the hill to climb;  
The vot’ries for poetic fame,  
Got aff decredpit, blind an’ lame;  
Except that little fellow Pope.  
Few ever then got near its top;  
An’ Homer’s crutches he may thank,  
Or down the brae he’d got a clank.

Swift, Thomson, Addison an’ Young  
Made Pindus echo to their tongue,  
In hopes to please a learned age;  
But Doctor Johnson, in a rage,  
Unto posterity did shew  
Their blunders great, their beauties few,  
But now he’s dead, we weel may ken;  
For ilka dunce maun hae a pen,  
To write in uncouth rhymes;  
San’ yet forsooth they please the times.

A ploughman chiel, Rab Burns his name,  
Pretends to write; an’ thinks nae shame

To souse his sonnets on the court;  
An' what is starange, they praise him for't,  
Even folks, wha're of the highest station,  
Ca' him the glory of our nation.

But what is more surprising still,  
A milkmaid must tak up her quill;  
An' she will write, shame to the rabble!

That think to please wi' ilka bawble,  
They may thank heav'n, auld Sam's asleep;  
For could he ance but get a peep,  
He, wi' a vengeance wad them sen'  
A' headlong to the dunces' den.

Yet Burns, I'm tauld, can write wi' ease,  
An' a' denominations please;  
Can wi' uncommon glee impart  
A usefu' lesson to the heart;  
Can ilka latent thought expose,  
An Nature trace whare'er she goes;  
Of politics can talk wi' skill,  
Nor dare the critics blame his quill.

But then a rustic country quean  
To write - was e'er the like o't seen?  
A milk maid poem-books to print;  
Mair fit she wad her dairy tent;  
Or labour at her spinning wheel,  
An' do her wark baith swift an' weel.  
Frae that she may some profit share,  
But winna frae her rhyming ware,  
Does she, poor silly thing, pretend  
The manners of our age to mend?  
Mad as we are, we're wise enough  
Still to despise sic paultry stuff.

"May she wha writes, of wit get mair,  
An' a' that read an ample share  
Of candour ev'ry fault to screen,  
That in her dogg'rel scrawls are seen."

All this and more, a critic said;  
I heard and slunk behind the shade;

So much I dread their cruel spite,  
My hand still trembles when I write.

Janet had hoped that Burns would visit her at Loudoun, when he was in Kyle in August 1790, and again Mrs Dunlop passes her comments on to Burns: "I ought to tell you Jenny Little says you are very stupid, did not come and see her when you were at Mauchline.<sup>35</sup>" The following month, she tells him "I dare even say there would be some of the collection not unworthy your reading, perhaps honoured with your applause, tho' you well know I have no reason to call you lavish with that.<sup>36</sup>" Early in 1791 Janet made the journey to see friends, possibly in Ecclefechan, and took the opportunity to visit Burns while he was at Ellisland, near Dumfries. The visit was badly timed: Burns had taken a fall from his horse and broken his arm, while Jean Armour was about to give birth<sup>37</sup>.

### **On a Visit to Mr Burns**

Is't true? Or does some magic spell  
My wond'ring eyes beguile?  
Is this the place where deigns to dwell  
The honour of our isle?

The charming BURNS, the Muse's care,  
Of all her sons the pride;  
This pleasure oft I've sought to share,  
But been as oft deni'd.

Oft have my thoughts, at midnight hour,  
To him excursions made;  
This bliss in dreams was premature,  
And with my slumbers fled.

'Tis real now, no vision here  
Bequeaths a poignant dart;  
I'll view the poet ever dear,  
Whose lays have charm'd my heart.

Hark! Now he comes, a dire alarm  
Re-echoes through his hall!  
Pegasus kneel'd, his rider's arm  
Was broken by a fall.

The doleful tidings to my ears  
Were in harsh notes convey'd;  
His lovely wife stood drown'd in tears,  
While thus I pond'ring said:

"No cheering draught, with ills unmix'd,  
Can mortals taste below;  
All human fate by heav'n is fix'd,

Alternate joy and wo.”

With beating breast I view'd the bard;  
All trembling did him greet;  
With sighs bewail'd his fate so hard,  
Whose notes were ever sweet.

Returning to Ayrshire, Little must have described her meeting with Burns with Mrs Dunlop, who writes thus to him in March 1791:

Dear Burns, Jenny Little is just returned from visiting her friends, and has brought me the disagree

able intelligence that you had had a third fall from your horse, and broke your arm. This is very bad. Yet I would be glad to hear it were no worse. She tells me you could not lie down in bed, but was obliged to sit all night in your chair, and in very violent pain. Dare I believe in this case that the fracture is the only bad effect of the fall, and that you have not at the same time received some contusion that may be of still more vexatious consequences? [...] Meanwhile though I greatly applaud that strength of mind which enables one to surmount bodily pain to such a manly pitch of fortitude as to chat at seeming ease and tranquillity, as Jenny tells me you did, and entertain others with great kindness and good humour. [...] as Jenny tells me your are now a Supervisor<sup>38</sup>.

In a subsequent letter, Mrs Dunlop asks of Burns, “what did you think of Jenny Little on sight? She was much pleased with your polite attention and kind offer<sup>39</sup>” (which may have been a subscription towards the publication of her work). He was reminded, as we have seen above, of the need to complete his subscription form in January 1792. Little’s admiration of Burns was not dampened by his wanton ways, but her disapproval was certain. The title line of “On Seeing Mr \_\_\_\_\_ baking Cakes” was left incomplete, but there can be no doubt to whom the poem refers. This is Janet’s attempt at acknowledging Burns’s unquenchable love of the lassies, her disapproval of his rakish ways and Burn’s own knowledge that women were very strongly attracted to him. She refers to herself as ‘crazy scribbling lass,’ and her sense of humour comes through strongly in the lines of this surprisingly bawdy poem. We have no way of knowing when Little’s poems were written, but this poem was probably written after her visit to Ellisland, when the reality replaced the midnight visions.

### **On Seeing Mr \_\_\_\_\_ Baking Cakes**

As Rab, who ever frugal was,  
Some oat-meal cakes was baking,  
In came a crazy scribbling lass,  
Which set his heart a-quaking.

“I fear”, says he, “she’ll verses write,  
An’ to her neebors show it;

But troth I need na care a doit,  
Though a' the country knew it.

My cakes are good, none can object;  
The maids will ca' me thrifty;  
To save a sixpence on the peck  
Is just an honest shifty.

They're fair and thin, an' crump, 'tis true;  
You'll own sae when you see them;  
But, what is better than the view,  
Put out your han' an' pree them."

He spoke, an' ha'd the cakes about,  
Whilk ev'ry eater prized;  
Until the basket was run out,  
They did as he advised.

An' ilka ane that got a share,  
Said that they were fu' dainty;  
While Rab cri'd eat, an' dinna spare  
For I hae cakes in plenty.

And I' the corner stan's a cheese,  
A glass an' bottle by me;  
Baith ale and porter, when I please,  
To treat the lasses silly.

Same ca' me wild an' roving youth;  
But sure they are mistaken;  
The maid who gets me, of a truth,  
Her bread will ay be baken.

### *Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop*

Janet Little's connection with Burns, tenuous though it is, and existing, perhaps, largely in her own imagination, was made possible through their shared friendship with Frances Anna Wallace or Dunlop (1730 - 1815), scion of the Wallaces of Craigie, and chatelaine of Dunlop House. She had been at a low ebb, after the death of her husband John Dunlop in June 1785, when her friend Betty McAdam gave her a copy of Burns's poem 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'<sup>40</sup>. She was interested in writing poetry as well as reading it and was so enthralled with the poem that she promptly wrote to Burns requesting further copies. This was to be start of a long and valued friendship between Frances Dunlop and Robert Burns, and she never ceased promoting his talent, though a final rift between them was caused by his support for the French Revolution: two of her sons-in-law, including Jacques Henri, were French émigrés.

According to Cunningham, she “exercised a two-fold influence over the muse of Burns; she was a poetess, and had the blood of the Wallaces in her veins. Her taste and station gave her great power in the west; she praised the Poet wherever she went, and addressed letters to him remarkable not only for their good sense and good felling, but for a spirit of charity and toleration not common in those feverish times.<sup>41</sup>” She sent her poems to Burns, but neither looked for praise nor resented him not having the courtesy to comment on them. She enjoyed writing poetry, and although she may not have been such of a poetess, she proved herself to be a true friend to Burns. Cunningham, again, said that “[s]he lived to a good old age; had the satisfaction to see the ancient spirit of the Wallaces revive in her son the General, and to know that Scotland revered her for her unchanging kindness to the equally accomplished and unfortunate Burns.<sup>42</sup>”

It was probably through Mrs Dunlop that Little was first introduced to the poetry of Burns. Certainly Mrs Dunlop did as much as she could to encourage Burns to take an interest in Little, though, as we have seen, little success. As with Burns, she used her influence to ensure that Little’s talents were as widely known as possible, and was doubtless the chief moving force in seeing her poetry into print. She also seems to have tried to interest the Paisley-born poet and naturalist Alexander Wilson in Little’s work, and she refers (in a letter to Burns) to his “disinterested, generous conduct to her”, to his having sent her copies of unpublished examples of his “rural songs, town eclogues and familiar epistles,” which are “the production of a manly mind, not degraded by a wholly illiterate education, and although he has followed his great original [Burns] in his greatest fault of admitting a little ribaldry, he has really, at least in my opinion, so much intrinsic worth and so many real beauties [that] I fear it will hurt Jenny by comparison, as it has all that masculine advantage over her that your sex generally have over ours on paper.”<sup>43</sup>

The true nature of these relationships can never be known. Both Dunlop and Little were affected, even in absentia, by Burns’s charismatic character. Dunlop turned this into a lively, perhaps flirtatious, relationship, conducted largely through correspondence; Little, from a vastly different social milieu, seems to have pursued him through poetry. The visit to Ellisland may have broken the spell, and the publication of her poetry in 1792 exorcised the demons of the ‘midnight hour’. She produced no poetry after 1792 (or, at least, none is known); she had, through it, met Burns, however fleetingly, however ill-timed and chaotic it may have been. She was satisfied, and could, as Mrs Richmond, ‘devoted, affectionate stepmother’ and ‘devout and intelligent’ member of the church, content herself with her memories.

A final poem to close this narrative is not one of Janet Little’s, but one of Frances Dunlop’s.

### **To Jenny Little at Loudoun Castle**

O blest with young Poesy’s fair dawning day,  
Come light my October’s dull wintery gray;  
Since for knowledge, dear Jenny, to you I repair,  
Tell how Time wynds his jack in yon kitchens of Air.  
How my friends in the parlour drive winter along;

Come, cheer up his cold with the warmth of your song.  
If heaven's fair promise like yours don't prove vain,  
And your pears at the window all drop with the rain.  
The garlands of love, these spring flowers do not fade,  
Poor Hymen grow cold and frostbit in your shade.  
Here the tooth-ache makes Lydia drop the soft showers,  
While without doors the torrent in hurricanes pours;  
But our storms and diseases blow o'er in a blink.  
Our sun and good humour beam bright in a clink.  
O'er the ridges the corn is brought rattling home,  
And the crack of guns tell the gentlemen roam.  
With pheasant and partridge the board is replete.  
With pride and with joy the young murd'rer elate.  
The apples that fill in fine fritters and seen,  
And those feast in the hall that don't sport on the green.  
At eve, if our spirits should chance to fall low,  
Revive with a syllabub under the cow,  
Or if for variety any repine,  
They may have honest whisky or generous wine,  
Nor does night by our fears her anguish reveal,  
We can all sleep sound, for we've nothing to steal,  
Tho' our windows be low and our doors be unbarred,  
By our dogs and our swins all intruders are scared.  
Here tho' geese as at Rome be all gabbling round  
More heroic than they we heed not the sound.  
'Tis ne'er dismal nor dark if our oyl be but good,  
Lamps light us to sleep and the child to his food.  
Harmless mirth at the heart and good cheer on the fork,  
Our lives swim off thoughtless and light as their cork.  
May the jack be perpetual, no change in the feof,  
Still Lydia be happy in spite of her teeth.  
From the heights of our wisdom oft Folly appears,  
And wit grows no stronger by doubling our years.  
To fortify happiness wrong we begin,  
And by raising a wall oft shut a thief in.  
With the weak eyes of foresight a rampart we trace  
That entrenches a foe in the heart of the place.  
With innocent glee let me lift to the song  
And cull a few friends from the best of the throng.  
Jostle none from their road that on pleasure are bent,  
But take the contentment what heaven has sent.  
For sake of the writer excuse this reply,  
Remember the Muses' least scullion am I<sup>44</sup>.

- 1 Hilton Brown, 'Burns and the Scottish Milkmaid', in *Burns Chronicle*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, no.25, 1950, 15-20. The quote is on p.17.
- 2 Valentina Bold, 'Janet Little "The Scotch Milkmaid" and "Peasant Poetry"', in *Scottish Literary Journal*, vol. 20, no.2, 1993, 21-30. The quotes are on page 21.
- 3 Valentina Bold, 'Janet Little ("the Scotch Milkmaid")', in *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, Elizabeth Ewan *et al*, eds., Edinburgh, 2006, pp 207-208. There is also an article on Little, entitled 'The Loudoun Milkmaid', by Joan Biggar in the *Scots Magazine*.
- 4 OPR 829 (Hoddom), vol 10, no 0019, page 16.
- 5 William McKelvie *et al*, eds. *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, Edinburgh, XXXX, p.66.
- 6 Henry C Shelley, *Literary By-paths in Old England*, London, 1906, p.286.
- 7 Thomas Carlyle [TC] to David Hope, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1834. Carlyle's letters are accessible online at [carlyleletters.dukejournals.org](http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org) (Duke University Press).
- 8 TC to John A Carlyle, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1826.
- 9 In *United Presbyterian Magazine*, New Series, vol. 8, 1864, p.343.
- 10 James Paterson, *The Contemporaries of Burns and the More Recent Poets*, Edinburgh, 1890, p.79. Almost all we know of Little comes from Paterson's account in this book of her life and work.
- 11 Paterson, *op cit*, p.79.
- 12 Paterson, *op cit*, p.79.
- 13 William Wallace, *Robert Burns and Mrs Dunlop*, New York, 1898, letter of Dunlop to Burns 24<sup>th</sup> December 1788. [Hereafter FD/RB and date]
- 14 FD/RB, 24<sup>th</sup> December 1788.
- 15 FD/RB, 13<sup>th</sup> July. No year given, but probably 1789.
- 16 FD/RB, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1791.
- 17 FD/RB, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1791.
- 18 Paterson, *op cit*, p.87.
- 19 FD/RB, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1791.
- 20 FD/RB, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1790.
- 21 The poems quoted in this article are, unless stated, from this collection. It is a thin octavo, of 207 pages. Little is reputed to have made £50 from its publication.
- 22 RB/FD, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1792.
- 23 Paterson, *op cit*, p.88.
- 24 *The Farmers Magazine*, vol xv, p.475.
- 25 Mrs Dunlop responded in kind, though was sure to send a copy of her poem to Burns [FD/RB, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1790]. 'To Jenny Little, In reply to hers on my being sick at sixty.'  
A breeding sick Muse gaunting sore for a theme,/ May trick up a shadow and varnish a dream;/ Bid fancy just paint the first stick she can find,/ Or dress some old witch in the charms of the mind. Come then, my dear Jenny, and hold down your head;/ I'll bind it with joy - here's the Queen of the Mead,/ Thus crown'd when you meet and

shake hands on our plains,/ When strength, wit, and sweetness embellish your  
strains,/ Yet satire may rend those just meeds of your prime./ But unenvy'd I'll wear  
my wreath - of gray Time.

26 FD/RB, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1790.

27 Allan Cunningham, ed., *The Works of Robert Burns with His Life*, London, Vol..II, 1834,  
p.304. According to Cunningham, Burns said that the poem was about a father carried  
to the grave on the day his only daughter [sic] was born. This is clearly erroneous in  
the Henri case, but comparisons with Burns's own funeral are unavoidable.

28 RB/FD. 6<sup>th</sup> December 1790.

29 FD/RB, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1791.

30 David Sillar, born 1760, was a close friend of Burns, spending a great deal of time with him  
discussing poetry. He had only a common education and acknowledged this as being a  
hindrance to his writing. Latterly, he was a grocer in Irvine.

31 FD/RB, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1790.

32 FD/RB, 13<sup>th</sup> July. No year given, but probably 1789.

33 RB/FD, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1793.

34 FD/RB, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1789.

35 FD/RB, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1790.

36 FD/RB, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1790.

37 Nor was Jean Armour alone in this condition. Since taking up his excise duties Burns had  
been in the habit of occasionally staying overnight in Dumfries, at the Globe Inn,  
where he quickly struck up a relationship with a barmaid, Ann Park. In early 1791 she  
too was pregnant by Burns, and her daughter, Elizabeth, was born nine days before  
William Nicol Burns. The timing of Little's visit was hardly propitious. See Robert  
Crawford, *The Bard: Robert Burns, A Biography*, London, 2009, 225.

38 FD/RB, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1791.

39 FD/RB, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1791.

40 [www.robertburns.org/encyclopedia/DunlopMrsFrancesAnna17301511815.321.shtml](http://www.robertburns.org/encyclopedia/DunlopMrsFrancesAnna17301511815.321.shtml)

41 Cunningham, *op cit.*, Vol. I., 1834, p.70

42 Cunningham, *ibid.*

43 FD/RB, 25<sup>th</sup> January 1792.

44 FD/RB, 25<sup>th</sup> November 1789.

# Archibald Finnie and Son, of Kilmarnock, Coalmasters

*by Chris Hawksworth*

During the nineteenth century, Archibald Finnie & Son was one of the largest coal mining concerns in Ayrshire. At its peak, the firm held over 13% of the coal leases in Ayrshire and employed some 1000 men in numerous collieries around Irvine, Kilmarnock, Kilmaurs and Kilwinning. The Finnie family had moved to Kilmarnock from Constablewood<sup>1</sup> near Largs in the mid eighteenth century<sup>2</sup>. Over the next hundred and thirty years they established themselves as one of the town's leading families, being involved in many businesses and social organisations as well as producing two Provosts of Kilmarnock. When the last two of the four Archibald Finnies died in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they left estates valued at over £210,000<sup>3</sup>, the equivalent of over £10 million pounds today<sup>4</sup>. This article gives a brief history of the family and the business of Archibald Finnie & Son, coalmasters.

The first son of William Finnie and Ann Boyd, Archibald Finnie I was born in Kilmarnock on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1746. Little is known about him other than he ran an iron foundry and ironmongery business in Kilmarnock and was rather litigious. In 1784, he is recorded as taking legal action against James, Earl of Glencairn, and William Howie, merchant in Saltcoats, for recovery of debts of £13 19s 6d and £7 19s respectively<sup>5</sup>. Again, in 1812, he was involved in litigation with a William Stewart, late merchant of Ayr<sup>6</sup>. Five years later his Kilmarnock Foundry was in dispute with William Taylor of Bourtreehill over payments for iron rails and chairs for a railway from Taylor's coalworks to Irvine<sup>7</sup>. The outcome of these disputes is not recorded. Like his son and grandson to come, Archibald Finnie I served on Kilmarnock Town Council, being Treasurer in 1821<sup>8</sup>. In 1824, Finnie bought the salt pans at Barassie and later converted some of the buildings as accommodation for the men and horses working on the Kilmarnock and Troon tramway<sup>9</sup>.

Archibald I married a Janet Muir, with whom he had at least seven children, William, Ann, Janet, Archibald (II), James, Robert and John. The men in the family all went into business, both at home and abroad. William was a merchant in Lisbon; he returned to Scotland after the French invasion of Portugal in 1807 and commenced business in Glasgow. He died in Kilmarnock in 1854. The two daughters, Janet and Ann, died in 1822 and 1857 respectively. James Finnie, who died in 1846, was a merchant in Lisbon and London. He owned the estate of Newfield, near Dundonald. Robert Finnie worked in Glasgow and Liverpool, before becoming head of Finnie Brothers in Rio de Janeiro. He returned to London in 1830, where he died unmarried the following year, and was buried in St Martin-in-the-Fields church, Trafalgar Square. John Finnie, who was also a merchant in Rio de Janeiro, returned to live at Bowden, near Manchester, where he died 1875. He supplied the funds to build John Finnie Street in Kilmarnock, which was named in his honour. His father, Archibald I, died in 1826<sup>10</sup>.

Archibald II, the fifth child of Archibald I and Janet Muir, was born in Kilmarnock on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1783. After his father's death, he continued running both the ironmongery business at King Street, and the Kilmarnock Foundry at Townholm. The Foundry had been established by his father and two local men, Alexander Guthrie (c.1783 - 1852), who had been coal manager for the Duke of Portland before establishing himself as a coalowner, and John Guthrie, a farmer<sup>11</sup>. Amongst other items, the foundry supplied rail chairs for the Ardrossan Railway and other castings for the construction of Ardrossan Harbour<sup>12</sup>. This was one of many business links the Finnies had with the earls of Eglinton. The 13<sup>th</sup> Earl, who succeeded in 1819, owned the harbour, and was the major shareholder in the Ardrossan Railway; the Eglintons owned much of the land in the Kilwinning area on which Archibald II had his mines. He had taken over the tack for the Fergushill pits near Kilwinning by 1836<sup>13</sup>, and by 1841 he had started building miners rows at Bensley to accommodate his workers at the expanding Fergushill pits, which were a quarter mile from the rows. He was a forward-thinking businessman, becoming a member of the Provisional Committee set up in 1836 to promote the Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock and Ayr Railway<sup>14</sup>. He would have been aware of the benefits of rail transport, for many of his pits at Fergushill and Sourlie were connected with the recently opened Ardrossan Railway.

Like his father, Archibald II was politically active, being listed as a magistrate in 1826 and 1827, and again in 1832, Bailie in 1833 and eventually Provost of Kilmarnock from 1837 to 1840<sup>15</sup>. While Provost, Archibald II had his portrait painted by James Tannock (see cover illustration)<sup>16</sup>. The 1833 Kilmarnock Directory lists Archibald as an ironmonger, at 30 King Street. Besides being a Bailie, he was also a member of the Kilmarnock Improvement Trust, a director of both Kilmarnock Academy and Kilmarnock Gas Company, and Preses of the town's Dispensary. He was also a member of Kilmarnock High Kirk, and a Life Governor of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He was also a Commissioner of Police and would have been involved in the twice weekly Bailie Courts dealing with small debts. In 1834, presumably in his role as a Bailie, Archibald II was appointed Interim Factor in the bankruptcy proceedings against J.W. and T. Deans, carpet manufacturers at Kirkford, Stewarton. He was elected Trustee on the Deans' sequestrated estates, on security of £2000, for which the ironmongery business was used as a guarantee. The creditors were offered 3s 9d for each pound of debt initially, but on rejection of this, this offer of composition was raised to 4s 6d, which was accepted. Presumably the lower offer would have been financially more beneficial to Finnie.

Archibald II married Jean Stevenson 19<sup>th</sup> March 1810, in Kilmarnock High Kirk. They had at least five children: Archibald (III), James, William, Robert and Frances. Archibald II died in 1843.

Archibald III was born in Kilmarnock on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1823, and succeeded his father when barely twenty years old. During the 1840s, the demand for coal for manufacturing, and for the iron industry in particular, increased markedly. Finnie was able to expand his business rapidly, opening up new coal fields and developing a significant export trade to Ireland and continental Europe. The European market developed as a result of Finnie's widespread advertising of the benefits of both Ayrshire coal and the port facilities at Troon, Irvine and Ardrossan in French, Spanish, Italian and German. The firm's European trade

was such that they employed a clerk for their foreign correspondence who had been educated in France and Germany, and was fluent in these languages<sup>17</sup>. As the business prospered, the offices moved from Braefoot to a purpose-built office on John Finnie Street (see Figure 2).



### **Finnie's offices, John Finnie Street, Kilmarnock**

The Bensley miners' rows were expanded in 1857 as Archibald III's mining interests in the Fergushill area flourished. In 1854, he also arranged with the owners of the adjacent Doura mine to work the particular coal seams he had started mining at Auchenwinsey into the Doura estate property, with a reciprocal arrangement for John Barr, provost of Ardrossan and lessee of the Doura minerals<sup>18</sup>.

In the *Mining Journal* of 5<sup>th</sup> August 1848, James M. Melville, Commissioner to the Duke of Portland, placed an advertisement intimating that "Messrs Archibald Finnie & Son, of Kilmarnock, have now become the sole lessees of his Grace the Duke of Portland's Kilmarnock Colliery, and the only Shippers of the Duke's Coal at Troon." Archibald Finnie & Son also developed collieries at Busby (Knockentiber), Thorntoun, Springhill (Springside) and Bourtreehill (Irvine).

The Kilmarnock Foundry at Townholm, lying adjacent to the Kilmarnock Water, was badly affected by the severe flooding of 14<sup>th</sup> July 1852. The dam at the foundry was destroyed and the flood waters were about ten feet deep at the foundry manager's residence: even in central Kilmarnock, the Finnie's ironmonger's shop was ten inches deep in water<sup>19</sup>.

In 1864, the company began producing shale oil at an oilworks at Fergushill which continued in business until at least 1873. They extracted between 13 and 14 gallons of oil per town of shale: the crude oil was shipped by rail, in tank waggons, to refiners in Glasgow<sup>20</sup> and Bathgate<sup>21</sup>.

Archibald III took a great interest in the civic affairs of Kilmarnock, being elected councillor for the fourth ward in November 1851. One of his first recorded acts on the council was to attempt to raise a subscription to assist the emigration of destitute handloom weavers from Kilmarnock. In the end, it would appear that the subscription failed, as the weavers did not emigrate. He was elected to the Treasurer's Committee in 1852 and served on it for several years. Having voted that the council should take on a Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths in 1854, four years later he was instrumental in reducing the Registrar's salary from £40 to £20 per annum. He was elected bailie in November 1857, and became Provost the following year, serving a regulation three-year term until 1861. During his term as Provost, several important improvements were carried out in Kilmarnock, including the opening up of Union Street and Duke Street; he was also involved in the development of the Corn Exchange buildings, and the formation of John Finnie Street, for which the land acquisition had been largely funded by his uncle.

Archibald Finnie III was also one of the local Road Trustees, responsible for the maintenance of the roads in the Kilmarnock area. In May 1859, he gave evidence to the Turnpike Road Enquiry, Scotland, supporting the abolition of turnpike charges in an attempt to encourage local trade. In April 1861, Kilmarnock Town Council received a petition from 300 unemployed and destitute workmen. Finnie and the other magistrates ordered stones to be brought into town to give them work breaking the stones for road metal; he encouraged his fellow Road Trustees to use the unemployed labourers to improve the road at Annandale, between Kilmarnock and Crosshouse. It was probably not a coincidence that the coal pit at Annandale belonged to Archibald Finnie & Son. The Council and Road Trustees agreed to this idea, and £295 was paid out to the labourers. A further £60 was awarded to a John Stewart, carter, for transporting the stone, although, four months later, Stewart had still not been paid his haulage fee. In October the same year, 60 workmen were still unemployed and their families destitute: Finnie and the council agreed to further stone breaking and set up a soup kitchen to feed them. After his term as Provost, Finnie remained a Town Councillor until at least 1865<sup>22</sup>.

Although Finnie's dealings with his miners were lauded as philanthropic in his obituary in the *Kilmarnock Standard*<sup>23</sup>, he was obviously a shrewd and hard-headed businessman. He built houses for the miners at various collieries and he apparently awarded prizes for the best kept ones. However, given the lack of alternative accommodation when many of the pits were started, it was to his benefit to house the workforce nearby. Living in company houses meant that the miners were liable to eviction if dismissed, as occurred during the 1861 strike over the demand for shorter working hours. According to the socialist newspaper, the *Glasgow Sentinel*, Finnie persuaded other landlords in the area to refuse to give alternative accommodation to his striking miners<sup>24</sup>. The miners' union tried to put their case in a letter to the *Kilmarnock Standard*, but the *Standard* refused to publish it "for fear of offending Finnie", reported the *Sentinel*<sup>25</sup>. As the strike dragged on, Finnie

imported unemployed tin miners from Cornwall and took them on at even lower rates of pay than he was offering the men who had gone on strike.

As well as contributing to the cost of buildings such as Fergushill Church and the school at Fergushill, Archibald III also built the Springside Institute for the use of the local community. He instituted a savings bank for his miners, offering depositors a higher interest than was current at ordinary banks. How many of the miners had any money to save after the various deductions for rent, equipment and living expenses is open to question.

Finnie's mining interests were dependent on good relations with the railways which provided the main means of transport for his coal. In particular, he had considerable dealings with the Earl of Eglinton's Ardrossan Railway, and its successor the Glasgow and South-Western Railway (GSWR). In 1865, he was a Director of the Greenock and Ayrshire Railway. Despite this dependence on railways, he seems to have been frequently involved in legal action on railway and other transport issues, especially with the GSWR. In 1852 there was a dispute over the use of steam locomotives on the branch from his Annandale pit to the Kilmarnock and Troon line. Finnie had built this branch at his own expense, and he objected at having to use horses as specified by the GSWR in a lease of 1846. He advised the railway company of his intention to use his own engines to pull the trains to Troon. The GSWR obtained an interdict preventing him from doing so on the grounds that the steam engine would wear out the rails too quickly<sup>26</sup>. There were further legal tussles in 1855 over the freight charges applied by the GSWR<sup>27</sup>. In both these cases, the courts found in favour of the railway company. In 1867, Finnie's lease to run trains from his Dreghorn area pits across the Craig estate to the Kilmarnock and Troon railway near Laigh Milton ran out. Despite this, he continued to run his trains until the proprietor of the Craig estate, Allan Pollok Morris, obtained a suspension and interdict from the Court of Session<sup>28</sup>. This prevented Finnie using that stretch of line until new terms had been agreed. In 1873, the GSWR had to introduce a rule that all traders running trains on their lines should have a brake van staffed by a guard at all times. Finnie had been ignoring this widespread safety rule, and presumably saving some considerable expense in the process, until he received a stern letter urging him to comply<sup>29</sup>.

Although he was a litigious customer, there is evidence that the railways appreciated Finnie's business. In an 1852 letter in which the GSWR turned down a request for reduced freight charges from Finnie's pits, they expressed their hope that a new pit Finnie was sinking on the Eglinton estate would be productive as they knew his business had not been going well recently<sup>30</sup>. The GSWR were in the process of surveying a branch line to the new pit and presumably hoped to profit from the freight trade guaranteed.

Archibald Finnie III married Margaret Monteith Guthrie, daughter of the late John Guthrie. They had two sons, John and Archibald (IV), and four daughters, Mary Ann, Margaret, Helena and Jean. In 1836 he bought Diamond Cottage<sup>31</sup>, a house on the seafront at Barassie, as a 'holiday home', and in about 1855 began to build Springhill House, just off Portland Road, Kilmarnock, which was to remain in the family until 1948, when it was gifted to Kilmarnock Town Council (see Figure 3).

Archibald III was a keen curler. He was President of the Kilmarnock Curling Club and had his own rink at Springhill, where he would entertain some of his fellow

businessmen before work on winter mornings. He was also Director of the Athenæum, Curator of Kilmarnock Libraries and a member of the Kilmarnock Philosophical Institute<sup>32</sup>. In 1852, he purchased a commission in the Ayrshire Yeomanry Cavalry as Cornet (the equivalent of Second Lieutenant) and was Lieutenant from 1854 to 1861<sup>33</sup>. He was a regular attender at the High Kirk, Kilmarnock; in 1879 he endowed a stained glass window there in memory of his parents and parents-in-law, and also to his son John Guthrie Finnie, who had died five years previously. Archibald III died at Diamond Cottage in 1876, from a disfiguring facial tumour that apparently had kept him out of public view for some time. His estate was valued at £213,924.

Archibald IV, born on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1851, in Kilmarnock, was the only surviving son of Archibald III, and took over the running of the family business on his father's death. Little is known about him, other than that he was educated at Kilmarnock Academy, and later at Dreghorn, Edinburgh. He shared his father's interest in politics, being Vice-Preses of the Junior Conservative Club in 1882<sup>34</sup>, but was not on the local council. Despite inheriting a large fortune, he seems to have had an active interest in the coal mining business. However, it would appear that the iron foundry at Townholm was disposed of sometime before 1882, when it was listed in the Kilmarnock Directory as belonging to Grant, Ritchie & Co., engineers, whereas in 1873 it has still been owned by Archibald Finnie & Son<sup>35</sup>.



### **Springhill House**

Archibald IV seems also to have inherited his father's hard-headed business streak. In 1882, a new 19-year lease on the Fergushill pits was to be signed<sup>36</sup>, and Finnie was in dispute with the Earl of Eglinton's factor over the amount of coal to be wrought. He felt the factor was being too optimistic about the mine's projected output given the increasing difficulty of actually getting at the remaining coal measures. He wanted a reduction in the stipulated tonnage to be exported via Ardrossan Harbour from 90,000 to 50,000 tons per year. Archibald IV died, unmarried, at Springhill House in 1883 before the new lease could be signed. The cause of death was recorded as "sea sickness with irritation of the stomach",

which he had endured for four months, finally succumbing to “syncope with nervous debility”. His sisters took ownership of Archibald Finnie & Son. The Eglinton estate factor’s notebooks record that the estate’s lawyers were unhappy that the Finnie sisters would be the new tenants; they were concerned that if any of the sisters married, a new party would be brought into the contract which could cause complications<sup>37</sup>. However, despite these misgivings, the Misses Finnie were granted the lease.

The Misses Finnie owned the company until its demise, although it would seem that the day-to-day running of the business was conducted by a manager. The mines continued to meet demand from the local ironworks and other industries, with new pits continuing to be opened as others were worked out. In July 1886, the GSWR agreed to a private branch from the Doura branch of the Ardrossan Railway to Finnie’s new Fergushill Number 29 pit<sup>38</sup>. In the same year, the company were owed £203 for coal delivered to Francis Ross, master of the barque *Huron* of Londonderry, for shipment to Ireland. Ross had defaulted on payment, and the company obtained permission from the courts to tow the boat from Lamlash Bay to Greenock, where they planned to de-mast it and remove the rudder until such time as the money was paid by the *Huron*’s new owners<sup>39</sup>. Much of Finnie’s coal was exported, often to Ireland. This aspect of the business must have been going well as, in June 1893, the company took delivery of a new 515-ton vessel, the SS *Archibald Finnie*, from Fleming & Ferguson of Paisley. Unfortunately, a month later while on a voyage to Dublin laden with coal, she collided with the SS *Pearl*, of Glasgow, and sank in 49 metres of water off Ballyhalbert, County Down<sup>40</sup>.

In 1873, Archibald Finnie & Son had employed over a thousand men and boys at its seven collieries at Busbie, Carmelbank, Cauldhame, Fergushill, Kilmarnock (Annandale), Thorntoun and Springhill. The firm also had a share of the Bourtreehill coal and fireclay mine. Over the next thirty-five years, most of these pits closed, leaving only Fergushill still open by 1908 (see Table 1, *below*). According to Pott’s 1915 Mining Register and Directory, Fergushill Colliery still employed 360 men and the company was run by William Cameron, managing partner. The colliery had closed by 1918, and Archibald Finnie & Son appear to have ceased trading.<sup>41</sup>

The four sisters of Archibald IV all outlived the firm. Jean married James Robertson Buntine, Sheriff Substitute, of Tarbrax House, Stirling, and died a widow, aged 83, in Kilmarnock in 1938. Three weeks later her spinster sister, Mary Ann, died at Springhill House. Helena, also unmarried, died at the age of 84 at Springhill House in 1942. The final sister, Margaret, married the coalmaster John Sturrock in 1895 and died, aged 90, at Thorntoun House in 1947. Neither of the married sisters appears to have had children.

Despite its relatively rapid demise from major employer to ceasing business in less than 10 years, there is still some physical evidence left of the firm of Archibald Finnie & Son. Their office building in John Finnie Street and the family home at Springhill House are still standing in Kilmarnock, as is the house at Barassie. Ruins of some of their Fergushill mine buildings are still to be found on the eastern boundary of Eglinton Park near South Fergushill farm, along with evidence of the mineral railways that supplied them, a lasting reminder of this once widespread industry.

**Table 1: Archibald Finnie and Son’s collieries in ‘Lists of Mines’ from Scottish Mining web site<sup>42</sup> and Potts Mining Register and Directory 1915**

Pit	1854	1860	1866	1873	1880	1893	1896	1908	1915	1918
Fergushill <sup>43</sup>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Busbie	*	*	*	*						
Carnilbank	*	*	*	*						
Thorntoun <sup>44</sup>	*	*	*	*		*	*			
Kilmarnock <sup>45</sup>	*	*	*	*						
Gatehead	*	*	*							
Springhill				*	*	*	*	*		
Cauldhame				*	*	*	*	*		
Bourtreeschill <sup>46</sup>				*	*					

### *Acknowledgements.*

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- 1 “Constablewood is a small piece of land lying high on the north bank of the Noddle Burn, on the back road from Largs to Inverkip... This ground once had a flax mill on it and supported livestock and arable farming for the earliest members of the Finnie family I have been able to trace.” (Joyce Hart, ‘Island Hopscotch: Largs to Cowal in Four Generations’, Pt 1, in *Largs & North Ayrshire Family History Society Journal*, no.58, Spring 2010, p.20).
- 2 Christopher A. Whatley, ‘The Process of Industrialization in Ayrshire c.1707 – 1871’ (PhD Thesis, University of Strathclyde), 1975, p.82. [There is a copy at the Carnegie Library, Ayr].
- 3 R Britton, ‘Wealthy Scots 1876-1913’, in *Historical Research*, vol. 58, 1985, pp 78-94.
- 4 National Archives Currency Converter: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency)
- 5 National Archives of Scotland [NAS], CS99/268, Arch Finnie v Earl of Glencairn.
- 6 NAS, CS228/F/8/36/1, Arch Finnie v William Stewart. William Stewart, merchant, Ayr, was a partner in the Kilmarnock Foundry Co dissolved in 1809: the other partners were Archibald Finnie and John Guthrie (see *Air Advertiser*, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1809, 4b).
- 7 NAS, CS271/40298, William Taylor v Kilmarnock Foundry Co 1817.
- 8 Archibald McKay, *History of Kilmarnock*, 1909.
- 9 ‘The Building of Barassie’: [www.ladyisle.com/tp%2014.htm](http://www.ladyisle.com/tp%2014.htm) accessed 4<sup>th</sup> June 2010.
- 10 ‘The Finnies of Kilmarnock’ in *Kilmarnock Standard*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 1883.

- <sup>11</sup> Whately, *op cit*. Presumably after the dissolution of the earlier partnership with Stewart in 1809.
- <sup>12</sup> NAS, GD3/18/2/9, /15, /19, /21 and /23.
- <sup>13</sup> NAS, GD3/4/101, Fergushill Colliery, abstract of accounts.
- <sup>14</sup> William McIlwraith, *The Glasgow and South-Western Railway: Its Origin, Progress and Present Position*, Glasgow, 1880, p.18.
- <sup>15</sup> *Kilmarnock Directory* 1833.
- <sup>16</sup> The original is stored at the Dick Institute, Kilmarnock.
- <sup>17</sup> ‘The Finnies of Kilmarnock’, *op cit*.
- <sup>18</sup> NAS, GD3/4/142, Tack between Archibald Finnie and Earl of Eglinton and Winton.
- <sup>19</sup> McKay, *op cit*.
- <sup>20</sup> *The Mining Engineer*, Vol. 81-82, 1982, p.193.
- <sup>21</sup> NAS, BR/GSW/1/58, GSWR, Reports to Directors, p.88.
- <sup>22</sup> Burns Monument Centre, Kilmarnock, Kilmarnock Town Council Minutes 1843 - 1865.
- <sup>23</sup> *Kilmarnock Standard*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1876.
- <sup>24</sup> *Glasgow Sentinel*, 10<sup>th</sup> November 1866.
- <sup>25</sup> *Glasgow Sentinel*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1866.
- <sup>26</sup> NAS, CS275/14/166, GSWR v Archibald Finnie.
- <sup>27</sup> NAS, CS275/17/31, GSWR v Archibald Finnie.
- <sup>28</sup> NAS, CS275/29/100, Allan Pollok Morris v Archibald Finnie.
- <sup>29</sup> NAS, BR/GSW/1/13, GSWR Directors’ Minutes.
- <sup>30</sup> NAS, GD3/5/1343/63, letter from Railway Office, Ardrossan to Auchans House, Dundonald.
- <sup>31</sup> ‘The Building of Barassie’, *op cit*.
- <sup>32</sup> *Kilmarnock Directory* 1868.
- <sup>33</sup> W.S. Cooper, *Ayrshire Yeomanry Cavalry*, 1881. See also *Edinburgh Gazette*, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1852, p.174.
- <sup>34</sup> *Kilmarnock Directory*, 1882.
- <sup>35</sup> Grant, Ritchie & Co had been founded in 1876 when Thomas M. Grant and William Ritchie, formerly employees of Andrew Barclay, Sons & Co., left that employ to establish a rival locomotive engineering company in the Townholm Engine Works,, vacant through the death of George Caldwell. They presumably acquired the Kilmarnock Foundry soon after. [Russell Wear, ‘The Locomotive Builders of Kilmarnock’, in *Industrial Railway Record*, No.69, January 1977, p.332.]
- <sup>36</sup> NAS, GD3/15/5/12, Factor’s Memoranda Notes 117 and 119.
- <sup>37</sup> NAS, GD3/15/5/12, Factor’s Memoranda Notes 191 to 215.
- <sup>38</sup> NAS, BR/GSW/1/37, GSWR Committee Minutes, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1886.
- <sup>39</sup> NAS, CS274/113 Archibald Finnie & Son v Bryson.
- <sup>40</sup> www.irishwrecksonline.net, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> September 2006.
- <sup>41</sup> See Chris Hawksworth, ‘Fergushill Tileworks – a short lived industrial concern on the Eglinton Estate’ in *Ayrshire Notes* 32, 2006, 21-25.

- <sup>42</sup> [www.scottishmining.co.uk/377](http://www.scottishmining.co.uk/377) accessed 15th November 2010.
- <sup>43</sup> Fergushill had both coal and shale mines in 1873.
- <sup>44</sup> Thorntoun was listed as East and West Thorntoun prior to 1880.
- <sup>45</sup> Kilmarnock colliery was Annandale.
- <sup>46</sup> Bourtreehill was co-owned with James Finlay and Son, and had both coal and fireclay mines.

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## Ayrshire Cattle Overseas

These two news items, both taken from the Ayrshire Post of Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1930, demonstrate the global popularity of the Ayrshire breed of cattle. That popularity was then, perhaps, at its height, but it remains one of the most popular breeds, especially when a high milk yield is the main selection criterion.

The first gives some indication of those parts of the world where it was most popular: surprisingly, not just those areas traditionally tinted pink in our atlases:-

Exportations. These have been well maintained, the total number being 246 against 287 last year. Included in the Canadian shipments were a number of animals for British Columbia sent out to the order of Captain J. C. Dun-Waters of Fintry, B.C. These cattle were sold by him to farmers in the district in order to spread the breed over the Colony. Captain Dun-Waters has done much for the breed in his part of the world. He has pleaded with, cajoled and harried Government Departments, Officials and private individuals in his endeavours to get the Ayrshire more widely recognised, and to bring its merits before as wide a public as possible. Breeders on this side owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his untiring devotion and work for the breed. For the year to November 30 the numbers exported and the destinations of the animals were as follows:- Canada, 155; U.S.A., 34; China, 19; Newfoundland, 18; South Africa 14; Kenya Colony 3; Sudan 2; Rhodesia 1 – 246.

The trade at home had been very steady. Once again Mr Thomas Barr had the highest figure at auction for the year; his yearling bull Hobsland Satisfaction bringing him £170 2s from the Hon G. Corbett.<sup>1</sup>

The second gives very specific details of a shipment of bulls to Kenya (where it obviously wasn't all play and no work):-

## FOR KENYA COLONY Shipment of Pedigreed Ayrshire Bulls

Mr A. W. Montgomerie shipped on December 3 six bulls to the order of Mr W. R. Thomson, Mua Farms Ltd., Athi River Station, Kenya Colony. The bulls went per SS Montgomeryshire from the East India Dock, London, and comprised the following: Lochlane Bloomer, born in May 1929, and bred by Mr F. A. Rottenburg. This bull is sired by Mansfield Mains Fashion and out of Mansfield Mains Bloomer 2<sup>nd</sup>. The record of the dam is 1243 gallons at 3.69 per cent b.f.<sup>2</sup> The bull was purchased from Mr T. G. Wilson, Carbeth, Killearn.

Low Milton Indomitable, born 25<sup>th</sup> November 1929, went from the herd of Mr Thomas Logan. His sire was South Craig Fancy Lad and his dam Low Milton Frivolity. The dam has a record of 1210 gallons at 4.80 per cent b.f. as a heifer while the dam of sire produced 1031 gallons at 4.54 per cent b.f. A bull of this kind should breed plenty of butter fat.

Mr David Wallace supplied Auchenbrain Yoho, born September 1929 by Lyonston Douglas and out of Auchenbrain Yellow Kate 34<sup>th</sup>, whose record was 1064 gallons at 4.11 per cent b.f. The dam of sire had a record of 1232 gallons at 4.03 b.f. From Mr Alexander Watson, Barboigh, Mauchline, went Barboigh Select, born March 1930. He is sired by Hill Speculation and out of Barboigh Lilac 9<sup>th</sup> with a record of 1086 gallons at 3.70 per cent b.f. The record of the dam of sire is 1070 gallons at 3.78 per cent b.f.

South Craig Utility, from the herd of Mr William Logan, South Craig, Hollybush, was also included. This bull, born August 1929, is sired by Lyonston Broon Bun and out of South Craig Bloom, whose record was 1254 gallons at 4.50 per cent, while the dam of sire had a record of 930 gallons at 4.46 per cent b.f.

From Mr Montgomerie's own herd went Lessnessock Banker, born June 1929, and sired by Linnhead Pearl King, and out of Lessnessock Beatrice. The dam's record was 1197 gallons at 3.80 per cent b.f., while the dam of sire produced 1100 gallons at 3.87 per cent b.f.

With such good milk records behind these animals, they should do well in their new quarters. Cattle exported to Kenya have a good deal to go through after they arrive there, and it is usually several months before they get through quarantine and the inoculation station. The characteristic hardiness of the breed, however, should be a good bulwark against troubles.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ayrshire Post*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1930, 23b, from the annual report of the Ayrshire Cattle Society.

<sup>2</sup> Butter fat.

<sup>3</sup> *Ayrshire Post*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1930, 23a.

# A Nineteenth Century Ayr Character

The *Ayr Advertiser* of Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 1890 contains the following obituary and additional editorial comment:

## Death of Colonel Shaw

We take the following from the *Launceston Examiner*, Tasmania, of 10<sup>th</sup> January:-  
“Our Leven correspondent telegraphs that Colonel Michael Maxwell Shaw died somewhat suddenly yesterday at his residence, Molenda Lodge, Castro Road, at the ripe age of 87 years. He had been ailing for about six weeks, and got up yesterday morning as usual, but about eight o’clock was taken suddenly ill, and died before his son, Mr Thomas Shaw, who was living next door, arrived. Colonel Shaw was one of the retired Indian officers who were attracted to Tasmania by Colonel Crawford’s immigration scheme put forward in 1865, and settled on the N.W. Coast, and until his health failed some years ago he was an active correspondent to the press at home as well as in this colony, and a warm supporter of the Temperance cause. Before coming to this colony he endeavoured to improve on Colonel Crawford’s scheme by a series of letters to the English religious journal, the *Christian News*, advocating that the Evangelical Union should form an association to secure land and form a settlement and township in the Tasmanian bush from its own adherents. The letters were subsequently reprinted in pamphlet form, but the project was never taken up. Colonel Shaw leaves one son and a daughter, both of whom are married and reside in the district.”

[Col. Shaw was a notability in Ayr for many years. He had powers of mind of a high order, and possessed strong convictions on several subjects, his enthusiasm in particular directions amounting almost to eccentricity. He held strong and clear religious views of the kind represented by the E.U. Church, was a thorough going advocate of temperance, and an earnest supporter of Parliamentary reform on the most radical lines. He fearlessly maintained his views on the platform and in the press, and was a most awkward controversialist to tackle. For many years he preached regularly at street corners in different parts of the town, his tall and commanding figure and powerful voice in themselves attracting the attention of the passers-by. He had a portable pulpit or stand made for himself, which he carried about from place to place. His sermons were no mere ranting utterances, but carefully prepared, and often eloquent compositions. He frequently expressed his religious and temperance views in verse, and not many weeks have elapsed since we received a parcel of poems by him in the form of printed leaflets. They were addressed in his own well-remembered handwriting. He was respected by the people of Ayr for his sincerity and earnestness of character, and many will hear of his death with deep regret.]

# Negro Mauled by a Lion

Exciting Incident at Ayr Shows

On Thursday evening of last week, while the second last performance was on at the menagerie of Mr. A. Manders, situated at the showground at Newton Public Park, Ayr, great consternation was caused among the spectators by an unrehearsed incident in which a lion, described as African forest-bred and named The Untameable Brutus, attacked a powerfully built negro named Bert Maccomo. The lion has the reputation of being particularly bad-tempered, and when Maccomo entered the case as usual, armed only with a chair and a stick, it immediately became surly. After once or twice threatening Maccomo, it suddenly caught him by the shoulders, with the result that his arms were badly torn down to the elbow. Maccomo struck out with his stick, but the lion bit him on the hand, the forefinger of his right hand being almost bitten off. By this time the attendants had secured hot irons, and with these drove the animal to a corner while Maccomo made good his escape from the cage. He was at once attended by Dr. White, and afterwards removed home. When the incident occurred there was a large crowd present. There was, of course, an immediate rush for the exits, but all were got out in perfect safety. Maccomo, who is 25 years of age, had only been with Mr. Manders for about three weeks. Prior to this Mr. Manders had himself undertaken the task of visiting Brutus and occasionally suffered severely from attacks by the beast. Only recently he decided to give up this part of the business and Maccomo succeeded him as tamer.

[From the *Ayr Advertiser*, Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 1911, 6b]

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## Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

### *Swap Shop*

The 2010 Swap Shop was held in the Burns Monument Centre, Kilmarnock, and attracted around 40 members and friends of the Federation. As well as the usual, but informal, business of the meeting, we were treated to a guided tour of the many aspects of this new facility, which contains the local history library, the archives and the registrar's office, as well as offering facilities for weddings and civil partnerships. It is an attractive and well-stocked library, with many local books and newspapers, as well as provided regular access to many of Ayrshire's rich archival sources. The facility is well described in Gary Torbett's article in *Ayrshire Notes* 40.

Details of the 2011 Swap Shop has not yet been finalised, but we are hoping that it can be at Perceton House, Irvine.

## *A.G.M.*

The 2011 Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2011, at Craiggengillan House, Dalmellington, by courtesy of Mr Mark Gibson, who has done so much to restore the estate's fortunes. Booking forms will be sent to Federation members as soon as possible, but they are asked to reserve the date, now, for what promises to be one of our more interesting visits.

## *John Strawhorn Quaich*

The award for 2011 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 was held in the Walker Halls, Troon, on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October, and was well attended by members and friends. All the speakers were lively and interesting, with many new things to say about the complex and varied relationships between Scotland and France. We thank them all for their contributions, and expect, as has been the case with past conferences, to see many of them re-appearing in Ayrshire in the programmes of our member societies.

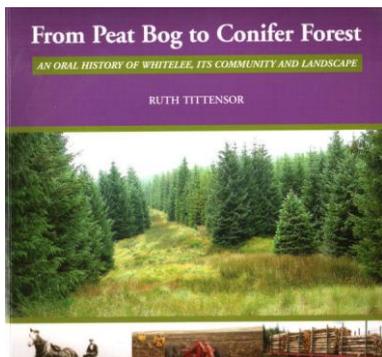
Our next Conference will be in 2012, and ideas for subjects and/or speakers are always welcomed from our members. Meanwhile, on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2011, we are co-hosting, with Glasgow Caledonian University, a conference in Kilmarnock Academy on the lives, careers, influences and achievements of Alexander Fleming and John Boyd Orr, both of whom won Nobel Prizes, and both of whom attended Kilmarnock Academy: a rare achievement of which the school should be inordinately proud.

The Scottish Place Names Society are holding a one day conference in the Walker Halls, Troon, on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011. Speakers include Rob Close, from A.F.H.S., and Tom Clancy, from Glasgow University, who will talk on the place names of Troon. Places are £20, including a buffet lunch. Details from the Society's web site, [spns.org.uk](http://spns.org.uk), or Pete Drummond, 8 Academy Place, Coatbridge ML5 3AX

## Rob's Book Club: an occasional series

by Rob Close

Three first class books have come my way since the last Ayrshire Notes: all are excellent, and two have a very strong Ayrshire bias, and are thoroughly recommended additions to the bibliography of Ayrshire.

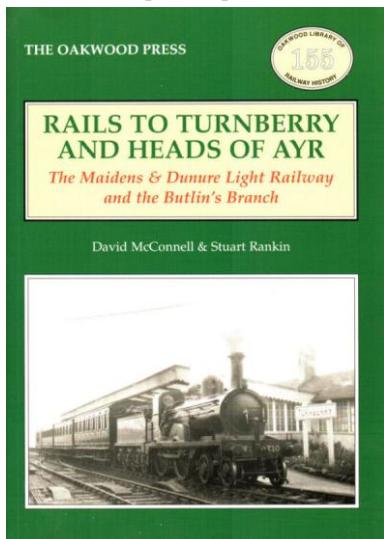


First up is *From Peat Bog to Conifer Forest: An Oral History of Whitelee, Its Community and Landscape*, by Ruth Tittensor, first published by Packard Publishing of Chichester in 2009, and reprinted by Countryside Management Consultants (i.e., by Ruth herself) in 2010. This book has had tremendous praise heaped upon in both highly academic and more accessible journals. It describes the ecological and social transformation of the Whitelee Plateau, in the north-east of the county, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It inter-mingles scientific and sociological analysis of these changes with the

transcribed oral testimony of the local people involved in this high peat moorland. Their memories, often very emotional, cover the ways in which the land was used for activities such as farming, digging peat, fishing and swimming in the burns, training greyhounds, snaring rabbits, collecting eggs, wildfowling and sheep-dog trials. It is the way in which these oral and scientific strands have been braided to create a new form of environmental history that has, rightly, excited earlier reviewers. It isn't often that Ayrshire is to the fore, but on this occasion we lead the way, and I strongly recommend Dr Tittensor's book: it is also beautifully produced and well illustrated. ISBN 978 185341 1 142 7, price £27.50 + £4.50 for postage and packaging, from Ruth Tittensor, 6 East Donington Street, DARVEL KA17 0JR. I have asked Ruth whether she is willing to lecture to local societies, and the answer is yes, but as a freelance consultant, she would need to charge.

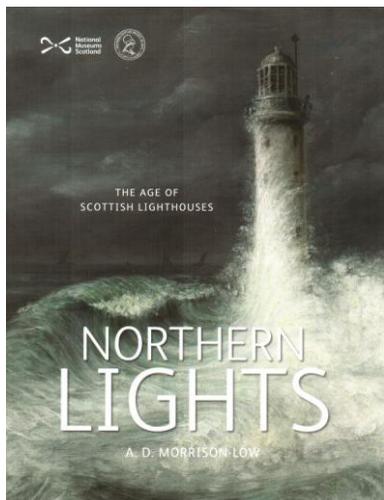
David McConnell and Stuart Rankin's *Rails to Turnberry and Heads of Ayr* [Usk, Oakwood Press, 2010, £19.95. oakwoodpress.co.uk. 01291 650444] brings one of the county's more evocative branch railways into the extensive, and long established, range of railway histories from this specialist publisher. Davy and Stuart cover the line in comprehensive detail, from the first proposals for a short branch to Alloway in the 1890s through to final closure of the surviving branch to Butlin's in 1968, and the removal of the display of locomotives at the holiday camp in 1971. As one of the few lines built under the Light Railways Act of 1896, this branch (the Maidens & Dunure Light Railway) has a particular interest to railway enthusiasts, while Ayrshire people will remember it for its beautiful scenery, and its connections with not only Butlin's Holiday Camp, but also with

Turnberry Hotel, to whose initial success it was an integral part, and with the early potato harvest, an important part of the Carrick coast economy. The authors bring the railway to



life well, combining a comprehensive display of factual information with the usual railway enthusiast's eye for the amusing detail and telling anecdote. The book's 300 pages are extensively illustrated with diagrams, maps and photographs, many from the collection of the incomparable Derek Cross. Much of the route of the line can still be followed on foot, and this book should be essential for anyone walking this part of the Carrick coast, as well as everyone with an interest in Ayrshire's industrial and social history. Highly recommended: it is hoped to include a longer review of this book in a future issue of *Ayrshire Notes*.

Our final selection this time is *Northern Lights: The Age of Scottish Lighthouses*, by A.D. Morrison-Low, published by the National Museums of Scotland (NMS Enterprises Ltd, nms.ac.uk/books , 0131 247 4083) at £17.99 in paperback (or £25.00 for a hardback. Lavishly illustrated, Morrison-Low's book traces the history of lighthouses, mainly in Scotland, using largely the extensive collections held by the National Museums of Scotland. Particularly interesting chapters, both with well-chosen illustrations, are those on the various early attempts to erect a light on the Eddystone Rocks at the entrance to Plymouth Harbour, and on the building of the Bell Rock, on another inhospitable reef, by Robert Stevenson between 1807 and 1811. The book is not parochial in scope: the index mentions lighthouses in, among other places, Japan, New Zealand, Burma and Newfoundland, as well as those nearer home.



Again, I have found very few stray Ayrshire reference in the past few months. Most interesting, perhaps, were the obituaries of the actor Susannah York, who died on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2011, aged 72. York, whose real name was Susannah Yolanda Fletcher, was born in Chelsea, but moved to Scotland after her parents divorced, and her mother re-married. She was a pupil at Marr College, when living with her mother and step-father, Adam M. Hamilton, at what Michael Billington, in an obituary in *The Guardian* (17<sup>th</sup> January) calls "a remote Scottish village." This

means, presumably, either Dundonald or Symington, as the Hamilton's family home was Westercroft, on the Corraith estate broadly equidistant from the two villages (and in Dundonald Parish), a broadly Arts and Crafts house built c. 1915 for Peter Mackie, proprietor of Corraith, and designed by the Troon architect John R. Johnstone.

Books for review and mention in this section, and reports of stray Ayrshire references are always welcomed.

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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. \*This meeting will be held at the Citadel Leisure Centre, South Harbour Street, 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 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.

### 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
Tues 8 <sup>th</sup>	KDHG	Tbc	602 Squadron
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
Tues 22 <sup>nd</sup>	KDHG	Alastair Dinsmore	The History of Glasgow Police
Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup>	FHS Joint	Chris Paton	Researching Your Irish Ancestry
Tues 29 <sup>th</sup>	WKCS	John Hume	Victorian Churches
Thurs 31 <sup>st</sup>	BHS	Alex Grey	New Riverside Museum

### April 2011

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	Sandra 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 Gables 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

### May 2011

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
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