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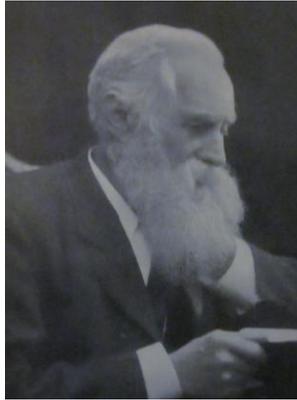
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Cover illustration
Kilmarnock War Memorial: The Victor by David McGill. (1926-27).
(Rob Close)

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William Gibson Sloan (1838 - 1913)

Sue McClure died unexpectedly in December 2013. This edition of Ayrshire Notes has been assembled without David's essential technical input and careful proofing. It shows, especially in my grappling with illustrations and the diary. Our thoughts, of course, are with David at this difficult time. RC

Kilmarnock War Memorial

By Ola Smith

War memorials were erected all across Britain and the rest of Europe after 1918 in memory of those who died during the Great War 1914-1918. Very few towns were left unscathed during the war, Kilmarnock included and once it ended people realised there were many wives, parents, siblings and children who were left without a husband, son, brother and father. To mediate the grief many towns arranged to construct a town war memorial, not only in honour of those who gave their lives but as a place for family members and friends to visit and pay their respects.¹ Memorials are different in every town. Some have a memorial garden many a monument some spent very little money on their memorial and instead gave money to the local school or charity. Every town is different but the most important part of a memorial was that bereaved families had a place to contemplate their loss, escape from their thoughts and channel their grief.²

It was not until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 1919 that war was officially declared over and all the troops gradually came home. For this occasion, there was a peace parade in July in towns all over Britain. Every town wanted to memorialise their dead soldiers, and many organisations, such as the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers, were set up to help towns find architects and stonemasons. Kilmarnock was one of the later towns in Scotland to build a war memorial in homage to the men of the town who died during the Great War. While most were erected before 1923, Kilmarnock's was not unveiled until

¹ Winter, Jay, Sites of Memory Sites of Mourning The Great War in European cultural history, (Cambridge, 1995), p 79

² Winter, Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning, p 79

21st May 1927, almost ten years after the Armistice was signed.

Peace was both a time of celebration and sadness for the people of Kilmarnock. As in the whole of Britain, many households in Kilmarnock were affected by the war's casualty list: there are nearly 900 names on the war memorial. Even if a family had not suffered a direct loss, it would be likely that they would know a family who had. Very quickly after the armistice, the town council sprang into action to organise an appropriate celebration for the people of the town. Within two days, on the evening of Wednesday 13th November 1918, a 'Special Committee' headed by ex-Bailie Wilson hosted a concert in the Agricultural Hall to 'rejoice the armistice'.¹ Many organisations performed for the crowd including the Burgh Band, Glasgow and South-Western Male Vocal Choir, a dance troupe, the Railway Choir, while the Territorial Pipe Band finished the evening with the National Anthem.

As early as December 1918, the council was discussing a fitting way to memorialise the dead soldiers of Kilmarnock. The Provost felt it the 'duty of the council to prepare something as a memorial at as early a date as possible'.² The council thought Kilmarnock was in need of a new Town Hall, and agreed it was appropriate to open a town hall with a memorial to the fallen somewhere in or on the building.

King George V declared a 'Peace Day'; the date was set for July 1919, nearly a month after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. A committee, one separate from the War Memorial Committee, was set up in April of 1919 to organise Peace Day celebrations. The preparations coincided with the celebrations throughout the whole of Britain. In London, the parade marched past the wooden cenotaph and was the focus of much commemoration and

¹ Kilmarnock Standard [KS], 16th November 1918

² Kilmarnock Town Council Minutes [KTCM], December 1918

celebration.¹ The cenotaph induced a sense of ‘collective bereavement’ and is thought to have brought Britain closer together. In Kilmarnock, the celebrations included a Drumhead Service, a united service in the Laigh Kirk and a Peace Tree planted in the Howard Park, followed by a parade.²

Meanwhile, in regards to the war memorial, an article in 1919 in the *Standard* telling readers that a meeting would be held in the following week beginning January 13th, to discuss plans for a War Memorial Committee.³ The meeting, which was open to all, agreed that the platform be classed as the committee. However, as the war memorial was not unveiled until 1927, it is inevitable that the war memorial committee, as part of the council, would change as the various elections took place. This can be seen in 1924 when a War Memorial Committee was again organised.

The organisation of Kilmarnock’s war memorial was a particularly slow process, more so than for many other towns. Although there was talk of a memorial in 1918 and 1919 in Kilmarnock Town Council minutes and the *Standard*, there was not much action towards building one in the early 1920s. 1920 saw a fund set up by the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the local regiment, in an attempt to help many of the people affected by the Great War.⁴ They raised money to help the widows of servicemen, disabled soldiers unable to find work on return to their hometown, to supplement any pensions and to pay the charges that might occur in helping this particular group of people.⁵ Kilmarnock Infirmary had the intention of extending its premises and raised sufficient money to do so through

¹ Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory Sites of Mourning*, p 103

² KS, 26th July 1919

³ KS, 11th January 1919

⁴ KS, 6th March 1920

⁵ *ibid*

public subscription.¹ However, whilst this was ongoing, Kilmarnock town council was debating whether or not to have the centrally placed Corn Exchange building in Kilmarnock as part of its war memorial. The Provost James Smith told the council that the building's future was unknown but it was 'fraught with much interest to the community' as it was a prominent feature in Kilmarnock.² For reasons never specified in council minutes or the local paper however, the building did not become the town's war memorial. Whilst a war memorial was not completed at this time, no economic issues were discussed in the Town Council Meeting, which suggests that the council had the potential to create a memorial, but for reasons unsaid, they chose not to.

The Kilmarnock Standard showed much interest in the progress of the war memorial throughout the years between 1918 and the unveiling in 1927, and in 1920, after two lesser war memorials had been unveiled, the writer of the weekly article 'Local Echoes' expressed his opinion on the matter. The anonymous writer wrote of many churches and schools having a war memorial and expressed the opinion that he sees no better place to have a memorial to the dead soldiers of a community than in the local school; future generations would pass through the halls of the school and be reminded of the supreme sacrifice made by former pupils. However, Kilmarnock's local Higher Grade School, Kilmarnock Academy, did not have a memorial at this point.³

In November 1920 Bailie Thomson expressed his disappointment at the Town Council Meeting that Kilmarnock had done nothing to organise a memorial. He described it as 'nothing short of a shame',⁴ to which Mr Jones asked if money for a town hall were to be raised.

¹ KS 27th March 1920

² KS, 17th April 1920

³ KS, 3rd July 1920

⁴ KTCM, November 1920

The Provost replied, 'That was the intention', and the matter was closed with the point being made that a memorial and a town hall were in much need and if money were to be raised it should be used with these intentions in mind.¹ However, as of yet, as can be seen from the local papers, no subscriptions or intention to raise subscriptions for a memorial were made.

It could be argued that the town council's hesitation to create a war memorial was for the best as 1921 brought mass unemployment throughout Britain. Kilmarnock undoubtedly suffered as much as the rest of the country as a result of 'one of the worst depressions in history'.² In 1921, 12.2% of the nation was unemployed, which was the highest percentage from 1921 to 1930, when the number rose from 8% in 1929 to 12.3%. These figures show the 'aggregate unemployment rate on an insured and on a working population basis'.³ In Kilmarnock, many industries continued to operate, including carpet-making, shoe-making and repairs, locomotive repair and construction, and the bottling of Johnnie Walker whisky.⁴ However, despite this evidence, it remains the case from reliable sources such as *Kilmarnock Town Council Minutes* and the *Kilmarnock Standard* that there was substantial unemployment in Kilmarnock, to the extent that a special committee was set up by the council to find ways of gaining employment for residents out of work.⁵ Unemployment in Kilmarnock resulted from an over-supply of manpower at the same time as a reduced industrial base.

¹ KTCM, November 1920

² Aldcroft, Derek, *The Inter-War Economy: Britain 1919-1939*, (London, 1970), p 37

³ Garside, W.R., *British Unemployment 1919-1939*, (Birmingham, 1990), p 5

⁴ Mackay, James A., *Kilmarnock*, pp 53-61

⁵ KTCM, September 1921

Probably in consequence of this depression, from the end of 1920 to the middle of 1923, plans for a war memorial in Kilmarnock seemed to disappear. The local paper does not detail any plans for a memorial, and the lack of mention of a memorial in the town council minutes suggests that parts of the town were in such distress that it was considered inappropriate to attempt to raise money by public subscription. In June 1921, Kilmarnock set up the 'Provost's Distress Fund', to help those in need of extra help in their time of need. By November 1924, the Distress Fund had raised £8000, which, is the equivalent of approximately £400,000 in 2014.¹ When the Fund was established, the Provost asked the council for a year or perhaps more depending on the improvement of circumstances in the town, where there would be no mention or planning of a town war memorial.² He felt at the time that the situation of many of Kilmarnock's poorest inhabitants was a greater priority than the erection of a memorial, which could be done at a later date. This would explain the lack of memorial-related news in the *Standard* and in the town council minutes.

In March 1923 a war memorial was set up in Kilmarnock Academy, to remember the 142 former pupils and teachers³ of the school who died in the Great War. The memorial takes the form of a mural built of Carrara marble, and of bronze.⁴ The unveiling of the memorial in Kilmarnock Academy is recorded in a special publication of the bi-annual school magazine *The Gold Berry*, in which there is a detailed outline of the unveiling ceremony, plus a

¹ This is Money, 'Historic Inflation Calculator', <<http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/bills/article-1633409/Historic-inflation-calculator-value-money-changed-1900.html>> [accessed 12th November 2012]

² KS, 21st December 1921

³ The Gold Berry, March 1923

⁴ *ibid*

short biography of every name on the memorial.¹ Presiding was Dr. Clark, rector of the Academy from 1907-1926.² In his speech, Dr Clark told the audience that they had first thought a playing field would be a ‘most fitting tribute to the Old Boys who had laid down their lives in “playing the Game”.’³ Eventually, they had all come to the decision that what they wanted was a visible record within the walls of the Academy of ‘their gratitude and pride’ in those who had not returned from the war. The Reverend James Hamilton unveiled the memorial by pulling the cord that let the Union Jack loose and accompanied it with the words, ‘This Memorial is now dedicated to the glory of God and to the ever blessed memory of the masters and pupils of this school who gave their lives in the Great War.’ After which, the ‘long sad catalogue of the names of the fallen was impressively read by Mr Robert Young’.⁴ For both the Kilmarnock Academy war memorial and the later Kilmarnock Town War Memorial, classical models were chosen which partly could reflect the education given at the time, with Greek and Latin featuring highly in the curriculum. However, it also evokes the glory that was associated with the Classical world and the notion that it reflected a heroic past and the glorification of war. Today, we tend to be more sceptical about war, but in the early 20th century, the fallen were often seen as martyrs, therefore it is understandable that towns would both celebrate their townspeople and also mourn them in neo-classical memorials.

¹Kilmarnock Academy, ‘Former Pupils’ Memorial’, <<http://www.kilmarnockacademy.co.uk/formerpupilsww1memorial.htm>> [accessed 19th March 2013]

² Kilmarnock Academy, ‘The New Academy’, <<http://www.kilmarnockacademy.co.uk/historythenewacademy.htm>> [accessed 14th January 2013]

³ The Gold Berry, March 1923, p 5

⁴ *ibid*, p 6

Perhaps impetus had been given to the town's plans, for during the October town council meeting in Kilmarnock in 1923, it was agreed that there should be no further delay on the war memorial and that the council should "co-opt a number of ratepayers outwith the Town Council and without further delay proceed to the erection of a memorial worthy of our fallen heroes".¹

This seems to be a step in the right direction for the town council of Kilmarnock, and possibly one due to the fact that many of the other towns in Ayrshire had already organised and unveiled their respective war memorials. They all agreed that a war memorial would come in good time, and would be worthy of the town when it was built.

Once the council set up a committee, and decided to go ahead with the memorial, decisions were made very quickly. Within a year or so of deciding to go ahead with the memorial, the location, form of the building and subscriptions towards the memorial were all decided upon and organised.

In March 1924, a *Letter to the Editor* was published signed by 'A Parent of One of the Fallen'² noting that Ayr's war memorial was to be unveiled, and if Ayr could arrange one, then there should be no reason for Kilmarnock not to have one. A reply was given in next issue by a man from Ayr who tells the 'Parent of One of the Fallen' "not to lose heart" with regards to the erection of a war memorial, and that if the council were not willing to start the planning process then he suggests the parent himself should start the planning of the memorial.³ He offers some tips to the writer of the letter, as he had been part of the planning process for Ayr War Memorial.⁴ He suggests the writer organises a public meeting and chooses

¹ KTCM, October 1923

² KS, 29th March 1924

³ KS, 5th April 1924

⁴ *ibid*

a memorial committee, then he proposes the first port of call should be to decide on a location for the memorial.¹

This period was still under the Provost's moratorium of a year and the writer of the letter did admit this, however, he argued that there was distress in every town, and that many other towns and villages indeed created a war memorial to their fallen soldiers despite the unemployment and related issues throughout most of Scotland. The writer went on to argue that if it was delayed any further then it would take so long to build that he and many other parents of the fallen would no longer be alive to see the memorial unveiled. That being the case, the council's reluctance to embark on building a war memorial during the period 1923-24 is surprising as it is quite clear from subscriptions that the public and businesses alike were quite willing to donate their money to a worthwhile cause; and so it can be argued that the council's unwillingness to ask for more money, due to a 'harsh winter' was a more significant factor in the delay than the public's inability to contribute.²

The unveiling of a new bandstand in the Howard Park in 1924 spurred the ex-servicemen of the town to meet up in November 1924 and decide unanimously that a war memorial should be erected in memory of their fallen comrades.³ The committee made an application to meet with the council to discuss the war memorial; however, the council declined their request and said they would be prepared to receive their deputation at December's town council meeting.⁴ In the November town council meeting the council agreed that they had raised £8000 towards the Provost's Distress Fund and they had done a lot of good for the town but the time had come to start the war memorial process.

¹ KS, 5th April 1924

² *ibid*

³ KS, 15th November 1924

⁴ *ibid*

Within a week of deciding to go ahead with plans for the memorial, the council's war memorial committee had decided on a location for the war memorial, and had agreed that a list of subscriptions should be drawn up for house-to-house collections. The council agreed unanimously on a plot of land on Dick Road in Kilmarnock. The area is one of the most affluent in the town, surrounded by expensive sandstone houses on London Road, and other important buildings including the Dick Institute and Kilmarnock Academy.

The Finance Sub-Committee issued an official appeal to the public detailing the committee's intention to build a memorial 'to preserve the memory of those who lost their lives in the Great War.'¹ It is an appeal to 'all sections of the community' and makes the point that it does not matter how much or little one has to contribute, every penny counts, 'from the widow's mite upwards'.² The ambience surrounding the war memorial subscription collection was more sombre than the Provost's Distress Fund collection. With the latter, the council wanted to encourage people to give by organising events, but with the war memorial fund they expected people to give money even with no personal gain involved.³ The *Kilmarnock Standard* strongly advised the residents of Kilmarnock to give generously and freely to the cause, and deemed it 'unseemly' that the money should be raised by means of whist drives and sales of work, as it should not be money given for material gain.⁴ The *Kilmarnock Standard* was clearly very much behind the council as they made it very clear that the residents of Kilmarnock would only have one chance to donate to the war memorial fund, and once the memorial had been built there would not be another way for them to do their part for the dead soldiers of their town.

¹ KS, 15th November 1924

² *ibid*

³ KS, 7th March 1925

⁴ *ibid*

The war memorial committee, through house-to-house collections with the help of ward councillors and ex-servicemen, gathered subscriptions towards the war memorial. Every household was expected to donate, as a household that had not been affected by the First World War in one way or another was very much the exception. Therefore, the committee had expected the raising of subscriptions to be very successful and so it was, as they managed to raise enough money to build the extravagant memorial to the fallen soldiers of Kilmarnock.

Subscriptions towards the war memorial were abundant and generous in many wards. Records of subscriptions were published in the *Kilmarnock Standard*, enabling us to analyse to a certain extent the comparative generosity of the households and the wards. Subscriptions towards the war memorial under five shillings were not recorded by name of individual householder, but were grouped together by ward and the total amount shown, so it is impossible to tell the exact numbers of subscriptions collected.

The ward that gathered the least amount of money was Ward VIII, (Riccarton).¹ The people of Riccarton were very reluctant to donate money towards the war memorial as they were the furthest out of Kilmarnock and they felt disassociated from the whole organisation. There were rumours circulating at the time that the Riccarton Ward was expected to donate towards the war memorial, but the names of their fallen would not be included in the memorial. It became such an issue that a statement was released in the local newspaper to refute these rumours.² However, it does seem to still have had an effect on the generosity of the area, as it is the ward that donated the least amount of money. It may be that fewer people meant fewer donations and less money, but since the Riccarton average is roughly half of that of the whole of Kilmarnock,

¹ KS, 7th March 1925

² KS, 25th April 1925

it clearly can be seen that the rumours circulating about Riccarton's exclusion in the memorial corroborates their reluctance to donate towards Kilmarnock War Memorial despite assurances to the contrary.

Further to the donations gathered by house-to-house collections, donations were also made from businesses and prominent people in the town. Many families in Kilmarnock, particularly the more wealthy and important families gave very generously and were published in the newspaper as separate from the house-to-house collections because they donated directly to John Haggio, Town Chamberlain.

Public subscriptions were the foundation of the war memorial and the very reason it stands today. The council, the *Kilmarnock Standard*, and ex-servicemen all made it extremely clear to the people of Kilmarnock that there would not be a second chance to make their mark in regards to honouring the dead soldiers of the town. The council aimed to raise around £5000 to pay for the war memorial, from the evidence that can be taken from the *Kilmarnock Standard* it seems they raised approximately £4,200, which while less than their original planned amount, is still a feat considering it was completely public money and during a time in which it might have been difficult for people to find money to spare.

At the end of March 1925, the first drawing of the proposed war memorial was published in the *Kilmarnock Standard*, showing the extravagant temple made of blonde sandstone that was to become the finished article. However, in February 1925, there were two *Letters to the Editor* in which both argued that there was no need for such an extravagant monument and instead perhaps the money collected should be donated to the Infirmary or something of use and a small plaque detailing what the real monument to the fallen was should be erected somewhere on the building.

By the end of 1925, the impression was given by the local newspapers that the planning and the subscriptions for the war memorial were very much

finished, and the planned unveiling had been for late 1925, or early 1926,¹ however, for reasons not stated in any primary sources consulted, the war memorial took longer to finish than had been anticipated. In 1926, there is not much mention of the war memorial throughout the whole year. One very important reference in the *Kilmarnock Standard* was in April 1926, and was an invitation to readers to give as much information about the fallen to the council as was possible. The reason for this was that, whilst there were different pieces of information about the soldiers, the only way to get a full account of each soldier was for the families to come forward.² The newspaper printed a list of all the names the council had on record as having been killed in the war alongside their regiment and rank.

There is only a smattering of material during this time, the reason for this is unknown. Only suggestions can be made, perhaps there was no new information to publish, and the builders were getting on with their work quietly; however there appears to be anecdotal evidence of disputes and difficulties in completing the memorial. The rumour was that there was no money left for the sculptor as the council had spent all their money on the temple and bronze panels and the committee had asked the sculptor, David McGill, to lower his price or they would have to go with a cheaper sculptor. Whilst this rumour was never acknowledged in any of the primary sources consulted, the final sculpture was in fact gifted to the town by the sculptor to go inside the war memorial. Whilst there is no way to confirm the theory, it is possible that the committee ran out of money building the memorial and so the sculpture was a gift from David McGill to complete the monument to the fallen soldiers of Kilmarnock.

In May 1927, nearly ten years after the First World War had ended Kilmarnock finally unveiled its town war memorial. The war memorial was described in the

¹ KS, 28th May 1927

² KS, 17th April 1926

Standard as being ‘unique in character’ and would ‘rank as one of the most dignified and impressive memorials in the country’. The memorial is most certainly different in comparison with many other towns in Ayrshire. The most common choice of war memorial in Ayrshire was the obelisk, which had the information of the fallen on the base. Kilmarnock’s war memorial was certainly unique.

The memorial is in the form of a blonde sandstone temple of ‘commanding proportions’, with Grecian Ionic columns and marble floors inside.¹ The interior is simple: the bronze figure of ‘The Victor’ bowing his head in sadness at the loss of life inside the temple and the names of the fallen men of Kilmarnock on bronze panels on the walls of the inside. It is important to note that the names of the men are all in alphabetical order, and whilst the *Kilmarnock Standard* had attempted to gather full information from the people of Kilmarnock about the fallen soldiers, it was decided not to reveal their rank on the memorial as ‘a sacrificial death has raised all to the level of martyrs and heroes’.²

David McGill gifted the sculpture to Kilmarnock War Memorial in 1927. It is unknown why the sculpture was gifted and not paid for, perhaps it was gifted as McGill was from the local area and felt a personal connection with the town of Kilmarnock, as he came from Maybole. Another hypothesis could be that the council did in fact run out of money, and the sculpture was donated to the war memorial to complete the building. Either way, it was a kind deed done by sculptor possibly because the war memorial was an unselfish act of memorialisation for the men who sacrificed their lives for their country. Besides the names of the dead soldiers on the wall; ‘The Victor’ is the key piece that completes the poignancy of the memorial.

¹ KS, 17th April 1926

² KS, 28th May 1927

The war memorial was unveiled on the 21st May 1927, in front of a 10,000 strong crowd. The writer of the article details the unveiling, describing the crowd as a mixture of rich and honoured and of humble estate. He reported that the social status of the people at the war memorial unveiling did not matter at this point in time, ‘all barriers were down during that day’.

From the 4/5th Royal Scots Fusilier Drill Hall on Titchfield Street at the bottom of the town centre, ex-servicemen and the Territorial Army paraded through town to the area in front of the Dick Institute, marching to the unveiling of the memorial.¹ They were accompanied by 300 ex-servicemen about whom the writer of the article on the unveiling reports ‘no distinction was seen between the officers and men, on this day they marched shoulder to shoulder together’.² Since the war had been over for nearly ten years, it could be argued for the most part, the ex-servicemen would have been back in civilian life and the mixture of officers and men indicates that they were no longer ruled by military discipline. It was noted the spirit that permeated from the parade was similar to that of the war, which, ‘alone made tolerable the life of the trenches’.³ Even though they were not expected to march in military discipline, the veterans conducted themselves in a way that was a credit to their Army training. Upon reaching the memorial, the Territorial Army and ex-servicemen formed three sides of a square around the relatives’ enclosure.

The language used by the writer of the article in the *Kilmarnock Standard* is extremely emotive which could be due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it was a long-awaited, emotional day for many relatives and friends of the fallen. For this reason, the writer of the article wanted to express the atmosphere of the day onto the page for readers who might not have been able to attend. Secondly,

¹ KS, 28th May 1927

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

it may have been to bring the classes of Kilmarnock together. All classes in the town felt grief for the ones they had lost; the loss of a loved one was not easier if one had a better occupation or lifestyle.

‘The Last Post’, ‘the saddest of all earthly music’ was sounded and the Territorials stood with their arms presented, the ex-servicemen stood to attention, and ordinary civilians bowed their heads. After ‘The Last Post’, ‘Flowers of the Forest’ was played and many in the audience shed a tear for ‘broken-hearted, wild regrets for the might-have-been’.¹ ‘Reveille’ and ‘Death is not the End’ were played after and according to the writer, they seemed to say: “when ‘The Last Post’ has been played, and all the day’s troubles have been wiped out in sleep ... and for the living there is still the day, and life has to be lived and the world’s work has to be done.”² The language used emphasises the tragedy of the four years of war and the heartbreak that was left for families in Britain as a result.

Bailie Orr introduced Sir Hugh M. Trenchard after the ‘The Last Post’ and ‘Flowers of the Forest’. In his address at the unveiling, Trenchard described it as an honour that he was asked to unveil the memorial, that the town should be proud, as over 850 names on the memorial was a record for the burgh of Kilmarnock to be proud of. He made a direct statement towards the relatives of the dead soldiers, assuring them that although they may have felt sad memories on the day that the war memorial was unveiled, they should also have felt proud that their ‘kith and kin’ laid down their lives for their country and for freedom.³ Furthermore, the war memorial would be a reminder of what the men of Kilmarnock sacrificed during a ‘great crisis in our national history.’⁴

¹ KS, 28th May 1927

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

The memorial was then handed to the custody of the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Kilmarnock by Sir Alexander Walker in the name of the War Memorial Committee and David McGill, 'the generous donor of the bronze figure', with 'the assured faith on our part that it will be guarded by them as a sacred trust, now, henceforth, and for ever.'¹ Bailie Orr's speech in accepting the war memorial to the care of the council describes its purpose as, 'a shrine where the parents, relatives and friends of those whose names are inscribed therein may pay homage to their glorious dead.' The singing of 'The strife is o'er, the battle done', the National Anthem and the benediction by Reverend Joseph Hibbs of Princes Street U.F. Church finished off the unveiling ceremony.² It was one of the few occasions in the town, mentioned in the Kilmarnock Standard where most of the churches in the town gathered together to pay tribute in the ceremony.

After the unveiling ceremony, Sir Hugh Trenchard, Bailie Orr and representatives from different regiments, ex-servicemen organisations and individuals all laid wreathes in the war memorial. Queues of people waited their turn to inspect inside the war memorial, and there were queues up until the doors closed at sundown. 'Judging from many comments heard, the citizens of Kilmarnock have deep-seated feelings of pride and satisfaction in the character of the War Memorial they have erected. They have good reason to be proud.'³

In conclusion, we can see that many issues were overcome during period 1918 to 1927 in order to ensure that Kilmarnock had a proper and appropriate memorial. The people of Kilmarnock suffered greatly during the war and after. Given the obvious hardships of the period, the determination of the townspeople to press ahead with fund

¹ KS, 28th May 1927

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

raising for the Monument shows how important it was as a symbol of mourning for them. Although Kilmarnock War Memorial took almost ten years to complete, the end result was one that the people of the town, and those on the War Memorial Committee were proud of. It has stood solemnly since, having been looked after by the Town Councils of Kilmarnock as was intended.

The Sad Case of Hugh Ross, vintner in Ballantrae

By Jane Jamieson

Dr James Paterson's report¹ into the conditions prevalent in Ayr Tollbooth in 1812 makes for grim reading. He comments not only on the fabric of the prison and on the staff but also on the two inmates present at the time of his inspection in April 1812. One was Hugh Ross, late vintner in Ballantrae. He was confined on suspicion of stealing a box with money in it from a carrier in Ballantrae. Paterson states that Ross had applied to the Lord Advocate to set a date for his trial.

According to the warding and liberations book for Ayr Tollbooth,² Ross had been imprisoned for the theft of banknotes and other valuable papers from a box on one of the carts of David Smith, carrier in Ayr who was transporting the box from the agent of the Paisley Banking Company³ in Stranraer to Ayr. Smith stopped overnight at Ross's' inn but did not check the contents of the box until he got to Ayr when he discovered that they were missing. According to the papers – The Caledonian Mercury and the British Chronicle⁴ - the theft involved £1630 notes of the British Linen Bank, the Bank of Scotland and Ayr and Paisley Banks. The imprisonment occurred on a warrant issued at the instance of Adam Keir, cashier of the Paisley Banking Company. Ross was not brought to trial on this occasion as he raised and executed Letters of Intimation under the Criminals Act of 1701 charging the Lord Advocate and the parties concerned to fix a diet for his trial within 60 days. When this failed to happen Ross was

¹ National Records of Scotland GD142/47 Report on Air prison and the situation of the prisoners, 14th April 1812

² Ayrshire Archives, B6/15/13

³ The Paisley Banking Company was absorbed into the British Linen Bank in 1837.

⁴ British Newspaper Archive accessed May 2013

released in November 1812 under Letters of Liberation.¹ Ross then apparently tried to sue the bank for wrongful imprisonment² and according to the papers was successful.

The British Chronicle has a more in-depth report on the case.³ McKie, the agent for the Paisley Banking Company was accustomed to send weekly by carrier a small tin box from Stranraer to Ayr. This box on this occasion contained notes of the British Linen Bank, the Bank of Scotland, Ayr Bank and the Paisley Bank. All these notes were marked in the left hand corner on the back with a private mark and were scheduled for destruction. Subsequently several of these notes with the marks obliterated turned up in a hatter's shop at Wigton in Cumberland and in a post office account in Belfast under the name of a Mr Christian. In the later trial of 1818, the prosecution were to try to prove that Hugh Ross and Mr Christian were one and the same.

The Paisley Banking Company used J and S Smith, carriers in Ayr for transporting their financial material from Stranraer to Ayr fairly regularly and David Smith stopped for the night at Ballantrae. The cart was guarded by a dog. However, Smith had also stopped at several places along the road before Ballantrae although he did not check the contents of the box until he reached Ayr. It was not the first incident to occur concerning the box. Smith had left it once before at a house by mistake and Mr Morland, one of the agents of the bank in Stranraer had had to retrieve it.

Banks never like losing money and in 1818 they obtained new criminal letters on the same charge and Ross was rearrested and tried before the High Court in

¹ National Records of Scotland JC27/124

² The papers for this have not survived but there is evidence of the case in National Records of Scotland CS239/12880 which is an inventory of the process. It is possible that with the later counter case the papers were borrowed for this action and never returned.

³ British News Paper Archive accessed May 2013

Edinburgh having been imprisoned in the Edinburgh Tollbooth in August of that year. Due to an unsuccessful but serious attempt to end his own life, his trial was adjourned from August to November 1818 (contrary to the terms of the Criminals Act which stipulated that the trial should take place within 40 days of confinement). He had attempted to cut his throat and on his subsequent appearance before the court in November 1818, he could not speak and had to resort to writing down his plea of not guilty. The charges before the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh against him were found not proven by a plurality of votes in December 1818.

His throat injury proved to be serious and he was under the care of Drs Gall and Sibbald who were instructing him on feeding himself via a silver tube inserted in his throat. This mechanism was also allowing him to breathe as he had severed his windpipe.

Ross's earlier history is an interesting one. This was not his first court appearance as he had several civil suits against him for debt. In 1798, aged 16 or 17, he obtained a sub-tack from James Sloan, vintner in Ayr and John McCrorie, vintner in Kirkoswald of a tack which they themselves had obtained for 21 years from Sir Hew Dalrymple with entry from Martinmas 1798.¹ This tack included the inn, house and stable at Ballantrae with a small park and acre of land with large barn at the foot of Port Kelly Brae and the lands of Lagganholm Farm with the farm and tollhouse stretching to the Water of Stinchar.²

¹ This tack was probably one granted to Thomas McKissock, vintner in Ballantrae of public house at Ballantrae with the stable, byre and barn and the old walled steading at the south end of the house with the gardens belonging thereto and the little three acre park with an acre of land in the lands of Ballantrae in virtue of a tack granted by the late John Dalrymple of Bargany dated 10th Jan 1791 and which was renounced by McKissock in 1798 (National Records of Scotland GD109/3756)

² National Records of Scotland CS234/12/107

In the sub-tack Hugh Ross is described as son of Mrs Ross, vintner in Girvan;¹ his father had died in 1787 and left a reasonable sum of money although due to his intestacy it is the inventory and his testament dative which survives.²

After obtaining this sub-tack in Ballantrae, Ross gave the inn in a further sub-tack to William McIlraith and lived for a while in the farm of Lagganholm before again sub-tacking that to Gilbert McKenna.³ William McIlraith died sometime before 1808 and Hugh married his widow, Agnes McIlraith and presumably moved back into the inn at Ballantrae.⁴ In 1808 Sloan and McCrorie held that Ross owed them back rent for the tack and discontinued it. This affected McKenna's holding of the farm of Lagganholm⁵

¹ He was baptised on 16th November 1781, lawful son of William Ross, innkeeper, Newton of Girvan, and his wife, Janet Lymburner. (ScotlandsPeople OPR Births 594/00 0000 0050 Girvan)

² National Records of Scotland CC9/7/73. His widow was Janet Lymburn and she seems to have carried on the business in Girvan. She is assessed for window tax in 1789 and is described as Mrs Ross, innkeeper in Girvan (National Records of Scotland E326/1/16/3). William Ross was assessed for two carriage horses in 1785-86 and is described as innkeeper in Girvan E326/8/1/14) just before his death

³ Interestingly under the terms of the tack McKenna was to keep the farmhouse in thatch and the tack also included the tollhouse

⁴ He is described in his brother William's testament dative in 1808 as Hugh Ross in Lagganholm (National Records of Scotland CC9/7/79/571-574

⁵ Laggan Holm Farm is shown on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch first edition c1850 as lying south of the Stinchar Water on the Girvan road. The tollhouse is just north of the Ballantrae Bridge. Further along the street is the Dryman's Inn which could have been the inn which Hugh Ross leased. The Ordnance Survey book describes Lagganholm as follows 'on east side of Ballantrae-Stranraer road. A few houses consisting of three tenements and a smithy built of lime and stone one storey high and in good repair he property of Charles McGibbon, Edinburgh' reference National Records of Scotland OS1/3/6/1 Ordnance Survey Books. OS1/3/7

since he leased it from Ross and McKenna brought an action against Ross for damages before the Court of Session. There was also a diligence brought by Williamson and McLachlan, merchants in Ayr against Agnes McIlraith and her husband, Hugh Ross in 1812 for non payment of accounts.¹ This may relate to the time before William McIlraith's death since their principal complaint seems to have been against her. There was also a summons before the Court of Session by McLellan Dunbar and Company, coachbuilders in Glasgow against Margaret (wrongly given instead of Agnes) McIlraith, wife of Hugh Ross for a debt of £93 on 20th November 1813. This was owed for work done on a chaise, for which the bill had not been paid.² Further diligence was obtained by Thomas McCord, farmer in Kinwinnell on 15th June 1815.³ McCord took out an inhibition against Hugh and Agnes for £163 10s of rent arrears due by them to John and Hugh McWhirter in Balig following on a bond of caution by Hugh and Agnes in their favour.⁴ This had added interest and damages of £150.

It has not been possible to trace what happened to Hugh Ross after his trial in 1818 but by 1855 the inn at Ballantrae was tenanted by William Drinnan and was called Drynan's Inn.⁵ Pigot's Directory of 1837 does not mention Ross either although it does list the two inns. It is possible that Ross did not survive long after the trial due to the severity of his injuries.

describes Ballantrae itself as having 2 inns and 3 smaller public houses in 1857. McKenna appears to have been successful in keeping his tenancy. He is described as in Lagganholm and acting as baillie for Sir Hew Dalrymple in 1817 in a disposition to Hunter and Company (NRS RS3/1068 folio 139)

¹ National Records of Scotland DI25/32/125

² National Records of Scotland CS38/10/78

³ National Records of Scotland DI25/32/126

⁴ National Records of Scotland DI25/33/234

⁵ National Library of Scotland online ordnance survey maps 1st edition sheet LXV.12

From Dalry to the Faeroes: William Gibson Sloan

By Óli Jacobsen¹

The 175th anniversary of the birth of William Gibson Sloan fell on 4th September 2013. He was born in Dalry, in North Ayrshire, in Scotland, but it was in the Faeroes where he had great influence on religious life and, consequently, on Faeroese society. Sloan was the instigator of the Brethren movement in the Faeroe Islands, and by the time of his death in 1914, as a white-bearded, patriarchal figure, was known there as ‘*Gamli Sloan*’, ‘Old Sloan’. While the Brethren play only a negligible role in public life in most countries, in the Faeroes they are the largest Christian group outside the established church and the movement has had substantial influence in the archipelago.² To commemorate the anniversary of Sloan’s birth, a large party of Faeroese went to Dalry on the day, where they visited his birthplace and had a short commemorative service in the town’s North Street Gospel Hall.³

D. J. Danielsen (‘Dollin’)⁴ wrote about the family that the Sloans ‘were of Scottish origin but fled to Ireland during the reign of the Stuarts. Many of his relatives are famous men within medical science in Scotland.’ William’s parents were Elisabeth and Nathanael Sloan. His

¹ This article is taken from [Óli Jacobsen], ‘Gamli Sloan 175 ár’, *Fríggjadagur*, 9th August 2013, 18–19; [*idem*], ‘175 ára føðingardagurin hjá William G. Sloan’, *Fríggjadagur*, 27th September 2013, 60–1; translation is by Tórður Jóansson with additional editorial material by Neil Dickson

² Cf. Tórður Jóansson, *Brethren in the Faroes* (Tórshavn, 2012)

³ The Faeroese were on a tour of Scotland from 2nd to 6th September

⁴ For Danielsen, cf. Óli Jacobsen, *Dollin: Havnarmaðurin, sum broytti heimssøguna* (Tórshavn, 2010); *idem*, ‘Daniel J. Danielsen (1871–1916): The Faeroese who Changed History in the Congo’, *BHR*, 8 (2012), 10–42

father was a handloom weaver, and William was born in the family cottage at Bridgend of Rye.¹ They were members of the Church of Scotland, and William was baptised by the parish minister on the 16th September 1838 in the family home.² William almost died in childhood. He was playing on the riverbank of the Rye Water which runs close to the family cottage, when he fell into the water which has steep banks and deep pools. Nobody was present and he could just as well have drowned. But he had a fortunate escape, because Margaret Reid, the daughter of a farmer, had seen the accident through a window, and she succeeded in rescuing the drowning boy before he disappeared for the last time. Margaret Reid later married William Wylie, a tube manufacturer in Glasgow, and he built Doggartland House, on the banks of the Rye, for his new wife.³ On a visit in Dalry later in life, Sloan was happy to be able to thank the now elderly lady for saving his life.

¹ A cottage of the type lived in by handloom weavers still stands on the spot where Sloan was born. In all probability it is the original building, but if not, then it is a replacement of the same type, although much altered since the nineteenth century, having been made into one house (from 2–3 dwelling places), re-roofed and the walls harled: architectural notes by Rob Close, 4 Sept. 2013

² Fred Kelling, *Fisherman of Faroe: William Gibson Sloan* (Gøta, Faeroe Isles, 1993), 43

³ Rob Close, e-mail, 10 Aug. 2013. After Mrs Wylie's death in 1913, the house was bought c.1917/8 by William Tytler, a Glasgow businessman and a Brethren member. Tytler owned well-known tearooms in Glasgow. When he died in 1930, the house and business passed to his daughters, the Misses Tytler, who owned it until after World War II. Doggartland House was therefore used in the early twentieth century for providing hospitality to preachers visiting the assembly in Dalry, which had been founded in 1864 (after Sloan had left the town), and a field behind the house was used by the assembly for the annual Sunday school outing

As a young man, William liked dancing. He was also good at playing the violin and he also played at dances. William, however, had an evangelical conversion. At the time of this event he was working in Coatbridge as a store manager for Baird and Company, the ironmasters. Part of his duties was to sell alcoholic drink, but as this was now against his conscience, he resigned, and eventually obtained work as a salesman of Christian books. It was in this connection that he went to Shetland where he joined the Brethren as one of the founder members of Shetland's first assembly in 1864.¹ Here he also became aware of the Faeroes, writing in his diary on 28th May 1865: "I have become very interested in the Faeroe Islands. I have heard that around 6,000 people live there and 700 Shetlanders fish there during the summer, also French and English, so that around 1,000 foreigners go ashore there each year." He thought that there was a need for spiritual work in the islands: 'Therefore I feel an urge and am willing to go there to work in God's name and strength. So with the Lord's help I decide to go the Faeroes and preach Jesus.'² A problem was that he was engaged to be married. However, the girl did not like his plans, so the engagement came to nothing.³

Equipped with some Danish Bibles, a Danish grammar, an English-Danish dictionary and a letter of recommendation from a Shetland businessman to H. C.

¹ [George Peterson], *A Century of Witness in Ebenezer Hall, Lerwick 1885–1985* (Lerwick, 1985), 1. The Brethren in Dalry also began in 1864, but it would appear that the founding of the Brethren in Lerwick and in Dalry were unrelated, although Sloan later visited and was friends with Samuel Dodds, the founder of the Dalry congregation

² Private collection, diaries of W. G. Sloan, MSS. A digital copy of these diaries is in the Christian Brethren Archive, University of Manchester Library

³ Sigurd Berghamar, *...men Gud gav vökst: um William Sloan og fyrstu samkomurnar* (Afturljóð, Faeroe Isles, 1992)

Muller, the sheriff of Streymoy, Sloan went on a smack from the small island of Papa Stour in Shetland to the Faeroes. Arriving in Tórshavn on a miserable and rainy day, Sloan was ferried ashore. The town consisted of only 170 poorly built houses, and Sloan, then aged 27, almost lost interest, became depressed and got the feeling that he could not carry out his plans in such a place. He did not understand the language, and it seemed as if rain and wind, houses and sheds, the nature and environment surrounded him with darkness and felt inhospitable.

On the first day he got whale-meat and blubber for dinner at Madam Olsen's, later the Hotel Djurhuus.¹ However, most of the time he stayed with the book-binder H. N. Jacobsen, who could speak English, and this undoubtedly helped him with his work. Sloan was very popular with children who gathered around him wherever he went. He sang for them, put his hand on their heads and said: "Believe in Jesus" in Danish. His main problem was the language. The people spoke the native Faeroese which is descended from Old Norse and is akin to West Norwegian dialects, but everyone learned Danish in school. It was in this last language he tried to speak, although in the beginning, as he later admitted, his Danish was very poor.

Sloan travelled between Scotland and the Faeroes the following summers until he settled down in Tórshavn in the late 1870s. It was often difficult for him to travel around the islands, visiting villages. He could arrive at a village, tired, hungry and wet only to learn that nobody would put him up. Sometimes he had to stay in outhouses, and occasionally this quiet and nice man was chased by farmers' dogs. At an open-air meeting somebody threw a dead cat which hit him on his chin. Sloan just put the cat down and said, "Don't treat the cat badly."

Sloan continued working for fourteen years without seeing any growth in adherents. But on Sunday

¹ This historic timber house is now called *Áarstova* and is owned by a daughter of Petur Háberg (see fn.2, p.37)

morning 31st October 1880 his Faeroese friend Andreas Isaksen (Dia í Geil) was baptised in the sea in Tórshavn. This was arranged early in the morning so the townspeople should not get upset. But men in the town were early risers, so soon the baptism became a sensation which led to much anger and hysteria in Tórshavn. To be re-baptised was regarded as treason against the faith of the ancestors and was seen as an extremely bad thing. A couple of days later a man threw a deadly agricultural tool at Dia but did not hit him. However, Dia was slightly disabled and easily got angry and he was often bullied, not least after the baptism.

Around this time the movement got a hall, built in 1879. The plot was bought from the council for 216 krone; and in the deed it says that the plot is for ‘an assembly hall for the worship of God and the announcement of the Gospel and serving those who attached to this work.’ Apart from some British Brethren present in the Faeroes, the brothers Djóni and Andreas, Dia í Geil signed the deed as witnesses. This demonstrates the tolerance of Djóni who belonged to the established Lutheran church.

The building measured 6.3 x 9.6 metres. Sloan lived upstairs and had a small kitchen and a sitting-room downstairs. The rest of the ground floor was a hall. Sloan called the house ‘The Hall at Tinghúsvegur’, but most people called it ‘Sloan’s Hall’. Here the first Sunday School in the Faeroes was held. The hall was also used for other purposes such as abstinence meetings.¹ Soon the hall was too small, and a new hall, Ebenezer, was erected in 1906. Then Sloan’s Hall was taken over by Tórshavn’s Club and used for other purposes.²

On the whole Sloan was a respected and popular man. A visitor from Denmark explained that when he

¹ Sloan’s brother-in-law, Djóni í Geil, was the founder of the Tórshavn Abstinence Association

² The Faeroese National Anthem was first performed in Sloan’s Hall (the name had been retained) on Boxing Day 1907.

arrived in Tórshavn, he was received by “Missioner Sloan, an old Scot, who has been an integral part of the town for a long time and is regarded as a *Pater Familias* and a central person in the environment. Sloan has excellent eye-sight and this showed when suddenly he shouted ‘*Grindaboð! Grindaboð!*’ (‘Whales in sight’). The whole town comes to life. Sloan, who knows that the first one who sees the whales gets the head of the biggest whale, shouts so that everybody hears him. His Faeroese language becomes mixed with English but the ‘*Grindaboð*’ was understandable!”¹

Another Dane, Godtfred Petersen, concluded, after a visit to the Faeroes, that “Mr Sloan has been able to be accepted by the people. Everywhere he is welcomed in a friendly way. He greets people in a courteous way, he holds out his hand, greets the children, asks how the husband, away on a fishing trip, is, comforts a mother who has lost her child, implores an old man to turn to God, encourages a blind woman to look forward to heaven and asks the children to take care of their younger siblings.”²

A story has been told about Sloan on a visit to the village of Gøta. The house á Dunganum at South Gøta used to offer accommodation for guests. One day it so

¹ ‘*Grindaboð*’ is the Faeroese term for the whale-drive in which a school of whales is driven by boats to the head of a bay or fjord where they are slaughtered by the menfolk. The meat is then divided up by the locals according to strict and traditional rules. In earlier times it was an indispensable supplement to the Faeroese diet. Among Brethren, even the breaking of bread would be stopped for it as the whales’ appearance was regarded as God’s gift.

² Petur Háberg, *Frá penni Petur Hábergs*, 2 vols (Gøta, Faeroe Isles, 2007), vol. 1, 21–62. These volumes are a collection of articles which Petur Háberg wrote, including different ones about Sloan. Petur Háberg was a leading member of the Brethren. His full name was Petur William. His mother was a niece of Sloan’s wife, Elspa. As he was born a few days before the death of Sloan, Petur was named after him

happened that both Sloan and the Lutheran Dean, the principal clergyman of the State Church in the Islands, asked for bed and breakfast. Only one bed was available, so the only solution was that both of them should share the same bed. Both were tolerant men, and thus they shared it. That this must have been slightly uncomfortable is another matter!

The second person baptised by Sloan was Dia's sister, Elspa. It is said that her father, Poul í Geil, was not pleased with this and he said that the two were going to make the nails for his coffin. However, his anger did not last long. William G. Sloan and Elspa married on 11th October 1881. He was nineteen years her senior. They were married in the assembly in Motherwell in Scotland because in the Faeroes only the Lutheran Church could perform marriages. Elspa was known as a lively and well spoken woman who had acted in the local theatre to great acclaim, for example from the Lutheran Dean, V. U. Hammershaimb.¹ Elspa and William had six children. Andrew, who later became an evangelist in the Islands, is the only one who has from second to sixth descendents still living in the Faeroes, and one his four children, Kristina, now an elderly woman of advanced years, was able to attend the commemorative event of her grandfather's birth in Dalry.² In his address at the memorial service the Faeroese Brethren evangelist, Svenning av Lofti, recollected some stories still told in the Faeroes, of 'Old Sloan'. Among them, was the following:

'One day I had been at a morning service in my home assembly, Ebenezer in Tórshavn. I was walking with

¹ Venceslaus Ulricus Hammershaimb (1819–1909) established the modern orthography of Faeroese, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venceslaus_Ulricus_Hammershaimb> accessed October 2013

² William and Elspa Sloan's children were: Poul (1882–1953), Anna Elisabeth, called Betty (1885–1938), Elisabeth (1887–?), Archibald (1890–?), Ketty (1892–1968) and Andrew (1896–1973)

an elderly man called Palli á Lava. He was about 90 years of age. That morning he told me this story: “In my childhood I lived close to Mr. Sloan’s house. As we boys were playing football, it happened that the ball went over the fence into Mr. Sloan’s garden, which was a beautiful garden. The first time I had to go into his garden, over the fence, I was not sure what would happen. Will this man be angry? When I stood there I met William Gibson Sloan. He smiled, put his hand on my head, saying: “Believe in Jesus!” I took my ball and walked out of the garden. Since that moment I never forgot Mr. Sloan. Still today I feel his blessed hand on my head and can still remember his words: “Believe in Jesus!””

A few years after this occurrence, Mr. Sloan suddenly got sick and passed away after a few days. At the funeral service in Ebenezer people saw a little boy make his way forward and lay fresh flowers on Mr. Sloan’s coffin. The boy was Palli á Lava. He had gotten flowers from his mother and went to the funeral to pay his old friend the last honour, this man who had made such a great impact on the life of this little boy.¹

Sloan died on his seventy-sixth birthday on 4th September 1914. He had become weak. It has been said that the fact that Britain had entered the First World War a month previously worried Sloan considerably. Tributes came from outside the Brethren movement. In 1965, on the centenary of Sloan’s first arrival in the Islands, William Heinesen, widely considered to be one of the greatest Scandinavian writers of the twentieth century and the most celebrated Faeroese novelist, paid homage to him in a radio talk.² The Heinesen family had lived next door to the

¹ Svenning av Lofti, ‘William Gibson Sloan’, address given in North St. Gospel Hall, Dalry, 4th September. 2013

² The attribution of Scottishness to J. S. Mill might seem surprising, for it was Mill’s father who was a native Scot; however, Heinesen may be using poetic licence to make his point, or it may be due to a very Faeroese awareness of how minority

Sloans in Tórshavn, and as a boy William Heinesen was a childhood playmate of Andrew William, Sloan's youngest son. In the broadcast Heinesen said:

“With his white beard and pious countenance not unlike the Scottish philosopher, John Stuart Mill, he was for me a loveable personality as he walked about his garden among the blossoming red currant bushes and rowan trees, a gentle sage who knew the way of truth and life. It happened now and again as we played in Mr. Sloan's garden, that this humble and friendly white-bearded and black-clad Scottish missionary came and put his hand on our head and said “Believe in Jesus!” This felt like a blessing. I don't remember ever having seen a purer soul or a milder pair of eyes. It was obvious that this man wholly and fully was a good and large soul, a bearer of good news - truly an evangelist. As he stands in the garden among leaves and flowers so many years ago and yet so curiously vivid and alive in my memory, I want to honour the memory of William Gibson Sloan with gratitude.”¹

Kristin í Geil, who, as the editor of the independent, and often culturally radical, *Tingakrossur*, was a well-known writer in the islands,² wrote an obituary of *Gamli Sloan* in her newspaper:

ethnicity can be swallowed by that of the dominant nation. William Heinesen (1900–1991) was a novelist, short-story writer, artist, sculptor and composer. He wrote in Danish, and on several occasions he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature, but that he did not receive it is perhaps due to his own wishes. He wrote to the committee stating he did not want the prize as he felt that the first Nobel awarded to a Faeroese author ought to be to one who wrote in the native language. Religious themes are central to his work, and his five novels feature an evangelistic group similar to the Brethren, most notably in *Blæsende Gry* (1934), Eng. trans, *Windswept Dawn* (2009). Cf. W. Glyn Jones, *William Heinesen* (New York, 1974), 24.

¹ William Heinesen, quoted in Lofti, ‘William Gibson Sloan’

² Kristin í Geil was connected to W. G. Sloan by way of his wife, who was Djóni í Geil's sister, and Djóni was Kristin's father

“The meekness and humility which characterised Mr. Sloan’s manner and appearance won him, as time went on, the hearts of many, although the opposition from the [State] Church at the beginning was often quite severe. His preaching was simple, and straightforward, as he himself was; but it was upheld by an unshakeable faith in God and a self-sacrificing love for his fellow-man, which commanded everyone’s respect and made him beloved wherever he went. As one of the very few, his life was, in great and small circumstances, dominated by the example which is given in the life and teaching of Jesus, the Nazarene. Only the very few have been entitled to bear the name of Christian with the same rights as William Sloan.”¹

Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

Members are given advance notice that the 2014 Annual General Meeting will be held in Fairlie Village Hall, Fairlie, at 2 p.m. on Sunday 18th May, 2014. Member Societies are encouraged to send representatives. Fairlie Village Hall is an attractive Tudor Gothic building of 1892 by J.J. Stevenson, a conversion of the earlier village school. The village’s church (1834, much enlarged by Stevenson in 1883) will also be open. It has a fine interior and a good collection of stained glass. The John Strawhorn Quaich will be awarded at the meeting, and we hope many of you will be able to attend. Formal notice will be sent to members in due course, but please now mark the date in your diary.

¹ Kristin í Geil, quoted in Kelling, *Fisherman of Faroe*, 234–5

Another Millport / Great Barrier Reef Expedition (1928–1929) link

By Geoff Moore

Yonge (1930) has recounted the story of the Great Barrier Reef Expedition (1928–1929). Two scientific members of that expedition: Sheina Macalister Marshall (1896–1977) and Andrew Picken Orr (1898–1962) were members of staff of the Marine Station at Millport (Scotland). Morton (2011) has written recently about a welcoming ‘Coral Corroboree’ that took place in Brisbane on 19th July 1928. In that paper he presented a photograph (figure 5) that included *inter alia* one H. C. Vidgen. A better photograph of Vidgen alone recently came to light in Sheina Marshall’s photograph album of the expedition held until recently in the archives at Millport’s Marine Station.¹

Yonge (1930: 30) wrote appreciatively of the then 29-year old Herbert Charles ‘Carl’ Vidgen’s (b. 1900) unexpected contributions to the expedition. He had crewed the *Luana*, the expedition’s boat for the year, from Brisbane arriving at Low Isles on 22 July bringing “two boys who had been taken on board at Yarrabah ... his coming, totally unexpected, proved a gift of fortune. He was later induced to ‘sign on’ as a member of the non-scientific staff of the expedition.” He helped mightily with the organization of the camp: “Thanks to Mr Vidgen’s prowess with the gun, a week seldom passed without a meal of stewed pigeon” (Yonge 1930: 38).

The only other Vidgen whom I had ever encountered was James Grayhame Vidgen (1834–1919), who was the organist at the Cathedral of the Isles, at Millport between 1852 and 1865. During his last

¹ With the closure of the University Marine Biological Station Millport (UMBSM) by the University of London on 31 October 2013, the Sheina Marshall archive is being transferred to the Scottish Association for Marine Science, Dunstaffnage, Oban

remaining bachelor days of 1857 and intermittently until 1861, he had succumbed to the Victorian craze for seaweed collecting (Moore 2008). In 1865 James G. Vidgen had emigrated with his wife (Emily née Norris (1828–1872)) and young family (Maud (7), Ethel (6), Margaret (3) and John (1-year old) to Queensland, Australia, arriving at Brisbane on the *Legion of Honour* on 27th February 1866, where their offspring grew to 12 children. One of those Australian-born children was Arthur Richard Vidgen (1869–1957), who was the father of Herbert Charles Vidgen. H. C. Vidgen lived in New York at some time. He served in the Australian army as a Lieutenant during World War II. I wonder, however, whether he, or any of the expedition party, ever realised that his grandfather and two of his companions on Low Isles shared a Millport marine biological link? No mention of such a link appears in Yonge’s account (1930).

REFERENCES

MOORE, P. G., 2008 A 150-year old seaweed collection returns to Cumbrae. *The Glasgow naturalist* **25**(1): 3–8.

MORTON, B., 2011 The Great Barrier Reef Expedition’s “Coral Corroboree”, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, 10 July 1928: an historical portent. *Archives of natural history* **38**: 88–95.

YONGE, C. M., 1930 *A year on the Great Barrier Reef*. London & New York.

Rob's Book Club

Ayrshire Echoes: People, Places & Past Times, by John Kellie. Reviewed by Neil Dickson. I grew very fond of this book as I read it. The author has a great love of faur-ben places, orra events, gangrels, and Ayrshire working-folk. As a result, the book lingered in the mind after it was put down - a high tribute to quality, both of content and style.

Some stories in the first two sections of the book readers will be already familiar with, such as the Flitting of the Sow, the Eglinton Tournament, Boswell at Auchinleck House, and Sawney Bean. But the author brings his own approach. The Battle of Largs is coupled with the less well-known story of the building and dedication of the Pencil. Sawney is coupled with the real-life, twentieth-century hermit, Henry Torbet, aka Snib Scott, who was a kenspeckle figure in a cave near where the legendary Sawney was said to inhabit. In a neat twist on the killing of the 10th Earl of Eglinton the writer takes the side of Mungo Campbell, the killer, against the overbearing Earl, and convincingly shows that at the very most it was a case of culpable homicide.

Mixed in with these better-known stories are many more, less well-known ones and the excavation of obscure and forgotten lives from old newspaper accounts and oral history. Many of these will stay with me—James Young and his murderer in 1848; Sister Laurienne and her tragic death; Robert Cunningham, a postman who died in a snowstorm; James Aird, Ayr's public executioner. The book could be read slowly and selectively, like a book of short stories. However, I found it engrossing and read it compulsively. I will return to it. It has breathed new life into some older legends and tales, while bringing to light forgotten murders, misers, events, and places: a good read in its own right, but essential reading for anyone interested in Ayrshire. (Carn Publishing, 2013, £10.00)

DIARY

- AA** Arran Antiquarians. Meetings in Brodick Public Hall, Brodick, at 2 p.m.
- AANHS** Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. www.aanhs.org.uk Meetings in Town Hall, Ayr, at 7.45 p.m.
- AMC** National Trust for Scotland, Ayrshire Members Centre. Meetings in Education Pavilion, Burns Cottage, Alloway at 7.30 p.m.
- ASA** Alloway & Southern Ayrshire Family History Society. www.asafhs.co.uk Meetings in Alloway Church Halls, Alloway, at 7.45 p.m.
- BHS** Beith Historical Society. Meetings in Our Lady's Hall, Crummock Street, Beith at 8.00 p.m.
- CHS** Cumbrae Historical Society. Meetings in Newton 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. www.eastayrshirefhs.org.uk Meetings in Kilmarnock, at 7.30 p.m.
- FBC** Friends of Brodick Castle. Meetings at Brodick Castle, Brodick, at 2.30 p.m.
- FHS** Fullarton Historical Society. Meetings in
- FHS Jt** Joint Meeting of Ayrshire Family History Societies. Alloway Church Hall, Alloway, 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. www.kilmarnockhistory.co.uk Meetings in Kilmarnock College at 7.30 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. www.largsmuseum.org.uk Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
- L(MS)** LDHS, Marine Section. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
- LNA** Largs & North Ayrshire Family History Society. www.largsnafhs.org.uk Meetings in Largs Library, Allankirk Street, Largs at 7.30 p.m.

PHG Prestwick History Group. Meetings in 65 Club, Main Street, Prestwick KA9 1JN, at 7.30 p.m.

SHS Stewarton & District Historical Society.

www.stewarton.org Meetings in John Knox Church Hall, Stewarton, at 7.30 p.m.

SWT Scottish Wildlife Trust: Ayrshire Members' Centre. Meetings in The Horizon Hotel, Esplanade, Ayr KA7 1DT, at 7.30 p.m.

TAFHS Troon @ Ayrshire Family History Society.

www.troonayrshirefhs.org.uk 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.

February 2014

Monday 3 rd	KCCS	Adam Wilkinson	Communities and their Heritage in the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh
Monday 3 rd	SHS	Mark Gibson	Craigengillan
Tuesday 4 th	KDHG	Frank Donnelly	Sir Alexander Fleming
Thursday 6 th	PHG	John Hope	Prestwick in the 1950s
Tuesday 11 th	LNA	Robin Nicolson	Mapping in and about Largs
Wednesday 12 th	DHS	Bill Fitzpatrick	The beloved, the Damned and the Forgotten
Thursday 13 th	AANHS	Natasha Ferguson	Treasure Trove
Tuesday 18 th	KDHG	Tony Mulholland	Lewis Fry Richardson
Tuesday 18 th	ASA	Dane Love	Legendary Ayrshire
Tuesday 18 th	SWT	Heinz Traut	Conserving Red Squirrels: How You can make a Difference
Tuesday 18 th	AA	Nancy Anderson	Covenanter Country
Thursday 20 th	TAFHS	John Stevenson	Old Ayrshire Farming
Thursday 20 th	AMC	Alistair Deaton	Clyde Steamer Cruising out of Ayr
Tuesday 25 th	WKCS	Scott Grier	Loganair
Thursday 27 th	AANHS	Geoffrey Stell	Defences of the Clyde, 1914 - 1945
Thursday 27 th	BHS	Ian Mathieson	Home Front in the Great War

March 2014				
Monday 3 rd	KCCS	Gordon McDonald	Restoring Bank House, Newmilns	
Monday 3 rd	SHS	Elaine McFarland	John Boyd Orr	
Tuesday 4 th	KDHG	Jim Boyd	The History of the Royal College	
Thursday 6 th	PHG	members	Pot Pourri	
Tuesday 11 th	LNA	Val Reilly	A Woman's Work is Never Done	
Wednesday 12 th	DHS	Frank Henderson	The History of Dreghorn Parish	
Thursday 13 th	AANHS	Catriona MacDonald	What makes a Scottish Hero	
Thursday 13 th	EAFHS	Andrew Dick	Ayrshire Mining	
Tuesday 18 th	FHS Jt	Frank Brown	The Tall Ship at Glasgow	
Tuesday 18 th	SWT	Simon Jones	Beaver Update	
Tuesday 18 th	KDHG	members	Kilmarnock in the 1960s and 1970s	
Tuesday 18 th	AA	Val Reilly	Coats & Clarks: The Binding- Thread of Paisley's History	
Thursday 20 th	AMC	Jonathan Bryant	Brodick Signature Project	
Tuesday 25 th	WKCS	Isabel Garrett	The Hunterston Brooch	
Thursday 27 th	BHS	Kitty Walker	Britannia Panopticon	
April 2014				
Thursday 3 rd	PHG	Alisdair Cochrane	Now for Something Completely Different	
Monday 7 th	SHS	Allan Richardson	QE2	
Tuesday 8 th	LNA	Pat Emslie	Greenock Cut	
Wednesday 9 th	DHS	Ian Macdonald	The Richmonds of Riccarton	
Thursday 10 th	EAFHS	Peter Cameron	Church of Latter Day Saints	
Tuesday 15 th	AA	Carl Reavey	Eating the Wildlife: Islay in the Mesolithic	
Thursday 17 th	TAFHS	members	Open Forum	
Thursday 17 th	AMC	Jim Moffat	An Introduction to the Bagpipes	
Thursday 24 th	BHS	Alasdair Wham	Ayrshire's Railway Heritage	
May 2014				
Thursday 1 st	PHG	members	Blether of 2014	
Monday 12 th	SHS	Guard Archaeology	Flodden Battlefield	
Thursday 15 th	TAFHS	Tom Cunningham	Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Scotland	
Tuesday 20 th	AA	David Walker	Glasgow's Hidden Treasures	
June 2014				
Tuesday 17 th	AA	Ben Shepherd	The German Army under the Third Reich	

July 2014			
Tuesday 15 th	AA	George Geddes	A Rough Guide to St Kilda and North Rona
August 2014			
Tuesday 19 th	AA	David Donaldson	"Jings Crivens Help ma Boab My Time at D.C Thomson
September 2014			
Tuesday 16 th	AA	Stewart Gough	My Obsession with Arran Postcards
October 2014			
Tuesday 21 st	AA	Paul McAuley	The Twelve Monuments Project
November 2014			
Tuesday 18 th	AA	James Murchie	Arran to Antarctica - A Life at Sea



University Marine Station, Millport: Stained Glass by Joanna Scott, 1983-84 (Rob Close)



From General Roy's Great Map of Scotland (1747-1755). The road across the north west corner is that between Cumnock and Muirkirk. This name has not been corroborated from other sources: it is understood that Roy's surveyors were not above creating their own names, a pastime which presumably reflected some of the conditions they must have endured.