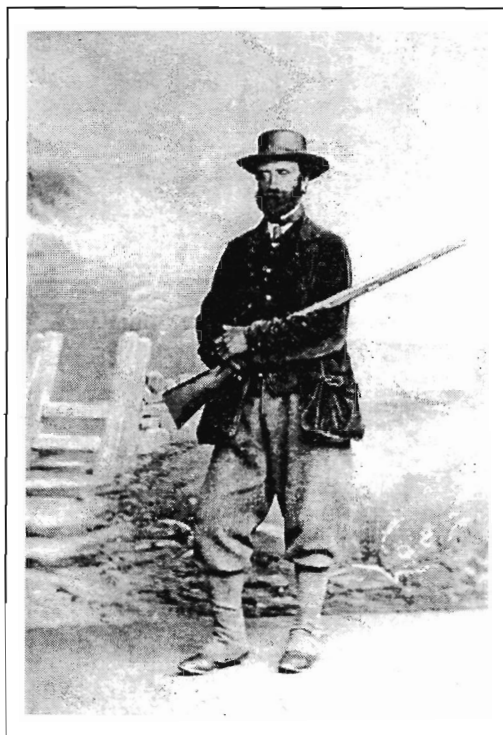


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Cover Illustration

Our cover illustration shows John Macmillan, gamekeeper on the Dumfries House Estate. The photograph was taken by John Ballantine, photographer of Cumnock.

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HOW THE CARPENTERS OF SALTCOATS AND WEST KILBRIDE GAVE THE PRESS-GANG THE SLIP

*This article originally appeared in the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald
of 29 December 1860.*

It is now more than eighty years since the circumstances I am about to narrate occurred, and it is somewhere about fifteen years since my grandfather used to relate the story with great glee to a group of young people who sat around the blazing hearth eagerly listening to his funny remarks and anecdotes.

The story commences with the launch of a vessel which took place at Mr Porter's ship-yard, in Saltcoats, about the year 1789 or 1790, and as launches are generally regarded as auspicious events by carpenters so it was on the present occasion. As was customary then (and I believe still is at the present day in Ardrossan) a ball was given to the carpenters in the evening of the same day of the launch, and this evening it was announced to take place in Mr Campbell's hall. It had just struck five o'clock, and the most of the workers had left the ship-yard, and were returning home in order to get prepared for the approaching ball.

Seven o'clock was the hour at which the ball was to commence, but it was long past that hour before the whole company was assembled. About half past eleven the dancing appeared to be going on in good earnest, and the hall at this moment presented one of the most animated scenes that can possibly be described. On a platform elevated about three feet from the floor sat an old blind man with a fiddle, who showed great dexterity in handling the bow. In one part of the room sat a loving pair talking to each other in the most confidential manner of their prospects of the future, seemingly unconscious of what was going on around them. In another part sat some half-dozen of the fair sex eagerly discussing the merits of some sweetmeats and oranges that had been left them by their admirers as a parting gift, while they had betaken themselves for a short time to another room to enjoy a few minutes chit-chat and a comfortable smoke. In the centre of the floor about fifteen couples tripped it most gracefully on the light fantastic toe; and in another part of the room one might be seen who appeared not to be quite sure whether he should trip in on the crown of his head or the soles of his feet; however in the midst of his reverie his foot caught in the folds of a lady's gown,

and down he fell flat on the floor to the no small amusement of the dancers, as he lay howling out at the full pitch of his voice, "Britannia rules the waves".

The one half of the evening had been spent in this agreeable manner, and all went merry as a marriage bell till about one o'clock, when a private messenger found his way into the hall, and in a somewhat startled manner told one of the carpenters that they had been betrayed by S---, who had given information to the press-gang at Irvine of the night's meeting, and that they now stood outside the door ready to seize them. The looks of the astonished carpenter after receiving this bit of information can be easier imagined than described. For a moment or two he appeared irresolute what to do. However, it was not his own personal safety alone that depended on the issue of events, so he at once communicated the unwelcome tidings to the rest of his comrades, who were not at that time engaged with the dance. The news (not long in circulating through the room) broke upon the ears of the dancers like a thunder bolt. Some regarded it as a trick, but a hasty glance from one of the windows showed there was too much truth in the messenger's statement; others again tried to persuade themselves into the belief that if it came to close quarters they would be more than a match for the gang, and would probably manage to make their escape by overpowering them all at once. But this also was found to be absolutely impossible, as a second glance from the window showed at once that the gang had calculated on meeting with stout opposition, and therefore had increased their numbers threefold nearly.

The quadrille was now stopped when only half finished, and the male dancers stood eyeing each other in the most melancholy aspect; each looking upon his neighbour as able to give some directions as to the course they ought to pursue for the purpose of effecting their escape. At this critical juncture the fiddler, out of all patience at the seeming irregularity of his company, in an authoritative voice ordered them to proceed with the dance, as he didna come here tae fiddle tae folk that could dae naething but talk blethers. A few words from one that now approached the fiddler soon made him aware of what was going on outside, who at the same time told him he might stop his fiddling for the present.

Hugh Gilmour (for that was the fiddler's name), after thinking for a minute, suddenly snatched up his fiddle again, and began to play upon it most vigorously, as if nothing of any consequence had occurred. All eyes were now directed to Gilmour at this sudden outburst of the music again, and one in rather an angry tone demanded what he meant? Gilmour, on hearing this, made a motion with his head for the man to advance closer to him, which being done - Frien, said Gilmour, addressing the speaker, whatever chance there may be in gettin aff clear, depend on't your chance is no worth a fig if the fiddlin an noise should stop. Let the women carry on the dance wi as much noise as possible, an

you, gang your wa's back tae the rest o' your companions an think owre matters as fast as ye can. They'll never jalouse outside that ye ken they're there. Noo awa', an whater ye ha' tae dae or sae, dae it quickly, an mind ye slip the bar in the door cannily. Noo hoogh! hurrah! on wi the dance.

The fiddler's advice was conveyed to about eight or nine young women, who at once seeing the force and meaning of his words immediately started the dancing, and commenced to shout and stamp with their feet in such a manner as would have done credit to the inmates of bedlam; for what purpose we presume the most of our readers will understand. Various plans of escape were mentioned by the carpenters, who by this time had gathered together, and left the dancing to their sweethearts. One plan was no sooner suggested than it was rejected as being useless.

Every way of escape from the hall they could think of was strongly guarded by a part of the gang, and nothing now appeared for them but to adopt one of the two alternatives - either to allow themselves to be taken quietly, or else to run the risk of a hand-to-hand battle. Twenty-one years on board His Majesty's ship was a term no one was in the least inclined to begin, and they were just on the point of putting the latter alternative into execution (resolving to die before they would be taken), when fortunately, for both parties, one of the young women suggested the plan of disguising themselves in their clothing, and so giving the gang the slip. The plan was no sooner proposed than it met with general approbation, and the young ladies now began to strip off as much of their own clothing as they could decently want, and as would properly disguise their respective sweethearts. The dressing of the men was no easy task, and, of course, it had to be performed by the women who were better acquainted with the garments than the men. One woman, of the name of L----, having two brothers and a sweetheart at the ball, and being anxious, if possible, to effect their escape, so disposed of her own clothing that she managed completely to mask the whole three. During this time the dancing never ceased, the women relieving each other by turns as necessity required. All things being now completed, after many a joke and laugh given by both parties, the men, after repeated instructions from the women as to how they should walk, &c., now ventured to open the door, and now for the first time they seemed to notice the gang outside. Of course they had to go through the form of turning back and conveying the sad news in as distressing a manner as they possibly could to those inside so as to set the gang off their guard. As to their presence being now made known, they (the gang) did not care a straw, as they had every way of egress completely guarded. After waiting some considerable time in the hall, the same party issued out, and with counterfeit tears and sobs succeeding in eluding the vigilance of the watch outside, and so passed

the whole file, without any remarks, further than that "they were a lot o' lang-legged jades".

After waiting for about an hour or so longer, and as there seemed to be no end of the dance, the gang at last forced the door of the hall, and entered to seize their noble prize. The scene that was presented to the gang on entering the room defies all description - (the nearest approach to it that I can fancy is in a picture of the Dance of the Witches in Alloway Kirk, from Burns' 'Tam o' Shanter', only the bagpipes were used on that occasion instead of the fiddle). The horrified looks of the head of the gang may well be conceived when he found no other persons in the room except Mr Porter, the shipbuilder; the fiddler, and some thirty young women. It was evident, now, when too late, who the "lang-legged jades" were. He began to curse this one's eyes, and this next one's eyes, and left the hall in a towering rage, cursing his own stupidity, remarking as he left the room, that they might well laugh at him and his men this time, but they would not do it the next.

In concluding my story I may add, for the sake of your female readers, that the women soon after this left the hall, each wearing her sweetheart's jacket, and reached home quite safely, and next morning they visited the retreat of their lovers, and were all very glad to see each other - the carpenters to learn how the affair concluded after they had taken their leave, and if the gang were still in the town; the ladies, on the other hand, were anxious to hear if they had all been able to make their escape good. So after a hearty congratulation on both sides, and a good laugh at the success of their scheme, the whole party sat down and partook of some bread and cheese, seasoned with a drop of mountain dew, which had been kindly provided by the ladies for the occasion, and after a few hours of lively conversation, the party separated, seemingly delighted with each other's company.

Further, I may add, that the descendants of the above-mentioned parties can be found at the present day either at Saltcoats or West Kilbride, and no doubt they will remember having heard related the same story in bye-gone years. I only hope if the same should ever occur that our young townswomen of the present age may display the same amount of courage, and forethought, as was done on the former occasion by their ancestors.

RD

MARION PAUL AIRD, 1815-1888

Looking for something else in the mid 19th century Post Office Directories of Kilmarnock I came across an entry for a "Miss M P Aird", who described herself as an 'authoress', living at Kadikoi Place, Kilmarnock. It seemed to me that there was something unusual, in those un-emancipated days, of a woman writer so describing herself, especially one living at such an address. Who was she, I wondered. This brief note is a résumé of what I have been able to discover, and also serves to raise two questions.

Marion Aird was born in Glasgow on the 27th November 1815. Her father, David Aird, was a coachman. Of him we know little, but it is known that Marion Aird came to Kilmarnock as an infant. Her early years remain obscure. We know that she had at least one sister, Jeanie, who was married to John Milne, a draper in Kilmarnock, but who died in April 1871, occasioning the poem, "Memorial Lines on my Beloved Sister, Mrs Milne", which appeared in the Kilmarnock Standard of 8th April 1871. Marion Aird had first come to the notice of the public as a poet in 1838 when some of her verse was published in one of the Kilmarnock newspapers; the same year she dedicated some verses to the Kilmarnock doctor, John Bowring, who acknowledged the compliment at a public dinner. Her poems began to appear in various publications, particularly those connected with the Kilmarnock printer and publisher, James McKie. For him she contributed, using the pseudonym *Marimonia*, 6 pieces to a weekly poetical magazine that ran for 10 issues in 1839. Further pieces appeared in the annual editions of his "Ayrshire Wreath" in 1843, 1844 and 1845, and in 1846 McKie published the first collection of her work, "Home of the Heart, and other poems, moral and religious", which was, he noted, "very successful".

Further books followed. "Heart Histories, Violets from the Greenwood, &c. &c." was published in 1853 by the Edinburgh and London publishers, Johnstone & Hunter, and in 1860 James McKie published for her "Sun and Shade". Finally, a reprint of "Home of the Heart" was published by McKie in 1863. Thereafter pieces continued to appear in the Kilmarnock Standard, in the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald and elsewhere. She also circulated among her friends an annual Christmas and New Year poetical leaflet, while the nature and tone of some of these later fugitive pieces can be guessed at from their titles, e.g. "On the Death of Robert Cumming, Esq." in the Kilmarnock Weekly Post in 1863, or "On the Late Deaths from Drowning on our Shores" in the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald in 1860.

It is probably correct to assume that Marion Aird was never particularly wealthy, or that she made much money from her poetry. On Census Night 1861 she is recorded as a 'lodger' in the household of Margaret Rodger, a 49 year old music teacher, (Aird was 42 at this time, and gives her occupation as 'authoress'), at an address in Kadikoi Place. She was still at Kadikoi Place 10 years later, but now living on her own. In 1864, the Kilmarnock Weekly Post noted that a £10 donation to Miss Aird had been made by J N Fleming, who was then tenant of Kilkerran. Her situation was such by June 1874 that McKie, with a Glasgow minister (David Brown of St Enochs), Thomas Cuthbertson, the Town Treasurer, and Thomas Lee, teacher at Kilmarnock Academy, raised a subscription appeal for her, with the result that they were able to secure a small annuity, which enabled her to be spared from total poverty in her final years. She died on the 30th January 1888, having been ill with liver cancer for the previous 6 months.

Aird's poetry is very much rooted in her deeply held Christian convictions, and if not especially profound nor particularly powerful, it was, as her obituarist in the Kilmarnock Standard noted, "characterised by a fine religious feeling, and occasional felicity of expression". To the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald, she was "if not brilliant a pleasant writer", while the Kilmarnock Herald felt that "Miss Aird's great talent ... was in the production of charming little poetical pieces, suitable to the tastes and capacity of Sabbath School children". She herself, in some introductory remarks to the 1846 edition of "Home of the Heart", with the modesty which affects most authors, comments that her poems were 'written at a common hearth, by a common hand, moving more frequently to the dictates of circumstance than taste - fostered on no classic grounds, - almost the exclusive fruit of self-culture, and not a little self-denial, - unmeasured by the "clockwork tintinnabulation" of prosody, therefore no spirited distillations, analysed in the refining alembic of orthography".

As a brief, if not entirely representative, of her work, I offer the opening lines from "Statue of Sir James Shaw", which appears in "Heart Histories":

Majestic statue! genius stamps its power,
In lordly dignity and kingly grace,
Upon thy noble form and breathing face,
Revealing all the master-spirit's dower,
That could so mould and picture to the sense
The princely form and mind's benevolence,
And from the rugged block of snowy stone
Warm into life 'Kilmarnock's Whittington'.

Marion Aird's greatest work, however, in the eyes of her contemporaries was the hymn "Had I the Wings of a Dove". The Kilmarnock Standard felt that "at least one of her pieces is certain to live - the beautiful hymn, 'Had I the Wings of a Dove', which may justly be called a world-wide favourite. To be the author of a song that is universally sung is a meed of fame that has seldom been attained even by much abler writers". The Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald noted that this hymn was "familiar as a household word to every Sabbath scholar", the Kilmarnock Herald that "Sabbath school children all over the country know and take delight in singing the words of this beautiful hymn". Aird herself, in a letter of c.1880 to Colin Rae Brown, a London based poet and a lifelong friend, notes that "it was truly gratifying to learn (lately) that some friends who were travelling in Germany had heard a Princess there playing and singing 'Had I the Wings of a Dove'. It has now got a world-wide renown and that is something".

Unfortunately, this hymn does not appear in any of the collections of poems, and I have been unable to find it in any of the many hymnbooks that I have looked at. It cannot have disappeared entirely, and thus my first question is to ask whether anyone out there can supply me with a copy of the words (and music, if appropriate) of "Had I the Wings of a Dove". It is not, apparently, the same as "Oh for the Wings of a Dove", which appears to have a Classical origin.

The second question I wish to pose is not directly related to Marion Aird. Anyone with the name "Robert Close" (streets in Coventry, Billericay and Maida Vale) is destined to have an interest in the names of places and localities, and I have long wondered about the origins of Kadiköi Place. I only recently discovered that Kadiköy is a suburb of Istanbul, on the Asian shore, close to Üsküdar (Florence Nightingale's Scutari). The pub at Kadiköi Place is/was called the Thin Red Line, which also has Crimean War connotations. What the particular connection with Kilmarnock was, if any, I have yet to discover, and any information on this would also be gladly received.

Information on Marion Aird came from a number of sources. The obituaries in the Kilmarnock Standard (4 February 1888), Kilmarnock Herald (3 February 1888) and Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald (3 February 1888) were particularly useful. Copies of all four published books can be consulted in the Alexander Wood Memorial Collection in the Local History Library at Ardrossan. My thanks are due, as always, to forbearing friends who endured the telling and retelling of Marion Aird's story, and particularly to David Johnston, who tolerated a ransacking of his collection of hymnbooks.

Rob Close

REBELS ON AILSA CRAIG, 1746

The following declaration is among the Saltoun Papers in the National Library of Scotland. It reveals that 'rebels', presumably supporters of the Young Pretender, were on Ailsa Craig in May 1746. It was reproduced in No.41 of the Kintyre Antiquarian and Natural History Society Magazine, and is reprinted here with their permission.

***Copy Declaration of Archibald Young and James Watson
concerning some of the Rebeles haveing been seen
on Elza [= Ailsa Craig, eds]; Greenock, May 25th 1746.***

Archibald Young Ship Carpenter in Campbeltown and James Watson boatman there Declared that they left Campbeltown Early on Saturday the 25th currant where there were just arrived two boats from Elza the Crews of which Reported that they had parted from Elza on Friday the 23rd. That they saw on that Island a Number of people in arms whom they conjectured to be Rebels. That they could observe Sentries placed in Different parts and Tents pitched and two boats drawn up on Shore. They saw severalls who be the Richness of their Dress appeared to be persones of Distinction. That having attempted to Land on the said Rock of Elza the Sentries Threatened to fire on them if they pursued their Attempt: and the saids Archibald Young and James Watson further Declared That they were strictly enjoined by the officers of the Customes at Campbeltown to give this Information to the first person having the Kings Commission whom they should meet with.

(signed) A Y Archd Young's initials

(signed) James Watson

JOHN BARR, ARDROSSAN, 1798 - 1884

Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald, Friday 4 April 1884

THE LATE PROVOST BARR

John Barr, for thirty-eight years Provost of Ardrossan, died at his residence, Kilmahew House, on Wednesday afternoon, aged 86 years.

His long official position as Provost of the Burgh of Ardrossan would have made his decease a memorable local event, but the Provost was more than simply the Chief Magistrate of a small provincial town. He was a strong

personality - a personality which, when exerted, was almost irresistible in the sphere in which he has all his life moved; and so marked, that had the opportunities in early years been more favourable, would have raised him to the front in other and higher positions in the community. Tall, a good presence, and possessed of great muscular strength, his will, and natural abilities, were in keeping with his stalwart frame, and to these more than to educational advantages was he indebted for the success achieved. He was indeed a self-made man, and one other illustration of the kind of men who at the beginning of this century were reared under a weaver's roof, and inherited from worthy parents that grit and strength of character which well-made, healthy Scotchmen possess, and have made them famous all over the world.

Provost Barr was born at Lochwinnoch in 1798, His father was a weaver, but a man of character, for he was placed as foreman over a number of weavers during dull times employed at public works. In boyhood he, too, wrought at hand-loom weaving, but like his father he discovered that road-making was more lucrative than the loom; and first, father and son together afterwards by himself, and sometimes in partnership with his brothers, he contracted for the making of railways, the construction of harbours and docks, the making of bridges, and the erection of lighthouses. In 1822 he improved the road between Irvine and Ayr; and it was the railway from hence to Kilwinning that brought him to Ardrossan in the year 1828 - fifty-six years ago.

Fifty-six years ago! These years almost sum up the history of the town, and only eighteen years more than the term in which he held office as chief magistrate. His life from manhood, therefore, is identified with the rise, and with many of the institutions of the place. Fifteen years before he came there were not thirty houses in Ardrossan, so few indeed, as barely to indicate the lines of the streets. Progress in these years was slow, and in 1828 when he began to construct the railway the sea washed to within a few feet of those houses in Princes Street in a line with the railway buildings, ran up to Montgomery Street; and where his own house now stands there was a quarry opened up as far as Castlecraigs. Besides making the railway he deepened the old Harbour, and built the sea wall in front of Montgomery Street, filling up the space intervening, now the green esplanade, with the soil taken out of the Harbour. There was, indeed, no slackening of his activity. While undertaking and superintending large contracts elsewhere, he built properties in Ardrossan, until at one time possibly a fifth of the town, if not more, belonged to him; entered into partnership (1842) with the late Mr Shearer for carrying on the business of ship-building; owned ships, coal mines, brick works, and a newspaper. It is not to be supposed that he was successful in all that he undertook. He was accustomed to say that only in his

legitimate business - that of contractor - had he made money, and his crowning misfortune was the one that ruined so many - the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank. He held, if we remember rightly, 14 shares in that mismanaged concern, and all the calls he honourably met.

It was only natural that one so much identified with the employment of labour, first on the railway and harbour works, and afterwards as shipbuilder, should aspire to guide municipal affairs when the town was erected into a burgh in 1846. He had, indeed, opposed the proposal when it was made by Dr McFadyen and others, and carried his opposition as far as he could. The Bill, however, passed, and the first election turned upon whether the promoters or opponents of the Bill should have the administration of it. The opponents gained the day; Mr Barr was elected first Provost; to be re-elected till his days closed, with every new term of office. Similarly when the Education Act first came into operation. He was no friend to the Act, when it was passing through Parliament, and when the lists of candidates were prepared, it was never thought, apparently, by any one that he was ambitious of a seat at the Board. He was, however, elected a member, was chosen to be the first chairman, and has held the position ever since. In addition, he was a Justice of Peace, and gave very faithful attendance, when he was able, at the Courts; for many years chairman of the Gas and Water Company, of which he was an active promoter; the oldest member of the Saltcoats Free Gardeners' Society, the oldest member of Mother Kilwinning, having been brought to "light" within her portals on the 18th of August, 1828, and a Trustee of the New Parish Church. Indeed it is not easy to say in what local matter he did not interest himself; and it was in recognition of long services to the public that he was presented in 1878, with his portrait, painted by Mr Norman Macbeth, ARS, which now adorns the walls of the Town Hall. The number of subscribers was 300, and the contributions amounted to £460, which allowed of a half length copy also being presented to Mrs Barr. The presentation was made at a cake-and-wine service, at which the Earl of Eglinton presided, while the Right Honourable Sir James Fergusson made the presentation.

Although a Radical when young, he was long a leading Conservative. We know he did not much care for the 'educating' process in 1867; and unless for electioneering purposes, we misjudge him if he had much sympathy with the latest development of Toryism - the Tory democrat.

That the Provost will be greatly missed goes without saying. His life and the life of the town have been so intertwined that the separation of the two for a time will dislocate many things, and it will be long before the new man, and the new order without him, get properly into harness. Our views and the views of the Provost in many local matters were divergent, as our readers know; but no one

appreciated higher than we did his many and great personal qualities, his singular aptitude for conducting business, his merits as a landlord, his readiness to grant a favour, his willingness to spend and be spent if, in his opinion, Ardrossan would be benefited. He was "the Provost" to old and young; for more than half a century all-influential in the place; and now that he has left us, as we recall the good he did the community, not a few poor widows, not a few employees, and not a few who are not poor, will be reminded of personal benefits kindly and frankly given in their hour of need.

SEAWEED PROCESSING IN THE WEST OF SCOTLAND

The following article originally appeared in Historic Argyll, no.2, 1997, the journal of the Lorn Archaeological and Historical Society. In view of its relevance to Ayrshire, we are pleased to bring it before an Ayrshire readership. It is reproduced by kind permission of the Society's editor, Charles Hunter, and the author.

Kelp and Iodine

Seaweed was first burned for its alkaline ash in France in the seventeenth century. In Europe 'kelp' refers to the burnt ash, whereas in the Americas and Southern Hemisphere the word refers to the ash and the seaweed itself.

The burning of seaweed for the production of Kelp ash did not start in Great Britain until 1720, but by the end of the century Scotland alone was producing 20,000 tons annually. Kelp was a substitute for an expensive substance called Barilla Soda or Salichord which was prepared in Spain from certain salt-rich plants that grew on the shore. It was refined by soap and glass manufactures to extract soda and potash.

The main types of seaweeds used were the Laminaria, which grew below the low tide mark and could only be collected after storms, and the Fucus and Ascophyllum weeds which could be cut from the rocky shore when the tide was out. The method of manufacture changed little over the centuries. Storm cast or cut weed had to be collected as soon as possible to prevent it rotting and laid out on low stone walls to dry: during the drying it had to be protected from rain which would wash out the valuable salts. In good drying conditions weed could

be burned two days after collection. The weed was burned on the shore in kilns made from loose boulders, at first in a small fire of wood or peat, to which more and more weed was added. The result was a hard glass-like cake 3 - 6 inches thick, and successive burnings in the same kiln produced a cake 12 - 24 inches thick which weighed from 2 to 6 hundredweight. This solid mass was broken up while still hot by pouring cold water over it.

Enormous quantities of seaweed were handled without any mechanical means other than a horse and cart, if available. It required 20 tons of wet weed or 5 tons of dry weed to produce one ton of burnt kelp. Therefore the 20,000 tons of burnt kelp produced in the West of Scotland and the Hebrides during the short-lived boom period at the beginning of the 19th century would have needed 400,000 tons of wet weed annually. This would require 3,000 cutters working extremely hard for the four summer months, when the weather conditions were bearable.

Many of the factories which used the kelp in the manufacture of soap and glass were situated in Glasgow and it was natural for this city to control the industry. At one time 80% of all the kelp was handled by one Glasgow merchant.

Considerable fortunes were made by a few. In the years 1740 to 1760 kelp was commanding £7 9s [£7.45] per ton. By 1800 this had risen to £18 per ton. In the early years of the 19th century, at £16 per ton, the income of the landowners would be around £200,000, with about £29,000 being paid to the collectors. Distributed among 4,000 families, this represented an annual income of £7 per collector. The average cost of production was £2 10s [£2.50] per ton. No wonder that the rental of shores in North Uist alone was worth £7,000 per year. However, the importation of Barilla Soda from Spain around 1810 brought the price of kelp down to £10 per ton, while the removal of import duty after 1820 brought kelp down to £2 per ton, thus ending the burning of seaweed for soda and potash.

In 1811 it was discovered that iodine, for medicinal purposes, could be extracted from various seaweeds. The deep water *Laminaria* weeds contained more iodine than the rock weeds and collectors had to adapt to new methods of collection.

Manufacture of iodine from kelp was a much more skilled operation. The weed had to be protected from rain during drying as the loss of iodine from leaching was even higher than that of the other salts. The weed had to be fresh since rotting weed would yield no iodine at all. The presence of sand on the weed during burning would affect the burning temperature and thus the yield of iodine. The burning temperature had to be controlled and stopped at the right time to prevent volatilisation of the iodine.

As well as the difficulties of manufacture the industry suffered from speculative pricing. For example, in the years 1841 to 1845 the price for iodine averaged 11s 9d [59p] per pound, while in 1856 to 1865 it was 8s [40p] per pound. By 1900 the Scottish industry was slowly petering out and had become a crofting industry, in competition with much cheaper mineral deposits from Chile. The last cargo of iodine was reported to have left South Uist in 1933.

Alginate

Alginate is a unique substance extracted from brown seaweeds which has found extensive uses, over the last 65 years, in industrial, food and pharmaceutical applications. Sodium alginate is used to thicken fruit drinks, forms gels in fruit pies, dessert jellies and pet foods, and in the manufacture of ice cream. It is used to thicken textile printing paste and, when dried, forms a high gloss sheen on quality papers. It is used in toothpaste, dental impression powder and as a tablet coating compound for pharmaceuticals,

The story begins in 1893 when the English chemist E C Stanford isolated alginate from seaweed. He was already well-established as a leading chemist in the extraction of iodine and had several papers published on this subject. During his lifetime he set up an iodine extraction plant on Tiree using the local seaweed, but he had problems getting local people to gather seaweed because they thought he had been sent by Customs and Excise to spy on their illicit distillation of whisky. Although at first Stanford could find few uses for his new chemical, 'algin', he realised that it would have tremendous potential in the future.

The extraction of alginate from seaweed did not start in Argyll until another Englishman, C W Bonniksen, set up the Cefoil factory in 1935 at Putechantuy on the Kintyre peninsula. This site was invariably called Bellochantuy. Mr Bonniksen's intention was to produce a clear alginate film which could be used as a wrapping paper for foodstuffs, hence 'cefoil'. It took almost to 1939 before he was able to perfect his production process and start to produce saleable quantities. When cefoil was ready for the market a much superior foil, cellophane, was launched and this looked like the end of Mr Bonniksen's business.

On the outbreak of war in 1939 the Ministry of Supply took an interest in Mr Bonniksen's ailing business, realising that alginates could be used instead of some scarce raw materials. It had been known for some time that alginate could be spun into yarn and chromium alginate, naturally green, was used for camouflage netting. Apart from additives for foodstuffs the other uses are at best vague, but there is some documentary evidence that alginic acid may have been

used as a substitute for lightweight balsa wood in the Mosquito aircraft. The Ministry built additional factories at Kames, near the southern end of Loch Melfort, and at Barcaldine on Loch Creran, and also at Girvan in Ayrshire. Cefoil were employed to manage these four factories.

When the war ended the Ministry of Supply had no further need for these alginate factories, so Cefoil bought them back and changed its name to Alginate Industries, after deciding to manufacture a range of alginates for different applications. Bellochantuy, being the smallest, was closed at the end of the War, and Kames followed in the 1950s, with production being concentrated at Barcaldine and Girvan. The 1960s and 1970s saw a period of expansion with demand outstripping supply for this unique product. Scotland and Ireland were unable to meet the increased demand for seaweed, and additional supplies were imported from Norway, Iceland, South Africa, Chile and Tasmania.

In 1979 Alginate Industries was sold to another alginate producer from California called Kelco, and renamed Kelco/AIL Limited. At this time there was unprecedented competition from low cost Chinese alginate producers and the appearance of competitive products.

The 1980s saw a period of slow decline and the shedding of labour as production fell. There followed a period of consolidation and slight growth in the late 1980s to early 1990s, though nothing like the glory years of the past. The name changed again to Kelco International and in 1995-1996 Kelco's parent company, Merck, sold it to another multinational, Monsanto, who swallowed it all up and renamed it the Nutrasweet Kelco Company, with production concentrated at Girvan.

The closure of Barcaldine was announced early in 1996, thus ending 65 years of alginate manufacture in Argyll.

Jim Bailey

AANHS Officers & Committee

At the Annual General Meeting of the AANHS, held in the Carnegie Library Ayr on 12th March 1998, Dr David Reid was elected President of the Society; Stanley Sarsfield and Mrs Susan Martin were elected Vice-Presidents, and Miss Jane Jamieson, Kenneth Montgomerie and Mrs Mair Tiley were appointed to the committee.

THE UNRELIABILITY OF PIGOT'S DIRECTORY AND OF CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG'S MAP OF AYRSHIRE

Pigot's Directory

This commentary on Pigot's Directory appeared in the Kilmarnock Weekly Post in June 1860:

"Piggott's Directory - The titles of some books are but a sorry index of their contents. They are sometimes such that the most learned would shrink to own, and promise information which it is not in the power of man to bestow. In short, they are literary shams. Piggott's Directory for Scotland is now lying before us. It is not a literary work in the common acceptation of the term. It is a matter of fact thing, and the information it has to communicate lies perfectly within the reach of the understanding - indeed, within the reach of an ordinary man of business, if he were to set his mind to it. Yet this book, in a very large part, has a wrong title applied to it. It should have been called a misdirectory. We glanced over a portion under the head Kilmarnock, and blunders egregious and numerous presented themselves. We gave up the task of scrutinising as too laborious and disagreeable, and shut the book, which is badly printed and miserably bound. We hope, for the sake of commercial men who require a reliable directory, that if ever the publishers or proprietors of Piggott prepare another issue, they will exhibit that scrupulous care which such a task demands."

Mr Arrowsmith's New Map of Scotland

Some years earlier, the following had appeared in the Air Advertiser for 6th February 1806, as an advertisement placed by John Hamilton of Sundrum, the County Convener:

"Sundrum, 5th February 1806. In consequence of information by a letter to the Lord Lieutenant that Mr Arrowsmith of London, Geographer, is now preparing for publication a new map of Scotland, from all the best authorities extant, in which he is aided by Government, affording him access to all their surveys - and it appearing that amongst the particular surveys of the different counties in Scotland, from which the interior of the map must be filled up, the one formerly executed by Armstrong of the Shire of Air is by much the worst - and,

likewise, as for some time past a general wish in the county has prevailed to obtain a new and accurate survey of it; a meeting of the heritors and all others who are favourable to such an undertaking is requested, at Air, on Friday the 14th current, when the letter on this subject to the Lord Lieutenant shall be laid before them, and when they may determine what ought to be done regarding it. John Hamilton, Convener"

The minutes of that meeting are recorded in a minute book of the Ayrshire commissioners of supply, CO3/1/5, which can be found in the Ayrshire Archives, presently in the County Buildings, Ayr, but shortly to relocate to Craigie Park, Ayr, adjacent to the Horticultural Centre.

It was attended by John Hamilton of Sundrum, who presided, and by Thomas Kennedy of Dunure, Richard Alexander Oswald of Auchencruive, Primrose Kennedy of Drummillan, John Hamilton younger of Sundrum, William Bowie of Cambusiscan [then provost of Ayr], Mungo Smith of Drongan, Hugh Hamilton of Pinmore, Patrick Ballantine of Castlehill, Charles Buchan McMicken of Kilsaintninian, Captain James Blair and Richard Campbell of Helentonmains.

"Mr Hamilton submitted to the consideration of the Meeting a Letter from Thomas Thomson, Esqr., Advocate to the Lord Lieutenant of date 24 January last mentioning that Mr Arrowsmith, was at present employed in preparing for publication a New Map of Scotland, and that he was particularly patronised and encouraged in the Execution of it, by the Parliamentary Commissioners for Roads, Bridges and other publick Improvements; that Mr Arrowsmith in proceeding with the undertaking had found himself at a loss on account of many imperfections of the Map of the County of Ayr formerly executed by Mr Armstrong; - Mr Hamilton also stated, that as for sometime past a general wish in the County had prevailed to obtain a new & accurate survey of it, he had therefore called the present meeting in order to lay Mr Thomsons letter before them, to take their opinions upon the subject; - He further stated that he had lately wrote to Mr Fergusson requesting him to procure proposals from any respectable surveyor who would be willing to undertake the Survey in consequence of which he had forwarded to him proposals from a Mr John Blackadder, which he laid before the meeting."

"The meeting upon considering the foregoing and Mr Hamiltons Representation, and having deliberated upon the subject are unanimously of opinion, that it would be a most desirable object ot have a survey and accurate map of the County; but on account of a munber of Noblemen and Gentlemen being absent out of the County and this meeting being but thinly attended, they could come to no resolution upon the subject that could be followed up with any effect. And with regard to any assistance being immediately furnished to Mr

Arrowsmith, the time which would be required, to make a complete survey would be so great, that in all probability it would be of no use to him; but that it had been represented by Mr Kennedy of Dunure to the Meeting that upon his receiving a letter from a friend of his in London regarding Mr Arrowsmiths plan of publishing a Map of Scotland that he had mentioned the matter to Mr Abercromby who seemed to think that nothing very complete could be furnished without an actual survey of the County, which could not be accomplished in time for Mr Arrowsmiths purpose; but if Mr Arrowsmith chose to send him a sheet of his map he would willingly mark upon it the principal features, such as ridges of hill, the principal hollows, the courses of the principal rivers, the situation of Towns, and an outline of the coast; which the meeting consider as the most effectual assistance that can be afforded to Mr Arrowsmith in time for his purpose. And the meeting Adjourns 'till sometime in Summer next when the great proprietors of the County may have an opportunity of attending, and wish the Convener then to intimate a Meeting for the same purpose."

No subsequent deliberations upon this subject are recorded in the minute books.

Charles Abercrombie and the Bridges of Doon

The Mr Abercromby consulted by Kennedy of Dunure was Charles Abercrombie (or Abercromby), a surveyor whose Ayrshire engagements included advising on the line of the new road between Ayr and Maybole (generally on the line of the present A77) and on the design of the bridge across the River Doon on that road. Monkwood Bridge, which still stands beside the A77 in the vicinity of the Riverside Inn, was in the event built by and to the design of James and John Rutherford, whose names may be found inscribed on the outer, upstream face.

A later minute book of the commissioners (CO3/1/6) records on 12th July 1810 Abercrombie's assessment of the state of the Old Bridge of Doon at Alloway. He concludes his report: "but I am much afraid there would be found no man hardy enough to undertake this work except the Bridge was completely centered, this would lead to many hundred pounds Expence and after all an old inconvenient crazy bridge for the money. No man will say or require me to say or point out the period of its existance - this impossible; But it is plain from the state it is now in that no portion of confidence can be place on it."

MINUTE BOOKS OF THE AYRSHIRE COMMISSIONERS OF SUPPLY

CO3/1/1	from 1713	to 1758
	volume missing	
CO3/1/2	1774	1774
CO3/1/3	1775	1788
CO3/1/4	1788	1799
CO3/1/5	1799	1807
CO3/1/6	1807	1812
CO3/1/7	1812	1820
CO3/1/8	1820	1829
CO3/1/9	1829	1845
CO3/1/10	1845	1861
CO3/1/11	1861	1871
CO3/1/12	1871	1879
CO3/1/13	1879	1899
CO3/1/14	1900	1929

These volumes are in the Ayrshire Archives, presently in the County Buildings, but shortly to relocate to Craigie Park, Ayr, adjacent to the Horticultural Centre.

"TWO MOCK DOORS IN PORTICO"

On 25 January 1821, the *Air Advertiser* carried a notice calling a meeting of the creditors of James McCall & Co. This partnership appears to have been created specifically to build the County Buildings in Ayr, to the designs of London architect Robert Wallace. An advertisement seeking contractors appeared in the *Air Advertiser* of 18 September 1817, and the foundation stone was laid on 23 April 1818. On 22 April 1819, the *Advertiser* reported the loss of a vessel "bringing stones to the Public Buildings from Garscube Quarry". The County Buildings were finally completed and opened in 1822. James McCall died, aged 72, on 20 July 1849, at his house in Elba Street, Wallacetown.

Following the meeting in January 1821, the company was sequestered. It is not my purpose here to examine the reasons for this. The records of the

sequestration (CS96/3739, in West Register House, Edinburgh), and of the Commissioners of Supply, particularly those relating to the construction of the County Buildings, should, if examined closely, offer some explanation. The appearance, though, is of a small company struggling with a large contract, probably with cash-flow problems. The sequestration records also include a number of inventories, of which perhaps the most interesting is that which details the material at County Buildings. This is transcribed below.

April 1821. Inventory of Materials laying upon the ground and unfinished at Ayr County Buildings

		£	s	d
390' 6" of	America Pine timber at 1s 8d per foot	32	11	0
134' 6" of	Memel timber at 3s 7d per foot	22	13	8½
67' 6" of	Oak timber at 5s per foot	24	8	0
41' 3" of	Plank, 6" thick, at 5s per foot	10	6	8
256 yards of	Flooring, wrought, at 4s 4d per yard	55	9	4
26' yards of	Flooring, rough, at 3s 9d per yard	4	17	6
374' 8" of	2½" plank at 6d per foot	9	7	4
3265' 3" of	1½" plank at 3d per foot	68	0	5
2070' of	1¼" plank at 4d per foot	34	10	0
4023' of	¾" plank at 3d per foot	50	5	9
150' of	1" plank at 3½d per foot	2	3	9
35' of	2" plank at 5½d per foot		16	0½
5396	slabs	22	9	8
284	Memel planks at 7s 4d each	104	2	8
57' of	Finished windows at 3s 6d per foot	9	19	6
57' 4" of	Finished sashes at 1s 6d per foot	4	6	2
10 yards 1'	4 Record Room Doors at 12s per yard	6	1	4
	6 Doors in Keeper's House	5	17	0
	2 End Doors in Court House at 18s per foot	6	6	0
	1 Front Door for Court House at 20 per foot	5	12	0
	2 Mock Doors for Portico at 7s per foot	3	3	0
10 yards 5'	Square Framed Doors at 6s per yard	3	3	6
6 yards 1'	Circular Door for Under Gallery at 12s per yard	3	13	4
8 yds 4' 5"	4 Sash Doors for Water Closets at 10s per yard	4	5	0
32 yards	12 Bound Doors at 9s per yard	4	8	0
19 yards 7'	3 Large Circular Doors, Rotunda, at 24s 9d per yard	23	8	0

4 yds 10"	2 Square Framed Doors, Keeper's House, at 8s per yard	1	12	0
11 yds 5'	6 Square Framed Doors, Keeper's House, at 8s per yard	4	12	0
50 yds 4' 6"	34 Doors for Felons' Buildings, at 10s per yard	25	5	0
4 yards	2 Outside Felons' Doors at 12s per yard	2	8	0
6 yds 6"	2 Square Framed Doors, at 8s per yard	2	12	4
37 yards	23 Doors for Debtors' Buildings, at 9s per yard	16	3	0
4 yds 7' 2"	3 Outside Doors for Debtors' Building, at 12s per yard	2	15	0
15 yards 5'	Bound Door Lining, at 8s per yard	6	4	0
3 yds 7'	Glass for Bound Door Lining, at 8s per yard	1	9	0
128	Plasters for Civil Court Room, at 2s	12	6	0
169	Margin [Rules] for Civil Court Room, at 6d	4	4	6
220	Back Mouldings for Civil Court Room at	11	0	0
118	Plinth and Back Mouldings, 7" broad at 9d	4	7	0
3 yds	Framing for Water Closets, at 8s per yard	1	4	0
267'	Architrave Mouldings, at 9d per foot	10	0	3
10 yds 4' 6"	Blind Doors stuck both sides, at 11s per yard	6	6	0
71' 9"	Surbase Moulding, at 9d per foot	2	16	9
71' 9"	Base Moulding, at 9d per foot	2	16	9
5 yds 8'	Bound Lining for Judges' Room, at []	2	8	0
25' 6"	Large Architraves, at []	1	0	9
15 yds 5'	Circular Bound Lining, Water Closets	7	10	0
9 yds 1'	Circular Bound Lining, Water Closets, at 12s	5	8	0
30 yds 5'	Square Bound Linings, at 8s per yd	12	4	0
12 yds	Window Shutters, 1¾", at 3s per yard	5	8	0
23 yds 7'	Shutters for Felons' Buildings, at 7s per yard	8	5	0
	4 Bundles of 4' lathes at 2s 2d per bundle	0	8	8
	48 Lined Oak Door [Lianders?] at 1s each	2	8	0
	13 Window Sash Weights, at 14s each	9	2	0
	4 pairs of Door [Lianders?] at 5s 9d per pair	1	3	0
	4 cwt of lead at 30s per cwt	6	0	0
	1 cwt of iron at 18s 8d per cwt	0	18	8
	1 cran at the building, one at the Shire and one at Arran	90	0	0
	2 crabs with shears and []	30	0	0
	1 pair of iron shears	1	1	0
	9 wrights' benches	13	10	0
	28 masons' tresses	7	0	0

	400 [slabs?]	1	8	0
	18 pair of 3½" Hinges		13	6
	2 Mortice Locks	1	0	0
	1 Cast Iron Stove	1	0	0
209 yds	Plain Faising and Skirting	3	9	8
900 yd 2'	Circular Railing, Court Room Seats	11	5	0
	Small Wood	1	1	0

STONE

	6 Bases for Principal Columns at £10	60	0	0
	12 Blocks for Principal Columns, 8' long, at £21	252	0	0
	6 Ionic Capitals, finished, for columns, at £16 10s	99	0	0
	5 Blocks for Architraves at £21	105	0	0
529'	Stone Steps for outside, at []	44	1	8
1021'	Hewing in Stone Steps	25	10	6
172' 6"	Blocks for Margin Cornice for Pedament [sic]	25	17	6
241' 6"	Hewing for -do-	12	1	6
24' 9"	Blocks, Upper Leaf on end of Pedament	3	14	3
36'	Hewing for -do-	1	16	0
439'	Blocks, Under Leaf of Cornice on Pedament	60	17	0
393' 6"	Blocks of hewing in -do-	19	13	6
113' 6"	Blocks for Ballaster Back	11	7	0
87' 10"	Hewing for -do-	4	7	10
11' 10"	Blocks for Ballaster Cornice	1	3	8
21' 9"	Hewing for -do-	1	1	9
	2 Cornice Blocks, 43' at 2s 6d	5	7	6
	3 rough Blocks for Cornice	4	10	0
	Block, 9'9" by 2'2" by 11"	2	4	0
	Block, 7'6" by 3'6" by 9"	2	0	0
	3 Blocks, each 8'0" by 1'8" by 10"	5	15	0
	Block, 7'3" by 1'8" by 10"	1	13	0
	Block, 4'4" by 5' by 12"	2	2	0
	Block, 10'9" by 1'6" by 1'6"	5	10	0
	2 Blocks, 10'9" by 1'8" by 1'8"	11	4	0
	Block, 2'6" by 2'8" by 1'4"		10	0
	Block, 5' by 2'4" by 1'6"	1	8	0

Block, 6'3" by 1' by 10"	14	0	
11 Blocks, 4'8" by 1' by 1'	4	8	0
2 Blocks, 5'6" by 1' by 9"		14	0
Block, 3' by 2'6" by 1'4"		16	0
2 Blocks, 4'3" by 2'9" by 1'	1	17	0
2 Blocks, 4'5" by 2'1" by 1'	1	8	0
Block, 4' by 2'3" by 10"		12	0
2 Blocks, 11'6" by 1'9" by 1'9"	17	0	0
Block, 11'6" by 1'6" by 1'3"	7	10	0
3 stones containing 35' 10"	3	15	0
480 Ashlar stones	30	0	0
20'10" of Architrave in porch	5	1	8
95', of Hewing in Ashlar	14	17	6
44', of Stones for Base and Subbase	2	15	0
88', of Hewing in -do-	6	12	0
23 Gallery Plates for Rotunda	54	1	0
1246' of Hewing in -do-	41	10	0
19' 6" of Circular Moulding of Plates		16	3
16 Stone Steps for Principal Stair	10	0	0
418' 8" of hewing in -do-	20	18	8
86' of Plats from Taylor's Quarry	6	9	0
40'6" of Kilmaurs Plats, hewn	2	10	7½
60'9" of Kilmaurs Plats, hewn	2	10	5
413' 4" of Kilmaurs Large Pavement	25	16	3
24' of -do-, rough	1	0	0
77½' of -do-, wrought	4	16	3
3'9" of Cope for Boundary Wall, lineal		11	3
41' 3" of Hewing in -do-		18	9
10' of Polished Hearth from Taylor's		10	0
6' of stones from Ayr Quarry		6	0
173' of Hewing in stones collected	8	13	0
323' in stones collected	16	3	0
20' of Pavement		8	4
72' of Annan Ashlar	3	0	0
257' of Founds	6	8	6
29 Carts of Rubble	1	16	2
11 Carts of Lime	3	6	0

UTENSILS ON SITE

1 nught cramp	1	1	0
A pair of smith bellows	4	0	0
An anvil	1	0	0
2 hammers		5	0
4 sets of lewiss		4	0
1 small pinch		1	6
3 screw keys		3	0
2 grindstones		4	0
chest containing 32 nughts, plain	5	0	0
2 augers		4	0
1 lime heap		7	6
2 quarry mells		8	0
9 picks		13	6
additional chain		10	0
4 ladders		10	0
1 old cart	4	0	0
12 tubs		12	0
8 pails		16	0
4 hand barrows		8	0
1 shovel		1	0
the frame of a grab, old cast metal		2	0
a writing desk		10	0
4 wheel barrows		10	0

THE HEARTH TAX OF AYRSHIRE, 1691

The latest publication of the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies, "The Hearth Tax of Ayrshire, 1691", has now gone to the printer, and should be available in the next few weeks. A leaflet, incorporating an order form, is enclosed with this issue of Ayrshire Notes, and we hope that this new book will prove popular with member societies.

AYRSHIRE FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Ayrshire Notes

As always, I'm going to begin with an appeal for material for "Ayrshire Notes". We try to cover all parts of the county, and all periods of history. We are happy to take material of all lengths: even a single paragraph is all that is needed to convey some piece of information. Don't be put off by worries about literary style; our aim is to get information across, not necessarily to present polished writing.

A recent competition at Ayr Writers Club was to prepare an article for "Ayrshire Notes", and we have some entries which hopefully will appear in future issues, but we do need more material from our members.

A.G.M.

Notice is given that the Annual General Meeting of the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies will take place on Tuesday, 12 May, 1998, in the Portland Church Halls, South Beach, Troon. All member societies are encouraged to send representatives. Full details will be circulated in due course.

Ayrshire Sound Archive

There will be a meeting on Wednesday, 18 March, 1998, in the Meeting Room, Carnegie Library, Ayr, at 7.30, to discuss the future management and structure of the Ayrshire Sound Archive. Anyone interested in the continuing development of Oral History in Ayrshire is encouraged to attend.

Proposed Stirlingshire Federation

Office bearers of the Federation have been invited to attend a meeting in Stirling on March 14th to talk about the Federation, its objectives and achievements. The meeting has been called to discuss the establishment of a similar body by the local history societies in Stirlingshire.

PUBLICATIONS of the
AYRSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL & NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY

available from Ronald W. Brash MA, Publications Distribution Manager
10 Robsland Avenue, Ayr KA7 2RW

An Ayrshire Family 1526-1900 (Waterson)	£1.50
Ayrshire Honestones (Tucker)	£1.50
Ayrshire Mining Enterprises 1600-1840 (Whatley)	£1.50
Digging Up Old Ayr (Lindsay)	£1.00
George Lokert of Ayr (Broadlie)	£1.25
A Scottish Renaissance Household (MacKenzie)	£3.00
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Mauchline Memories of Robert Burns (ed. Strawhorn) (reprint)	£3.50
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