

HISTORY & ANTIQUITIES
AYRSHIRE
& **NOTES** &
ARCHÆOLOGY • NATURAL~HISTORY

No. 23

Autumn 2002

ISSN 1474-3531

£1.00



'Lang Sandy'

Contributions for the Spring 2003 issue of *Ayrshire Notes*, including information about the activities of Member Societies, should be sent before the end of January to Rob Close, 1 Craighrae Cottages, Drongan, Ayr KA6 7EN, tel. 01292 590273.

Local Societies may obtain additional copies of *Ayrshire Notes* for their members at cost price by prior arrangement with David McClure, 7 Park Circus, Ayr KA7 2DJ, tel. 01292 262248.

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

AYRSHIRE NOTES 23, 2002, ISSN 1474–3531

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Cover illustration

Girvan fossil collector Alexander McCallum, 'Lang Sandy'. [Courtesy of Hew McCallum.] See article on page 20.

Contents

	page
Finlayson Arms, Coylton	4
“She weeps o’er the trinkets he gave her”	9
Sawney Bean: Myth or Myth	15
The Auld Kirk, Beith	18
Hugh Miller, 1802–1856, Geologist and Writer: His Links with 19th Century Girvan	20
Lieutenant Robert Shankland: Ayr’s Supreme Hero	23
Book Review	
Ronald Brash, <i>Ayr St Columba: The Church on Midton Road 1902–2002</i>	27
Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies	
Buchan Lecture 2002	27
Swap Shop 2002	27
Conference 2002	28
Subscriptions	28
John Strawhorn Quaich 2002	28
Maps for Local History	28
Diary Dates	28
Diary of meetings of Historical Societies September 2002 – May 2003	29
List of AANHS Publications	32

Finlayson Arms, Coylton

The village of Coylton lies approximately 5 to 6 miles east of Ayr, on the A70, Ayr's traditional route to Edinburgh, via the Lang Whang, and to Dumfries, via the Nith Valley. This road is amongst those authorised in the 1767 Ayrshire Road Act, for "repairing and widening", and on which tolls could be applied for the maintenance of the road.¹ The improvement of this road through the parish of Coylton had an effect on population distribution; the old village centre, known today as Laigh Coylton, with the ruins of the old parish church and an inn, still functioning, was away from the road: this church was repaired in 1776.²

By 1806, however, it was recognised that feus alongside the new road might be of value: "it is proposed that certain parts of the lands of Carbieston, either at the village of Coylton, or upon the sides of the road leading from Air to Cumnock, near the farmhouse of North Duchray, as may be considered most eligible, shall be feued for building dwelling-houses, and for gardens to the same".³ A few houses seem to have been built near North Duchray at this time, in the area now generally known as Hillhead, and by the 1830s this seems to have been recognised as the village centre, for a new church, to designs of David Bryce, was built at Hillhead, replacing the old church at Laigh Coylton. This church is usually accorded the date 1836, though an advertisement in the *Air Advertiser*, indicating that the materials of the old church were to be roused on 11th June 1832, and the pews in the new church let thereafter,⁴ would indicate that the church was substantially completed and in use by that earlier date.

What is certain, though, is that the pub which today stands opposite Coylton Parish Church was in existence when the church was opened, as the following lease indicates:

"It is contracted and agreed between Captain Robert Cathcart of Carbieston, heritable proprietor and heir of entail, in possession of the estate of Carbieston, of which the piece of ground aftermentioned forms a part, on the one part, and David Dickie in Coylton in the county of Ayr on the other part, that is whereas in or about the year 1818 the said Captain Robert Cathcart, as heir in entail in possession of the said estate of Cathcart, under authority of the statute 10 Geo III, agreed to grant to the said David Dickie a building lease of the small piece of ground aftermentioned for the period of 99 years, at the yearly rent of 13s 6d, to which piece of ground the said David Dickie entered at Martinmas 1818, and has paid the yearly rent thereof since that period, although no regular lease between the said Captain Robert Cathcart and him has ever been executed, and whereas the said Robert Cathcart having lately sold that part of the estate of Carbieston on which the said small piece of ground is situated, it is agreed between the said parties that he the said Robert Cathcart shall grant a lease of the piece of ground herein afterwritten and in the terms after specified in lieu of the lease of the piece of ground under which the said David Dickie has occupied the said piece of ground since 1818, and that for the remainder of the period for which the

lease abovementioned was to be granted, and that the said David Dickie shall accept of the said lease in these terms accordingly, wherefore and in implement ... the said Captain Robert Cathcart ... has set and by these presents in tack and assedation lets to the said David Dickie in liferent, and to Margaret Dickie alias Campbell, his daughter, wife of James Campbell in Knockshogle Holm, and her heirs, assignees and sub-tenants in fee, all and whole that small piece of ground measuring 30 falls or thereby Scotch measure of the farm of Hillhead, part of the estate of Carbieston, lying opposite to the new Church of Coylton bounded by the road from Ayr to Cumnock on the north and by the thorn hedges on the east, south and west parts ... for 87 years from and after ... Martinmas last 1830. ... The said David Dickie obliges him and his foresaids to erect a building along the front of the said ground hereby let facing the said road and to uphold and keep in good order the buildings to be erected by him”.⁵

Nothing further is presently known of David Dickie, and he or his daughter may still have been the landlord when the minister, Alexander Duncan, wrote of Coylton in 1841: “There are eight houses licensed to sell spirits and ale; a number far greater than necessary. The facility of obtaining ardent spirits, and the immoderate use of them, are undoubtedly among the chief causes of the immorality, disorder, poverty, crime and misery witnessed in many parts of our country.”⁶ Coylton is a scattered parish, and the pub played an important part in church life, as “churchgoers used to stable their horses at the hotel in stables which are now [1960] used as a coal cellar”.⁷

Margaret Campbell had died by 1844, and the lease had passed to her son, David Campbell, who lived near Kilmarnock: he appears to have had no interest in running an inn, for in that year he assigned the lease to John McGill, the smith at Sundrum Smithy, and his wife, Janet Finlayson.⁸ The McGills seem to have remained as leaseholders for a number of years, but to have entrusted the management of the inn to sub-tenants. One of these, possibly the first, was Andrew McLennan, who was innkeeper here at the time of the 1851, 1861 and 1871 Censuses.⁹ Indeed, according to the notice of his death in the *Ayr Advertiser*, McLennan had been the innkeeper since 1837.¹⁰ From the censuses we learn that throughout this period he combined his duties as innkeeper with that of superintendent of roads. McLennan had been baptized on 20th March 1804 in Dalmellington.¹¹ His wife, Isabella Brown, was eight years his junior, and had been born in Ochiltree parish,¹² where she and McLennan were married on 13th February 1835.¹³ They had at least seven children: the eldest, James, was born in Coylton parish about 1838. Andrew McLennan died on 31st January 1882:¹⁴ his wife was still living at the pub in 1891, when she is described as “retired innkeeper”,¹⁵ and continued to live there until her own death on 14th March 1907.¹⁶

Certainly by 1881, and probably before then, the management of the inn had passed to Matthew Leggat, who was 38 in 1881, and had been born in Kirkoswald.¹⁷ He describes himself as “innkeeper and railway surfaceman”, which appears to indicate that trade at the inn remained below a level sufficient to support the tenant by itself. Leggat’s wife, Sarah Stevenson, came from the parish of Straiton, and they also had at least seven children.¹⁸ The places of their births tell us something of Leggat’s career prior to coming to Coylton.

The eldest child was born in Straiton parish, though this may be accounted for by the tradition of the wife returning home for her first confinement. From c.1863 to c.1873 the family had lived at Waterside in the Doon Valley, where Leggat had presumably worked for the Dalmellington Ironworks. In 1875 they were living at Maryport in Cumberland, but moved to Coylton later that year.

Matthew Leggat died, of an epileptic fit, on 24th September 1888:¹⁹ his widow, Sarah, is recorded as “innkeeper” in the 1891 Census,²⁰ and remained so into the early 1900s. One of Matthew and Sarah’s sons, Robert, achieved some prominence in the Glasgow business community, as proprietor of Robert Leggat & Co., oil merchants in Glasgow. He was also a director and chairman of Ayr United Football Club, and a founder member of Coylton Bowling Club.²¹ In 1938 he gave the address to the annual reunion of Coyltonians. In this address, Bob Leggat recounted his first impression of Coylton, after the family moved from Maryport:

“My first recollection of Culton is of its strange inhabitants and of the still stranger language which they used. My new home was frequented from early morn till the latest at nights by innumerable boisterous men who used to address my elder sisters as ‘colleens’ and they used to call me a ‘broth of a boy’. It will be remembered by many of you here tonight, that it was at that time that the railway was being cut through to the new colliery of the Dalmellington Iron Company at ‘Meedaheid’, and those wild men, whom I took to be natives of Culton, were the Irish navvies engaged on that important contract”.²² Leggat’s recollections give us a vivid insight into the life of a village inn in the 1870s: he had to make a solemn vow to his mother “never tae tell ma’ schule chums or my playmates that I ever saw or heard their faithers in oor hoose, and never tae come ower ootside wi’ anything that I ever saw or heard inside”.²³ Sundays were, to the young Leggat, the duller days: the blinds in the front windows – opposite the church – were lowered and remained so until church service was over, “at one o’clock or half past one, according to the dreichness o’ the meenister”.²⁴ Favoured farmers’ wives and daughters would have the use of the pub kitchen to make final adjustments to their dress, while the farmers attended to putting the horses into the stables at the back, and betook themselves of a glass of beer before or – behind the lowered blinds – during the service. Saturday nights were busy with the miners, and Tuesdays were notable for the passage of carriers and farmers to and from the Ayr market. The carriers, from Cumnock, Auchinleck, Ochiltree, Drongan, &c., would “ca’ at the inn on their road to the market, in the early oors o’ the mornin’ an’ they wud help themsels tae oatcake and cheese fae a basket that was aye hingin fae yin o’ the juists in the kitchen”, while the farmers, returning from market, would call in on their way home: young Bob Leggat had lots of friends on a Tuesday, for he and his school friends were in demand to hold the reins of the farmers’ horses while they were inside.²⁵ Mrs Leggat also built a hall behind the inn, for the Free Gardeners, who met there every Saturday night.

Sarah Leggat was succeeded in the tenancy by John Strachan, a miner, and in the 1920s Strachan also became owner of the property. On the death of John McGill and his wife, the main lease had passed to their two sons, Doctor John Finlayson McGill, of Coylebank, Coylton, and Doctor James Finlayson McGill, of Harthill, Lanarkshire.²⁶ James McGill died on 6th May 1900,²⁷ and his share passed to his niece – John F McGill’s

daughter, Janet Finlayson McGill, who was the wife of William Sloan, farmer. John F McGill died on 9th March 1909,²⁸ when his half share also passed to Mrs Sloan. In 1909 the Sloans were farming at Maneight, on the New Cumnock to Dalmellington Road, but by 1920 they had moved to Ifferdale, Saddell, Kintyre.²⁹

In 1909 the original lease was renounced by Janet Sloan,³⁰ and a new lease for 99 years from Martinmas 1908 made out in her favour by the Dalmellington Iron Company, who had succeeded to the feudal superiority.³¹ The new lease describes the property as being 38.66 poles of ground. In 1921 this lease was assigned by Mrs Sloan to John Strachan,³² who immediately used it as security for a £500 loan from Turner's Ayr & Newton Breweries Ltd.³³ In 1928 ownership passed from Strachan, who was then described as 'wine and spirit merchant, Finlayson Arms', to Isabella Gray or Ochiltree,³⁴ the widow of John Ochiltree, who had been a cashier in Gray's Carpet Works in Newton upon Ayr.³⁵ Mrs Ochiltree's background, however, was in the licensed trade, as her mother, Mrs Ritchie, had started the first licensed restaurant in Ayr, at the Kyle Hotel, where Mrs Ochiltree was licensee for a number of years before moving to Coylton.³⁶ Mrs Ochiltree was assisted in the management of the pub by one of her daughters, Bessie Montgomerie; after Isabella died, aged 80, in 1953,³⁷ Bessie was joined in running the Finlayson Arms by her youngest sister, Jean. Jean married, c.1957, Ian Thomson, and at approximately the same time, Bessie took on the management of the Toll Bar, Drongan, before moving to an off-licence in Beresford Terrace, Ayr. The Thomsons ran the Finlayson Arms for a few years, but in 1960 they sold it to Thomas and Elizabeth Reid, from Helensburgh.³⁸ By 1965 ownership had passed to Arthur and Ann Thomson. In 1981 it was owned by J and G Earl, and in 1988 by Murdo and Catherine Munro.

Rob Close

¹ See David McClure, *Tolls and Tacksmen*, Ayr, 1994.

² John Strawhorn, ed., *Ayrshire at the Time of Burns*, Ayr, 1959, 260.

³ *Air Advertiser*, 20th March 1806, 4b.

⁴ *Air Advertiser*, 7th June 1832, 1b

⁵ National Archives of Scotland [NAS], RS 91/1067, ff 58–60.

⁶ *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol.V, *Ayr–Bute*, Edinburgh, 1845, 665.

⁷ *Ayr Advertiser*, 22nd September 1960, 6a.

⁸ NAS, RS 91/1067, f 62.

⁹ South Ayrshire Libraries [SAL], Census Enumerators' Returns. The entries are as follows: for 1851, Registration District 583 [Coylton], Enumeration District 4, Entry No.13; for 1861, Registration District 583, Enumeration District 4, Entry No. 2 in Hillhead section; and for 1871, Registration District 583, Enumeration District 4, Entry No. 54..

¹⁰ *Ayr Advertiser*, 2nd February 1882, 8f, which states that he had been an innkeeper for 45 years.

¹¹ SAL, OPR 586/1, Dalmellington, Births and Marriages 1641–1822. His surname is given as 'McClewanen'.

¹² She was christened on 10th October 1813. [International Genealogical Index [IGI]]

13 SAL, OPR 609/4, Ochiltree, Births Marriages and Deaths 1819–1854. On this
occasion Andrew’s surname is rendered as ‘McLownan’.

14 New Register House [NRH], Register of Deaths 1882, District 583 [Coylton], Entry
No. 4. This entry also records that McLennan’s parents had been James McLennan,
a weaver, and his wife Barbara Gemmell.

15 SAL, Census Enumerators’ Returns for 1891, Registration District 583,
Enumeration District 5, Entry No. 103.

16 NRH, Register of Deaths 1907, District 583/1 [Coylton], Entry No. 4. Her parents
are recorded as William Brown, corn miller, and his wife Margaret Stoddart. See
also *Ayr Advertiser*, 21st March 1907, 8f.

17 SAL, Census Enumerators’ Returns for 1881, Registration District 583,
Enumeration District 5, Entry No. 15. His birth, on 15th February 1831, at
Woodhead, Kirkoswald, is recorded in SAL, OPR 601/3, Kirkoswald, Births 1820–
1854, and his parents named as James Leggat, general labourer, and his wife
Catherine Brown.

18 They were married in Straiton on 15th February 1861. [IGI]

19 NRH, Register of Deaths 1888, District 583, Entry No. 57. See also *Ayr Advertiser*,
27th September 1888, 8e.

20 SAL, Census Enumerators’ Returns for 1891, Registration District 583,
Enumeration District 5, Entry no. 104.

21 Robert Leggat died on 10th October 1941. See his obituary in *Ayrshire Post*, 17th
October 1941, 3a.

22 *Ayrshire Post*, 14th January 1938, 8a.

23 *ibid.*, 8a.

24 *ibid.*, 8b.

25 *ibid.*, 8b.

26 NAS, RS 91/1067, f 68.

27 *Ayr Advertiser*, 10th May 1900, 8f. He was 71.

28 *Ayr Advertiser*, 11th March 1909, 8f. He was 82. A brief obituary in the same
edition of the paper, page 4g, states that he did medical work for the Dalmellington
Iron Company, the Annbank Coal Company, and others.

29 Information derived from Valuation Rolls.

30 NAS, RS 91/1579, f 61.

31 NAS, RS 91/1580, f 132.

32 NAS, RS 91/2132, f 46.

33 *ibid.*, f. 47.

34 NAS, RS 91/2456, f 80.

35 *Ayrshire Post*, 15th May 1953, 9c.

36 *ibid.*, 9c.

37 *ibid.*, 9c. See also NRH, Register of Deaths 1953, District 583/1 [Coylton], Entry
No. 8, which names Mrs Ochiltree’s parents as John Gray, contractor, and his wife
Isabella Ross.

38* *Ayr Advertiser*, 22nd September 1960, 6a.

“She weeps o’er the trinkets he gave her”

What follows is the transcription of a court report that appeared in the *Ayr Observer* of 14th May 1833. At this period, the Sheriff Small Debt Court in Ayr, where this case from Dunlop was heard on the 9th May 1833, was the only court in Ayrshire able to deal with such cases. As in this instance, the appearance of their country cousins in town seems to have given the people of Ayr – or at least the editor of one of their newspapers – an opportunity for supercilious irony.

To us, the interest in the case lies perhaps not in the rough path of love, nor in the behaviour of Margaret Logan, but more in the insight the evidence gives us of the manner in which courtship was conducted in rural Ayrshire at this period. And while it gives us a glimpse of the trinkets which lovers bestowed on each other, one cannot but wonder about a suitor who kept a full, costed, list of his gifts to his beloved.

Of the protagonists we know little, though more could doubtless be discovered. We do know that Marshall, despite this setback, remained in Dunlop, where he was awarded a testimonial in 1839 (*Ayr Advertiser*, 28th February 1839).

Rob Close

Marshall v Margaret Logan and Husband (Jack)

This case is another melancholy proof to the thousand and one already on record that ‘the course of true love never did run smooth’. The pursuer, a douce looking village schoolmaster, about middle age, had, it appeared, been deeply smitten, some twelve years ago, with the laughing eyes and rosy lips of the defender, a pretty little woman, who has now attained the age of 32; but the shaft which pierced his tender heart had not been one of those ‘all tipp’d with pleasure, and all winged with joy’, for after a most laborious courtship, and a long and faithful attachment on his part, the dear object of his wishes found out, as set forth in one of her epistles, that ‘love is not in our own power’, and threw herself, some time in the cool month of January last, into the warm embraces of a tall youth, called Robert Jack, by whom she was attended in court on this trying occasion.

The action was brought to recover payment of the following account, which the pursuer produced, and read aloud:–

‘Langtown, 15th February 1833 – Having addressed Margaret Logan in Brae on a subject of the tenderest nature, I received from her several professions of esteem and regard, in which I placed confidence, and in full expectation of a future connexion, I gave her the following trinkets, during our correspondence, from 30th August 1820 till 18th December 1832. Peter Marshall.

1820	3 yds dark red ribbon	£0	4	6
1821	1 gold ring, 5 imitation garnet stones	0	7	6
	1 gold brooch	0	7	6
	1 smelling-vial, silver top	0	1	6
	1 silk handkerchief	0	5	0
	3 yds white ribbon	0	4	6

	1 hair brush	0	2	0
	1 cape comb	0	1	6
	1 copy Walker's Dictionary, with name	0	15	0
	1 copy Domestic Cookery, with name	0	8	6
	1 copy Gregory's Legacy	0	2	6
	1 copy Murray's small Grammar	0	1	0
	3 yds light red ribbon	0	4	6
	1 silver thimble	0	1	6
	1 penknife and inkstand	0	2	0
1822				
May 15	1 parasol, ivory handle & green figured silk	1	4	6
June 18	2 white ostrich feathers	1	5	6
	2½ yds French white ribbon and band-box	0	4	0
Aug 20	3 yds pink ribbon	0	5	0
Oct 11	3 yds light blue ribbon	0	4	0
1823				
March 18	1 elastic steel busk	0	1	9
	1 cape comb	0	1	9
1824				
Jan 10	1 silver thimble	0	1	6
	1 necklace	0	1	3
20	1 umbrella	0	7	0
April 12	1 pair scissors	0	2	6
June 12	1 mourning brooch	0	2	6
	1 silver smelling-box, inside deep gold plate	0	17	6
1829				
Dec 5	1 penknife, with name	0	3	6
9	1 silver thimble, ditto	0	2	0
	1 cape comb	0	1	6
1830				
May 24	1 silk handkerchief	0	2	6
25	2½ yds ribbon, 5s, and 1 yd -do-, 1s	0	6	0
26	1 pair side-combs, and dressing -do-	0	1	9
Nov 2	2 pair stockings	0	5	0
Dec 1	1 gold ring, with name	0	12	6
	1 silver thimble, initials	0	2	0
7	1 inkstand	0	0	6
1831				
April 20	3 yds white pearl ribbons 4s, and 1 cape comb, 1s	0	5	0
		£10	10	0
Received from Margaret Logan				
1831				
Dec 31	Domestic Cookery	0	8	6
1833	Received the following trinkets from Margaret Logan			
Jan 28	1 smelling-vial, silver top	0	1	6
	1 silver thimble, initials	0	1	6
	1 penknife, with name	0	3	6

1 gold ring, with name	0	12	6
1 silver thimble, with motto	0	2	0
	£1	9	6

The pursuer in support of his claim produced and read the following Statement:—

The following are a few of the declarations of esteem and regard made to me by Margaret Logan in Brae, in which I placed confidence, and on which account I gave her the trinkets stated in my account against her.

One evening in the Spring of 1821, I called at her father's and after some conversation I said that for some time she had been the object of my fond attachment, and asked, if she would be content to pass the rest of her days in my company? She replied that she would, for I had never given her any cause to entertain an unfavourable opinion of me. And assured me that I had gained her affection very much.

I called at her father's about the beginning of December 1829, where I spent some time conversing with the family. When they withdrew, she gave me a similar declaration of her regard. But being then rather in a delicate state of health, she thought it would not be prudent to enter upon an engagement of that nature for some time.

We were at Glasgow on the 25th May 1830, and when taking a refreshment in the Black Bull Inn, during our conversation I said that for many years my affections for her had been constant and sincere, and asked if she entertained a similar regard for me? She replied that I did not need to ask that question, for I could not but know her mind very well upon the subject. I asked if she had any objections to spend the remainder of her days in my company? She replied, that for any thing she had seen, she could live very agreeably with me, but on account of particular circumstances, she could not think to leave her parents in the meantime.

I called at her father's on the evening of 30th August 1830 and after some conversation, I asked if she thought she could give me her heart and her hand, and be my companion for life? She replied, that she thought she could, for she had been many times very happy in my company. I had always used her discreetly, and my attachment had gained her esteem and affection very much. But she hoped, as she had made me acquainted with the particular reasons, that I would not insist upon her to comply immediately with my wishes.

Peter Marshall, Langtown, 31st December 1832

The reading of the above inventory of love tokens, and the statement which follows, produced much merriment, in which the defender joined very heartily. On being called on for her defence, she boldly denied that she had ever given the pursuer any promise of marriage, or grounds to suppose that she meant 'to pass the rest of her days in his company'; but she admitted that he had given her many presents, which she averred were forced upon her, and received as 'free presents', without any pledge on her part whatever. In evidence of these assertions, she referred to the following epistle from the pursuer:—

Glasgow, 30th March 1824. My Dearest Love, By this time I hope that thy lovely bosom has got free from the complaint which has afflicted the dearest object of my heart,

almost since I saw you. For believe me, I shall always feel a tenderness for you, and shall be deeply interested wherever you are concerned. This is but gratitude on my part, but, if my feelings should be finer, I hope, you will have the goodness to excuse the man whose tenderness for you may prove his greatest fault. Pray accept of a small present along with this, and excuse this hurried scrawl, as it is now very late. Hoping that you are now recovered, and that I shall hear from you soon – saying when I may call and see you – altho' at midnight's darkest hour. I remain, my Dearest Love, Your sincere and devoted lover. [Signature clipped off]

My Dearest dear, you have my heart,/ Sure it is far the noblest part,/ No other fair one doth it share,/ Tho' shining in their silks so rare./ Come, let us haste to Hymen's shrine,/ And join our hands in love divine,/ Then all our fears shall quickly end,/ In mutual love our days we'll spend. [Initials here blotted out]

Miss Margt Logan, Brae, Dunlop.

The pursuer then produced the following letters, which he alleged he had received from the defendant, in evidence of her attachment and of his being ill—used.

Brae, 10th March 1823. Dear Sir – I received your letter of the 13th Nov. during the time of my indisposition, and am thankful for your kind attention.

If convenient, I shall expect to meet you at the bank in the garden, at nine o'clock on the evening of Tuesday the 18th current, when perhaps there may be something new, that is not worth committing to paper. I hope this will find you well, as I myself am. I remain, Dear Sir, your affectionate friend, (Signed) Margaret Logan.

Mr Peter Marshall, Dunlop

Brae, 10th August 1830. Dear Friend – I received your kind letter of the 21st July, inquiring kindly respecting my health, and informing me of your late indisposition, which I was truly sorry to hear; but I sincerely hope that by this time you are completely recovered.

You purpose to be here on Monday night, the 30th current, at which time I shall be glad to see you, if you can accomplish it without injuring your health. But by no means undertake such a journey, if you think it will be hurtful. I shall however wait for you, at the east end of the garden at nine o'clock, and if you do not come, the disappointment to me will be but trifling.

I soon recovered of a cold which I caught when we were at Glasgow last May, and have since enjoyed good health. Since I had the pleasure of seeing you I was there, where I remained three weeks, and have to inform you that my sister had got another daughter. I saw my brother, and am happy to say that he is looking well. My own immediate friends and any of your acquaintance that I know are enjoying good health. I have nothing farther of any importance to communicate, and shall therefore conclude by subscribing myself, dear friend, yours affectionately (Signed) Margaret Logan.

Brae, 18th Dec. 1830. Dear Friend – I never found myself at so great a loss how to address any person, as you have shewed so much kindness to me, and I can make no return; any thing short of my heart and hand would be presumption, and even that would be too

small an equivalent for the undivided possession of yours, but as mine is disposed of, it need be no more talked of. I have said all on this subject already that seems necessary to a man possessed of so much good sense and, I hope, generosity. Yes, Sir, let me bespeak your humanity to me, and justice to yourself in this point, and that shall be all I will ask in my favour. I know you deserve a much better wife than I can ever make, and as love is not in our own power, and I have the misfortune to know that I cannot love you, will not justice to yourself, if not pity to me, oblige you to abandon my company, and make some worthier person happy in your addresses that can be happy in them. I am truly ashamed when I think of my ingratitude. I hope my conduct will be sufficient to show you my unworthiness, as no woman would have used you as I have done, if she deserved the least of your attention. I therefore again beg that you will refrain my company as much as possible in future, as you need not talk of wearing of the affection by still coming back; you may as well think of quenching a fire by adding fuel. I will try to have the small jobs finished you left for me to do by the time you mentioned you would be here, when, I hope, for your own sake, you will break up the correspondence as abruptly as possible, since none but those who loved can tell the anguish of a last farewell. I therefore hope you will accept of the kind advice you gave to me, to do nothing rashly, and not give up your situation and render yourself uncomfortable with regard to the comforts of this world, which you have in your own hand, but see that you settle in your own country, and become a respectable member of society. It is not alone the advantages of rank or fortune that renders a man or woman worthy of esteem, it is the superior perfections of the soul, and the finer feelings of the heart, which can alone exalt the nature, and place one higher than another in the great chain of beings. Many a man has raised unto themselves eternal monuments of fame and glory, on whom fortune never smiled nor honours distinguished. But I must stop; you have enough of my incoherence for once; yet I trust you will pardon it, as it will likely be the last. I hope this will find you enjoying that blessing of health for which I at present have reason to be thankful; and in the meantime accept of best respects, and although I cannot be what you would wish me to be, do me the justice to believe me to be your sincere friend and well-wisher, Margaret Logan.

Mr Peter Marshall, Dunlop

The Sheriff here remarked that he did not observe in the catalogue of books she had received from the pursuer the 'Complete Letter-Writer', and asked where she found her last epistle. To this question, she made no reply, but by her smiles appeared to receive the query as a compliment on her powers of composition. The two letters dated 10th March and 10th August being only copies, the defender would not admit their authenticity, but she acknowledged the last to be in her hand-writing, and seemed much more entertained by its contents than Mr Jack, who obviously saw no fun in the matter.

The correspondence was closed by the following business-like communication:—

Langton, 31st December 1832. Miss Logan – The following is rather a disagreeable task, but a less contracted disposition on your part might have prevented it.

On Tuesday evening, the fifteenth February eighteen hundred and thirty one, a short time after you had informed me that your marriage with Thomas Parker was to take place

that spring, I returned you every article of yours then in my possession, even to a pair of worn-out garters and a crooked pin. At the same time, or soon after, I hinted to you to return every article which you had received from me during our correspondence. But you paid little attention to my request.

On Tuesday evening, the 18th instant, you informed me that you were to be married to Robert Jack about the beginning of the new year, when I insisted upon the impropriety of your retaining any trinkets or other articles belonging to me, as they were only given in expectation of a future connexion; but you appeared somewhat reluctant to part with them.

As I have sometimes known you to be any thing but a friend to truth, perhaps you may deny that you have received any trinkets, or other articles from me, but I have kept a list of them, and your letter to me dated 18th December 1830, yet in my possession, will be a strong evidence against you, and prove the validity of what I assert. Indeed you could only accept of these articles in the character of a virtuous woman, or that of a worthless one, and therefore you will do well to return them immediately.

I therefore request that, within twenty one days, after the date of this letter, you will return, by any person you please, to me at the Langton, every article which I gave you since 1820, without destroying or injuring any one of them, otherwise a public prosecution in an open court will be the immediate consequence, and you will have yourself to blame for exposure, unnecessary trouble, and expense. I remain your obedient servant, (Signed) Peter Marshall.

At this stage of the case the pursuer limited his claim to the gold trinkets enumerated in the above account. The defender alleged that she had returned some things to the pursuer, and that she had very few of his presents in her possession – many of them having been worn out, or ‘taken away by other beaux’. She acknowledged having ‘exchanged garters’ with him, but did not think it worth while to return his, as they were sore worn. The Sheriff here inquired if the garters she gave the pursuer bore any *particular* motto, to which she blushed a negative reply. She then unhesitatingly repelled the pursuer’s allegation that she had ever said to him that she was to be married to Thomas Parker, but admitted that the pursuer, about the time he mentions, stated to her a report was current that she was about to be married, she acknowledged it to be true, and when he added it was to Thomas Parker, she merely returned that he ‘was a witch for a guesser’.

The parties having been fully heard, it was submitted by an agent whom the defender had called to her aid, that the whole correspondence went to prove that she had received the pursuer’s visits with the greatest reluctance, and had never held out the slightest hope to him of forming a matrimonial alliance, and that therefore his claim could not be sustained. If however the Sheriff felt disposed to recognise the ‘laws of the court of love’, the pursuer might perhaps be entitled to a ‘yellow ribbon to bind his brows’ from his client, but nothing more.

The pursuer asserted he was not so melancholy as to need a yellow ribbon, and offered to prove by the defender’s oath that she had held out hopes to him which were not fulfilled, on the faith of which he had given her the presents.

The Sheriff held the reference competent, and she was accordingly sworn, when she negatived all the pursuer’s averments, leaving him no other consolation than what may be derived from the exposition of his disappointed love, and her unwarrantable flirtation, in a court of law. He might with propriety have adopted the language of Malvolio in the play:

‘Madam you have done me wrong – notorious wrong. Pray you peruse that letter – you must not now deny it is your hand: write from it if you can, in hand or phrase, or say ‘tis not your seal, nor your invention; you can say none of this. Well, grant it then and tell me in the modesty of honour why you have given me such clear lights of favour, bade me come smiling and cross-gartered to you, to put on yellow stockings, and made the most notorious geck and gull that ‘e’er invention played on? Tell me why’.

Acutely as the pursuer may have felt the truth of the poet’s remark that ‘slighted love is sair to bide’, and how hard it is to bear up under the gibes and jeers of the scoffers, yet he quitted the Court in tolerable cheerfulness of heart, and contrary to the example of poor Duncan Gray when placed in a similar predicament, he never ‘spak’ o’ louping owre a linn’ in revenge for the contumelious manner in which his overtures had been received by the fair and, as he no doubt thought, fickle defender.

Sawney Bean: Myth or Myth

[The following is a response to an article on “Sawney Bean: Scotland’s Cannibal King” in the last edition of *Ayrshire Notes*. In the footnotes to that article, I said that ‘[t]he editor must also admit that, with regard to Sawney Bean, he is firmly in the camp of the disbelievers, but relishes a good story as much as anyone’. The persistence of this myth says much about our society, and our belief systems: with hindsight I should perhaps have treated the article with more circumspection. The author of it is a regular, and welcome, contributor to *Ayrshire Notes*: I am fairly certain that Robert Shankland (pages 23–26) existed. We do, additionally, as a result of its appearance, have this well-constructed riposte, which sets the myth of Sawney Bean into its correct context, that of legend and mythology.¹ Rob Close]

Sawney Bean raised his ugly head in the last issue of *Ayrshire Notes*, in a manner which scarcely does credit to the editors or the author concerned. The reaction of any serious historian (particularly a local historian in Ayrshire) to the Sawney Bean myth should be polite incredulity at least, and outright denunciation at best. Several historians and antiquarians between the late 19th Century and the present day have debunked the story. However, for every sober refutation to appear in print there continue to appear hundreds of credulous regurgitations of the original tale. Irritating though it is to have to expend time and ink on such tabloid history, I am grateful to the editors for this opportunity to review what is known about the Sawney Bean myth.

Sawney Bean is reputed to have been a mass-murderer and cannibal, who lived with his family in a cave near Ballantrae, on what is now the Ayrshire coast, during the reign of James VI, or during the reign of James I (of Scotland). Versions of the tale proliferated in the 19th Century in books and magazines. Newspaper editors and journalists with column inches to fill in the silly season, and radio and television producers with spare airtime for airheads have maintained and increased Sawney’s notoriety over the last 100 years. And given the success of recent porridge westerns it cannot be long before the cameras begin to roll on a Hollywood blockbuster. *Braised Heart*, perhaps.

In the 1970s a rural myth somehow spread beyond Carrick that a cave at Balcreuchan Port, near Ballantrae, was Sawney Bean's abode.² An increasing number of sightseers made their way down the precarious route to the cave and, fearing an accident, the local authority (the Kyle and Carrick District Council) improved the pathway in 1978. This had the unfortunate effect of promoting the site, which has since been noted in tourist literature, and recently the Ordnance Survey has marked the location of the cave on its Landranger maps. It is worth pointing out here that, far from bestowing historical legitimacy on a site, recognition of it by the Ordnance Survey very often confers the opposite. The Survey's carelessness with respect to marking sites like this is well-known, at least to the many people who have attempted to find the site of (what the Survey calls) 'Prince Charlie's Cave' on the slopes of Ben Alder (there wasn't a cave, and it wasn't the Bonnie Prince who resided there). To be fair to the Ordnance Survey, it merely records an existing use of a site in order to sell maps. In this respect, it is no worse and no better than anyone else who has boarded the bandwagon of Caledonian mythology.

Doubts have been expressed about the story from at least the late 19th Century and by the early part of the 20th Century the origins of the story were unravelling in antiquarian journals, for example in the periodical *Scottish Notes and Queries*.³ In the 1930s the legal historian William Roughead wanted to include the case of Sawney Bean in his *Notable British Trials* series. Roughead reported that he had 'sought diligently for Sawney in the official records of the time in contemporary journals, diaries and memoirs, in the pages of gossiping annalists and of grave historians', but failed to find 'either in print or in manuscript the slightest mention of him', and concluded that Bean was a completely fictional character.⁴

Roughead found (as others before him had) that the story probably dates from the early 18th Century, becoming widely known through a book by a Captain Charles Johnson entitled *A General and True History of the Lives and Sections of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-Robbers, &c.*, published in London in 1734 and Birmingham in 1742. Although Johnson stated that his account was 'as well attested as any historical fact can be', he did not record any source for the story. Roughead suggested that Johnson's source was a similar work by Alexander Smith published in London in 1719 entitled *A Compleat History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen*.

Smith, in turn, almost certainly lifted the material from 18th Century chapbooks and broadsheets. These were early forms of printed books, to some extent precursors of the tabloid newspaper, sold primarily by pedlars, especially at fairs and public executions. The content of chapbooks and broadsheets frequently concerned executions, murders, other major crimes and strange occurrences: cheap thrills. They were replaced as popular reading matter by the 'penny dreadfuls' of Victorian times. Four such chapbooks, recounting the Bean story, survive in the Lauriston Castle Collection of the National Library of Scotland:⁵ Roughead ingeniously suggested that these or their precursor might have been written by Daniel Defoe.

Many of the tales from these chapbooks and broadsheets were collected and published in the *Newgate Calendar*, which first appeared in the 1770s, taking its name from the prison of Newgate in London, the scene of many public executions. Some of the stories

in the *Newgate Calendar* were based on real cases, others (such as the story of Sawney Bean) were almost certainly fictional. The many editions and reprints of the *Calendar* in the 19th and 20th Centuries have assured Sawney Bean an international notoriety.

Adherents of the story point to the amount of detail in the published versions as supporting evidence and cling to the hope that historical records may yet provide validation. However, the dating of the story to the late 16th Century (or earlier) means that there are relatively few contemporary sources of information available to the researcher, and most have already been searched. Indeed, the mass of supporting detail, in the absence of historical record, casts more doubt on the story.

For example, the story goes into some detail about Bean's origins in East Lothian. Why say he was born 'about 8 or 9 miles eastward of the city of Edinburgh' instead of mentioning the actual place? Probably because the chapbooks and later versions of the story were aimed at an English audience, and Edinburgh was sufficiently well-known in England, whereas Tranent or Macmerry or wherever was not. His parents 'worked at hedging and ditching' but it is unlikely that anyone specialised at those occupations in the Scotland of the 15th and 16th Centuries. The obvious source for all of these details would be an old parish register of births, but the earliest registers of births for East Lothian parishes date from the 1590s: too late by several decades to record Mr Bean and his parents.

The Bean family's 25-year spree of robbery and cannibalism accounted for over 1000 victims, and (according to the tale) caused a 'general outcry in the country round about' and 'the whole country was almost depopulated'. One might presume, then, that some mention of the outcry would be found in family papers, correspondence and memoirs of the period. Nothing of the sort has ever surfaced and William Roughead, one suspects, left few stones unturned on his search for a good, but valid, story. No account of Bean appears in Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials in Scotland, 1494–1624*. Neither is there any record of the trials of the travellers and innkeepers who were, according to the story, wrongfully hanged for Bean's murders.

Other details in the story look odd or anachronistic. A survivor of an attack by Bean is taken to Glasgow to see the Provost. Why Glasgow, when the nearest royal burghs were Ayr and Irvine? Why a provost, when the appropriate jurisdiction would have been that of the Sheriff of Ayr? The king then sets out with a body of about 400 men and bloodhounds. James VI is one of the most researched Scots monarchs, but no historian has reported finding mention of such an expedition in records of the exchequer, household and other crown records.

After capture, Bean and his family were reputedly committed to the tolbooth in Edinburgh, which at the time was probably a single tower, quite ruinous, and certainly incapable of housing several dozen prisoners.⁶ The warding and liberation books of Edinburgh tolbooth begin in 1657. How inconvenient! Then the Bean family is executed at Leith: the men having their limbs amputated and the women burnt at the stake. Barbarous executions of this sort were not as common in Scotland as is often supposed – they were generally reserved for traitors or regicides, and they were so unusual as to be well attested contemporaneously. Executions were normally staged by burghs and the costs involved are

usually scrupulously recorded in burgh minute books and accounts, but no one has ever reported any such costly execution.

Perhaps there is no smoke without fire. Is it possible that the story is grossly distorted folklore relating to some local murder case, for which no historical evidence survives? The short answer is: we'll never know. On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence from what we know of the literary origins of the story to suppose that it is not even genuine folklore (if such a thing exists), but the invention of 18th Century sensationalists. The story cannot be traced beyond the 18th Century equivalent of the *Sunday Sport*, so is it worth pursuing at all? I can think of no sound reason for doing so other than gratuitous and morbid titillation. What is most reprehensible about all this is that the myth is popularized as part of a despicable conspiracy of the heritage industry, tourist agencies and local authorities to turn parts of Scotland into little more than gruesome theme parks. If peddling the Sawney Bean story attracts tourists to Carrick, surely they are the wrong kind of tourists.

- ¹ For a lengthier debunking see Ronald Holmes, *The Legend of Sawney Bean*, London 1975. As the dust jacket says: 'The author sets out on the three-hundred year old trail of this monster who, together with his family, killed and ate over 1000 people in 25 years; and as the clues are examined it soon becomes evident that the real monsters are black shadows from the primitive past of the human mind.'
- ² S R Crockett, in *The Grey Man*, (1896) was the first to locate Bean's cave at or near Bennane Head. [Holmes, op cit, p.26–27]. In the early 1970s Bennane Cave was 'partly walled-up and occupied by a hermit' [James Lawson and Judith Lawson, *Geology Explained around Glasgow and South-West Scotland, including Arran*, Newton Abbot, 1976, p.116]
- ³ *Scottish Notes and Queries*, 2nd series, Vol 8, (1906–07), pp 101 and 129.
- ⁴ William Roughhead, "The Monster of Ballantrae" in *Juridical Review*, 45, 1933. Roughhead did, however, include Bean among the nine cases he covered in his *Rogues Walk Here*, London, 1934.
- ⁵ *The History of Sawney Beane and His Family; Robbers and Murderers*, undated, 18th Century. Printed in London. It contains six illustrations. NLS reference LC 2737, no.7; *The Life of Sawney Beane, the Man Eater*, undated, 18th Century. Printed in Hull. NLS reference LC 2746.E, no.19; another copy of the above. NLS reference LC 2746.E, no.20; *Horrid Life of Sawney Beane*, undated, 18th Century. Printed in Carlisle. NLS reference LC 2901, no.1.
- ⁶ Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Tollbooths and Town-houses: civic architecture in Scotland to 1833*, Edinburgh 1996.

The Auld Kirk, Beith

In 1593, about the time of the reformation, a parish church, in the form of a cross, was built on the site of the pre-Reformation parish church of Beith, dedicated to St Inan. In 1754 the front wing was enlarged, and a new belfry and clock added about 1800. The old bell, still in position, bears the following inscription: 'This bell was given by Hew Montgomerie, sone of Hesselhead, anno 1614, and refounded by the Heritors of Beith, anno 1734.' The church early became too small for the growth of the population, and in 1633 an Act of the Scottish Parliament was passed 'anent the re-edifying of the Kirk of Beythe', on some more convenient site for the parishioners, 'who cannot goodlie addresse and convene thameselffs thairto, be reason of the stormes of weather, and of the deep and evil ways.'

These good intentions were not carried out for 170 years, and the old kirk continued to cling to the cliff, jutting out from the steep hillside until in 1807–10 the new parish church, with its very prominent tower, was built a little further up the hill overlooking the old kirk. When the new church was built the Heritors, to save the expense of upkeep yet with inexcusable vandalism, removed all the older portion of the Auld Kirk, leaving only the front with the clock and belfry standing. Fortunately Robert Aitken, a Beith surveyor, copied the plan of the Kirk in 1822, showing the ground plan.

In each of the four wings of the Auld Kirk was a 'laft' or gallery, belonging to the territorial magnates of the parish, except the 'toun laft', which was in the front wing, where niches in the wall where the seats rested are still seen. Opposite the 'toun laft' was the Giffen laft; in the east wing that of Hesselhead, and in the west that pertaining to Braidstane. All were entered by outside stairs. Against the east wing was built a low-ceilinged two-storeyed building, still standing, called the Giffen Aisle. The portion of the Auld Kirk left has no pretensions to architectural beauty. Its walls are five feet thick, built of rough rubble. In the front wall is a square moulded door with two round arched windows higher up. The bell was rung from the doorstep by a rope hanging down outside the church, and the deep groove worn by the rope may still be seen in the base of the belfry. The church appears to have been as plain inside as out. The floor is said to have been bare earth, and whether there were pews or whether the worshippers, like Jenny Geddes, brought their own 'cutty stools' is uncertain: the seats in the galleries were boards stretched from wall to wall, resting in notches there. There was a small triangular gallery in the angle between the town and Braidstane lofts called the 'Woodside laft', which is said to have been finely painted and carved. This faced the pulpit. The only decorative relic of the Auld Kirk left is the richly emblazoned coat-of-arms of the barony of Giffen, taken from the Giffen loft and now fixed on the front gallery of the High Church.

The Auld Kirkyard was congested for generations and when the Kirk was taken down the site was filled with graves; even the interior of the portion remaining became the vault of the Woodside family. The Kirkyard has long since been closed to burials, and for many years was a pathless wilderness of docks and weeds until the late William King of Hillside, by public subscription, cut down the high wall, put in a modern front railing, levelled the inequalities and made paths through the grounds. It is curious that there are no sepulchral reminders of the old baronial families of Beith, the graveyard being thickly covered with both horizontal and erect tombstones, but unfortunately the inscriptions on the older ones have long since weathered away. The earliest inscriptions which can now be read only go back to about 1710.

The above was first published, in a longer form, in the *Official Souvenir of the Pageant of St Inan*, 1933, and is re-printed here to mark the Federation's AGM at Beith in May 2002.

Hugh Miller, 1802–1856, Geologist and Writer: His Links with 19th Century Girvan

This year sees the bicentenary of the birth of Hugh Miller at Cromarty on October 10th 1802.¹ Although well-known in the town of his birth as a pioneer geologist, folklorist and writer, Hugh Miller is a less familiar name elsewhere. The bicentenary has provided an opportunity for the Cromarty Arts Trust – a charitable trust set up in 1987 – to collaborate with other organisations including the National Trust for Scotland and Scotland’s Museums in a series of events and exhibitions across Scotland.

Hugh Miller’s early years in Cromarty are recounted in his own writings, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, which has now been reprinted. Following the loss of his sea-captain father – in a storm at sea, when Hugh was just five years old – it was his uncles, James and Sandy Wright, who Hugh later acknowledged became his real educators. With his Uncle Sandy there were explorations along the shoreline; finds of seashore wildlife and varied rock types instilling an interest and capacity for accurate observation. At home there were books and from family friends the recounting of local folklore and superstitions.

Hugh Miller’s working life as a stonemason began in February 1820 as an apprentice to a relative. This trade was chosen so as to allow six winter months free to pursue his real interests – ‘literature and mayhap natural science.’ The subsequent work in the stone quarries was arduous, and did long term damage to his health: the compensations were the free time and the fossil finds revealed by his hammer on the rocks. After a period as a journeyman stonemason, and following a six months convalescence back in Cromarty, he became an ornamental stonecarver – supporting himself for some ten years as an inscriber of tablets and tombstones, an occupation less hazardous to his health than the previous living in damp bothies and the work in the quarries.

In the early 19th Century, geology – the story of the rocks – was a rapidly developing science. Findings by the self-taught enthusiasts in their own localities were of great interest to the generally city-based academics and professors, so that descriptions and drawings of fossil discoveries communicated in correspondence were in general followed up by on-site visits and meetings. While for Hugh Miller the thrill was in the discovery and the detail, for the academics the new discoveries allowed them to progress more theoretical considerations as to geological sequences and relative ages of particular strata. Academics acknowledged the contributions so made in the field by naming the new find after the finder – hence a Hugh Miller discovery, a fossil flying fish, became *Pterichthys milleri*.

Hugh Miller’s interest in the rocks extended beyond his immediate environs of Cromarty and north-east Scotland, and in visits to south Carrick and the Girvan area he sought out as a local guide another enthusiast for rocks and natural history, Alexander McCallum, more generally known in Girvan as Lang Sandy.

Alexander McCallum (1804–1854) was just two years younger than Miller, and was by trade a weaver and occasional fisherman, and though always in struggling circumstances and with a large family, he retained an overpowering interest in natural history. Described

as tall, hardy and athletic, and reportedly following his favourite pursuits with the force of a passion, he undertook an immense amount of travelling, enduring exposure, fatigue and hard work in searching out the fossils of the area, later making a living as a collector of fossils and antiquities, and as a mineralogist and guide to geologists and others visiting the area.²

Hugh Miller, in his lecture read before the Physical Society in November 1852, expressed his obligations to Mr McCallum who had accompanied him on his Girvan explorations and from whom he had obtained many interesting fossils. The Reverend Roderick Lawson, years later in his discourse on the Geology of the District quotes from Hugh Miller's own writings in *The Witness*, 27th November 1852, reporting on the fossils of Mullochs Quarry near Dalquharran, where he found the remains of 'more trilobites, shells and corals than he had at one time supposed all the Greywacke deposits of the south of Scotland could have furnished', and Miller makes reference also to the limestone quarries of Craighead.

Sir Roderick Impey Murchison was another visitor and distinguished professional geologist who appreciated the practical and expert assistance provided by Alexander McCallum. In his book *Siluria*, when referring to the Silurian rocks of Ayrshire, he writes: 'Accompanied by Professor Nicol, I examined this tract in 1850. Our fossil collector was the late Alexander McCallum of Girvan who searched every locality with great assiduity.'

There are further references to Alexander McCallum in Murchison's paper in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London*, volume 7, 1851. During his visit to the Girvan Valley near Dalquharran where problems were encountered in interpreting certain limestone formations it was fossil specimens provided by Alexander McCallum which resolved the problem. Murchison wrote: 'Fortunately since the visit of my friend and myself, the successful fossil collector of Girvan, Mr Alexander McCallum has forwarded me organic remains which he has detected in courses of this limestone and shale, and which clearly overlie the coal-bearing strata of Dalquharran, and are seen between them and the foot of Mulloch Hill.'

Also documented in the paper to the Geological Society in 1851 are Alexander McCallum's discoveries 'both on the coast and in the interior – a very large species of *Orthoceratites*, together with other forms of that genus, a *Cyrtoceras* and one or two species of *Graptolites*, and some flattened brachiopods including *Orbicula*.' As a special acknowledgement of assistance, and as reported in the *Ayr Advertiser* obituary, Sir Roderick Murchison named one of the fossils after Lang Sandy as *Orthoceratites mccallumi*: the fossil itself was deposited in the Geology Museum in London.

It is Alexander McCallum's obituary in the *Ayr Advertiser* of 28th December 1854, recording his death as a victim of the Girvan cholera epidemic – 'Death of a Geologist in Humble Life' – that provides most ready access to biographical information. There is also the family tombstone in Girvan's Old Churchyard, erected by his son Fergus McCallum and recording his death on 20th December 1854, aged 50, and just two years before Miller's own death on 24th December 1856.

Interest in the geology of the Girvan area did not abate with the loss of both Hugh Miller and Lang Sandy. The dialogue between the locally-based discoverers and their

academic contacts continued into the late 19th Century and beyond – due especially to the efforts of Mrs Elizabeth Gray (1831–1924) and her family.

Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of Thomas and Mary Anderson, was born in the Burns Arms Inn, Alloway, then in 1836 moved to Girvan when her father gave up innkeeping to become a farmer.³ Elizabeth attended a small private school in Girvan until the age of 15 years, when she was sent to a boarding school in Glasgow, returning thereafter to the farmhouse home at Enoch. Her father, Thomas Anderson, took a keen interest in the fossils of the area, for instance by collecting those exposed in the local road stone quarries. In a paper by academic geologists Nicholson and Etheridge (1879), a trilobite – *Broneus andersoni* – was dedicated by them ‘to this intelligent and enthusiastic collector’, and they later named a coral after him.

Elizabeth’s own interest in fossil collecting as a family occupation continued following her marriage in 1856 to Robert Gray who, while working in banking, initially in Glasgow, then in Edinburgh, assisted Elizabeth in her fossil-collecting. He had also a strong interest in ornithology and later with his father-in-law published a joint paper on the birds of Ayrshire and Wigtownshire. Family holidays for the Grays were spent away from Glasgow or Edinburgh in Girvan – fossil collecting, with their two daughters Agnes and Alice also involved.

In his *History of Scottish Palaeontology*, Clarkson shows how the discovery and description of the fossil assemblages of the Palaeozoic sedimentary rock sequences of Scotland were largely revealed by self-taught amateurs and that this was particularly the case with the thick sequence of Ordovician rocks, of shallow water origin, with their rich, often unique, faunas, occurring around Girvan. Mrs Gray’s own collecting efforts were encouraged by the research requirements for fossil specimens, and the efforts then in progress by the professional academic geologists to interpret the stratigraphy of the region.

Robert Gray made contributions to the *Proceedings of the Natural History Society of Glasgow* and short papers and accounts based on the joint work of Robert and Elizabeth Gray appeared in these Proceedings between 1868 and 1878. It was at this time that Professor Young instituted a class in geology for women at Glasgow University and presented a ticket to Mrs Gray – her only formal geological education. Robert Gray died in 1887, but the fossil collecting holidays in Girvan continued, and in 1903 Mrs Gray was awarded the Murchison Geological Fund by the Geological Society ‘for her great services to geological science.’

The Gray Collection of Fossils has a particular value because their exact geographical location and horizon and associations have been recorded. They are the basis for many early descriptive papers and monographs, and many are British Fossil Type Specimens. The first Gray Collection was presented to the Hunterian Museum in 1866, while later collections went to Edinburgh and, following negotiations, in 1920 to the British Museum of Natural History in London. Mrs Gray died of acute bronchitis on 11th February 1924, just a few weeks short of her 93rd birthday. She is commemorated in the names of the many Palaeozoic fossils that bear her name or of one of the localities of the Girvan area, and by the observation that for anyone wanting to work on the faunas of the Ordovician period the Gray Collection remains required study.

The programme of Hugh Miller celebratory events has continued through 2002, and culminates in an international conference at various venues in Cromarty from the 10th to 13th October. In Girvan, the members of the Girvan and District Geological and Natural History Society are offering their own tribute – an exhibition to run from 5th October to the end of November in the McKechnie Institute, Girvan. Exhibits will include fossils from their own collections, and memorabilia relating to Hugh Miller, to Lang Sandy (whose family associations with Girvan are continued by his great great nephew) and to Mrs Elizabeth Gray.

Sources

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Margaret McCance

¹ The author wishes to thank her fellow members of the Girvan Geology Group for assistance with this article, and with the forthcoming exhibition in the McKechnie Institute.

² ‘The Girvan area is world-famous for its geological features.’ So begins Chapter 6, “The Girvan Area”, of James Lawson and Judith Lawson, *Geology Explained around Glasgow and South-West Scotland, including Arran*, Newton Abbot, 1976, which can be recommended as an introduction to this often abstruse subject.

³ The Burns Arms was a former name of the Burns Monument Hotel, now Brig o’ Doon House. Thomas Anderson was the first tenant, probably taking up occupancy at Whitsunday 1831.

Lieutenant Robert Shankland: Ayr’s Supreme Hero

Ayr Town Hall was crowded to capacity on Monday January 10th 1918, when the great and the good of the town and district gathered to acclaim one of her sons, Robert Shankland, who was about to be given the Freedom of the Burgh of Ayr. At the age of 30, he was the youngest person to be honoured in this way: he was the first person from Ayr ever to have been awarded the Victoria Cross, and this was the town’s own way of acknowledging his bravery.

On the platform that cold January night – the scene set by the Burgh Organist playing martial and patriotic airs – were Provost Mitchell, Lord and Lady Ailsa, Colonel Northcote of the Canadian Army, Sheriff Ivor McKenzie, as well as other dignitaries from the district. In an era when it was a proud and patriotic duty to serve your king and country, Robert Shankland had done that and more. Promoted for his bravery in the field of battle, he was the holder of the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Victoria Cross.

Robert Shankland was born at St Quivox, near Ayr, on October 10th 1887. The family must have moved to Ayr shortly afterwards. It is most likely that his father was William Shankland, a railway guard who lived at Content Street, Ayr: he is the only Shankland listed in contemporary Ayr Post Office Directories. Robert was educated at Smith's Institution (now Holmston School) under headmaster George Bain. He was a clever lad and had a brilliant scholastic career. After leaving school, he trained as an accountant with the firm of John T Scott, at 29 Newmarket Street, Ayr, and remained with them for many years. He subsequently joined the Glasgow and South-Western Railway, working from Ayr's Townhead station.

However, it would appear that Robert sought wider horizons, for at some point in the early 20th Century he emigrated from Scotland, moving to Winnipeg, the capital city of Manitoba, Canada, and an important junction for three Trans-Continental railway lines. What Shankland did in Winnipeg has not been ascertained, but it appears likely that he found employment in the administration of one or other of these railways. However, events in faraway Bosnia in June 1914 led to a declaration of war by Britain on Germany on 4th August 1914, and Britain, Canada and Robert Shankland found themselves caught up in a war of global proportions.

Shankland enlisted in the Canadian Cameron Highlanders in December 1914. In June 1915, after undergoing training, he arrived with his regiment in Britain. By this time he had risen to the rank of Sergeant, and by the time that he first saw action – in February 1916 – he had attained the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major. During one of his early actions he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Later in 1916, while in action at the Battle of the Somme, RSM Shankland was promoted on the field to the rank of Lieutenant as a reward for his bravery and initiative. A born leader, he was always in the vanguard of the fighting, and was twice wounded in action.

John Mitchell, the Provost, when describing Lieutenant Shankland's courage in gaining the most coveted honour a serviceman can win, referred to 'that little bit of metal, of no great intrinsic value, on which are inscribed the simple words "For Valour", and which we know as the Victoria Cross'. The Provost then went on to describe the incident which culminated in the presentation of the award:

'The Canadian infantry were involved in fighting for Bellevue Spur in the Battle of Passchendale. Some hours after the attack had begun it seemed as though the Canadians' effort against the ridge was a failure. When things looked blackest a young officer ran back to the advanced headquarters. He was one of a party reported dead. His coat was torn with bullets. "I have fifty men on the top of the spur," he said, "We are holding it. We have held it for hours. Send up reinforcements."

‘The British artillery had knocked out one pill–box, and damaged a second, while a third was intact. A brisk fight followed and the pill–boxes were re–captured. The remnants of our advance came on the top of the spur to two half–completed strong points. When they had captured these only twenty men and one machine–gun were left. But the twenty men were in a dominating position.

‘Lieutenant Shankland came up and rallied the men. Gradually other soldiers reached the top with a second machine–gun, and another officer with four men occupied another part of the ridge a little to their side. A remarkable fight followed and the rifle proved invaluable. Lieutenant Shankland found the Germans attempting to enfilade him. He directed his infantry and machine–guns to shoot every German as soon as he showed himself. One machine–gun was put out of action by a shell. Time after time the Germans crept up and time after time they were driven back by the steady rifle fire of the little group.

‘Shankland, realizing that the reinforcements had been delayed, again hurried down the hillside to headquarters. A fresh attack was decided upon and a fresh battalion thrown in. The remnants of the old battalion rallied and the Canadians advanced once more. Pill–box after pill–box was taken, and the German lines were swept clean.’

One incident in the fighting was worth recalling, the Provost stated. ‘A German company moved forward to attempt to cut off Shankland and his men on the spur. The enemy troops moved forward in twos and threes and as they passed a certain spot on the battlefield they were shot down. Owing to the mist and the noise, those Germans behind did not realize what was happening. Finally, a German officer with a sergeant came along to command the company that he expected to be waiting for him. To his surprise the officer found that he and the sergeant were the only survivors of the company, and duly surrendered.’

Concluding, Provost Mitchell said: ‘Lieutenant Shankland, the Town Council of this Burgh, in which you were born and educated, taking into consideration your courage and gallantry, have resolved to confer on you the highest honour which it is in their power to grant. They have admitted you as a Burgess of this Ancient and Royal Burgh, and your name will be enrolled for all time amongst those whom the Burgh delights to honour.’

The Provost then explained that as Lieutenant Shankland had to leave Ayr the following morning on military duty there had been no time to have the Burgess Ticket inscribed on vellum, or even to have a suitable casket made to contain the vellum. This would be provided in due course and, additional to this, a gift of War Loan Stock. The amount of the gift had not yet been decided, as the subscription lists had not been closed. He concluded by saying that the sum raised was substantial and had been spontaneously subscribed, without any canvassing, from a very great number of inhabitants of the town.

Mr Thomson, the Town Clerk, read the Burgess Ticket to Ayr’s newest and youngest recipient,¹ who then signed the Burgess Roll amid great cheering. Mr James Doak, the Burgh Organist, struck up ‘He’s a Jolly Good Fellow’, and Robert Shankland was then given a standing ovation.

Silence descended on the audience as the young officer rose to reply. He thanked the Provost and the Burgh of Ayr for the great honour conferred upon him, and caused laughter by saying that he had learned more that night about the battle he had been engaged

in than he had ever known before. His short speech of thanks was followed by the presentation of a gold watch on behalf of the Ayr Battalion of the Boys' Brigade. Shankland, as a boy, had been a member of the 2nd Ayr Company.

Mr James A Morris, in making the presentation, said how proud the Boys' Brigade in general, and the Ayr Battalion in particular, were of their former member's bravery. He made the point that Robert's example would be an inspiration to all Boys' Brigade members now serving with the colours. By coincidence, he said, Lieutenant Shankland was the seventh Canadian to be awarded a Victoria Cross, and also the seventh member of the Boys' Brigade to gain this accolade.

Robert replied: 'Looking back to the time I spent with the Brigade and what I learned then, and have profited by since, I would say to their members that I have no doubt they will find out in some future time the benefits of the education they were receiving as members of the Boys' Brigade.'

The meeting then terminated and as the platform party was leaving the hall there were scenes of great enthusiasm as people crowded round trying to shake the hand of the hero.

Robert Shankland stayed in the army after the war ended. He became a career soldier and also served in the Second World War. He retired from the Canadian army with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and died in 1968.

By a strange coincidence it was discovered that two other men who fought in World War One and lived in the same street in Winnipeg as Robert Shankland had also received the highest decoration for bravery. Company Sergeant Major Frederick William Hall, of the 8th Manitoba Regiment, and Acting Corporal Leo Clarke, of the 2nd Battalion, Eastern Ontario Regiment, were both awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery in France. Both these men lived in Pine Street, Winnipeg, as did Robert Shankland. It is believed to be the only street in the world that has had three Victoria Cross winners living there. The city of Winnipeg decided to rename the street Valour Road in honour of the three men, and a bronze plaque is mounted on a street lamp in Valour Road to commemorate this.²

George Wade

¹ It should be pointed out that 'youngest' refers only to those created Burgesses (or Freemen) after 1846. Before 1846, having a Burgess Ticket was a pre-requisite for anyone wishing to trade in Ayr: this rank could be achieved through family right or by purchase. Burgess Tickets were also used to honour celebrated and important visitors to Ayr: after the abolition of trading restrictions, the number of Tickets issued declined markedly, to the extent that they are now rarely awarded, and only to very deserving candidates, such as Robert Shankland. See Lindsay & Kennedy, eds., *The Burgesses and Guild Brethren of Ayr 1647-1846* (Ayr, forthcoming 2002).

² As the author of *Street Names of Ayr* (Ayr, 2001), the editor wonders whether the powers—that be might not consider honouring Robert Shankland with a street name when opportunity arises. Recent street naming in Ayr has lacked both imagination and local interest.

Book Review

Ronald W Brash, **Ayr St Columba: The Church on Midton Road 1902–2002.**

Ron Brash will be well-known to many readers of this journal. He has been a stalwart member of the Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society for many years, and is perhaps best-known for his enthusiasm for trams and tramways. His *The Tramways of Ayr* (Dundee, 1983) is a model of its kind, lightly combining the mechanical and engineering complexities with the social and economic background.

Another book from Ron's pen is always to be welcomed, and he has now produced this attractive, and generously illustrated history of his local church, St Columba, to mark the centenary of its foundation, as Trinity, in 1902. The book covers the history of this church, its ministers and its artistic features, and also has sections on the two other churches which merged with Trinity to form the single charge, St Columba, in 1981. It is a timely addition to the history of Ayr, and can be recommended to anyone with an interest in the town, its buildings and its religious life. Copies cost £5, and can be obtained from the author (10 Robsland Drive, Ayr) or bookshops in Ayr.

Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

The coming weeks are a busy period for the Federation, and your attention is drawn to the following events, where we hope to see many of you.

Buchan Lecture, 2002

The Federation has been fortunate to secure one of the Buchan Lectures for 2002. These are lectures which are funded by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, whose aid is designed to allow local groups to attract speakers of national or international standing, where they would normally be unable to meet the cost.

The Buchan Lecture will take place on Thursday 26th September at 7.30 p.m. in the Conference Suite, Park Hotel, Rugby Park, Kilmarnock. The Lecturer is Dr William Kelly, from the University of Ulster School of Ulster–Scots Studies, who will lecture on the links between Ulster and the West of Scotland. The lecture is free, and will be followed by an equally free finger buffet. Tickets can be obtained from Stuart Wilson, 34 Glebe Road, Kilmarnock (01563 529768).

This is a big opportunity for the Federation to demonstrate its abilities on a wider scale, and we look forward to a big attendance.

Swap Shop 2002

The Annual Swap Shop will be held on Sunday 20th October 2002 in Nanse Tinnock's, Castle Street, Mauchline, at 2.00 p.m. The Swap Shop will follow the regular format, and will include visits to Nanse Tinnock's and the other Burns-related museum

buildings in Mauchline. The Burns House Museum, which has recently been restored and subsequently taken over by East Ayrshire Council, has extensive displays on two of Mauchline's world-famous industries – curling stones and box-ware – as well as much on Burns and his connections with Mauchline.

A booking form is enclosed.

Conference 2002

The 2002 Conference will, as previously announced, take place from 10 a.m. in the Walker Hall, Troon, on Saturday 26th October 2002. The speakers – Michael Moss, Alastair Hendry, Elaine McFarland and Elspeth Reid – will be under the chairmanship of Sheriff David Smith. We hope for a lively, interesting and informative day, and look forward to seeing many of you there.

The cost for the day will be £10, and a booking form is enclosed. Further details from Rob Close, 01292 590273.

Subscriptions

The Subscription Year for the Federation begins in October, and member societies and individuals are reminded that Subscriptions for 2002–2003 are now being actively sought. The rates remain at £15 for societies, and £10 for individuals. All moneys should be sent to the Treasurer, Rob Close, with cheques, &c., made payable to AFHS.

A reminder form is enclosed.

John Strawhorn Quaich 2002

At the AGM in Beith the John Strawhorn Quaich for 2002 was awarded to J R D (Duncan) Campbell from Largs. For many years the Town Clerk of Millport, Duncan Campbell has written and researched, and continues so to do, the history of Largs, Millport, the Cumbraes and surrounding areas, as well as further afield. In the April 2002 *Journal of the Largs and District FHS* he has written on his great uncle in 'From Glen Lyon to the Yukon', while his sixth book, *Mid Calder's Past*, has just been published. He is currently researching the history of the Wee Cumbrae. He has made a noteworthy contribution to local history in Ayrshire, and we hope that this award is a fitting acknowledgement of his abilities.

Maps for Local History

We have been asked to give publicity to a Conference, organised by the Scottish Local History Forum, in Falkirk on Saturday 5th October 2002 on the subject of 'Maps for Local History'. The cost including lunch is £14, with registration from 9.45 a.m. onwards. Further details from Rob Close, who can also supply booking forms.

Diary Dates

This edition of *Ayrshire Notes* includes a Diary for the 2002–2003 Winter Season. We again encourage Secretaries of all societies to send syllabuses to Rob Close.

Diary

AANHS	Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. Meetings in Carnegie Library, Ayr, at 7.45 p.m.
AFHS	Joint Meeting of Ayrshire Family History Societies. Clark Memorial Hall, Largs, at 7.30 p.m.
CSD	Catrine Sorn & District History Society. Meetings in A M Brown Institute, Catrine, at 7.30 p.m.
KCCS	Kyle and Carrick Civic Society. Meetings in Loudoun Hall, Ayr, at 7.30 p.m.
KDHG	Kilmarnock & District History Group. Meetings in Kilmarnock College at 7.30 p.m.
Largs	Joint Meeting of LDHS and LNAFHS. Dunn Memorial Hall, Largs, at 7.30 p.m.
LDHS	Largs and District Historical Society. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
L(MS)	LDHS, Marine Section. Meetings in Largs Museum at 7.30 p.m.
LNAFHS	Largs & North Ayrshire Family History Society. Meetings in Largs Library at 7.30 p.m.
MHS	Maybole Historical Society. Meetings in Maybole Town Hall, High Street, Maybole at 7.30 p.m.
PHG	Prestwick History Group. Meetings in 65 Club, Main Street, Prestwick, at 7.30 p.m.
SHS	Stewarton Historical Society. Meetings in St Columba's Church Hall, Stewarton, at 7.30 p.m.
TAFHS	Troon @ Ayrshire Family History Society. Meetings in Portland Church Hall, South Beach, Troon, at 7.30 p.m.
WKAS	West Kilbride Amenity Society. Meetings in Community Centre, West Kilbride, at 7.30 p.m.

September 2002

Tues 10th	LNAFHS	Dane Love	Scottish Kirkyards
Tues 17th	TAFHS	Andrew Boyle	Tales of Ayrshire
Thu 26th	Federation	William Kelly	BUCHAN LECTURE

October 2002

Tues 1st	KDHG	Ian Campbell	Thomas Carlyle
Mon 7th	L(MS)	John Baxter	Underwater Geology of St Kilda
Mon 7th	KCCS	Nat Edwards	Burns Cottage Museum: Re- discovering a National Treasure
Tues 8th	LNAFHS	Alastair Hendry	Witch Hunting
Thu 10th	AANHS	Alastair Penman	History & Archaeology of High Status Settlement at Botel, Kirkcudbrightshire
Tues 15th	KDHG	Murray Pittock	James Boswell and Corsica

Thu 17th	PHG	David W Rowan and Alisdair Cochrane	Prestwick 1900–2000
Sun 20th	Federation	Swap Shop in Mauchline	
Thu 24th	Largs	John Burnett	Glasgow Fair
Thu 24th	AANHS	Charles Munn	Banking and Economic Developments in Ayrshire in the 18th Century
Sat 26th	Federation	Conference in Troon	
Tues 29th	KDHG	Chris Whatley	Looking Beneath the Kilt: New Ways of Interpreting 18th Century Scotland

November 2002

Mon 4th	KCCS	Linda Fairlie & Bruce Morgan	Ayrshire Textiles
Mon 4th	L(MS)	A Baxter	The Million Ton Ship
Thu 7th	PHG	R Macalpine Ramage	Bridging the Gap: Scottish Bridges and Their Stories
Tues 12th	LNAFHS	Jill McColl	Ayrshire Resources
Tues 12th	KDHG	Miles Oglethorpe	Losing our Mines – Remembering the Scottish Coal Industry
Thu 14th	AANHS	Fred Westcott	An Island Hopscotch
Tues 19th	TAFHS	Nan McFarlane	C K Marr
Tues 26th	KDHG	George Kilmurry	The Story and Trial of Oscar Slater
Thu 28th	AANHS	Hamish Fraser	What was New about Old Labour: Scotland's Early Socialists
Thu 28th	LDHS	Janet McBain	From Here to Posterity – The Work of the Scottish Screen Archive

December 2002

Mon 2nd	KCCS	tbc	Scottish Natural Heritage
Thu 5th	PHG	Bob Smillie	Carrick Coast Nostalgia
Tues 10th	KDHG	Alastair Hendry	Castles of Ayrshire
Thu 12th	AANHS	Roland Paxton	'Bright Lights': Robert L Stevenson's Family of Engineers
Thu 19th	LDHS	Robert Ferguson	Preserving the Heritage

January 2003

Mon 6th	KCCS	John Hope	Memories of Wartime Prestwick
Tues 7th	KDHG	Murray Wilson	A Walk in the Park: Gettysburg USA
Thu 9th	AANHS	Ian Gow	New Hailes House, East Lothian
Mon 13th	L(MS)	Gordon Law	West Coast Steamers
Tues 14th	LNAFHS	Adelle Redhead	Glasgow University Archives
Tues 21st	KDHG	Bernard Aspinwall	Scots in America
Tues 21st	TAFHS	Kevin Wilbraham	Ayrshire Archives
Thu 23rd	LDHS	William Gibb	John Dunmore Lang – Evangelical Enigma
Thu 23rd	AANHS	Peter Addyman	From Jorvik to Largs: Presenting the Viking Past

February 2003

Mon 3rd	L(MS)	Peter Cooney	Modern Ship Management
Mon 3rd	KCCS	Ann Galbraith	Local Newspapers

Tues 4th	KDHG	Ged O'Brien	Football: The Game Scotland Gave the World
Thu 6th	PHG	George Kilmurry	Auld Ayr
Tues 11th	LNAFHS	Andy Green	Restoring Photographs
Thu 13th	AANHS	Sarah O'Donoghue	Caterpillars in Costa Rica: Working in the Rain Forest
Tues 18th	KDHG	Frances Robertson	The Art of Deceit in War: Dazzle Painting on Ships 1914–18
Thu 27th	LDHS	Ian McCrorie	MacBrayne
Thu 27th	AANHS	Marie Watt	The Evidential Contribution of Teeth in Archaeology
March 2003			
Mon 3rd	KCCS	Stuart Faed	The Faeds: Art in the Family; A Family in Art
Mon 3rd	L(MS)	Speaker from RN, Faslane	Underwater Navigation
Tues 4th	KDHG	Joy Blair	Turkey Red – The Dyeing Industry in Scotland
Thu 6th	PHG	Members	Pot Pourri
Mon 10th	AFHS	Elizabeth Mortimer	Testaments
Thu 13th	AANHS	Eddie Haggarty	Strathclyde seen from the Police Helicopter
Tues 18th	TAFHS	Duncan Dornan	Scottish Museum of Country Life
Tues 18th	KDHG	Evelyn Stell	Scottish Instrumental Music 1603–1707: The Ayrshire Connection
Thu 27th	LDHS	tbc	
April 2003			
Thu 3rd	PHG	Jim Allan	North Ayrshire
Mon 7th	L(MS)	Ian McLagan	Submarines in Rothesay in WW2
Tues 8th	LNAFHS	Chris McLeod	Hand Weavers in Scotland
Tues 22nd	TAFHS	tbc	Family History Sources in the Mitchell Library
May 2003			
Thu 1st	PHG	Members	Blether of 2003
Tues 20th	TAFHS	Tom Barclay	Ayr's Transatlantic Trade

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